

CLOWN KILLIE, *Epiplatys annulatus*

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, July-Aug 2011



Male Clown Killie

DESCRIPTION

Epiplatys annulatus, or Clown Killie, is one of my favorite species of tropical fish. It comes from African coastal swamps in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and was first described by Boulenger in 1915. "Killie" refers to the Dutch word meaning ditch or channel where many are found. It likes darker surroundings and heavy plant cover. It is timid and sensitive to moving and water parameter changes, yet its miniature size, unique shape, and colorful pattern make it truly unusual and beautiful. Many other people likely agree, as its price at auctions always remains high. It is not an easy fish to keep or breed, mainly because it requires soft water and the fry are extremely tiny and difficult to feed. The Clown Killie is also known as the Banded Panchax or Rocket Panchax because of its color pattern and body/fin shape. Red, yellow, and blue colors are especially attractive in the males' tail, and its long cylindrical body and pointed tail exemplify its name of Rocket Panchax. 4 broad vertical bands along the body give it a bumblebee or clown type appearance. Maximum size for the males is 1.5 inches and 1 inch for females, making it perfect for a nano tank. Just make sure to cover it, as they are very skilled jumpers! They feed on the surface and prefer small live foods, but can be trained to take some small flake foods. Sifted daphnia and newly hatched brine shrimp are 2 of their favorites. It has a lifespan of 2-3 years and is not an annual fish.

BREEDING

Breeding the Clown Killie is a definite challenge, even for the advanced hobbyist, but well worth the effort. Keeping them alive and healthy is the first test. I have found that one key in keeping them is using at least 80% soft water (RO or rain). A pair can be kept in a 1 or 2 gallon jar with slow aeration, as they don't seem to like heavy filtration. In Nature they are often found in water 1 inch or less in depth, so the container can be shallow. Weekly 30-50% water changes would be recommended, and 75 to 80 degrees is a good temperature for them. They are mop spawners but

not prolific, as I will get only 5-15 eggs from 3 pair over a weeks time. I like to pick killie eggs, but these are the smallest I have ever done! I have had little success getting fry to hatch out in the parents tank, even though the parents are reputed to not eat them. The eggs are known to be susceptible to bacterial infection, so I place them in fresh soft water with methylene blue in a pan with a slow bubbler. The eggs hatch in 2 weeks and the fry are so tiny I can hardly see them! They are then moved to a gallon jar of soft water with a few plants, snails, and a slow bubbler. It is 1-2 weeks before these tiny fry will be large enough to accept baby brine shrimp. This stage of feeding is the most critical. The tendency is to feed normal amounts of infusoria, but this usually results in death of the fry because they are susceptible to pollution. We need to remember that these fry are so tiny that they need very little volume of food. The plants and snails will probably provide infusoria naturally, so feed sparingly! Once they are able to eat brine shrimp, things become easier. In 4-6 months they will reach adult size.

For those who desire a challenge, as well as keeping a strikingly beautiful fish, I recommend trying the Clown Killie!



Female Clown Killie