BREEDING TETRAS

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WHAT IS A TETRA?

- Name means 4 in Greek, referring to 4 fins: caudal, anal, dorsal, and adipose
- Mostly small, peaceful, colorful, schooling fish
- Fish in the Order Characiformes, mostly from Africa, Central, and South America (characins)
- Around 2000 species of characins worldwide
- Forked tail, compressed body
- Most are hardy, popular, and easy to care for
- Lay eggs, fry often require infusoria
- Evolved in freshwater, often intolerant of salts

WHAT IS A TETRA, CONT.

- Most are carnivores with teeth
- Lack spines in dorsal and anal fins
- Hard scales
- Often skittish (Weberian apparatus bones)
- Active midwater swimmers
- Chemical alarm systems (Phreomes)
- Often the first to surface food
- Come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors

A COMMON TETRA

Black Neon Tetra, easy to keep and breed

WHY TETRAS?

- Tetras are colorful, peaceful, community fish
- They are easily fed and have robust appetites
- Many are easy to breed and prolific. Others are a definite challenge for experienced breeders
- Tetras are active swimmers and inhabit the mid-central open areas where they show off well
- Many tetras are carried in local shops and reasonably priced
- Shapes, sizes, colors, and breeding habits of tetras vary greatly to give many choices
- Some easy to breed tetras are:

GLOWLITE TETRA
Hemigrammus erythrozonus

Easy to breed; very common and often the first tetra one keeps; very peaceful; hardy and tolerant of water conditions; male above;

BLACK TETRA
Gymnocorymbus ternetzi

Peaceful but aggressive feeder; very easy to keep and breed;
Females are larger and have a fuller belly area;

BUENOS AIRES TETRA (albino)
Hyphessobrycon anisitsi

Easy to breed; fast swimming and can be aggressive; can reach 3 inches and live 5 to 6 years

FLAME TETRA (Orange)
Hyphessobrycom flammeus

Gluttonous feeder; very peaceful; easy to breed; also called Tetra Von Rio; rarely over 1 inch long; Male above;

DIAMOND TETRA
Moenkhausia pittieri

Attractive red eyes and sparkling scales; adult male has long flowing fins, especially dorsal; peaceful and active;

TETRAS MORE DIFFICULT TO KEEP AND BREED

- The following species are more difficult to keep and breed. The need for soft clean water, low light, and a diet with some live foods is greater. Remember: all fish breed; we just need to find the conditions under which they do! I have not bred all the species listed.

BLACK PHANTOM TETRA
Hyphessobrycon megalopterus

Pair of Black Phantom Tetras; male has longer fins and more intense color; needs soft water to breed; 1 ½ inches maximum size; tiny eggs and fry;

BLEEDING HEART TETRA
Hyphessobrycon erythrostigma

May reach 3 inches and live 6 years; has been bred with difficulty; male has more color and longer dorsal fin; on the left is a young male; a schooling fish; feeding frozen brine shrimp brings out more color;

BLUE DIAMOND TETRA
Alestopetersius smykalai

A difficult to breed African tetra; Male on right has ray extensions on dorsal and anal fins; Peaceful but somewhat shy; slow grower; a fast swimmer that can jump; spooks easily and ships poorly

BLUE TETRA
Boehlkea fredcochui

Fast and flashy; somewhat sensitive to water conditions; jumps; lays adhesive eggs in the gravel;

CARDINAL TETRA
Paracheirodon axelrodi

Quite durable and hardy; breeding difficult and requires very soft acid water; lays eggs at night; fry sensitive and difficult to raise;

CONGO TETRA
Phenacogrammus interruptus

A larger tetra from Africa; peaceful and active; Adult males can have long flowing fins; lays large eggs that can take 4-6 days to hatch; will jump if spooked;

CORAL RED PENCILFISH
Nannostomus mortenthaleri

Sensitive to water conditions; rarely seen in stores; very attractive coloration; heavier bodied female on right; very difficult to breed, resulting in high prices; can be aggressive to conspecifics;

EMPEROR TETRA
Nematobrycon palmeri

Male has triple filaments on tail fin; not prolific; lays one egg at a time and is adept at eating them; very colorful yellow and neon blue; peaceful but males can scrap with each other

