



ISSN 0953-0029

# LABYRINTH

Anabantoid Association  
of  
Great Britain



## Newsletter No. 161 November 2010

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Front cover: Betta macrostoma Clearwater  
Aquatics  
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#### LITERATURE

\*Gouramis & anabantoids. H.Richter, TFH  
\*Bettas, Gouramis..... J.Vierke, TFH  
\*Labyrinthfish. H.Pinter, Barrons Labyrinthfish.  
H. Linke. Tetra (see below)  
\* ? out of print

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**1991** *Betta macrophthalmia* and *Trichopsis  
schalleri* by K.Webb, *Ctenopoma muriei* (male)  
and *Macropodus ocellatus* by O.Roth  
**1992** *Pseudosphromenus dayi*, *Betta bellica*,  
*Macropodus opercularis*, *Ctenopoma damasi*;  
all by K.Webb.

**1993** *Parosphromenus deissneri*, *Betta  
splendens*, *Anabas oligolepsis* by K.Webb,  
*Ctenopoma nanum* by D.Armitage  
**1994** *Malpulutta kretseri* (male) *M.kretseri*  
(female) by D.Armitage; *Colisa lalia*,  
*Ctenopoma weeksi (oxyrhynchum)*, *C.muriei*  
(female), *Channa gachua* (portrait) by K.Webb  
**1995** *Sandelia bainsii*, *S.capensis* and *habitats*  
*of each* (4 slides, tri-fold leaflet p&p £3)  
**1996** *Parosphromenus nagyi*, *Ctenopoma  
fasciolatum*, *Trichopsis vittatus*, *Betta  
persephone*, *B splendens*: Twin-tail and  
Cambodian. 6 slides by Kevin Webb,  
*Ctenopoma intermedium* and its Okavango  
habitat 2 slides by Dr J. Cambray  
Fish name, photographer and year are printed  
on each slide, to protect copyright.  
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## COLLECTING BETTA MACROSTOMA IN SARAWAK

### Lum Tuck Fai

I was attending an on-the-job training in Miri, a small town in Sarawak, when I decided to make a short trip to have a look at the *Betta macrostoma* habitat near Marudi town (on the outskirts of Miri), during the weekend. I quickly ran through my contacts and before long, I've managed to get a contact of a local collector through another friend. Luck is on my side as the local collector needed to go collect some too during that weekend for a buyer in west Malaysia. He was friendly enough to offer me to join him during that weekend. The journey to Marudi took 3 hours of high speed 4x4 vehicle cruising off-road as if on a highway. I have to say the driver is really good. He must have gained the experience of driving the same path over and over again every day. It was the rainy season and the journey was halted by muddy road conditions so we had to stop and take a speed boat instead.



Upon arriving to Marudi town, I gave the guide a call and we met up for breakfast before heading to his house to grab all the necessary equipment and gear for the trip. Here's a picture of a long house which is a traditional style home of the locals.



The entry point to the habitat was just few minutes away from the house of our guide. He told me that this is not the normal area where he does his collection, as he did not need to collect a lot during this trip. There is another location which requires about 2 hours of off road driving to reach and that location has a lot of *Betta macrostoma* to offer.

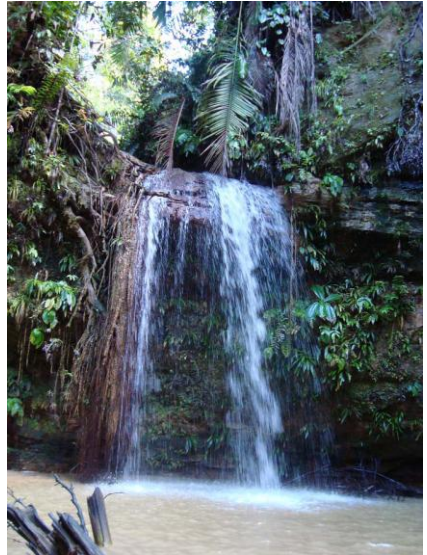


We had to cut through thick secondary bushes taller than me but with a sharp “parang” (a local stout straight knife) the journey became possible. After a short stretch of bushes, we entered the forest and here we could walk faster. I tried my best to catch up with the fast pace as I did not want to get lost in this forest as I wasn’t familiar with the area. Apparently a Japanese guy came to sample some *Betta macrostoma* with just wearing a pair of slippers! Nevertheless, I still slipped and fell a few times with my boots on.



During the course of the long and tiring trekking, we came across many small waterfalls formed from the streams coming down the hills. We did not start fishing because, based on our guide’s experience, there are none to be found downstream. We continued to trek up and down beside a small stream flowing from nowhere. The terrain would have been slightly confusing, with no guide!

About an hour later, our man finally put his bag down and took out his fishing equipment. It was a relief for me as I was already panting heavily and drenched with sweat



The method for catching *Betta macrostoma* (Unimac group) is different from the method I use to catch other groups of *Betta*. Our guide fixed a mini pole with a line and tied (no hook is used here) a worm on the end of the line. While holding the mini pole in his right hand, his left hand was ready with a net to catch the *Betta macrostoma* from falling back into the stream.





