

FOCUS

Wild Arizona

Key Words

Adapt: to change in order to better survive in a new environment

Aquatic: living in the water

Habitat: the place where an animal lives

Native: a plant or animal living in Arizona before people

Fish are **adapted** to living in **aquatic** environments. They have fins that allow them to swim easily. They have gills that allow them to remove oxygen from the water so they can breathe. But fish also have other adaptations that help them survive. In particular, Arizona's **native** fishes have some special adaptations that allow them to find food and avoid predators.

Special Body Shapes:

- Some fishes have a large hump on their back that allows them to swim better in fast-moving water
- A flat belly allows fishes to eat food, like algae or bugs, that may be on the bottom
- Fast-moving fishes are often long and thin, like a torpedo

Special Mouths:

- Large mouths allow fishes to eat large food
- In some fishes, the top part of their mouth is longer than the bottom, allowing them to eat fish below
- Sucker-shaped mouths allow fishes to attach to rocks and suck up algae and small bugs like a vacuum cleaner

Special Colors:

- A fish that is dark on the top blends in with the ground below, making it difficult for predators to see
- Striped fishes can easily blend in with the plants
- Spotted fishes can blend in with the rocks on the bottom of a river





Do the science:

Here are descriptions of some of Arizona's native fishes. Circle the adaptations. Based on these adaptations, describe each one's **habitat** and food.

Razorback Sucker This fish can be olive green to brown in color. Its belly is usually white or yellow. Adults have a sharp-edged hump. The mouth faces downward. This fish can grow to 36 inches and 13 pounds.

mouth. It can grow to 6 feet long and weigh up to 100 pounds!

Bonytail Chub This fish is very long and thin. It is usually green or gray with dark spots on the top and a white belly. The adult often has a small hump behind its head. It can grow to 24 inches and about 2 pounds.

Colorado River Pikeminnow This fish has a very long and thin body. It is green or gray on the back, with silver sides. Its head is flat and it has a large

Just for fun:

Pretend you are walking along a stream and have just discovered a new species of fish. Unfortunately, you forgot your camera.

Draw a picture of your fish. Make sure that your drawing includes its habitat. Be creative and include some of the adaptations described above. Don't forget to name your fish.

Send it to us along with your name, age or grade, and address or e-mail:

Eric Proctor
Arizona Game and Fish Department, IEED
2221 W. Greenway Road
Phoenix, AZ 85023

Did You Know?

Biologists use "fish" when talking about one or many members of the same species of fish. They use "fishes" when talking about different species of fish.

■ This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Focus Wild Arizona program, a free

educational program for teachers, parents, students or anyone interested in learning about wildlife and habitat.

Visit our Web site, azgfd.gov/focuswild, to find exciting lessons and resources.