

Part 1: New Fishes from Australia

In 2015 I had the opportunity to make two fishing trips, one to West Papua and another to Australia. Both trips were very successful and now there will be a flood of new rainbowfishes available for the hobby.

A selection (not all) of the Australian species and forms will be presented here. Not all fish have been photographed, and some photos are not optimal, either.

In all cases only small quantities of fish were imported as breeding stock. Several of them have been distributed to some other breeders. From most species, first fry have already been obtained. For those who are interested in some young fish, it will be worth looking at the advertisings for the annual IRG convention 2016.

The species from the Taritatu catchment (New Guinea) will be presented within the next issue of the “Regenbogenfisch”.

Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum

This is an Australian hardyhead with a metallic green-golden color and many small dots (hence the name Flyspeckled Hardyhead). Long and slender body, makes a great combination with rainbowfishes.

Craterocephalus stramineus

The “famous” Blackmast or Strawman, is a hardyhead that has an outstanding position in its genus. Very limited distribution

in northern Australia, found only in alkaline water. Very beautiful, but needs special attention and is better kept in a species tank. However, in such a tank it is an eye-catcher!

Iriatherina weneri “Ankabadbirri”

I am very happy having obtained three different forms of Australian threadfin rainbowfishes. Most of the *Iriatherina weneri* in the European hobby are from aquarium strains of New Guinean origin and unknown source. Now we have offspring from wild caught fishes, with known locations. “Ankabadbirri” is an aboriginal settlement at the Cadell River in western Arnhemland. We already had those years ago, but as far as I know they have been lost.

Iriatherina weneri “Gulbuwangay River”

Gulbuwangay River is one of the rivers feeding the Arafura Swamp, a known location of *I. weneri*. This swamp is in eastern Arnhemland. The extended fins of this form are black, but the basis is yellow. The first dorsal is red and yellow.

Iriatherina weneri “Myall Creek”

This form was discovered just a short time ago. To my knowledge it is the first time that it is available in Europe. Until now it



▲ *Iriatherina wernerii* “Ankabadbirri”
(Photo: Dave Wilson)

is the *Iriatherina wernerii* variety with the highest amount of yellow in its fins. The collecting place is on Cape York, in the Embley River drainage near the city of Weipa.

Melanotaenia australis “Kambolgie Creek”

Fishes kept under this name in the European aquarium hobby are not from Kambolgie Creek. These falsely named fish are an aquarium strain of unknown origin and have nothing to do with the true variety. Kambolgie Creek is part of the Alligator River in the Northern Territory. It has a tributary called Ferny Creek. This is the only known location of the “real” fish. They grow big and become huge, impressive animals with blood-red tail fins and a rhomboid body shape.

Melanotaenia duboulayi “Oyster Creek”

Over the years we had several *Melanotaenia duboulayi* varieties in the hobby, but so far none of them lasted for long – maybe this one can. The basic color is a metallic green



▲ *Iriatherina wernerii* “Gulbuwangay River”
(Photo: Dave Wilson)

with red lines between the scale rows. The yellow sides of the body are a distinctive trait of this variety and set it apart from any other *Melanotaenia duboulayi* that we know.

Melanotaenia exquisita “Bindoola”

This is for the specialty keepers. Most likely an undescribed species from the Northern Territory, as DNA analysis indicates that it is significantly different from the other *Melanotaenia exquisita* varieties. Bindoola Creek is a small tributary of the Pentecost River. A small and attractive species, but better suited for a single-species tank.

Melanotaenia gracilis

New blood for the few breeders of this small and slender rainbowfish in the IRG.

Melanotaenia maccullochi “Moa Island”

Not many people know that the islands of the Torres Strait (a group of islands between Australia and New Guinea) host rainbowfish species, provided the island is



▲ *Iriatherina wernerii* “Myall Creek”
(Photo: Neil Armstrong)



▲ *Melanotaenia australis* “Kambolgje Creek”
(Photo: Gunther Schmida)

part of the continental shelf (i.e. the top of a submerged mountain) and not of coral-line origin. It was a lucky chance that an Australian who has relatives on Moa Island brought back some rainbowfish specimens to the mainland a few years ago. Those were bred and offspring was distributed by ANGFA members. Looks a bit like those from “Skull Creek”, but becomes bigger.

***Melanotaenia maccullochi* “Skull Creek”**

We have only a few of those left in the IRG and breeding rates are declining, therefore this is a chance for new blood. It is one of the most beautiful *M. maccullochi* varieties.



▲ *Melanotaenia duboulayi* “Oyster Creek”
(Photo: Gunther Schmida)

***Melanotaenia spec.* “Fletcher Creek”**

This rainbowfish is a new discovery from Australia with a very limited distribution near Rockhampton. Looks a bit like the “Running River” rainbow, but the basic color is an iridescent green. It is something really different, very attractive and easy to keep.



▲ *Melanotaenia spec.* “Fletcher Creek”
(Photo: Gunther Schmida)



▲ *Melanotaenia spec.* “Miskin Creek”
(Photo: Gunther Schmid)

Melanotaenia spec. “Miskin Creek”

This slender, mid-sized rainbowfish comes from Australia, from the Miskin Creek in the South Johnstone River drainage close to the town of Malanda. It is not known yet if it is an undescribed species. The basic color is a light blue, displaying or mating males become darker. It is a very nice fish, and gives good companions to *Melanotaenia maccullochi*, *Pseudomugil signifer* or *M. eachamensis*.

