

# CARDINAL TETRA, *Paracheirodon axelrodi*

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Sept-Oct 1984



School of Cardinal Tetras

## DESCRIPTION

The Cardinal Tetra is perhaps among the most strikingly beautiful of all freshwater aquarium fishes. The broad, brilliant red on the body goes from the eye to the tail with a neon blue stripe above it almost as long. It prefers soft, clean water on the acid side to show its best color. Maximum size is about 2 inches. The sex difference is mainly in body shape with the female being stockier and more plump in the belly. Healthy, well-fed specimens are necessary to make this determination. This fish comes from the upper Rio Negro of South America where the water is soft and dark from humic acid content. It measures 2-3 DH with a pH of 5 to 6.5.

## BREEDING

For almost 2 years I had tried unsuccessfully to breed the cardinal tetra. Two months ago I was lucky and succeeded in spawning and raising 11 fry which are now about 3/8 inch long. The breeding tank was a 10 gallon tank containing fresh, 12 hour old dechlorinated softener tapwater at about 75 degrees. Clean plastic plants were put in the tank when set up, and excess bubbles were knocked off the plants and glass before a pair of Cardinal Tetras were introduced. As soon as any eggs were noticed, they were siphoned out, rinsed off, and placed in a quart pan of rainwater with 1 drop of methylene blue added to reduce fungus and cut down on light. I believe the fish spawned at night because their eggs and fry are very sensitive to light. After 24 hours, the eggs hatch and the fry need to be rinsed off again and put in clean rainwater and methylene blue, as the eggshells will pollute the water. Just before free-swimming, the fry were placed in a 2 gallon tank of

fresh rainwater and some java moss in a darker location. The fry are very tiny and need infusoria for about a week. I fed ½ drop or less of Liquifry two times per day and added snails to clean up the excess. The eggs and fry are very sensitive to water pollution! There was a big sigh of relief when the fry began taking newly hatched brine shrimp!

Along with the neon tetras, the cardinal tetras were some of the most challenging fish I have bred and raised for Breeder Award Points. Maybe someday someone will find an efficient and easy way to reproduce these most beautiful tropical fish!