GLASS BLOODFIN
Prionobrama filigera

Very fast and active; difficult to catch in net; does best in a school in a larger well-planted tank; will breed in harder water than most tetras;

GOLD TETRA
Hemigrammus rodwayi

Active, peaceful, and colorful; do best in a school; imported from the wild they show good color; tank-raised fry lose most of the reflective color of parents;

BROKEN LINE TETRA
Hemigrammus ulreyi

Several similar species; not often seen in stores; soft acid water is best;

KING TETRA
Impaichthys kerri

Also called Blue Emperor; can fight amongst themselves and are more difficult to raise than regular Emperor Tetras;

DWARF PENCILFISH
Nannostomus marginatus

Closely related to the Red Coral Pencilfish but not as aggressive towards others of its kind; Shy, needing soft acid water to spawn;

NEON TETRA
Paracheirodon innesi

Closely related to Cardinal Tetra; one of the most popular fish of all times;

PIRANAH
Pygocentrus nattereri

Very aggressive; parents make a nest area and guard it to some degree; pure carnivores; can reach 8-10 inches; fry very canabalistic;

RAINBOW EMPEROR TETRA
Nematobrycon lacortei

Also known as Red Eyed Emperor or Rainbow Tetra; can be very nasty to each other; difficult to breed and not prolific; males are more colorful and have red eyes; in this pair, male is below;

RED EYE TETRA
Moenkhausia sanctaefilomenae

Active and attractive; reaches 3 inches and lives to 5 years; can nip fins unless in a school; soft acid water for breeding; fry tiny and need infusoria;

ROSY TETRA
Hyphessobrycon rosaceus

Male below has longer dorsal fin; peaceful; eats all foods; from acidic blackwater biotopes; somewhat shy;

SILVER DOLLAR
Metynnis argenteus

Mostly vegetarian but needs some protein; will mow down aquarium plants; gets large (8 inches) and needs a big tank; plants in diet needed to condition for breeding; lays numerous large eggs that require soft acidic water to hatch;

DAWN TETRA
Aphyocharax nattereri

A small but very swift fish; can be fin nippers; difficult to catch in net; picture by Darrell Ullisch;

YELLOWFIN CONGO TETRA
Alestopetersius caudalis

Larger African tetra; peaceful but shy and spooks easily; ships poorly; very colorful; eats a variety of foods; difficult to breed; seldome seen in stores; photo by Darrell Ullisch;

LONGFIN AFRICAN TETRA
Brycinus longipinnis

A large African tetra (to 5 inches); fast swimming and peaceful but skittish; male has longer dorsal and anal fins; Photo of male by Darrell Ullisch;

