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LABYRINTH

Anabantoid Association
of
Great Britain



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Newsletter No. 169 June 2012

- 2. *Betta sp. Palanka***
- 9. *Balikpapan-Peruk Kahuh***
- 15. *Betta pallifina***

Front cover: *Betta* sp. Sengalang/
Palangka By Stefan v.d Voort

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OBSERVATIONS ON *BETTA* SP. “PALANKA” Heinrich Bayer



© H.Bayer

I brought home two sub-adult pairs of *Betta* sp. “Palanka” from our last trip to central Borneo. After their long journey they were carefully added to a previously prepared, blackwater 56 litre tank which was decorated with dried beech leaves and thick with vegetation. The animals apparently felt immediately well and thrived.

These fish, as has been observed by myself with other wild caught fish, took every food that was offered; live food, frozen food and in the appropriate size; high-quality pellets. A few weeks later they seemed to be fully grown and I started to notice the fact that they were quarrelsome and

males and females had, more often than not, some slight damage to their fins. However, after I removed the second male from the tank, peace returned.

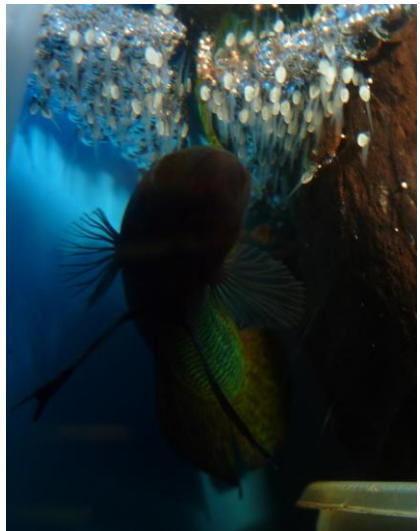
At that time it was still not 100 percent clear as to whether these fish are bubble-nest builders or mouthbrooders, so curiously, I followed these events. The male retreated into the farthest, almost invisible corner of the aquarium under a coarse sponge which covers the overflow pipe. The females were not seen, not even at feeding time, until one day I was able to observe a spawning, just below the surface underneath the sponge. It was

a typical wrap-around manner of spawning bubble nest builders. I could not see a bubble nest; maybe it was lost in the coarse sponge. Neither eggs nor larvae were discovered, but from time to time there was a spawning, presumably also with the second female.

Of course, the disappointment was great that no young fish had ever shown up but a few weeks later I discovered tiny offspring while feeding the fish. Immediately, I caught all that I could see (about 30 individuals) and took them to a small breeding tank. While measuring the pH, I realized that this had fallen from about 6 to 4.5 at a conductivity of 50 μS . This is probably what caused offspring to finally develop. Later I found more and more juveniles in different sizes in the spawning tank. They had apparently successfully hidden in the beech leaves and lived off them as well. Since the parents were not hunting them, I left them in the spawning tank. To date, the offspring are almost fully grown in both tanks and the rearing of them has presented no problems.



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FURTHER COMMENTS ABOUT *BETTA* SP. PALANGKA

Thomas Weiblen



© H.Bayer

Occurrence:

Via the company Kurnia Aquarium Palangkaraya (Kalimantan Tengah) in late autumn 2009 *Betta* sp. Palangka came into the trade, sometimes mistakenly under the name of *Betta* sp. Palangkaraya. First introduced by members of the EAC/AKL. Unfortunately, there is nothing known about the exact habitat of this fish.

Description and gender differences:

At first glance one might think, this is a variant of the mouth breeder *Betta foerschi*. This was assumed in the beginning. Today we know that this is a small, 5.5 cm in males and in females up to 5 cm long foam nest builder. The coloration is more intense in males than in females. The elongated body is depending on the mood from brown to red burgundy. Also dependent on the mood is the

intensity of gloss scales that stretch from emerald green to a delicate mint green along almost the whole body. Only the head remains in brown red. Another highlight are the 2 strips that are shown on the dark edges of the gill cover (similar to *Betta foerschi*). A nice contrast to the shiny metallic green eyes, which are known from many black water-*Betta*. Also the fins are covered with highlighted green and blue spots.

Behaviour:

In my observations, I could seldom see aggression. With rival males, there was indeed mock battles, which ended rarely in violation of the fins. In structured tanks with enough hiding places inferior males and the females rarely are traced for a long time. In general, the fish stand under large leaves or roots and only rarely swim in

the free swimming space. Should a male see a rival male or a female, it swims around with spread fins and shows off its beautiful colours. If the is female in spawning mood she changes her colour. In the central area, bright vertical stripes are shown, similar to *Betta splendens* or *B. imbellis*. Also red colour and the green sheen is not shown. If the female is in no mood for spawning it is expelled by the male from the area.

