

# Virgin River Chub

(*Gila seminuda*)—Endangered

---

## Description

Adult Virgin River chub rarely exceed 10 inches in length. Although this species lacks the prominent hump of the bonytail and humpback chub, they are stoutly built. The front and bottom of their bodies are swollen in appearance tapering suddenly from the dorsal (top) to the caudal (tail) fin. This tear-drop shape is most likely an adaptation to the swift, turbid waters in which it lives. Its body coloration is silvery to grayish brown above and lighter beneath.

The largest of this species feed on other smaller fish species, but most eat terrestrial and aquatic insects, and plant matter. They are opportunistic and will feed on insects, snails, crustaceans, and algae.

## Distribution and Habitat

These chub are found in runs and pool over substrates of sand and sediment in physically and chemically unmodified areas of the Virgin River drainage.

## Life History

These fish spawn in June and July when the water temperatures have warmed to about 66 degrees F. At this time they avoid turbid waters, staying in low, clear flows so that eggs are not carried away by the current. Spawning females are accompanied by several males. Females randomly drop their eggs over gravel beds in deeper water. The adhesive eggs attach to anything available. Once the eggs are deposited no additional parental care is provided.

## Threats and Reasons for Decline

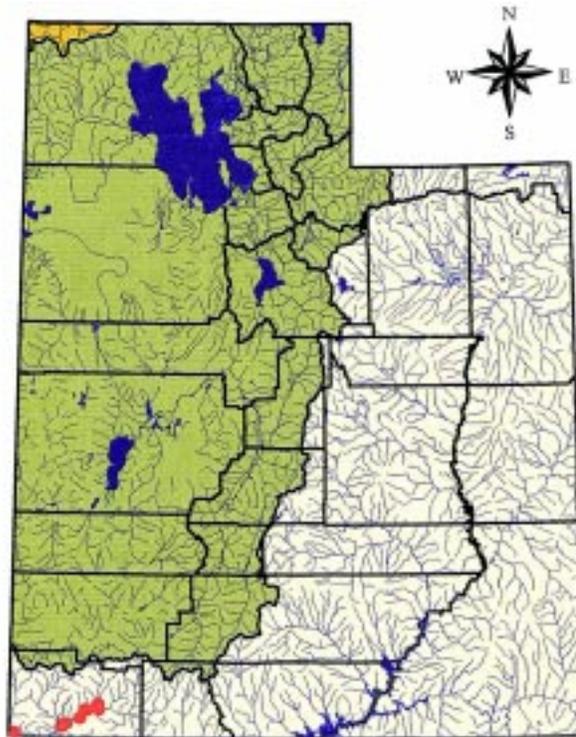
The population of Virgin River chub has declined over the last 100 years due to increased agricultural and urban water use, decreased water quality, and the introduction of exotic fishes. Decreased water flow leads to overcrowding of fish, resulting in increased predation and spread of disease.

## Recovery Efforts

The Virgin River chub was listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1989. A recovery plan has been developed which calls for restoring permanent water flows in the Virgin River to provide habitat for this fish. There is a population currently being maintained at the Dexter National Fish Hatcheries in Dexter, New Mexico.



Photo courtesy of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources



Virgin River Chub distribution.




---

## References

- J.N. Cross. 1978. Status and ecology of the Virgin River chub, *Gila robusta seminuda*. Southwestern Naturalist. 23(3):519-527.
- Mckinley, W.L. & Deacon, J.E. 1991. Battle against extinction. The University of Arizona Press: Tucson, Arizona.
- “*Gila robusta seminuda* Virgin River chub” *Biological Resources Research Center*: <<http://www.brrc.unr.edu/data/fish/gilarobs.html>> (5 May 1998).