

V. Datskevich

Multi-Coloured Fins





Betta splendens



Barbus spes (Odessa-Barbe)



Cichlasoma cyanoguttatum



Badis badis



Julidochromis ornatus



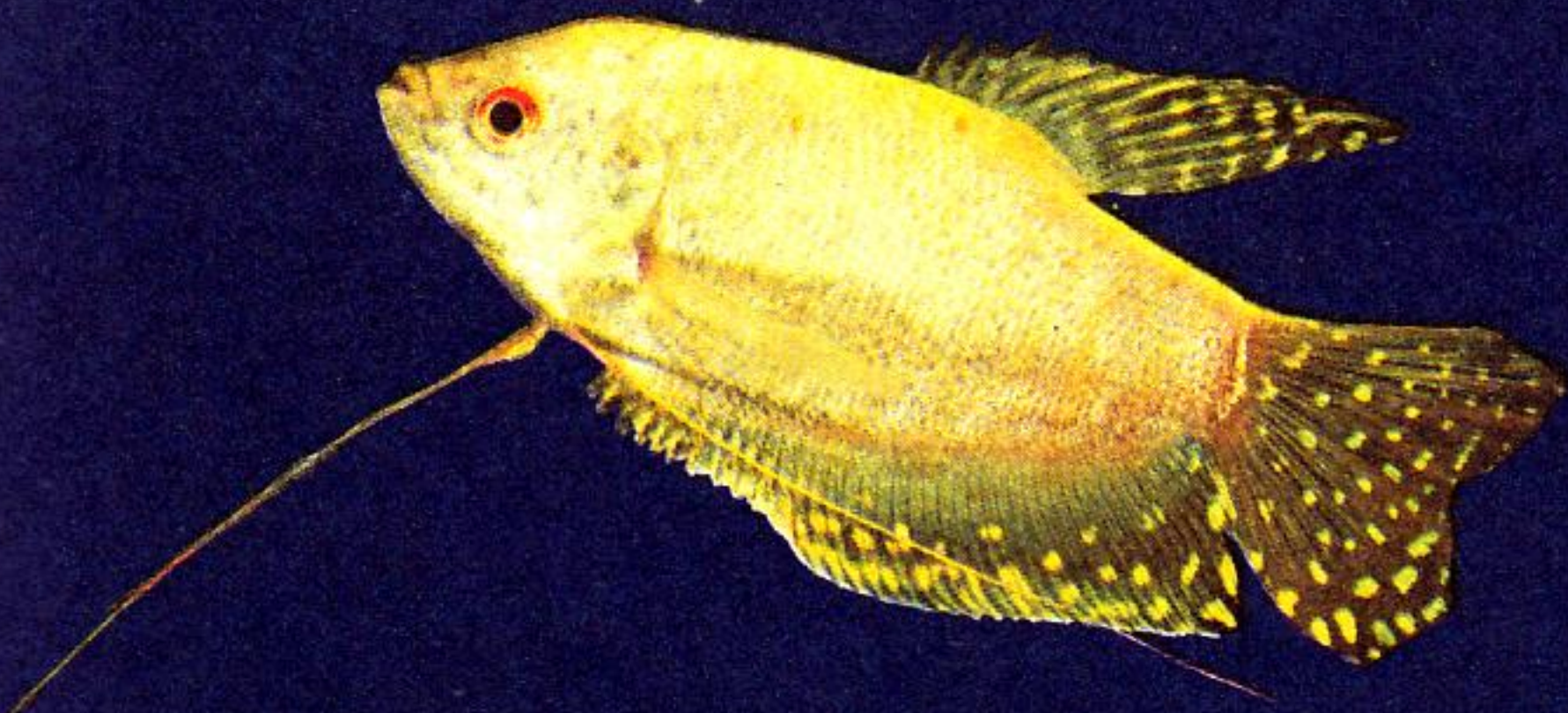