After trying a few locations while moving upstream, we managed to catch our first fish of the day, an adult male with a stunning bright orange colored body and fierce black markings.



The fish just bit on the worms as if they were starved for days and will not let go easily. Some we even need to shake them off! The habitat looked something like a freshwater stream with many fallen logs providing ample hiding space for the *Betta macrostoma*. The water was clear and you could actually see them darting around looking for food.



Apart from *Betta macrostoma*, there are no other fishes in the stream. We could only see some red shrimps scattered all around, having a go on our worms every now and then.



As we progressed further upstream, the terrain became more like a peat swamp and the water flowed slower. Here, the numbers of *Betta macrostoma* was greater. Within 20 minutes, we managed to get about 10 specimens !



After having collected enough adults, we decided to call it a day and head out. A trip full of mosquitos bites and scratches all over my body but it was all very worthwhile!

<http://tuckfai.blogspot.com>

## CLEARWATER AQUATICS- SHOWCASE & BREEDING OF BETTA MACROSTOMA REGAN,1910

Wild collected from **Marudi, Sarawak**. We got this batch early July,2008.Kept in pH 5 initially,now reduced to pH3.8 - 4.2



*A newly introduced female*



Two males flare immediately after introduction to the 4ft tank

Two weeks later this happened.:



Spawning occurs in the early morning.



The embrace



The eggs are skillfully balanced by the male on his finnage.



Eggs passing in process.



Second spawning by the same pair.



Notice that the female displayed a horizontal bar marking during and after the spawning.



Eggs laid are collected by the female.



Some of the eggs dropped to the bottom of the tank.



Those yellow spots in the background

are some of the eggs that have yet to be scooped by the female.



The color of the male changes to strikingly reddish with the ends of his

finnage slightly pale during the spawning and brooding.

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**From the archives-  
THE SPAWNING OF MALPULUTTA KRETSERI  
Mick Kirkham**



I first obtained five of these unusual and rare anabantidae from a very good friend and aquarist, T.Cruickshank on 31 November 1981. The only information that I could find about them in my books was in the TFH

loose-leaf which said that they like soft, slightly acidic water, size 1.5 ins (38mm), can be bred: builds bubble nests under leaves, ledges or floating plants- and finally, you can leave both parents in the tank after spawning. So I



set up an 18x10x10 in tank, a week before I was to pick the fish up. I put in a base of honey sand, some java fern, *Microsorium pteropteris*, floating Indian fern, *Ceratopteris cornuta* and broken flower pots. The water I used was rain water, pH, 5.7, DH 0.2. I added 10 ml of blackwater tonic to help age and condition the water; temperature 75 F.

When I got the fish back home, they were about  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (19mm) in size, very dark in colour and looked like 4 males and 1 female. They settled down well and I fed them on freshly-hatched brine shrimp and grindal worm and, as they grew, on white worm, live adult brine shrimp and occasionally flake food. On this diet, they grew well and sexed out by the beginning of January when it turned out that they were 2 males and 3 females; the males having extensions to their dorsals. and extremely long, pointed caudal fins with a bright electric blue tinge to their fins and tails.

I had noticed some bubbles underneath one of their broken flower pots, so I thought I'd try to have a go at breeding them. Therefore, on 10 January 1982, I set up a 10x10x8 in. Tank, sand based, with a small clump of Java fern and floating Indian Fern. I put 3 ins. Of water from the main tank and 1 in. Of fresh rain water and added 10 l. Blackwater tonic as a buffer. The back and sides of the tank were blacked out, so the fish were as little disturbed as possible. No air was used. I chose the biggest male and one of the females

and introduced them into the breeding tank on 11 Jan. The male twice built nests between 11<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January but with no result. I occasionally fed them during this period on white worm and live adult brine shrimp and on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1982, I changed the female.

I had to go visiting that afternoon, and on returning, at about 4.30 pm, I went to the fish house to do some water changes and happened to look into the *Mipulutta* breeding tank. To my surprise, I saw a quite large bubble nest under the leaves of the Java fern. On looking more closely at the nest, I noticed eggs in the bubbles and observed the pair were still spawning. The female would gently peck at the male's side, encouraging him to curl around her in a typical anabantoid spawning embrace. The male spread his anal fin across the female and they embraced for 10-15 seconds. As the female broke loose of the male, the eggs were caught in his anal fin. As he slowly dropped to the bottom of the tank, still in the embracement position, the female picked 10-15 eggs out of the male's cupped anal fin with her mouth, went up to the nest and blew the eggs into it. The male then checked the nest and re-arranged the eggs in the nest. The entire spawning embrace was very gentle. The male must fertilise the eggs when he cups his anal fin around the female. I did note that the female carried the eggs after each embrace.

After they had completed the spawning, the male kept the female

away from the nest and spawning area, so I moved her back into the main tank. I then placed cling-film over the cover glass and around the top of the tank to prevent any draughts and air difference which might trouble the fry. The eggs, which were white in colour originally, had turned amber the next day (1 Feb.) and on the afternoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb., the fry had begun to hatch and were hanging from the nest. The male was catching the very small fry as they fell and then blowing them into the nest.

