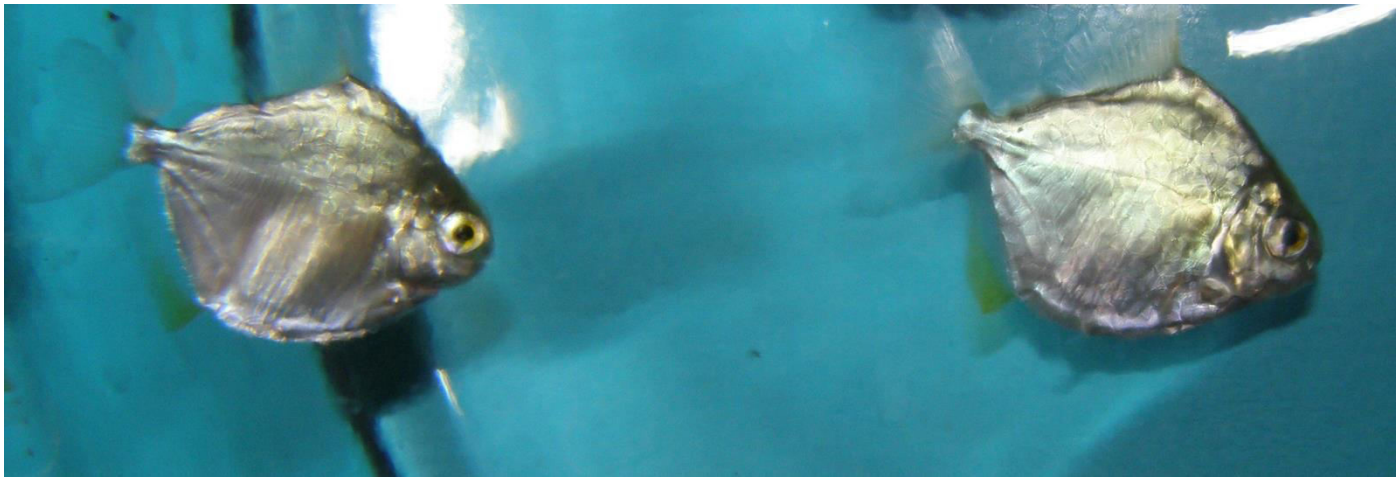
SILVER DOLLAR, Metynnis argenteus

By Chase Klinesteker GVAC Tank Notes, Mar-June 2017



Silver Dollar Fry

THE CHALLENGE

A couple of years ago I purchased 3 small silver dollar fish, Metynnis argenteus, thinking I might try to breed them before they got too large. When they quickly approached 4 ½ inches and I realized that I only had 20 gallon tanks available to breed them in (my two 70 gallon tanks were full of plants!), I considered getting rid of them. When I mentioned that to a friend in the aquarium club he said "you will never be able to breed Silver Dollars in a 20 gallon tank". Unwittingly, he had proposed a challenge I could not refuse!

DESCRIPTION

Metynnis argenteus is a peaceful, active, and schooling fish that is often seen in pet shops around 1 ½ to 2 inches long. They are quite attractive with their perfectly round shaped body, silvery reflection, and some red color in their fins. Only later do some people realize that they can grow to over 6 inches and mow down all live plants in a tank! They do best in large tanks of 50 gallons and more, as they are fast swimmers and need lots of swimming room. They can be spooky and a challenge to catch in a net. They prefer clean, aerated soft water around 75-82 degrees and subdued lighting for breeding, but regular tap water is fine to keep them in. Silver dollars feed off the surface and in the water column, and will eat most all foods, including flake, live, and frozen. Some vegetable matter is required, which includes spirulina flake, vegetables, or simply excess plant growth from other tanks. They can live to be 10 or more years old.

BREEDING

Normally, Silver Dollars are bred in large tanks or pools, but I was determined to try and get BAP points on this fish. Females need to be separated and fed fairly heavily to fill up with eggs, so I used Spirulina flake, frozen beef heart, and excess live plants. Adult Silver Dollars are fairly easy to sex by examining their anal fins, the males' are convex at the bottom, and the females' are straight. Males are also slightly smaller and get black coloration in their fins at breeding time. A 20 gallon was set up with no light overhead, a large plastic plant,

some driftwood, and a few scattered oak leaves. 82 degrees tapwater was used, since enough rainwater was not available. It was felt that tapwater was the reason for a very low egg hatch rate. A heavily run sponge filter kept the water clean and clear.

It took about a week for the pair to become comfortable in the tank, but one day many hundred eggs were seen scattered over the bottom, and the adults did not seem to be eating them. About half of the eggs were left in the breeding tank and half were removed, rinsed, and put into rainwater with methylene blue. In 3 days, only 15 eggs hatched in the rainwater, but none in the tapwater. The fry can begin eating baby brine shrimp, are translucent, difficult to see, and move slowly while hiding. It was at least a month before they began coming out and swimming in the open, quite atypical for this fast moving fish! After that they had excellent appetites and grew quite fast.

Metynnis argenteus is an attractive, schooling fish well suited for a community aquarium. If one wanted to accept the challenge of breeding them, I would strongly recommend using soft water and a large tank!