Breeding:

As described above, the basin should provide hiding places in the form of floating plants, mosses, roots, or caves. For a couple, a 12 liter aquarium is sufficient. With more animals the tank should have 54 liters or more. The “ideal” water must be provided also. The best is SAC = soft, acidic and clean. The temperature can move between 24 to 30 °C. In this area the fish feel comfortable. The dGH should be between 1-3°, the dKH around 0-1° or the electric conductivity maximum up to 80 _S/cm. The pH should not rise above 6. A value between 5 and 5.5 has proven itself. Peat and oak leaves assist in this process. In other case and charges of dead plant material (over a long use of peat or oak leaves), the animals react with clamped fins and a white coating, and fin rot. Here a large water change and a leaf of *Terminalia catappa* helps.



© H.Bayer

My Palangkas all need help to spawn. This I make from a film container. This was the only way to get the fish to nest building and spawning. It helps in this case to use the cover of the film container as well. Here I cut / punch a 1.5 cm diameter hole into it. The lid prevents the eggs to fall out of the container during the night or during movements of the male and thus become prey to predators. It turned out that the fish spawn then frequently. I was quite amazed when I saw lot of eggs in the nest. When counting the larvae that hatched after 48-60 hours and after another 2-3 days were floating freely, always 70-90 larvae were in the tank. They need to feed in the first 2-3 days on Infusorian or paramecium. In exceptional cases, some of the larvae start eating on the first day smallest brine shrimps.

Further raising is no longer a problem then. Should *Oodinium* or *Ichthyophthirius* occur a treatment with salt is helpful.



© DMA

Food:

With good feeding (Artemia, Daphnia, mosquito larvae, Tubifex, Grindal and white worms), the females started to produce spawn fast. Feeding a high fat content of live food such as Tubifex, white worms Grindal and should be done sparingly. 1 to 2 times a week is enough. The animals become fat easily. This damages the liver, gonads and ovaries. Also once a week, a day of fasting is recommended. This does not harm the fish but strengthens the vitality.

Final word:

Betta sp. Palangka is a great, new fighting fish which with little effort and care can be successfully propagated. This fish will cause us much joy in future.

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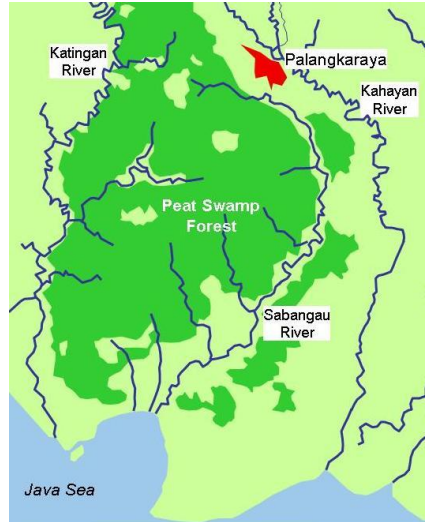
Stefan van der Voort comments:-This new and currently un-described species of fighting fish was first collected by an Indonesian trader in 2009 and shortly afterwards brought back to Europe by Horst Line, Thor Winter Dahl, Michael Haakanson and friends after they purchased them.

The fish apparently came from Sungai Sabangau, Kalimantan Tengah but was introduced to the hobby with a variety of labels: *Betta* sp. "Sebangua", *B.* sp. "Sengalang", *B.* sp. "Palangka", *B.* sp. "Palangkaraya" and *B.* sp. "Sengalang; Palangkaraya".

There appeared to be some early confusion among hobbyists about which its closest relatives are within the *Betta* genus and for some reason either the *B. foerschi* species group (mouthbrooders) or *B. coccina* species group (bubblenesters) were considered. The confusion existed because of the fish having two vertical red bars on their opercle, something that congeners of both aforementioned groups possess. However, in appearance they were more comparable to the latter species group and not so well to the former.

Sungai River in Sabangau is a blackwater habitat where *Betta* sp. "Palangkaraya" likely occupies the shallow parts over a substrate consisting of leaf and wood litter. Such biotopes are well known for their yellow to tea-coloured water which, combined with it usually being located in dense forested areas, are very

shaded. Blackwater habitats can dry up during the dry season, with the fish surviving the duration amongst moist leaf litter until the rain comes.



The peat swamp area they're likely to be found in. Source: www.wikimedia.org



Female. ©Stefan V.d.Voort

**BOY'S BORNEO - BEERLESS AND BETTAFUL
(C and E Kalimantan, 2012) 1. Balikpapan- Peruk Kahuh
Dave Armitage**



Betta sp 'Hungan'

I had resolved that the previous year's fish tourism trip to Malaysia was to be my last, so inevitably I found myself once more in Singapore with Paul Jordan, en route to a rendezvous in Balikpapan with Pat Yap's partner in E Kalimantan, who we'd been instructed to address as 'Ah Boy'. But for the moment we revelled in the luxury of Tiger beer and Chinese food in the bustling coffee shop beneath the small but comfortable rooms of 'Le Peranakan' hotel on the East Coast road. Paul started to exhibit an unfortunate inadvertent near-fatal predilection for chilli dishes and struggled with his hot Thai soup so I felt obliged to help him out after wolfing my rather bland fish soup.



