

THE GOLD TETRA, *Hemigrammus rodwayi*

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Jan-Feb 2004



Gold Tetra female

DESCRIPTION

Gold tetras come from British Guyana. Wild caught specimens are very attractive and have an iridescent gold coloration on their body that changes with the angle of light reflection. It is thought that the gold coloration results from specific conditions in their natural habitat, since aquarium raised fry do not have this coloration. Gold tetras have a black spot at the base of the tail with red coloration above and below it. These fish are peaceful, active swimmers that school tightly, interacting with each other. The males have somewhat more color and their anal fin is white in the front and they have more red coloration. The females may be slightly more plump but they do not get "full of eggs" as many other tetras do before spawning. A planted tank with a large school of these fish is truly beautiful. They prefer the middle and lower water layers to swim. These fish eat a variety of foods but will not "gorge themselves" as some other fishes do. Feed a good proportion of protein rich foods including frozen and live to get the best color and health. Their comfortable temperature range is 75 to 82 degrees, a little warmer than many tetras prefer. It is not imported too frequently. Breeding is more difficult than the "easy" tetras but can be accomplished with attention to detail. Maximum size is 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 inches.

BREEDING

I purchased 8 1-inch fish about a year ago from a local pet shop. They looked very healthy and robust. They were placed in a 20 gallon tank with some coolie loaches, rainbows, and corys. The bottom was sand with planted valisneria and floating hornwort. My expectations of breeding this fish were not high, as I had tried and failed spawning them several times before. With good food and water changes, they colored up and thrived. Several months later one of their fry was noticed swimming at the surface in the hornwort. This encouraged me to step up my efforts to spawn this fish! A pair was placed in a small tank with a layer of large gravel (1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter) on the bottom to collect the eggs and a plastic plant to spawn on. The water was freshly

drawn tap water (Grand Rapids) of about 80 degrees. "Blackwater Tonic" was added to condition the water and an airline slowly bubbling to oxygenate the water. The next day the fish were checked. It was difficult to tell if the female had thinned down (she wasn't very fat to begin with) so an airline hose siphon on a stick was put into the gravel and some water was siphoned out. Eureka! About 100 tiny eggs were collected. They could be seen when put in a translucent cup with a light shining through the bottom. The eggs were collected with an eyedropper and placed in R\O water with some methylene blue to retard fungus. No aeration is necessary since they hatch in about 24 hours.

FRY CARE

After hatching the fry were rinsed off and placed in a gallon jar of R\O water until free swimming (about 5 days). Very low or no aeration is needed on the fry until they begin eating. These fry were extremely small and needed to be fed infusoria for a few days before they could handle newly hatched brine shrimp. Pollution builds up quickly in small tanks, so a planted 20 gallon tank with gravel was used and the fry were acclimated to tap water and put there. The fry are extremely reclusive and difficult to find among the plants and gravel. Small amounts of APR and egglayer Liquifry were fed 2-3 times per day. Very low undergravel filtration was used to allow rotifers and small organisms to survive and feed the fry. Feeding a drop or 2 of baby brine shrimp after 3 days resulted in a few fry having visible orange bellies, so that was continued and increased. Only a few fry could be found and it was hoped that at least 10 would survive for BAP. It was 3 weeks before the fry began swimming in open water and about 75 fry showed themselves! At that time they began taking fine dry food also and growth was rapid.

The Gold Tetra is a peaceful, active, and pretty fish that is ideal in many community tank situations. Success in breeding it is a worthwhile and attainable goal.