

Quillback Carpsucker

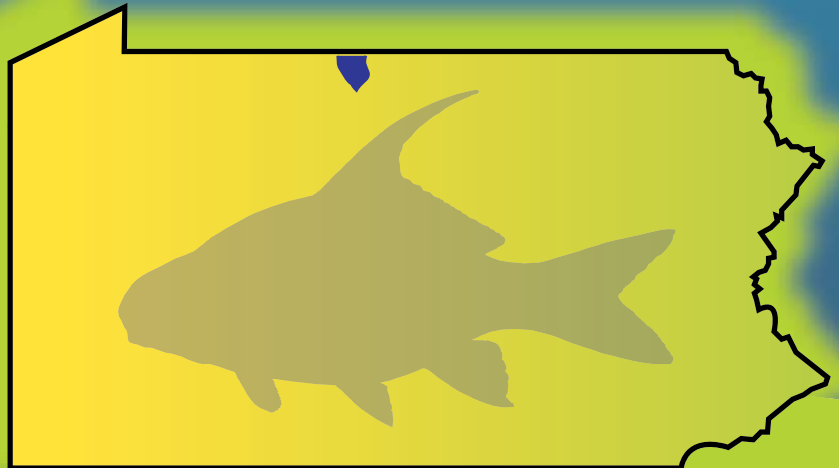


photo-Rob Criswell

Quillback Carpsucker

**Family: Suckers
(Catostomidae).**

**PA Watershed Range: Erie,
Ohio, Potomac, Susquehanna,
Delaware.**



A quillback what? It's a quillback carpsucker! Not only is its name a jumble of words, but its body is also a hodgepodge of characteristics. This fish has a heavy body like a carp, but it has the mouth of a sucker. It has an unusual dorsal fin, too: The first few rays are extra long and arch over the fish's back almost to its tail.

With its suckerlike mouth and no barbels ("whiskers"), it belongs in the sucker family. Big reflective scales make this fish white or silvery on the sides. Its back is olive-brown to gray. The quillback's small head and humped back give it an unusual look. Another characteristic is its deeply forked tail. The quillback carpsucker can grow as large as two feet and 12 pounds!

Cruising in schools near the bottom, the quillback carpsucker feeds on small aquatic animals, fingernail clams and aquatic vegetation. Quillback carpsuckers can be found in large, slow-moving pools in lakes and rivers. They are uncommon, but they live in all of Pennsylvania's major watersheds except the Genesee River watershed. Young quillback carpsuckers are an important forage fish for predators.