Carassius auratus auratus



Metynnis hypsauchen



Aphyosemion walkeri



Trichogaster trichopterus
spec. gold



Enneacanthus obesus



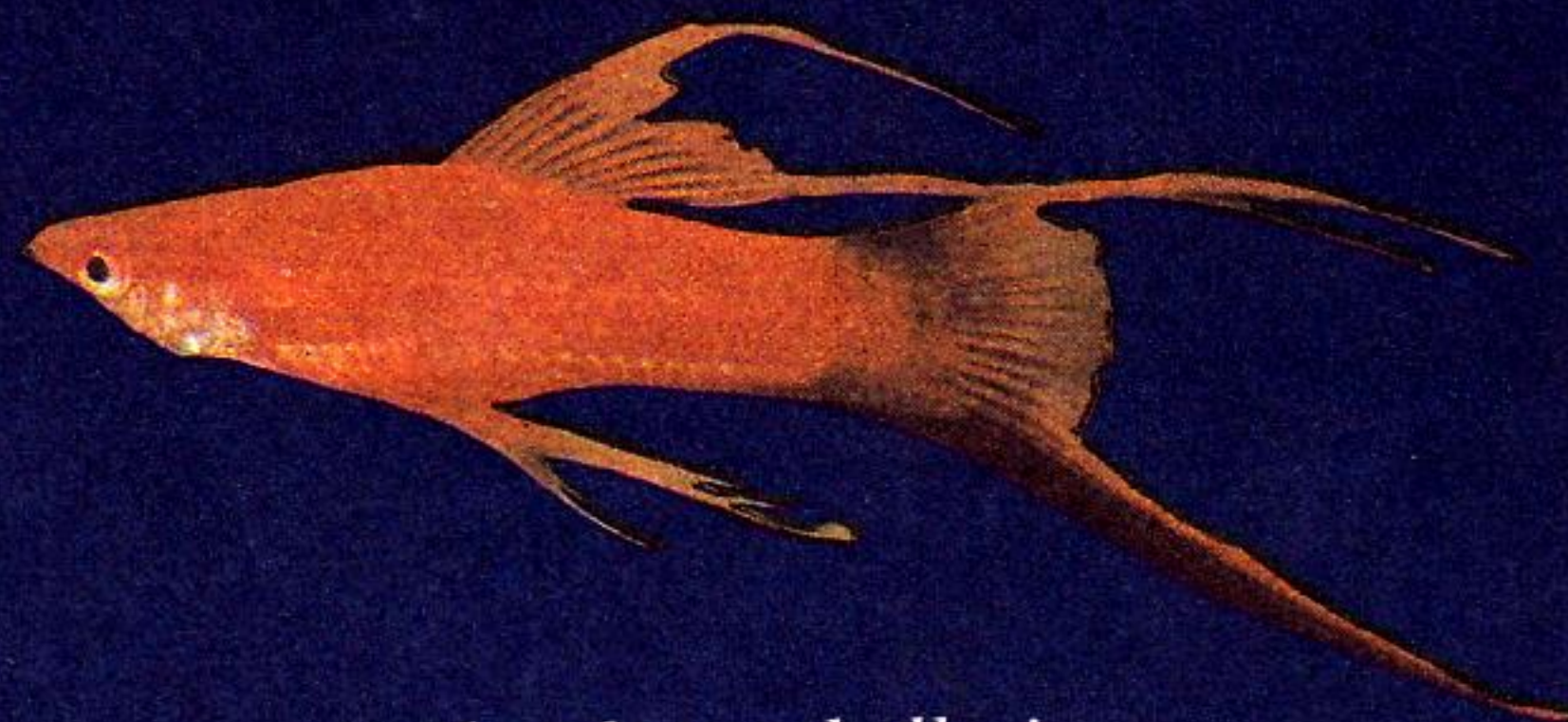
Trichogaster "cosby"



