

BLUE DIAMOND APISTO, *Apistogramma* Sp. “Pebas”

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Nov-Dec 2009



Pair of Blue Diamond Apistos

DESCRIPTION

The “Blue Diamond Apisto” is a new fish that has been labeled as “one of the latest rage from Peru”, specifically, Rio Ampiyacu drainage in Peru. It is part of the *Apistogramma* sp. *algodon* and *A. sp. pebas* group, some of which have not yet been described. I obtained a pair of the Apisto Sp. *pebas* “Morado” strain at the December '08 SWAMAS meeting where imported fish were obtained from Mark Denaro. They are found in slow, shallow, clearwater streams with fine sand or silt bottoms. Shady areas of leaf litter and roots provide plenty of cover for these secretive cave spawners. Males can reportedly reach up to 4 inches with females being ½ of that, but they will spawn at a little over 1 inch. In nature the male of this fish has a brilliant neon blue over its' whole body, and is one of the most strikingly beautiful fish I have ever seen a picture of. Captive fish are somewhat less striking, but still very beautiful with metallic blue scales all over its body. Dorsal and anal fin extensions on the males can reach beyond the tail, and they can change their color pattern quickly, depending on their mood. A dark band extends from the eye both down on the face and back across the body to the tail. There is orange in the fins and a sprinkling of red in the face. The female has similar patterns and colors, but much less so. My adult female was one of the brightest yellow-orange I have seen in an apisto, and she maintained most of that color even after I removed the pot with eggs.

BREEDING

This is a very prolific fish, and this pair spawned for me around 15 times, producing 40-60 fry each time. RO water was important both to get them to spawn and to hatch the eggs. At 79 degrees, the eggs hatch in 3 days and will be free swimming in 4 more. After the fry are free swimming and begin to eat baby brine shrimp, the water can gradually be adjusted to tap water, although it seems that slightly better growth occurs in softer water. The breeding tank was a 2 ½ gallon drum bowl with weekly water changes of 50%. Other pots and plastic plants were included to offer refuge. They seemed to be more comfortable in a darker environment. They were fed blackworms, daphnia, and frozen brine shrimp. They did equally well in this setup with an undergravel filter, or a box filter with peat moss in it. I normally will remove the pot with eggs in it and hatch them separately in RO water with some methylene blue, but decided to leave the eggs in with the parents the last time, and they were excellent parents. The female does most of the fry care. The male was about twice the size of the female and stayed in the background. When the fry got about 3/8 inch, I didn't see the female, and later found out she had perished, although no crime evidence was found! The male dutifully took care of the fry.

RAISING FRY

Because they are so prolific, one might think they would be easy to raise, but that is not the case. The fry are very small when hatched and grow very slowly. It may take 6-8 months or more for them to reach maturity. Corydoras catfish are a big help in keeping the aquarium clean with apisto fry, once the fry are big enough to not get eaten. Also, as they grow, one or a few individuals get considerably larger, hogging the food from the rest and preventing them from growing as well as they could. I also noticed that the numbers of fry is gradually reduced over time, possibly from the aggression of the largest fish on the smallest, although I never find any dead fry in the tank. There is likely a certain sized territory these fish need to thrive and grow, and this fish is noted for high aggression between males. Removing the largest fry from a spawn periodically and placing them in a separate tank may help more survive, as well as using lots of cover. All of these factors likely account for the higher price of Apistos in the stores. I feel that their striking beauty and interesting habits fully warrant the higher price.