

LONG-FINNED HALFBEAKS

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The Long-finned Halfbeak (*Hemirhamphodon pogonognathus*) is an unusual but attractive livebearing fish. They are very similar in appearance to the *Dermogenys* species, of which there seems to be more known about. Unfortunately, we found very little helpful information on the long-finned halfbeak, and only found out a few months ago its' true identity.

This species is supposed to grow to 19cm long, this we find hard to believe of ours, as we have had them for over seven months and the male is only 6cm long and the female 5.5cm long, tail to tip of beak. They are in

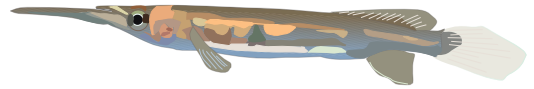
slightly brackish water and are fed live foods, daphnia, mosquito larvae, and every now and then a treat of Tubifex. Tubifex is only fed when time allows it, as one tubifex is fed at a time, dangled on top of their mouth until they snap it up. Everything fed to them must be above them because of the shape of their mouths. They are quite different in appearance to any of the other halfbeaks and are supposed to be less aggressive.

The temperature of the water is 25°C and floating plants such as duckweed, riccia and watersprite seem to make them feel right at home.

When the time was right to mate, the male showed off a little to the female, swimming around her and cutting off her every move, then, they would move side by side and the male seemed to wrap the lower half of his body around hers and they would quiver together for a few seconds, then, dart apart. This was repeated a number of times.

Several weeks later the female became a little heavier, so we made sure, in hopeful anticipation, that live food was always available to stop them eating any fry. A special treat of adult Brine Shrimp was added and this they loved. Being so small in size we could not imagine her having a great hoard of young, but we waited.

One night, one lone fry was spotted. We had a small tank set up ready, so we scooped it into a cup and placed it into this tank. The fry was huge, 1cm in length with a very short beak and a large yolk sac. This was the most unusual fry we had ever seen. Free swimming when born but still had its' own yolk sac.



The female had only one fry about every three days and only over a fortnight. For her size, compared to that of the young, we wondered how she managed any at all. She stopped almost as suddenly as she started. That seemed to be all for that time.

The fry consumed their yolk sacs in two days and were then into newly hatched Brine-Shrimp, they took a little while to get the knack at catching the brine shrimp but once they did, they were snapping away quite happily and still are.

We were really pleasantly rewarded having these breed for us, as they were mainly bought as a novelty.

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