We arrived at Balikpapan airport through the expensive but reassuring comfort of Silkair, via a quick meeting with Pat in the inappropriate surroundings of the Changhi Terminal 2 Macdonald's. We heard that Boy had come from Sabah, worked for Pat since he'd been a teenager and learnt

the fish exporting ropes in Singapore before branching off to organise his collecting business in E Kalimantan from his base in Johore.

After queuing for immigration processes, which surprisingly included face recognition scans and fingerprinting, we were much relieved to find 27 year-old Boy waiting for us with his schoolboy looks as well as driver, collector and local wrangler, Yousan. From thence, we were ferried to our first hotel, the 'Mega Buana' and then to a nearby Chinese coffee shop where Paul unerringly chose an uncomfortably hot chilli beef dish which I felt obliged to finish for him. Broaching the subject of beer supplies with Boy, I discovered, as feared, that in this very Moslem area, it was only available at bars but after a phone call, Boy met a contact in a shady alley and a case of bottles changed hands, to provide us with a minimum daily ration of the amber nectar (aka Bintang).



After tea we made brief visit to the house Boy rented for housing the fish before export to Patrick, where we were shown our itinerary on that rare commodity, a Kalimantan map with roads indicated. We then attempted

to get to sleep with the traditional Friday night karaoke caterwauling which was only surpassed by the strange scratching of one of the participants trying to break into his car and then, in the early hours, the call to prayer from a nearby mosque or two.



We were perhaps therefore not at our brightest when we were collected at 8am for our 1h drive to the Kariangau-Penajam ferry which would save us 3h driving around the estuary on or way to our overnight stop at Ampah. This gave us the chance to sample a bit of Kalimantan river life (and even though we were delayed for an hour entering the harbour before the other ferry left, it subsequently turned out on our return journey that taking the ferry was a very worthwhile exercise).



The roads could best be described as intermittent and unpredictable and we cautiously negotiated our way onwards through weaving crowds of motor bikes. We stopped for what became a rather unvaried diet of chicken and rice for lunch at a gas-fired roadside fry-up and arrived in the dark in the rain scattering terrified cats in our wake. We'd been warned about the rather muddy nature of the water in the hotel, which I put down to a sand filter but the dilapidated state of the western bathroom fixtures, combined with the moslem hip bath for washing, rather belied the respectable exterior. As we left, I noticed an ambitious gecko eyeing up a large green cicada in the hotel foyer.



Next morning, we gobbled our Copie 'O', veggie rice and noodles and headed for our overnight stop of Peruk Kahuh and at last made our first stops to fish. Boy first made contact with his

local collector near Kanduc who had to remind him of the site of the narrow white clay-lined stream which ran sharply downhill (Habitat1 'Muarateweh'). Here we caught our first *Betta pallifina*, a streamlined member of the *B.unimaculata* group, often among the leaves, sharing its habitat with *B.anabatoides* shrimps, an eel, catfish and tadpoles. A bit of co-operative stamping toward the nets in shallow water produced plenty of specimens. The PH here was usually around 4.5, according to Boy.



B.pallifina male



B.pallifina female (P.Jordan)



B.anabatoides

Our second habitat (2), a little further along the road, was a wide, deep clear stream of pH 5-ish lined with razor-edged Pandams, ferns and grasses where I could catch only a couple of female *Parosphromenus filamentosus*, but Boy and Yousan managed about 10 pairs between them, although it was

hard work in the deep water of the rainy season. Also present were *Rasbora cephalotaenia* and *R.gradis*, small *Sphaerichthys selenatenensis* and half-beaks.



Having at last got wet and wielded our nets, we felt we had earned our lunch of Duck and rice before continuing for another 4h to our overnight stop at Peruk Kahuh, where the water was of a more conventional colour than the previous night although the bathroom fittings were more determinedly moslem. I savoured the familiar Nasi Goreng with an egg on top, secure in the knowledge that a share in a smuggled bottle of Bintang awaited in the hotel room.



The next morning, we wended our way through the narrow streets of the town, past the market, asking about the whereabouts of the Dayak people as Boy had often found that their forest habitation co-incided with that of Bettas. Just as the road deteriorated to a slippery clay surface, we stopped at a small hut and enquired about the fish. He fetched one of our captures from the previous day and the locals

confirmed they were what they termed 'The stupid fish'; were always first to take any bait offered. We were ushered along a downhill path behind their huts and soon found another narrow, swiftly flowing downhill stream lined with clay where we found plenty of a *B.pallifina*-like fish with a barring on the flanks, often in the deeper sumps, as well as *B.anabatoides*, stamped into the net from small leaf-litter pools. *Channa gachua* and young *C.lucia/C.bankenensis* were also present.