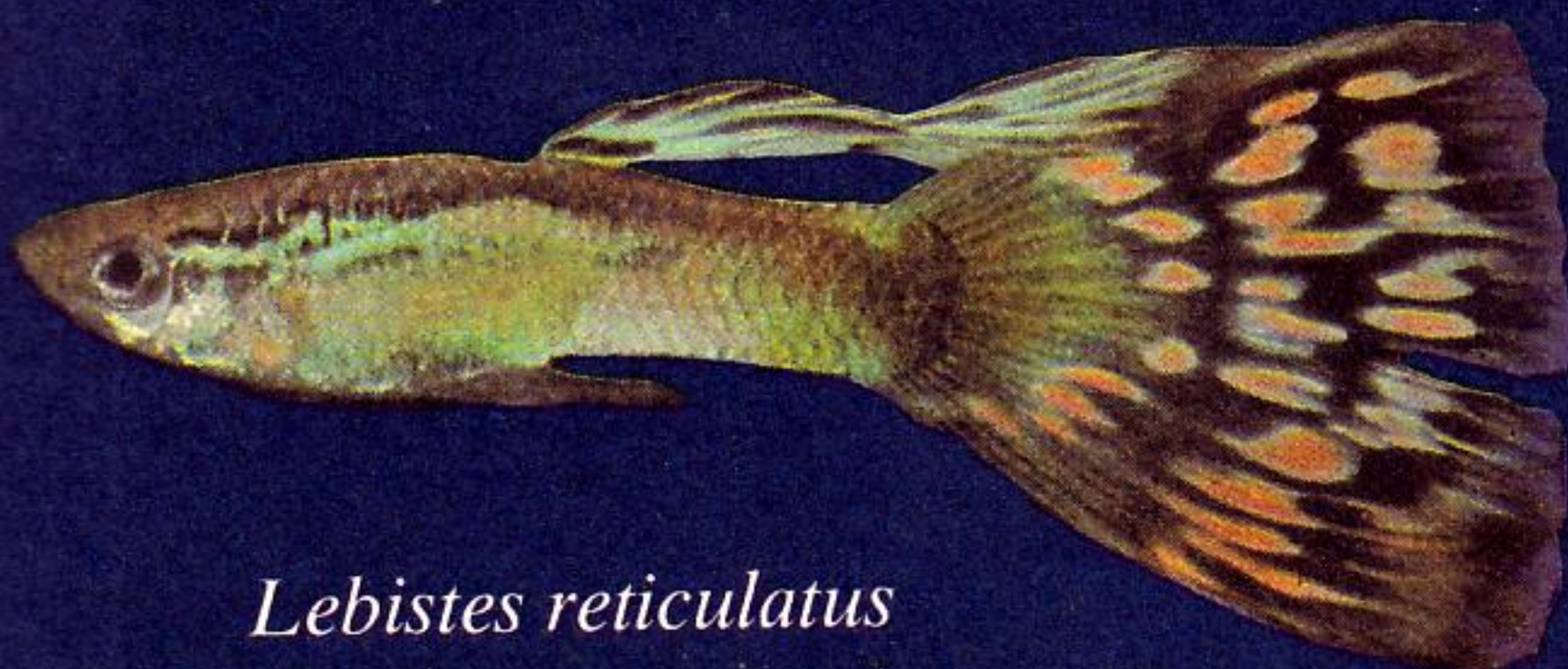
Pterophyllum eimekei



Barbus conchoni



Xiphophorus helleri



Lebistes reticulatus



Brachydanio rerio

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Multi-Coloured



Fins

Translated from the Russian by Natalie Ward

Photos by author

Designed by L. Orlova



PROGRESS

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There are houses and houses: wooden houses and brick ones, houses built of snow and houses built of concrete. But the house whose inhabitants you are going to meet today is all made of glass, with a glass floor and glass walls. Like the house in the fairytale, it has no windows and no doors ... and it is called an aquarium.



In the aquarium live different fish. There are big ones, bigger than your hand, and little ones, the size of a nail. Most of them come from hot, tropical countries which not many people have visited. And even for those who can travel there, it is not always easy to make out the fish when they are swimming free in the river, let alone observe how they live and multiply. Whereas in the aquarium, we can see everything and by watching the fish we can learn many interesting things about them: how they eat, how they deposit their roe and how they look after their young.

The Swordtail

The Swordtail has a long growth like a sword on his tail, which is how he got his name. He lives in small ponds in South America. If the pond dries out in summer, he gets to another one across



dry land. He coils up like a spring, uses his sword as a lever and does a little jump. He moves along like this in leaps until he comes to more water. When he is swimming, he uses his sword like a rudder, to steer. In the picture it has only one sword, but they sometimes have two, three, or even five.

Multicoloured Shoal

You don't know which way to look when you see a shoal of multicoloured Guppies. Little and lively, they are always on the move. It took a lot of work on the part of



aquarium-lovers to breed such bright and pretty little fish. Even at home in South America the multicoloured Guppy is something of a rarity. Back there he is grey, with much smaller fins. This is so as not to be noticed and scooped up by a bird, or swallowed by a bigger fish.

The Blackest Fish of All

There is nothing blacker than the Black Molly in the aquarium. Her fry are also black and very lively. As soon as they are born they set off to look for food.



The Black Molly lives in rivers. But sometimes it is attacked by its enemies, tiny infusoria, and then it swims away to the sea.

The infusoria are killed off by the salt water, and the fish returns to the river.

The Golden Gourami

The Golden Gourami has long thin whiskers in place of breast-fins. They are always on the move, just like hands. When he finds something



interesting, he puts out his whiskers to feel what it is. He feels the weeds, the glass walls of aquarium, and the little snails, and when he meets another fish, he pats it with his whiskers as though in greeting.

An Underwater Island

Look at this beautiful fish: she seems to have been sown with pearls. That is probably how she got her name: Pearl Gourami.

When it is time to breed, the Gourami builds a nest by



gathering up in her mouth leaves and little twigs that float in the water and glueing them together with a froth made of air-bubbles. The nest ends up like a little island. The Gourami hides her roe inside it so that it shouldn't get washed away or eaten by other fish, then stands guard by the nest until the little Gouramis have bitten their way out of their eggs.

Fighting Fish

Fighting Fish are very bright in colour. They come in all colours, red, blue or green, and they are called Fighting Fish because they are so



aggressive. They cannot meet without a fight. They attack and try to bite one another, tearing each other's fins to shreds. But this is no disaster, for the fins grow back again: the only thing that is seriously hurt is their pride before the other fish.