SWORDTAIL CHARACIN
Corynopoma riisei

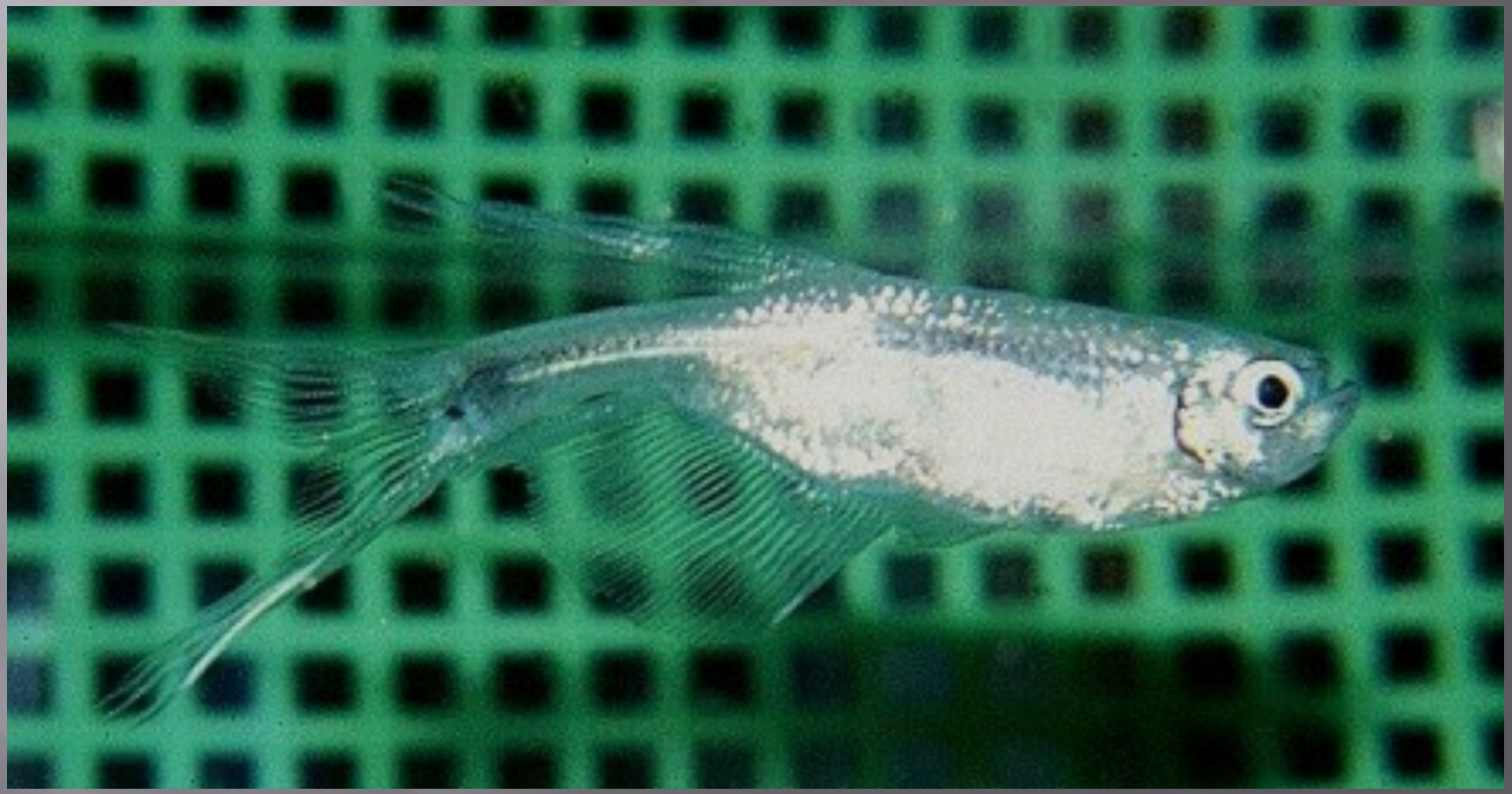


Photo of male by Darrell Ullisch; an internal fertilization characin; female lays fertilized eggs alone in plants; male larger with longer fins; surface dweller, can jump; gill attached paddles used to distract females;

SPLASH TETRA
Copella arnoldi

Photo of male by Darrell Ullisch; male has longer fins; Pair leaps out of water and lays eggs on leaf, rock, or glass; male guards under eggs and splashes eggs every 15 minutes to keep wet until fry hatch and drop into water; surface dweller; keep covered;

GENERAL BREEDING OF SOUTH AMERICAN CHARACINS

- Soft acid water, rain or RO, is imperative to breed and raise many species
- Acidifying or treating water can be done with oak leaves, peat moss, or wood. Adding chemicals is a last resort and dangerous.
- Habitat PH for some species can be 4.0 or less, but adjust the breeders slowly to PH changes
- Most characin eggs are light sensitive
- Try raising or lowering tank temperature to stimulate spawning
- Low light conditions usually best for breeding
- Bacteria free environment important for many species; filtration (box, sponge, etc.) helps, as well as frequent water changes and acid conditions

