

LAMBCHOP RASBORA, *Trigonostigma espei*

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, May-June 2003



Possible *T. hengeli*, which is very similar in appearance to *T. espei*

DESCRIPTION

The Lambchop Rasbora is a small, peaceful, and attractive cyprinid that somewhat resembles the "harlequin rasbora" (*T. heteromorpha*) except that it has a slightly slimmer body and a narrower black triangle on its side. Both of these fishes are very popular in the aquarium because they are hardy, active, and do well in smaller community tanks. *T. espei* comes from South East Asia: parts of Malaysia, Sumatra, and Thailand. It is a schooling fish that does best in natural plantings and soft, acid water. Water temperature range is 73-82 degrees, with about 80 good for breeding. Sexes can be easily determined on fish in good condition as the male has more reddish coloration on the side and is slimmer than the female. These fish reach about 1 3/4 inch maximum size and eat a variety of foods including live, frozen, and flake.

TANK SETUP

A 2 gallon tank was prepared with 90% RO water, a small box filter containing peat moss sandwiched between layers of filter floss, and a thin layer of large granite gravel (1/4 inch diam.) on the bottom in the back. The gravel will hide the eggs that fall down from the parents eating them and the bare bottom in the front allows feeding and siphoning up uneaten food. An Anubias plant was placed over the gravel area and black plastic was placed on the sides, back, and over the top of the tank. Fish from darkwater regions seem to prefer (are more comfortable in) darker low-light surroundings, and the eggs of many species are light sensitive.

BREEDING

A reverse trio(1 female and 2 males) of *Trigonostigma espei* was placed in the tank. A few days later the peat moss filter kicked in and the water became slightly acid. The fish were observed closely for the next several days but no eggs were found on the anubias or in the gravel. A strong flashlight was used to check the anubias and an airline-hose siphon(on a stick) was used to siphon around and under the gravel to search for eggs. After about a week, the fish had lost their shyness from the new surroundings and I began to feed small amounts of live and frozen foods.

After 2 weeks and no eggs, a 50 percent water change was made with fresh water. Shortly thereafter, about 50 eggs were found in the gravel, although no other signs of spawning were seen. No eggs were seen at any time adhering to the underside of the Anubias plant. The eggs are easily seen if the siphoned water is put in a clear or opaque plastic pan and a flashlight is shined up through the bottom of it. The clear, glasslike eggs can be collected by swirling the water in the pan and picking them up in the center with an eyedropper.

EGG AND FRY CARE

The eggs were placed in a quart pan of clean 90% RO water with 2 drops of methylene blue. They hatched in about 24 hours and the fry were rinsed off and put back in the pan with clean water and methylene blue. A very slight bubbling airline will keep the water oxygenated. After 5 days the fry become free swimming and should be placed in a larger container with clean water and some "Blackwater Tonic" added to darken and condition the water. In 1 day the fry were taking newly hatched brine shrimp. Be sure that only enough brine shrimp that the fry will consume in an hour or two is fed. The first feeding can be little more than a drop of baby brine shrimp. Excess shrimp will die and pollute the water and these fry are especially sensitive to nitrogen wastes. Adding snails to consume the excess and making regular water changes helps reduce the buildup of nitrogen wastes.

Trigonostigma espei is an attractive, peaceful, and popular tropical aquarium fish. Its' breeding is a little more challenging than some, but can be very rewarding. Paying attention to water, lighting, and environmental conditions fish live under in nature, along with a dose of patience, can help bring success with breeding.