

## Hemigrammus ocellifer falsus -Head and Tail Light Tetra by Rene Jez from Tank Talk Volume 11 No.4 in 1987

### HEMIGRAMMUS OCELLIFER FALSUS - HEAD AND TAIL LIGHT TETRA

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One wonders why the Hemigrammus ocellifer falsus, Head and Tail Light Tetra, was not bred in CDAS before as this small tetra has been in the hobby for such a long time. It is hardy, attractive and keeps its place amongst tens of other species very solidly.

This fish belongs to the Tetra family and it is very closely related to Hemigrammus ocellifer ocellifer its subspecies.

Both of these characins live in waters of Guyana and in the rivers and brooks of the Amazon basin. It grows to approximately 40mm long. Gregarious and lively it is suitable for community aquariums. Water temperature should be kept above 20 degrees Celcius. The adult specimen can tolerate a wide range of water hardness and the PH should be around 6.0 - 7.0.

Feeding requirements are as for the other Tetras. Sometime ago I had seen a reasonably healthy stock of young mature fish in a shop. With no other customers, the owner was willing to catch the 3 pairs I had selected. The sexing is very easy when females start to develop eggs.

As I feed all my tetras in very small tanks, the usual preparation and spawning method was described in past Tank Talk articles about neons or glow tetras. The Head and Tail Light Tetra behaves in very similar way but grows faster.

In the breeding of this fish, I had a chance to experiment with combinations of those 3 pairs. A long time ago I had worked out the minimum number of fry worth the time, effort, the occupancy of a tank and the quantity of food they will consume, for Danios this must be more than 100 fry, and for ordinary Tetras above 40 fry. Of course for rare or difficult fish to spawn even 2 fry get maximum care and their own tank.

Once the Head and Tail Light tetras started to spawn the results varied significantly, nearly all eggs were fungused and the number of fry, 5, 10 or 15, was very disappointing.

In this search for better results I have found (except when a particular female was extremely full of eggs), all females produced a reasonably constant number of eggs (50-150), when entered into spawning regularly in 3-4 weeks.

Knowing the water chemistry was perfect I started to draw conclusion that the males were the problem. Several spawnings had singled out performers one and two, and the third fish was a hopeless case. I removed this fish into a separate tank and had nearly forgotten it existed, assuming that this fish was infertile, I was not willing to enter it into any spawning.

I kept trying with the other two better males but results were under my set limits. After 3 months I had decided to try once more to enter that forgotten male. I could observe a very different behaviour, a sort of a confident, mildly aggressive fish and the chasing of the female in the spawning tank.

The result was well over 200 fertilised eggs with very few infertile.

This result elevated once more an old rule, the good male brings results immediately without days and weeks of very indifferent spawning behaviour of the pair. The male must be without the attacking mood, must court and try to invite the female into the spawning act, the wild chasing of a female by a male or a male by a female and a weak male which has retired into a corner is a disaster to your breeding attempts.

Probably many experienced hobbyists would say this is a well known fact. But a selection of a good breeding pair is a matter of daily observation. The results by entering the good fish into the spawning tank saves considerable effort and tank space, and in a short time brings a far superior results than by a chance selection of breeding pairs.

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