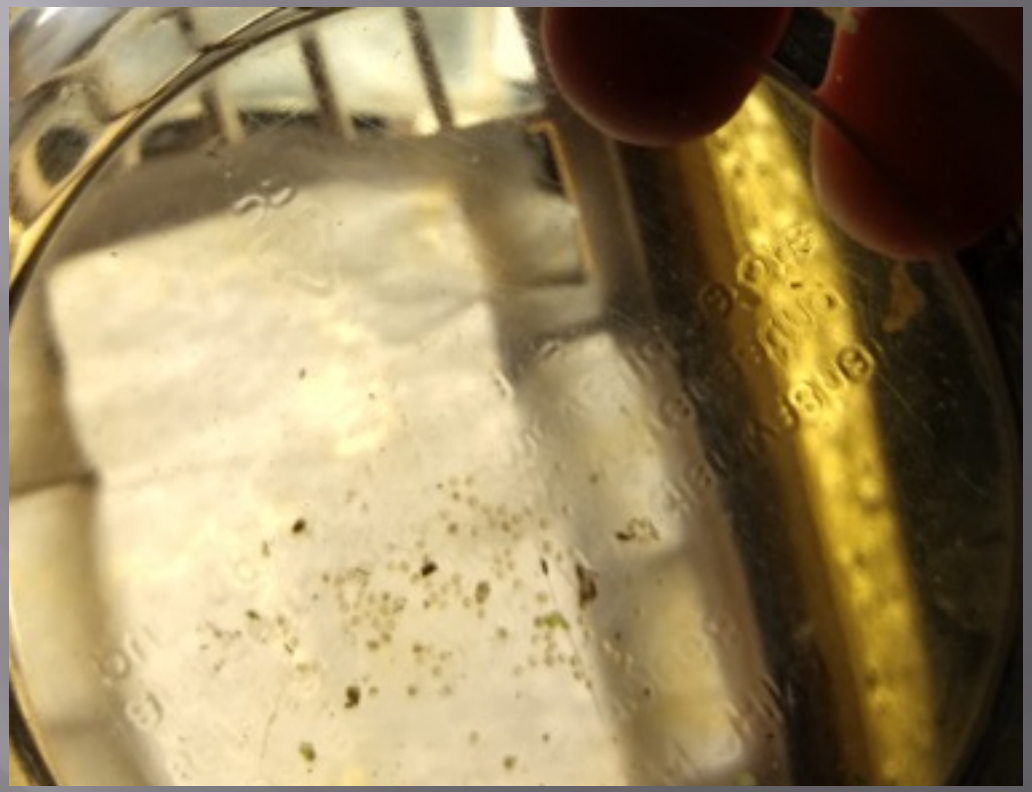
GENERAL BREEDING,Cont.

- Spawning causes pollution
- Eggs should be removed and hatched in clean, soft, acid water with methylene blue and light areation; Hatching causes pollution so change water on newly hatched fry
- Most fry hatch in 24-36 hours and need around 5 days to become free-swimming
- First food needed is often infusoria

GENERAL BREEDING FOR AFRICAN TETRAS

- Most guidelines the same as for South American tetras: clean, soft, acid water
- African tetras can be a greater challenge and require larger tanks
- They lay large eggs that may take 4-6 days to hatch (greater size difference in fry)
- They are mostly larger fish.
- Females do not fill readily with eggs
- Most fry still require infusoria at first

TINY EGGS AND FRY



These are Emperor Tetra eggs; Many characin eggs and fry are so tiny it is nearly impossible to see them; one must siphon them out and put a light below to even find them;

LEAF TREES FOR WATER TREATMENT

A dozen or so oak leaves tied together by the stems and weighted down will help treat and acidify the water. They are easy to move and replace.