I added three drops of Liquifry Egglayer to help encourage infusoria as the first food for the fry. They became free-swimming on 5 Feb and on the 7<sup>th</sup>, I started feeding Liquifry and micro-eel.. I fed micro-eel and not micro-worm as the former swims

while the latter sinks and therefore, as the fry stay close to the surface, the eel are the ideal food. The fry were seengreedily to take micro-eel on 10 Feb. and started to eagerly feed on newly-hatched brine shrimp on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. They are growing well and are still near the water surface. The male is still in with the fry and does not seem bothered by them. About 45-50 fry survived and they are doing well.

I have since bred the other male with another female in a smaller tank, containing just a broken flower pot and there are about 200 fry from this spawning. The water conditions for these spawning was: 82 F, 5.7 pH, 0 DH.

1<sup>st</sup> published Labyrinth 8 December 1982

## OBSERVATIONS ON PARASPHAERICHTHYS LINEATUS

### Kevin Marshall

Until a few years ago the only representative of the so called Burmese Chocolate Gourami was *Parasphaerichthys ocellatus* a fish so rarely seen in the hobby that it was often referred to as the lost gourami. However in 2002 Britz and Kottelat described a new species *Parasphaerichthys lineatus* from Southern Myanmar. I little thought at that time that I would own any of these two species but as sometimes luck lends a hand and with the interest in the aquarium trade with imports of the

new Danio species such as *Danio marginatus* from Burma it was only a matter of time before other fish from Burma such as *P. lineatus* found their way into my local aquarium shop. Knowing I had been dealt a great opportunity I quickly invested in 12 of these little fish

The fish were about 1.5 cms in length and in fairly good condition. In colour they were very unassuming at rest they ranged between a drab grey to light brown with a single dark line through

the eye along the lateral line to the caudal peduncle. They were housed in a standard 2 ft x 1ft x1 ft tank with a thin layer of gravel, a piece of bog wood with a good thick growth of Java fern that almost reached the surface was placed to one side of the tank in order to leave an open area in which they could swim. Floating clumps of Riccia provided surface cover.

Aeration was light and provided by a single air stone. The fish seemed to settle in well at first but problems did arise and unfortunately I lost about a quarter of the fish through what appeared to be no reason at all but the fish became ill, listless and very quickly died after that.

I had however set my sights on breeding this fish which I had already learned was a bubble-nester and not a mouthbrooder like its supposed counterparts from Malaysia and Indonesia. As I needed more information I turned to the internet and was pleased to find an article by Joerg Freyhof on the NVL (Dutch Association for Labyrinth Fish) website whose photographs of the male in breeding colours urged me on to breed these fish.

From what I could learn from the Dutch site it providing the right conditions would not be difficult as the fish seemed undemanding as to water quality. My fish were kept in aged tap water to which I had added a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda to raise the pH slightly above neutral. A

good diet, peace and quiet and good luck (easier said than done) were all that were needed. As time moved on the remaining fish settled in nicely, and hid amongst the fronds of the Java fern venturing from time to time out to take food. Live foods were preferred especially small mosquito larvae, but small granulated foods were also taken.

In a short space of time it was obvious that there were at least two pairs of fish as there were signs of courtship with what I suspected were males displaying to the then indifferent females. But there was no dramatic changes in colour in the males or nest building to suggest spawning might occur. Perhaps in a tank of some eight or so fish there were just too many distractions. With this in mind I decided to move all the fish out except for the two that appeared the most likely candidates for success.

This did the trick and coming home one evening from work found to my delight a perfect bubble nest complete with eggs made in the arch of a frond of Java fern. The male had changed colour the main part of the body being a rich honey yellow/orange with a contrasting black mask. His parental duties were typical of any bubble nesting gourami as he busied himself with the nest and eggs. The eggs hatched quickly within two days and the very small fry hung in the nest a further two days before disappearing into the Riccia where they were very difficult to spot. At this point the

parents were removed from the tank. Growth was very slow and the numbers of fry dwindled from what may have been about twenty or so down into single figures and eventually to zero with none of the fry making any reasonable size. Having failed to raise the fry I set out to recreate the spawning success this was unfortunately not to be but did result in some interesting observations in that on more than one occasion spawning was observed. This time however there was no nest present even though there was ample plant coverage and multiple nest building sites available. Spawning this time took place at the bottom of the tank and in a manner similar to mouth brooders the eggs

being taken up by the male and subsequently blown out and picked up again. No mouth brooding as such was observed the eggs most likely being eaten or left amongst the gravel to die. This behaviour poses questions regarding the origins of mouth brooding and evidence of intermediate breeding behaviour between bubble nesting and mouth brooding.

Some six years later *P. lineatus* is still a rarity even though fish from Burma are now common in aquarium shops. So if you are lucky enough to see them or *P. ocellatus* I would recommend that you give them a go.