The Glass Fish

This fish is so transparent that you can even see his skeleton. He is hard to make out in the water, and when he gets into the weeds he disappears completely. A sharp-toothed enemy will swim past and be completely puzzled, for there is a floating



skeleton, but no fish to be seen! It decides that this must be a fish that somebody else has already eaten. The predator glances at the skeleton and swims straight past. And this is just what the Glass Fish has been waiting for, he ruffles out his fins, wags his tail and swims away to find a worm for his dinner. This is no easy task in the river, as opposed to the aquarium where live worms are fed in from above.

A Mysterious Fish

This is a mysterious fish. It lives in tropical countries, in shallow ponds and puddles. When the hot season comes, the puddles dry out and the



fish perish. But as soon as the rains come again, the fish reappear... It turns out that their roe can do without water for several months at the bottom of the pond, in the damp mud. And as soon as it rains, the roe is back in water and the young hatch out.

A Travelling Fish

This fish is called the Blue Gularis because of its bright colour. People often find them in the hollow of a tree. How on earth do they get there? With the help of birds. The birds wade in shallow puddles looking for worms,



the wet mud clings to their feet and in the mud is the roe of the Blue Gularis. When the bird has found its worm it flies off home to its hollow tree, where it cleans the clay off its feet. The roe comes off as well, and out hatch the young. People come out after the rain, find a puddle has formed in the hollow tree, and in the puddle Gularis are swimming.

The Neon Tetra

These fish live in shoals in the smaller rivers of South America. The tropical forest is like a green roof over the river. The leaves are so thick that they do not let the sun's rays through,



and the water is black. The fish are used to living in darkness, and find each other with the help of the bright blue stripe on their bodies.

If a shaft of sunlight gets through, it lights up the water and the stripe flashes like a neon advertisement on a city street at night. That is why this fish is called the Neon Tetra.

The Cardinal Tetra

This fish also has a neon stripe, but in addition its belly is bright red. If the sunlight falls on it, it



burns like a live coal or like the candle on a Christmas tree. A whole shoal is a beautiful sight, shining and sparkling in the dark water like a row of lights.

The Cat Fish

The Cat Fish lies on the sand at the bottom, resting, immobile but for his whiskers and his eyes. He takes an interest in everything around him.

Since he's lying on the bottom, it means he's not



hungry. When he gets hungry, he rummages about in the sand looking for worms. He burrows under stones and bits of root, and as soon as he starts rummaging in the mud he raises a cloud in the water.

The cloud gets so thick that you can't see the Cat Fish himself, only a cloud moving around on the bottom.

The Diamond Fish

There are also Diamond Fish in my aquarium.

They fully deserve the name “Diamond”, for they sparkle all the



colours of the rainbow just like diamonds.

Quick and lively, they dart about flashing like a handful of jewels that has been thrown into the water.

A Crown on His Tail

Aquarium lovers are observant people. They noticed that this fish has a tail in the shape of the crown that rulers used to wear, and called



it the Emperor Tetra. If there is a shoal of these fish feeding in the shallow weeds, you can't see the fish themselves: only the tails, and it looks as though it's a group of people taking a walk, all wearing crowns.

Little, But So Quick and Lively

This pale-yellow fish with red eyes is very beautiful against a background of green weeds. It is the Lemon Tetra, only a little bigger than a halfpenny, but quick and lively. Trying to catch



it is no easy matter, for it knows its way about the underwater maze of weeds in the aquarium and darts off into them. If it were not so nimble, it would have a hard time of it at home, for its larger enemies would soon eat it up. But this fish got away and came instead to grace our aquarium.

How Fish Rest

This Pretty Tetra has hidden under a bush, and is standing there immobile. It might be hiding from the sun, or perhaps it has had a fright, or maybe it



is merely resting. For fish do not go to sleep like we do; they simply stop swimming for a while. They choose a cosy, secluded spot, and stand still in it, like this Pretty Tetra who isn't moving, not even a single fin. You might pass him by if it wasn't for his tail, shining like a torch.

A Live Torpedo

All quiet in the water, not a fish to be seen. And suddenly a striped fish flashes up as though it were a torpedo. It has gone for a piece of food. As soon as it



catches sight of something to eat, it bursts forward as though it has been fired from a catapult, in a little jerk, and advances in similar jerks until it gets to the food. But when it is full, it swims quietly among the water-weeds, only its fins fluttering.

The Congo Tetra

This fish comes from tropical Africa. There, in the River Congo, he was used to escaping from his enemies, so he became a fast swimmer. Now he has come to live in the aquarium. He



darts up and down like a little motor-boat, so fast that you cannot get a proper look at him until he stops for a rest. And if you want to catch him, you have to use a big net because he will wriggle out of a little one. He'll spin off to the side, and however hard you look, there'll be no sign of him at all.

