Daily Science
Big Idea 3
WEEK 1

Day 4

Weekly Question

How was the Grand Canyon formed?

The Colorado River has always been important to the Grand Canyon **ecosystem**. When the river flooded, it helped native fish by carrying away rocks and sand that blocked parts of the river. Floodwaters deposited sand along riverbanks, building sandbars that became plant and animal habitats.

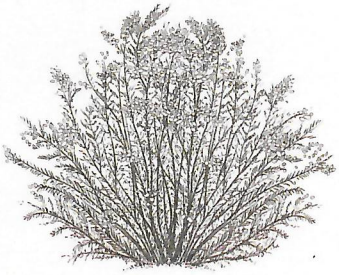
In 1963, water from the Colorado River was dammed up to create the Glen Canyon Dam. This meant that the natural flooding stopped. Scientists later realized that without flooding, the plants and animals living in the Grand Canyon suffered. Now the dam is occasionally opened to release a lot of water. This is done to preserve the ecosystem in the Grand Canyon.

Vocabulary

ecosystem
EE-koh-SIS-tum
a community of plants and animals and the physical environment in which they live

Below are two problems created by the Glen Canyon Dam. Explain how flooding might solve each problem.

1. The saltcedar is a shrub that, if left undisturbed, grows so thick that it stops other plants from growing. Saltcedar also traps salts from the soil and water, making the area around the shrub too salty for freshwater fish and amphibians to live.


saltcedar

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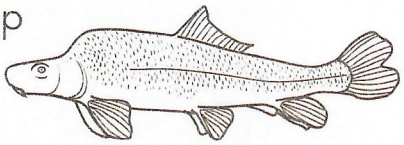
2. The razorback sucker is a fish that lays its eggs in sandbars. It gets most of its food from riverbeds that have been churned up by a lot of flowing water. This fish is currently endangered because it cannot find enough food or places to reproduce.


razorback sucker

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