

Owens Pupfish

(*Cyprinodon radiosus*)

Status - Federal: Endangered; State: Endangered



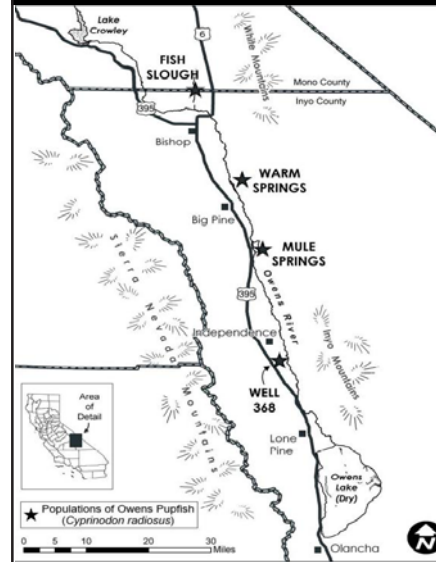
Photo: B. Moose Peterson/WRP

The Owens pupfish is tiny, rarely exceeding 2.5 inches (6 cm) in total length. Males are very aggressive, spending most of their time setting up their breeding territory or breeding. Females are smaller, and their silhouette less chunky. Both males and females are usually brown to olive above and silvery below. However, during breeding, male Owens pupfish turn vivid blue with purplish bars on their sides and orangish amber tinging the edges of their fins. They feed on midge and mayfly larvae, mosquitoes, crustaceans, plankton, detritus, and terrestrial insects that fall into the water. Sometimes the fish eat even their own eggs.

California Department of Pesticide Regulation
Endangered Species Program
<https://www.cdpr.ca.gov>



Owens Pupfish



Habitat

Habitat for the Owens pupfish consists of spring pools, sloughs, irrigation ditches, swamps, and flooded pastures in the Owens Valley from Fish Slough in Mono County to Lone Pine in Inyo County. Currently, this fish is confined to five populations in the Owens Valley.

Reproduction: Owens pupfish usually spawn during summer, but can begin anytime water

temperatures rise above 20°C (68°F). The males defend their small territories—often no larger than 1 m (3 ft) in diameter—by aggressively chasing away other males. A female ready to mate breaks away from her small school and approaches a male, who joins her in a slow mating dance. After she releases a single egg, the male fertilizes it. The two pupfish may repeat this ritual as often as 50 times in a day or they may separate and mate with other individuals. Fertilized eggs hatch within 7-10 days and the young fish begin to feed immediately. Juveniles mature rapidly, usually in 3 or 4 months. In fact, Owens pupfish hatched in the Spring may spawn before their first Winter.