



“Big Lips” The Santa Ana Sucker

Why is the Santa Ana Sucker called a “sucker”?



Sucker mouth

- The Sucker gets its name from its large lips
- The Sucker is not born with large lips
- At birth lips are located at front of head
- Lips start developing as mouth moves down to the bottom of the head while they age

Why large lips?

Feeding

- Large lips work to scrape and suction algae off the river bottom
- Long intestines help them absorb nutrients in plant material, like algae
- Suckers also eat insects living in the algae



Insect in Sucker Intestine

Holding On

- Suckers live in three southern Californian rivers (Santa Ana, San Gabriel and Los Angeles)
- These rivers often flood, especially in the mountains
- Large lips adhere to gravel and rocks so fish is not swept away

Think like a scientist !

- Young fish live near the bank where algae grows on the water's surface
- Adults live on the river bottom, where algae grows on gravel
- How do you think mouth position on the head influences where a sucker can feed?

Sucker Habitat



Young Sucker



Adult on gravel



Lovina Huns, a fourth year Cal Poly undergrad has been studying larval Sucker (fly) diet and has recently received an HRHS Scholarship to continue research on the diet and ecology of the federally threatened fish.

This student exhibit is supported by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the Cal Poly Pomona University's Center for Community Service Learning and the Biological Sciences Department.