

# CROAKING GOURAMI, *Trichopsis vittatus*

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Mar./April, 1985



Croaking Gourami Male, Darrell Ullisch Photo

## DESCRIPTION

*Trichopsis vittatus*, otherwise known as the Croaking Gourami, is a bubble-nest building fish from Southeast Asia that prefers heavy plant cover, especially floating plants. The sex differences are not overly pronounced as they are in many other anabantids. The males have slightly longer dorsal and anal fins and longer fin ray extensions, but this does not show up well in younger fish and you always wonder, "is that a female or a male with fin rays nipped?" The females do not seem different in color except during spawning when the male gets darker. The female doesn't seem to show much girth when full of eggs either. It is fairly plain in coloration but has beautiful deep blue eyes and a delicate lacy pattern in the fins. I still ask myself questions like: "which female laid the eggs?" and "who was that croaking?" Yes, they do really croak---it sounds like a small, slow frog, but they don't seem to do it at the surface, and so far, I haven't identified one while croaking. With six adults in a 20 gallon long tank, I hear croaking quite often, usually several times a day.

## LOVES HEAT

The Croaking Gourami is a heat loving fish. It is best to keep them at 80-82 degrees, and breed them at 82-85 degrees. Although many references state that breeding is best in the spring, my fish spawned in October, and it seems that they could be induced to spawn at different times if given proper conditions.

## BREEDING

For breeding, I use a 20 gallon long tank with about 10 inches of water, a foam filter going very slowly, soft water, bright lighting at one end, and floating and potted live plants. The plant cover was fairly heavy, and

dark gravel was under it. The other more shaded end was left clean so I could feed them and siphon up the excess food. I introduced six fish about one and one-half inches long. They have gracefully ravenous appetites and usually clean up everything lying on the glass bottom in due time, but are too slow to pick up all the food on the fly. They will eat almost any foods, including beef heart, frozen brine shrimp, and flake food. It took them about a week for them to settle in, eating twice a day, until it looked like some were filling with eggs, but they wouldn't stay that way.

### **BUBBLE NEST**

Sure enough, in about 3 weeks, I saw a male darken and start building a bubble nest under a piece of styrofoam in one corner. He became somewhat aggressive toward the other fish, and soon was attending a nest full of eggs. I still didn't know which female had spawned. Then the other 5 fish were removed and I proceeded to observe a masterful exhibit of anabantid parenting. The eggs numbered about 200 and were heavier than water, so the male was constantly busy tidying up his nest. The eggs hatched in about 36 hours and soon the male was building a new nest under some floating leaves about 6 inches away and moving the fry there. At this point most of the fry were clinging to the floating plants around the nest. Before the fry were free-swimming, he moved the nest once more. Some fish are never satisfied! The male was removed when the fry became free-swimming. They were fed Liquifry For Egglayers for about 4 days, followed by newly-hatched brine shrimp. The fry are very tiny, but grow fairly fast.

### **A MYSTERIOUS FISH**

Some references state that the water must be 6 inches or less for breeding, although I did not find that to be critical. The Croaking Gourami is a little more of a challenge to breed, but adherence to the "Bubble Nest Builders Basics" of light, live plants, covered tank, and warm, still water plus a little patience will result in success. I only wish they were available in the stores more often. The Croaking Gourami is a real thinker, at least that is the way it seems with its' graceful stop, look, and go approach to life. There is a mysterious air about this fish that I really admire.