

SWMAS PROGRAM REPORT NOVEMBER 1, 2013

“NATIVE FISHES” Talk by Philip Kukulski



Rainbow Shiner, *Notropis chrosomus*, native to North America, normal coloration

NEARTIC ECOZONE

When Philip first started talking about the “nearctic ecozone”, he almost lost me, but then I started to grasp that it is the climate region where our native fishes exist. He explained that nearly 1400 species of fishes exist in North America, giving us a wide variety of choice in what fish we can collect and/or keep. The purpose of his talk centered on tips for keeping natives in your tanks and selecting native fish. He emphasized that water levels in nature fluctuate considerably and that native fishes are quite adaptable. Many species kept are from rivers and he likes to add current to their tank with a powerhead connected to a slotted PVC tube as an intake. He uses a carbon filter to remove chlorine from tapwater but doesn't need to be concerned about heating the water, as most native species will do well from 45 to 75 degrees. He does an 80 to 95 percent water change about every 2 months, using Detroit tapwater. He doesn't like to use gravel on the aquarium bottom, instead smearing colored silicone cement on the glass bottom for texture. This is much easier to clean than gravel. For species that spawn in gravel, he adds a box with gravel in it to the tank. If you are going to collect native fishes, be aware that each state has its' own laws, often piecemeal, which you must obey. You will need to buy a fishing license in that state with authority to collect bait. Become aware of areas that have protected species and avoid collecting there. The North American Native Fishes Association (NANFA) can be a source of information for the collector also.

BEAUTIFUL FISH

Philip went on to show pictures, videos, and describe many species of very beautiful natives, including the Tennessee Shiner, Redeye Chub, Coastal Shiner, Pigmy Sunfish, Rainbow Darter, Bluenose Shiner, Redside Dace, Rainbow Dace, Scarlet Shiner, Rainbow Shiner, Flagfin Shiner, Northern Redbelly Dace, and Dollar Sunfish. Natives can be as much or more colorful than the warm water fishes we keep, but their color can be seasonal. He mentioned that the name “Mosquitofish” for *Gambusia* is a misnomer, and that they mostly eat other fish and few mosquitos. They are very aggressive and should not be released to any waters. That is true of all the

fish, plants, and invertebrates that we keep in our tanks----we should not release them to the wild, as they could become an invasive species.

NO STOMACH

Some interesting fish facts were pointed out such as minnows have gill arches in their throat that chew their food, and they have no stomach, so must eat continuously to get enough nutrition. Collecting Stonecatfish or Madtom catfish can be dangerous, as they have poisonous spines. Although colorful, Pumpkinseed Sunfish can be extremely nasty to all other fish in their tank and are not to be put in a community tank. Red Sided Dace are a Michigan native that jumps out of the water and catches flying insects. If you have a particular fish in your tank that needs removing but is too fast to catch with a net, Phil uses a stick with some fishing line, a small hook, and a worm! Native fishes from the Western US are not as numerous or as easy to collect, and the laws may be more stringent. The Southeastern US is the top region for collecting native fishes. Thanks much, Philip for a very interesting talk!

Chase Klinesteker