

STEEL BLUE KILLIE, *Fundulopanchax gardneri*

By Chase Klinesteker **SWAM**, July-Aug 2015



Male *Fundulopanchax gardneri*, misaje

DESCRIPTION

The Steel Blue Killiefish, also known as the Blue Lyretail, is easy to breed for beginners and is strikingly colorful. The word “killiefish” is derived from the Dutch word “kill”, meaning a small stream. This fish has bright yellow, orange, and reflective steel blue all over body and fins, sprinkled with bright red dots. There are many local populations and subspecies that can vary considerably in coloration, but they all are attractive. It is advised to keep the populations separate and not cross them. They hail from Cameroon and Nigeria in West Africa, and were described in 1911. It is more suitable as a community tank fish than many killiefish, although it can sometimes nip the fins of slow moving, long-finned fishes (e.g. fancy guppies). Maximum size is less than 3 inches, and they can be kept in a small aquarium without a heater, as their preferred temperature is 65 to 75 degrees. They are carnivores and will eat a variety of foods, including flake, frozen, and live. It is important to cover their tank tightly, as they are good jumpers. Mild filtration such as a sponge filter can help keep the water clear, but is not essential if water changes are done fairly often. They will tolerate a fairly wide range of water chemistry, although better egg production, hatching, and fry growth occurs in soft water. A brightly lit and well planted aquarium is quite acceptable to them, and they will come out and “show their colors”, especially at feeding time.

BREEDING

Breeding the Steel Blue Killie is fairly simple. A dark colored nylon mop is used to collect the eggs, which usually number from 5 to 20 daily if the pair is well fed. Eggs can be picked from the mop every few days and placed in a small pan of soft water with a drop of 5% methylene blue to help reduce fungus. Slight aeration of this water will keep them oxygenated and they will take about 2 weeks to hatch. The fry are quite large and will take newly hatched brine shrimp right away. Within a few weeks the fry will begin taking finely ground flake food at the surface, although to get best growth and health, continue to feed some meat also. It is important to have plenty of plants and hiding places in the breeding tank so the female can get away from an overly aggressive male. Using two or three females to a male can help reduce that aggression. As the fry mature, larger tanks with lots of plants, live or plastic, will aid in reducing hostile behavior.

The Steel Blue Killiefish is one of the most popular of killies, mainly because of its' outstanding beauty, simple care, and ease of breeding. I recommend them highly.



Female *Fundulopanchax gardneri*