

**BREEDING POECILIA RETICULATA, THE GUPPY**

by Andrew Boyd

Having never seen any really impressive Guppies in aquarium shops, we never bothered with them but one day, at Rodney and Deborah Ralphs' place, we noticed some really nice looking specimens, complete with a tankfull of youngsters. As they were running at 10 for a dollar on that day, I purchased a dollar's worth, which seemed to be quite enough to start with.

Two died immediately in the community tank. If it had not been so tragic, I would have thought it a magnificent sight: our pair of Congo Tetras (*Phenacogrammus interruptus*) swooping on the little Guppies as soon as they hit the water.

So into a separate 10-gallon tank the rest went and as they grew we noted 3 males and 5 females. As soon as the males began to colour up and chase the females, they were removed to another tank.

Guppies being Guppies, the males showed great diversity in colour and tail length. I selected one particular colour that I wanted to breed and chose the male with the longest tail, selling off the others at the next club auction, but this later proved to be a mistake. For, after breeding from females mated to this long-tailed male, I read about the Guppy's fascinating courtship dances, which only the less endowed males can perform. So I shall just have to try another one. Has anyone a short-tailed male to spare?

The male I kept was placed with the 3 females and nature took its course, the females never getting a moment's rest. A fertilized female Guppy can give birth to up to 8 broods from one mating, producing as many as 100 fry each time! When females are noticeably pregnant or "gravid", they are best separated off in tanks of their own, with some Java moss to serve as a refuge for the expected fry. Separating the mother-to-be also minimises any stress that could cause premature birth and damage to the fry. We have always found plastic breeding traps a failure in a guppy community tank, as the other fish soon learn to suck the babies through the holes and eat them. Likewise, it is a good idea to remove the female from the isolation tank, once fry are noticed, as female Guppies are notorious fry-eaters.

So we separated our biggest female and were graced with a litter of fry, most of which were soon eaten. The survivors were 7 - 8 mm long. Mother Guppy was returned to the main tank

and the babies got on with the business of growing up. *Daphnia*, powdered flake and brine shrimp were the staple diet, together with various "freeze-drieds" available from the club shop, given about every third day, as variety.

What was the outcome of all this? Well, one little male was almost completely black rearwards of the dorsal fin; another was a spitting image of his dad, except for a forked "comet" tail. Unfortunately, though, these were among the victims of our recent move to Murrumbateman, so we shall need to try again sometime. If we get another comet-tailed male we shall try to cross him back to his mother. This should result in a few more like him, that could then be out-crossed to another strain of comet-tails.

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