Help from the Rain

Everyone took a liking to the Harlequin Fish when it first arrived from Indonesia. But nobody managed to get it to breed in



aquarium; the roe always perished before it hatched out. Then we tried breeding in rainwater—and it worked! The young fish hatched out of the eggs and grew into big ones, and so we were able to start its breeding.

The Queensland Rainbow

If you ever see a green weed, decorated like a Christmas tree, in an aquarium, do not be surprised: it means that there are Queensland Rainbows in this aquarium. It is they who decorate the plants with transparent little bubbles on delicate



threads. But the bubbles are not toys or decorations, they are eggs.

The Queensland Rainbow is an inventive little fish: it hangs out its eggs and swims before them in pleasure. Soon it will have something to celebrate, when the young hatch out. But meanwhile the eggs hang there, swaying with every current and shining all the colours of the rainbow.

The Dandy of the Aquarium

The Dwarf Gurami is a very elegant fish. Its dark-blue breast looks like a shirt under a jacket, and the jacket itself is all red and light-



blue checks. It gets this beautiful colouring only when it is fully-grown and has learned to swim fast. When it is small, it is quite different: grey and undistinguished, to make it more difficult for its enemies to see.

A Fish with an Appetite

The Black Ruby is a nimble little fish with an excellent appetite.

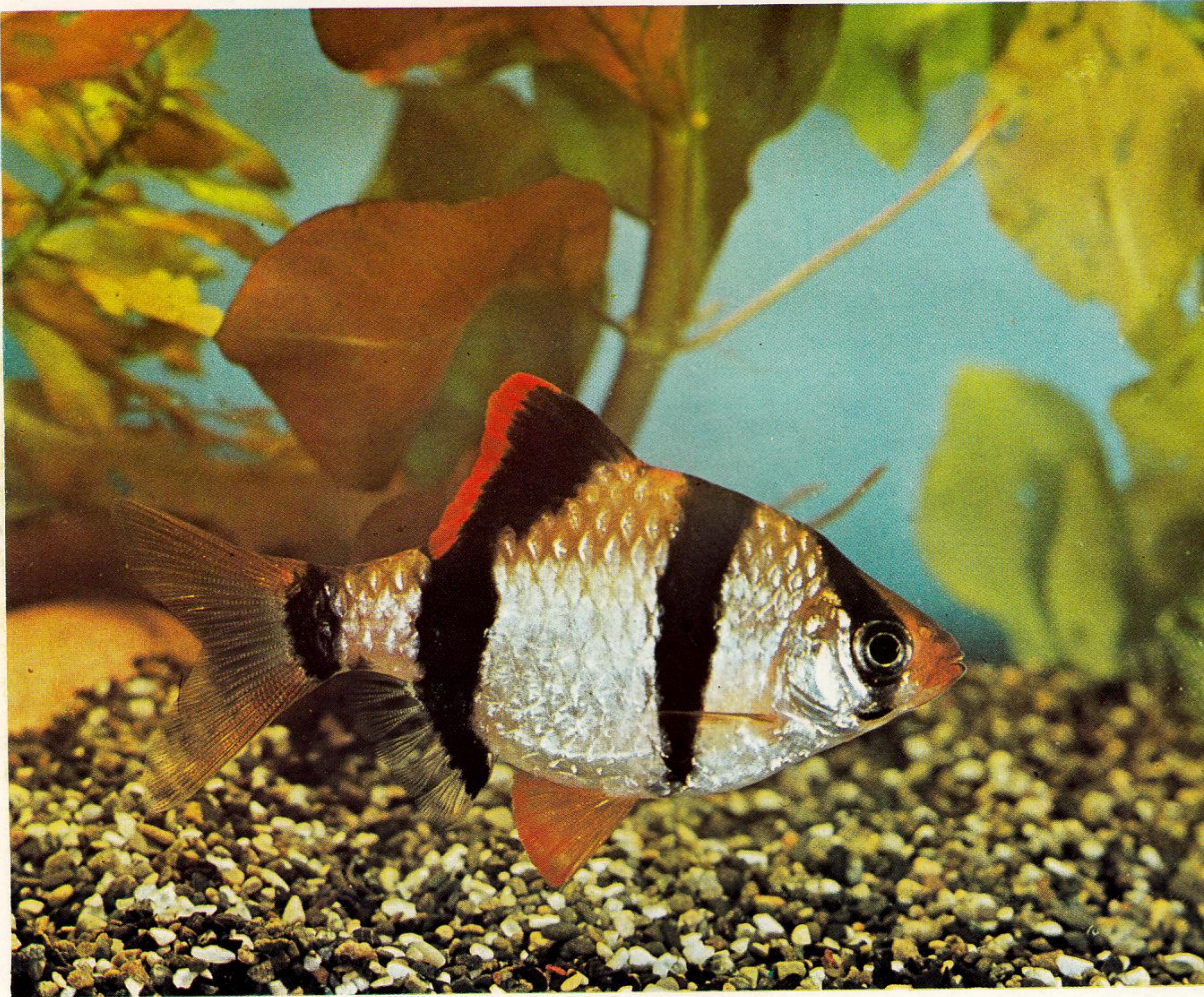
When you drop food into the



water, the Black Ruby is on the spot at once. It has already swallowed several worms by the time the other fish get there. It is probably due to the fact that it eats so much that it can swim fast.

