



Live Fast and Intensively: *Chlamydogobius ranunculus*

Volume 9 - Issue 6 December 2000

This beautiful little Goby is quite new in Aquariums. It can be found in northern Queensland and the Northern Territory along the coast of Cape York and Arnhemland. It is the only coastal species of this genus. Most specimens were found in shallow, muddy, low salinity (0-9‰) coastal habitats (Larson 1995). Their Latin name *ranunculus* is meaning tadpole because of the resemblance of the face.

In 1999 I received some F1 progeny of original fishes brought to Europe.

This Goby reaches a total length of 4-5 cm. The body colour is, depending on the lighting, dark blue-grey with paler markings, so it looks marbled. The first dorsal fin of the male has a signal-yellow and a metallic-blue spot. The second dorsal and the anal fin are in normal behaviour pale shiny blue, but when imposing or attracting they become black with white to yellow margin and the middle body half turns also to black. The dominant males have always this colouring. For such a small goby they are very attractive in colour, compared with other Goboidae species.

Their behaviour is very active, the males always attracting. They are group living; single specimens do not thrive well. In a group of approx. 15 specimens there are always 4 or 5 males in dominant colour. They need a tank structured with plants, rocks and other things, and small plastic tubes for breeding. The diameter should be 16-20 mm, the length around 5 or 6 cm, but they can be longer.

Although they have been found in estuarine conditions, they proved to be not dependant to a higher salinity of the water. In fact, they do not worry about the water, as long there is a high content of H₂O in the water! This matches with the natural habitat, which can be flooded bomb holes or water buffalo wallows.

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Be aware to cover the tank with a cover sheet because similar to the desert goby (*C. eremius*) they are able to climb up out of the water in the corners of the tank using their fins to move up. If they fall out, you have dry gobies and these are only useful to shock your wife.

Fry reaches sexual maturity within three or four months. The sexes are easy to distinguish. If there's a good feeding and the density of individuals is not too high, there are always nesting males. They fan the eggs till hatching. Some people say, Gobies are producing a fungicide skin secrete to protect the eggs from fungus infections. This may be possible, because eggs removed too early are quite susceptible to fungus infections.

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It's a better idea to leave the male in the nest and place the tube in a way that you can look inside easily without removing the tube from the tank. Watch the eggs developing, using a torch. After a few days the eyes of the fry are visible in the yellowish eggs. Some days later the eggs turn dark grey. With some experience it is easy to find the right moment of removing the tube, shake the male out and place the tube in a hatching tank. The whole time from egg laying to hatching is about 10 days, depending to temperature.

Hatched fry can be fed immediately with *Artemia* nauplii, micro-worms or a commercial fry food. If you want to raise them together with your young rainbowfishes, that's possible. But, attention - the rainbowfish fry should be approx. 4 weeks old! The young gobies are growing faster and their mouth is bigger. If you try to raise rainbows (especially those with extremely small fry) and these gobies of the same age together, it's not necessary to feed the gobies and after a week or two you have only fat gobies. If the rainbows are somewhat older, but not big enough to eat the gobies, community life works very well.

The feeding, either of the adults or the fry, should contain approx. 1/3 vegetable food, e.g. spirulina flakes, spinach, boiled peas or so. They eat readily the commercial flake foods, but are very happy and reach good condition with daphnia (which they hunt exhaustively) or mosquito larvae.

The lifespan of these gobies seems to be at about one or maximum two years. But they have such an enormous reproduction rate, that this is no trouble. In a normal community tank there are always some young ones who survive and grow up. The only thing that should not be done is to bring them together with other *Chlamydogobius* species. It is proved they can hybridise and they did it with *C. eremius*!

Catching these gobies can be a job that makes you crazy or it can be one of the laziest things in aquaristics at all, you can chose. Catching them with a net works only in an plain breeding tank without any or removable interior. In a planted community tank: forget it! It's better to do this: don't feed them for a

day or two, take a snail trap (one of those with a clear body and lamellas at the opening), be sure that the mechanism works, place a food tablet at the opposite of the opening, put it in an go drinking a beer. It is important to place the tablet at the opposite end of the trap, I have seen *Rhinogobius wui* going half inside the trap and taking the tablet out with their mouth.

It will not take a long time and your gobies are inside the trap. They are always hungry and the food tablet is too delicious to withstand. Take them out soon, because the oxygen content in the water inside the trap sinks rapidly.

So all in all this is a very nice goby to keep. It's an easy fish, good for beginners, and also interesting for the expert.

Literature:

Larson, H. K: A review of the Australian Endemic Gobiid Fish Genus *Chlamydogobius*, with description of five new species. The Beagle, Records of the Museums and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 1995 12: 19-51



The care and breeding of aquarium fishes is by no means a static, unchanging hobby. Aquarists are continually discovering new facts about the fishes they keep and share their experiences with others. It is this kind of information exchange among hobbyists that keeps the hobby always fresh and exciting.

The Editorial team seek to be a part of that excitement by examining both new and established areas of interest to members. We welcome contributions, suggestions and/or criticism from our readers. All aquarists can benefit from communication, and we hope that *In-Stream* will help increase interaction among our members.

Our success in this area depends primarily on you. So please write and tell us your opinions or submit articles for publication. They will help us to make *In-Stream* a better newsletter.