

Hi, I'm Ranger Andy and this is a Ranger Minute at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. One of my favorite things about Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and the Sonoran Desert in general are all of the surprises that you can find if you start looking closely. Now, it's not a surprise that National Parks protect habitat for endangered species. What might be a surprise is that one of the endangered species we protect here at Organ Pipe is actually an endangered species of fish. Now how in the heck did a fish end up in the Sonoran Desert? Well you have to think back about 10,000 years. Scientists think that this area, before it was actually a desert, was very tropical. There was more moisture, there was more water, more rivers and streams connecting to each other, more streams and springs that were perennial, meaning they run all year round. As the land started to raise up and the climate started to dry out 10,000 years ago, some of those streams that connected to each other became isolated and all of the little fish species that used to be intermingling also became isolated. Now some of the areas of the Sonoran Desert stayed perennially wet, and here at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument we have a true desert oasis out in the southwest corner of our monument and it's called Quitobaquito Springs. And if you look closely in Quitobaquito Springs, you will find a Quitobaquito Pupfish. It is one of the endangered species that we work very hard to protect here at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Now the beauty of this fish, is that you too can see it. All you have to do is walk from the back doors of our visitor center, across this patio, over here to an area we call "La Cienaga". "La Cienaga" is what we call this refugium or a refuge. It was created back in 2005 by some middle school kids in the local community. They went out and studied Quitobaquito Springs and helped us reproduce it to the best of our ability. And inside this little pond we are now protecting 750 unique individuals of this endangered species. Now you are looking at this pond thinking 750 is a big number. How do we get 750 fish into this one little pond? Well, they are small fish. In fact, the biggest one ever recorded is about the size of a tube of Chapstick, actually it is a little smaller than that, and the vast majority of them are only about as long as my fingernails. So in this small pond we have several small fish and the beauty of it that you have the opportunity to see an endangered species, for yourself, just by walking across our patio and taking a look in the water back here. Thank you very much. I encourage you guys to visit and see this fish for yourself. This has been a Ranger Minute with Ranger Andy.