Defensive Stripes

This fish comes from Indonesia, from the island of Sumatra, and so is called the Sumatran Tiger Barb. There is a lot of sunshine in Sumatra, and it is easy to make out shoals of Tiger Barbs in the clear water.

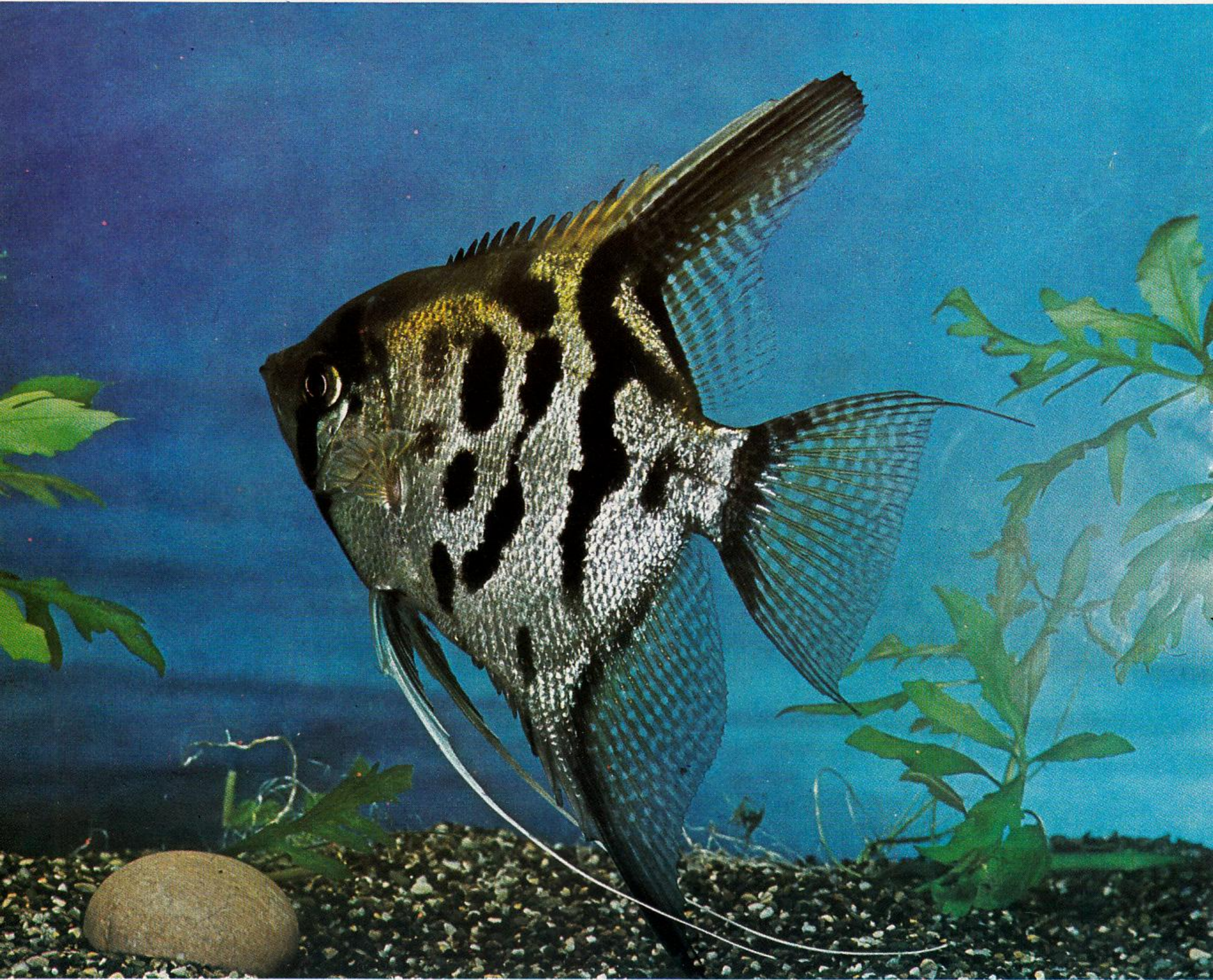


The Tiger Barb is yellow, with black stripes across its body. This colouring helps it to hide away from its enemies. It goes down to the sand at the bottom and takes up a position among the stems of the weeds there, and you can't make it out at all.