Melanotaenia spec. “Running River”

This is the endangered rainbowfish from the upper Burdekin River, now massively under pressure due to introduced *Melanotaenia splendida*. Therefore, the University of Canberra started a captive breeding project in order to preserve this species in the aquarium. I am very happy to have gotten some fishes from the original breeding stock of Bruce Hansen. They are now the basis for the breeding stock in Europe. One Euro per fish from the sales goes to the project!



▲ *Melanotaenia spec.* “Running River”
(Photo: Neil Armstrong)

Melanotaenia spec. “Wallace Road”

At the ANGFA conference 2015, Keith Martin mentioned in his presentation on the rainbowfishes of the Wet Tropics a new fish he discovered in the Atherton Tablelands. He called it “Platy Rainbowfish” because it has a kind of a similarity to the well-known livebearer. In any case: small and red, that is always interesting.

It was not so easy to find the place and it was even harder to collect the fish: very shy in the habitat and hard to catch. But in the aquarium, after a short time they became very lively and attractive, always at the front of the tank looking for food.

It is no *Melanotaenia splendida*, no *M. eachamensis*, and pretty sure a new, undescribed species with a very limited distribution in the middle of farmland. The wide, flag-like dorsal fin of the males is extraordinary. The middle rays are longer than the first and last rays. This is very uncommon in Australian rainbowfishes. Most likely it stays small, similar to a *Melanotaenia maccullochi*.



▲ *Melanotaenia spec.* "Wallace Road"
(Photo: Johannes Graf)

Melanotaenia splendida splendida **"Mount Poverty"**

Among the varieties of *Melanotaenia splendida splendida*, this one is an outstanding one. So far we thought that "Wallaby Creek" and "Deepwater Creek" were the splendidas showing the most red. That is wrong. This new variety has dark red fins and a purple body color. Sadly no pictures so far, but this is a red fish!

Melanotaenia splendida splendida **"Tarzali"**

Tarzali is a little village in the Atherton Tablelands. A creek crosses the road just ahead the village. There we found this nice variety of *Melanotaenia splendida splendida*. Medium size, copper-orange color and long fins are the characteristics of this variety.

Melanotaenia utcheensis

We have only a small stock in the IRG from this well-known species. Now this is the chance for fresh blood.



▲ The new fish from Mount Poverty has much darker red than the *Melanotaenia splendida splendida* "Wallaby Creek" pictured here.
(Photo: Gunther Schmida)

Pseudomugil gertrudae "Lockhart River tributary"

Two collectors of waterplants collecting in the Lockhart River area (Cape York) saw a few small fishes darting away in a tiny, overgrown small creek. They managed to catch five or six fish. Those were bred and founded the breeding strain of this new blue-eye.

It is very small with only two centimeters, with striking yellow body color and fine dots in the fins. This is without doubt enrichment to the portfolio of small blue-eyes and ideal for nano-tanks.

Pseudomugil signifer "Hastings River"

The southernmost place to find *Pseudomugil signifer* is the Hastings River near Port Macquarie (New South Wales). This blue-eye has a triangular yellow-white-black dorsal fin. It is easy to keep and happy with cooler temperatures. A little addition of salt is useful.



▲ *Pseudomugil gertrudae* "Lockhart River tributary" (Photo: Gunther Schmida)

Rhadinocentrus ornatus "Poona"

This new *Rhadinocentrus* is already called the native replacement for *Melanotaenia praecox* in Australia. The body of some outstanding specimen is metallic blue, the fins are red. This cannot be seen on the imported young fish, the second photo shows how the imported specimen typically look like. In principle, *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* is better kept in a species tank for its own. It is easily suppressed in a community tank. Furthermore, in a species tank, fry come up without effort, which is good, considering the short lifespan of *Rhadinocentrus ornatus*.

Rhadinocentrus ornatus "Stradbroke Island"

Another new variety of *Rhadinocentrus ornatus*, with heavy dark markings on the sides and reddish fins.

Rhadinocentrus ornatus "Teewah Creek"

A copper-red form of *Rhadinocentrus ornatus*, with black edges on the fins.



▲ *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* "Poona"; top: outstanding colored specimen (N. Armstrong); bottom: imported color form (G. Maebe)



▲ *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* "Stradbroke Island" (Photo: Gunther Schmida)



▲ *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* "Teewah Creek" (Photo: Gunther Schmida)

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Titelbild:
Junge Zwergwüstengrundel *Chlamydogobius ranunculus* in der 1. Etage des „Unterwasser-Blätterhotels“.
Foto: Peter Warth

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IRG - Internationale Gesellschaft für Regenbogenfische e.V. (International Rainbowfish Association), founded in 1986, is a community of fishkeepers with special interest in rainbowfishes, blue-eyes, and other freshwater species from Australia, New Guinea and the close-by islands. Most of our 500+ members live in Europe. 100+ species and varieties are kept and homebred in our aquaria. In regional meetings fish and information are exchanged. Our transnational, annual convention brings together many members and sees presentations of experts and the world's largest rainbowfish sale. The date is fixed each year to the second weekend of June.

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