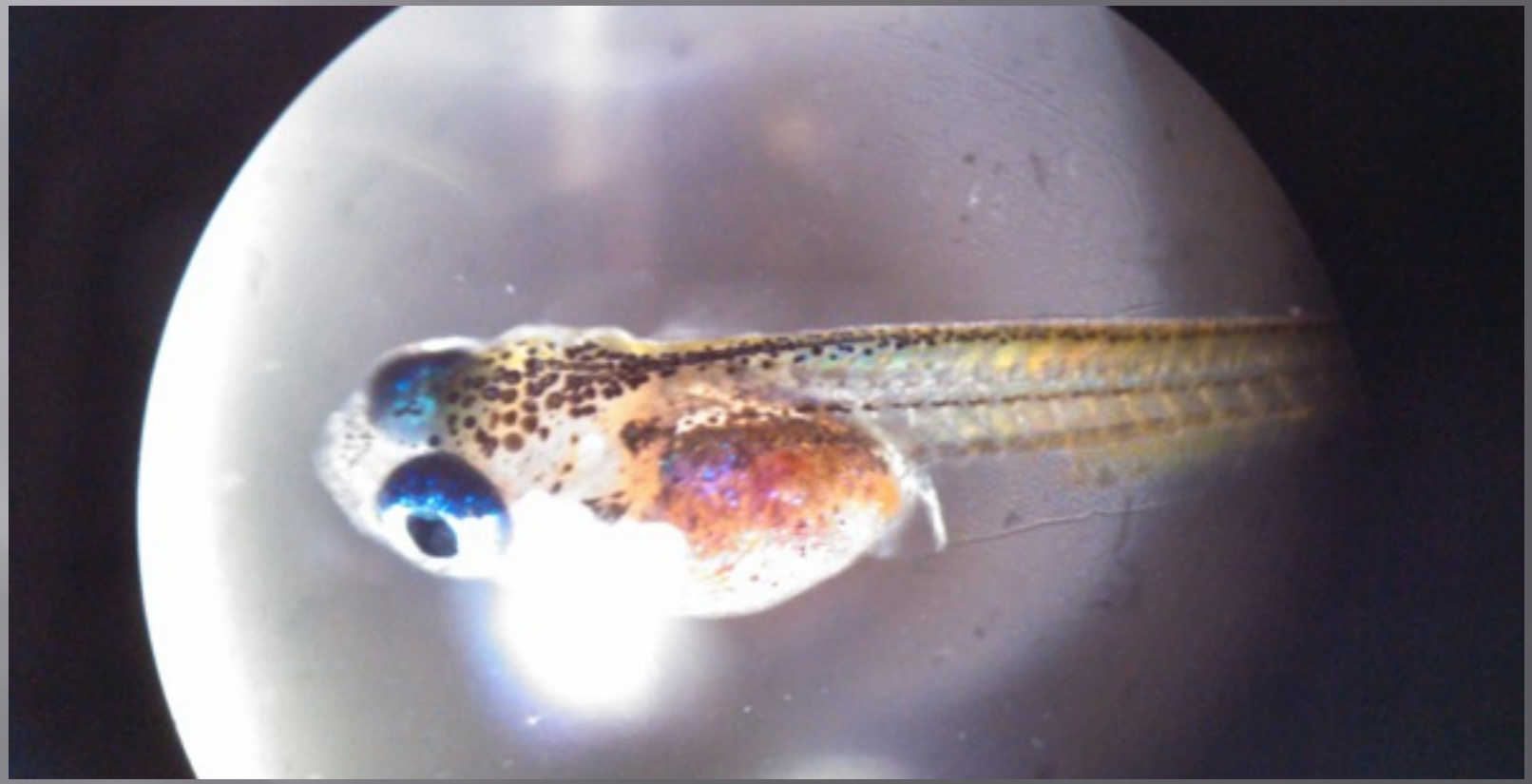
PEAT MOSS BOX FILTER

A box filter with peat moss will treat and eventually acidify water

LIQUID POWDER FOODS

---Put a small amount of the powdered flake food dust and some water in a glass cylinder and shake vigorously
---Allow the larger particles to settle out
---pour off the cloudy liquid containing suspended food and feed to the fry with an eye-dropper
---When a very slight cloudiness is noted, stop adding the suspended food
---Gentle water movement in the fry tank helps keep the particles in front of the fry
---Feed 2-3 times per day when water clears. Use snails to help clean up
---The old "Liquifry" is sold today in a tube by Wardley under the name of "Small Fry". Feed sparingly .

ORANGE BELLIES



Many characin fry need tiny foods at first like infusoria or liquified powder foods. After a couple days on that, put a small drop of newly hatched brine shrimp with the fry and wait 5 minutes. If you see any orange bellies like the one above, start feeding baby brine also.

COLLECT RAINWATER

Used for keeping and breeding softwater fishes in small tanks. Much less volume need than for larger tanks. Note hose connected on bottom of barrel so rainwater can be drained through basement window into storage containers.

BREEDING CHARACINS IS FUN AND REWARDING