The dark stems against the yellow sand look just like the stripes on the Tiger Barb's body.

Among the Bullrushes

This is an Angel Fish. Angel Fish live in the Amazon River, among the bullrushes. They grow thickly, and it is no easy task to get between their stems. But the Angel Fish swim freely in and out,



for their bodies are completely flat. They come out to play in the clear water, but as soon as there is any sign of an enemy, back they dart into the rushes. Once there, they are as well-protected as though they were behind a fence; their enemy can see them, but he can't get through to them, so he has to give up and go away hungry.

Underwater Coachmen

These fish are also flat, and they are round, like pancakes. They are called Discus Fish. Discus Fish are excellent parents. While their young are still bad swimmers,



they help them along. For this purpose the young have special threads to attach them to the parent's body. When the female is tired of carrying them, she swims up to the male and shakes them off. The young transfer to his body at once, as though to say "Your turn now!"

Tasty, But Not Enough

Among the green weeds just under the surface hide the Black Line Red Tail Pencils, pretty fish with a black stripe along their bodies. They



stand on their tails for hours, watching the gnats. The air above the water is full of them, and an insect only has to brush the surface for a Pencil to be on the spot at once, to seize it and swallow it. That was tasty!

The “Cleverest Fish of All”

The Headstander spends all its time on its head. This is the most convenient position for rummaging in the mud looking for worms. It is so used to this position that even when full stays in it. And so we joke that it is the “cleverest fish of all”, because



its head is so heavy that it weighs it down. The eggs in the Headstander’s roe are encased in a hard coating which the young are not always able to break through. Sometimes you see an egg in the aquarium with a little fish struggling to get out, and getting nowhere. When this happens we take a needle and break through the egg to let out the young fish.

A Rudder and Oars

This fish looks like an arrow, and swims as fast as an arrow in flight. Its fins are both a rudder and oars, and sometimes a brake as well. As soon as it wants to stop, it fans them out and stops dead; its brakes are working.



They often save its life. If it is being chased by a predator, it will dart into the weeds and stop dead there, hide, while the force of inertia carries the predator past. It swims past, and by the time it has slowed up it has no idea where the Lyretail has got to. Now you see it, now you don't. And so it sets off in pursuit of another.

Careful Parents

The Jewel Fish swims quietly and self-importantly around the aquarium. When the time comes to breed, it chooses its spot, deposits its roe on a stone and stands guard over it, letting no



other fish come near. It leaves its post only to eat. Then the male takes his turn, until the female returns, and so they stand guard, turn and turn about, like loving parents. Woe betide any fish which tries to harm their young; it gets such a beating that it will think twice before trying again.

Eggs in Safety

This fish has such a long name that it's hard to remember: it is called the *Pseudotropheus Auratus*, and it is a cunning little fish. It hides its roe in its mouth to save it from other fish, then shuts its mouth



tight for twelve days, not opening it even to eat. However thin and hungry it gets, it will not open its mouth. At this period it even grows a special pouch under its lower jaw to take the roe. It doesn't mind going hungry if it can be sure that the roe is always there, so that the young will hatch out safe and sound.



