

Lost River Sucker (*Deltistes luxatus*)

Status -- Federal: Endangered; California: Endangered

Shortnose Sucker (*Chasmistes brevirostris*)

Status -- Federal: Endangered; California: Endangered

The Lost River sucker is a large fish, measuring up to 3 feet (1m) in total length, and weighing up to 10 lbs (4.5 kg). Its small mouth is positioned below its elongated snout. Its coloration varies with location, Upper Klamath Lake (Oregon)



Lost River Sucker

fish have dark backs and sides fading to yellow or white on the belly, while Clear Lake Reservoir (California) fish are light brown above and white or tan below. Capable of living for more than 40 years, Lost River suckers usually inhabit deep lakes or river pools. Adult suckers are thought

to feed near the bottom on invertebrates found in the sediments and zooplankton.

The Shortnose sucker is smaller than the Lost River sucker, measuring less than 20 inches (50 cm) in length, and weighs 3.5 lbs (1.5 kg) when fully grown. It has a big head and its body is nearly cylindrical. It is recognized by its large, flexible mouth. The fish is also characterized by its blunt, turned-up snouth. Body coloring ranges

from dark-to-light brown above and from tan to white below. They are known to live at least 33 years. For most of the year, they live in large, shallow lakes and sluggish rivers, where they feed on zoo-plankton, algae, and benthic (sediments) invertebrates.



Shortnose Sucker

Both sucker species shared a similar historical distribution, in Upper Klamath Lake and its tributaries, and the Lost River system. Lost River suckers also occupied the waters of Tule Lake, Lower Klamath Lake, and Sheeple Lake. Large scale water

Lost River Sucker and Shortnose Sucker



reclamation projects developed in the early 1900s, resulted in the loss of over 250,000 acres of wetlands in the Upper Klamath Basin. The loss of these wetlands has had large scale impacts to the quality and quantity of suitable sucker habitat. Currently, less than 75,000 acres of wetlands remain in the Basin.

Range: Today, substantial populations of Lost River suckers are only found in Tule Lake, part of the Lost River, and Lower Klamath Lake in Siskiyou County, and in Clear Lake Reservoir in Modoc County. In California, the present distribution of Shortnose suckers is similar to that of the Lost River sucker. Gerber Reservoir in Oregon is the only habitat with a Shortnose sucker population that does not also have a Lost River sucker population.

Breeding: Lost River suckers reach sexual maturity between the ages 6 to 14 years. From early February through May, they begin their runs up tributary streams in order to spawn. Females release their eggs in stretches of stream that flow swiftly over rubble bottoms, depositing 44,000 - 231,000 eggs each. After hatching, larvae move downstream to the lake under cover of darkness. Shortnose suckers reach sexual maturity at age 6 or 7. They begin their runs in March, migrating up tributary rivers to spawn. In stretches of riffles and smooth runs of water, over gravel -or rubble-covered stream bottoms, females broadcast tens of thousands of eggs. Some suckers in both species spawn along the shores of lakes and springs.

Endangerment: The combined effects of damming of rivers, instream flow diversions, draining of marshes, dredging of Upper Klamath Lake, and other water manipulations have threatened both species with extinction. Additionally, water quality degradation in the Klamath Basin watershed has led to large-scale fish kills related to algal bloom cycles. Introduced exotic fishes may reduce recruitment through competition with, or predation upon, suckers and sucker larvae.