Unfortunately the stream was even muddier than usual with clay washed off a building site just above the forest remnant and one wondered how long the fish would hang on in these conditions. We wandered back to the car to clean up and change and were gratified to find that our 'hosts' were not averse to being photographed. More surprisingly, they asked if we minded and then were asked to pose for their phone cameras. The locals reckoned I reminded them of a wrestler which Paul and Boy decided must be 'Hulk' Hogan so it was a strange co-incidence to find that their hamlet (Kampong) was known as Hungon.



We continued on our way after Boy had applied a mysterious and pungent 'Owl' lotion to his bites and scratches which permeated the truck with a menthol/ camphor fragrance which certainly cleared the sinuses.. We had intended to complete a circuit to get to Palangkaraya that evening but had found out the previous night that the road was far from certain, so we were faced with a 4h return to Ampah, where we sampled the more down-market non air-con hotel which did at least have a suggestion of a bathroom and clean water. Our lunch of fried rice and chicken at Muarah Tewe was uncharacteristically tasty so Boy thought the chef was probably Malay-Chinese.

**THANKS TO WONG FUONG NGIP
(BOY) FOR GUIDANCE AND TO DAVID
GAMBLE FOR DIGITAL IMAGE
ENHANCEMENT OF SOME OF THE
FISH PICS.**

BREEDING OF BETTA PALLIFINA

Ian Mitchell



At the Autumn AAGB meeting on the 1st Oct 2011 I purchased 2 pairs of *Betta pallifina*. On returning home I housed the 2 pairs separately in 18" x 12" x 12" (46 x 30 x 30 cm) tanks in the anticipation of them breeding. After finding information about this variety of *Betta*, I learnt they originated from a remote part of the upper Barito river basin in the Indonesian province of Central Kalimantan, Borneo. They can grow up to about 4" (10cm) in length, mine are about 3.5ins.



The fish settled in very well and started taking live, dried & frozen food straight away. The tanks were filled about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with air driven sponge filters and heater stats set to 80F (27C) with tight fitting lids, as like most

Bettas are good jumpers. After 2 weeks one of the females managed to escape, she must have been a Houdini to have escaped the tank, as the lid was such a tight fit, but unfortunately I found it dead on the floor. The other pair continued to feed and come into breeding condition, around mid-November. I decide to set up a tank to set about spawning them. The tank again was 18" x 12" x 12" (46 x 30 x 30 cm), bare bottom, heater sat set at 80F (27C), with fast air driven sponge filter. I used re-mineralised RO water and Almond Leaves, which tanned the water like cold tea. After around 2 weeks the female initiated the spawning sequence nudging the male on the bottom back corner of the tank.



I did not see them spawn but the following morning the male obviously had a mouthful of eggs. Unfortunately,

they only carried for 3 days which I can only assume were eaten. A week or 2 later in the evening they spawn again. This time I watched the spawning sequence which is typical of the Betta; the male coiling around the female and the eggs deposited on the male's anal fin. Some eggs fell to the floor which the male picked up himself and the female collected from his anal fin and spit to the male. This continued for around 2 hours or more. After 3 days, once again the eggs disappeared. There were feeder eggs amongst the viable eggs. Another 2 weeks later the whole process started again, this time I removed the female after 24 hours to see if it made any difference. Same happened again 3 days later the eggs had gone again.



On my next attempt, I removed the Almond leaves and covered with Oak & Beech leaves up to about 2inch. This made a slight tanning in the water rather than like cold tea. I then returned the Female to the tank and they spawned again on the 31 Jan'12. This time, after the 3 day stage, I was getting optimistic that he may carry full term. I took out the female on the 14 Feb'12. 18 days later on 18 Feb'12, I saw 6 fry in the tank about 6mm long. So I thought the rest would appear the next day as his mouth was still full, but no more appeared until 23 Feb'12. Which I estimated around 50 fry. At this point I decided to check water parameters, which was PH 6 and Gh 3, very soft. I then removed the male. My estimate was well out as there are about 150.

They were initially fed on newly hatched brine shrimp, vinegar eels and micro worm. After about 10 – 14 days they were also taking grindle worm and crushed flake as well. After 4 weeks they are now taking white worm and flake. After the first half dozen were around 2 weeks old they were twice the size of their siblings, around 12mm. Possibly these 6 escaped early due to a cough, yawn or hiccup, who knows! The fry are now 6 weeks old split between 2 tanks and up to press there is no sibling predation to date. Fry are now 1- 1¼ ins (2 ½ - 3 cm). The male, who after not eating for 3 weeks was very thin but could not get him to feed and so, died 2 weeks later.