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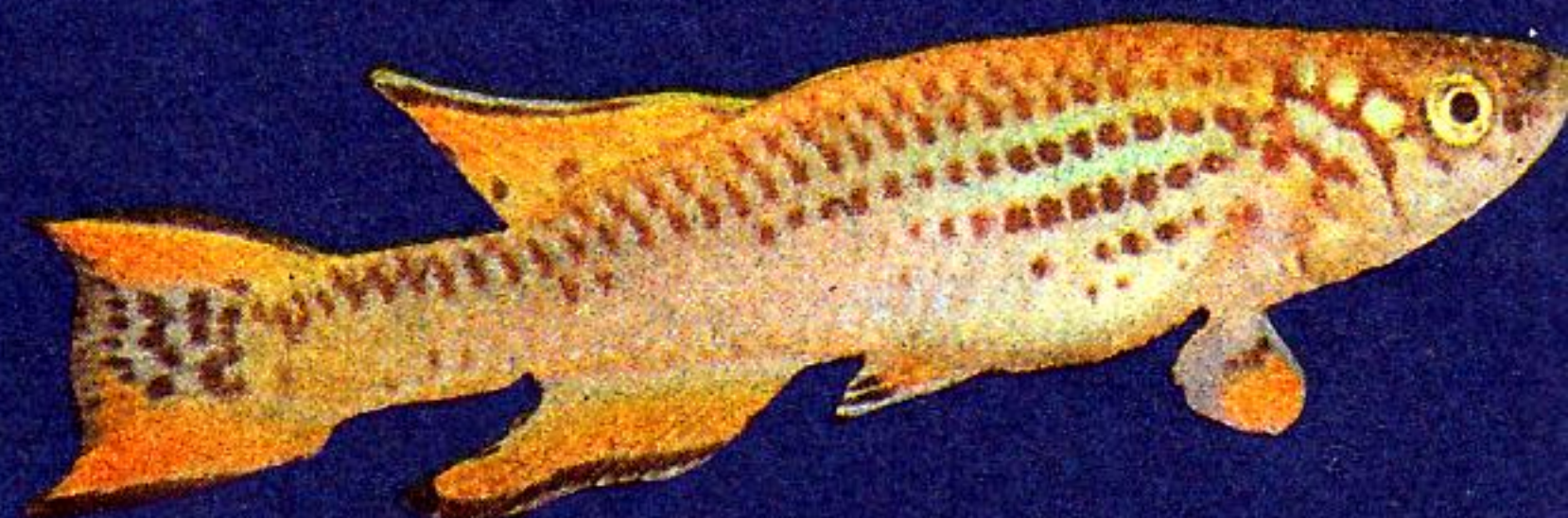
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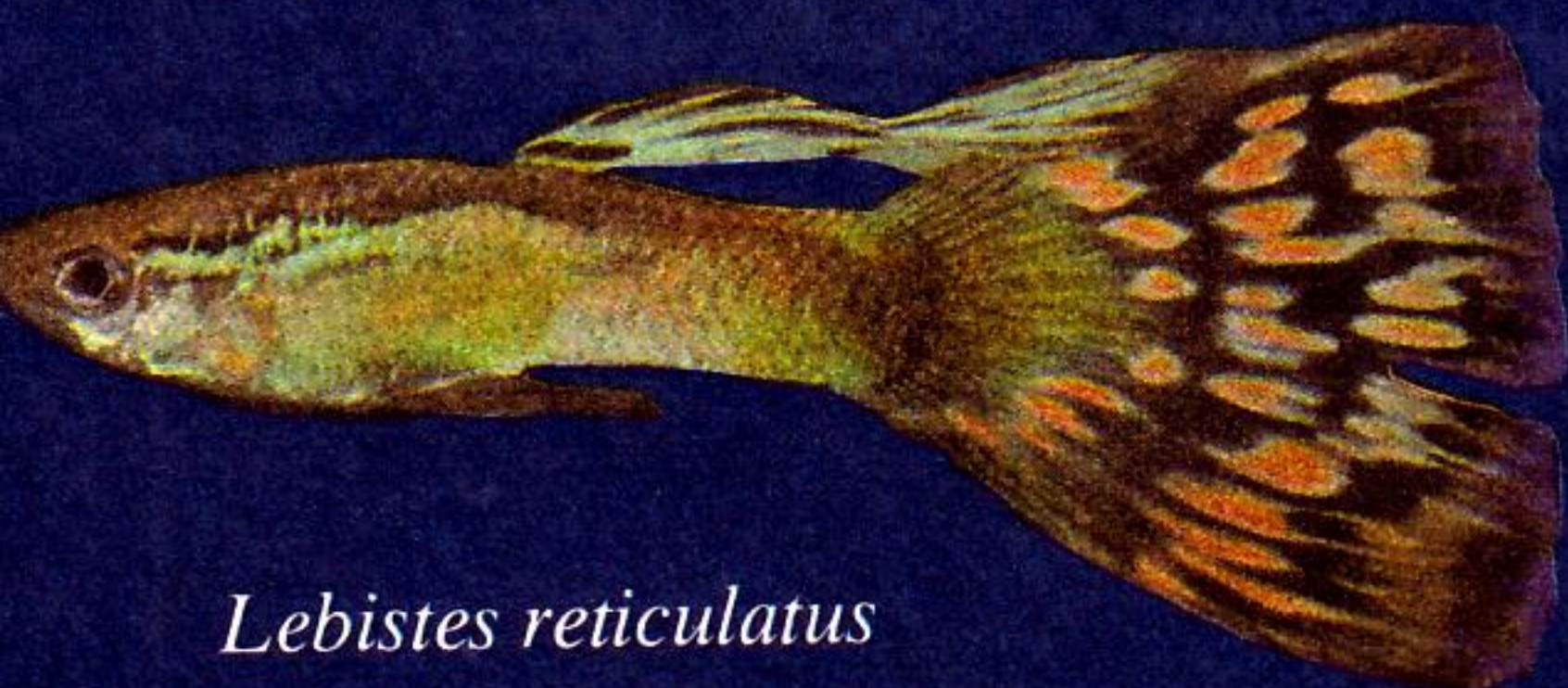
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