

# VIETNAMESE WHITE CLOUDS, *Tanichthys micagemma*

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Mar-April 2006



Vietnamese White Cloud

Charlie Grimes photo

## DESCRIPTION

The White Cloud Mountain fish, *Tanichthys albonubes*, is a popular, colorful, and easy to keep species that reaches maximum adult size of about 1 ½ inches. They were discovered by a Chinese boy named Tan in 1930 near Canton, China. When 7 fish of a new species, Vietnamese White Clouds (*Tanichthys micagemma*), were given to me by Darrell Ullisch about a year and a half ago, I was anxious to compare them with *T. albonubes*. They are very similar in most aspects except their full adult size was only about ¾ inch. Miniature species of fish have a special place in my heart. It might be that I feel sorry for them, but more likely it is because they can be kept, observed, and bred in small aquariums. Mosquito fish (*Heteropoma formosa*), Pigmy Corys, and Bumble Bee Gobys are some better known diminutive species and the Vietnamese White Cloud could be added to that group.

Both species of White Clouds are similar in form, color, finnage, and behavior. My description should apply to both species unless I specify observations about the Vietnamese species. White Clouds are colorful, active, and peaceful. Color can vary with region, but the red, white, and yellow in their fins can be very attractive along with the bluish green lateral line from eye to tail. Females are slightly larger and have more plump white bellies. Males are usually more intensely colored and have longer dorsal and anal fins. At times I noticed that the Vietnamese White Cloud dominant males would turn almost black, something I had not observed in the more common species.

## A SCHOOLING FISH

White Clouds are schooling cyprinids and like open areas to swim as well as plants in the tank to retreat to. In Nature these fish swim near the surface and feed on insects. They should not be kept with aggressive fish. In

larger numbers they show off better and are not as shy. They can tolerate a wide temperature range (40-90 degrees F.) but are best kept and bred around 68-72 degrees. Keeping them too warm can shorten their life and discourage breeding. They are not a true tropical fish but come from cooler mountain streams so they require regular water changes for best health. This makes them excellent candidates for small unheated aquaria or outdoor pools. PH and water hardness does not seem to be important for them. They have small mouths but will eat a variety of foods, including fine flake and live foods. They especially relish newly hatched baby brine shrimp, but care must be taken to not overfeed it and encourage the growth of hydra, which will consume their tiny fry.

## **BREEDING**

Breeding White Clouds can be done in a species tank that has sufficient floating plants for the fry to hide in like water fern or hornwort. They lay adhesive eggs in fine leaved plants that take about 48 hours to hatch. Fry will usually appear after a period of time for the adults to get established. The number of fry surviving seems to depend on the size of the tank and the food availability. With the Vietnamese White Clouds I raised about 40 fry from the 7 adults, but it took a 20 gallon tank and over 1 year so they are not overly prolific. I noticed that the adults swam mostly in the mid tank depths whereas the fry were closer to the surface with the tiniest up on the surface. This “stratification by size” probably is helpful in fry survival. The fry are extremely attractive and after a few weeks develop a brilliant neon blue-green line from head to tail. They look more like baby neons than baby neons! They are still quite small and growth is slow but they feed on much the same foods as the adults. Too many snails in the tank will cause loss of eggs so adding daphnia periodically will provide some food and help maintain water quality.

In conclusion, I highly recommend keeping and breeding the Vietnamese White Cloud for a bit of a test of ones’ patience, resulting in attractive and diminutive rewards!