

Introducing ...



*the native fish of Australia
and New Guinea ...*

... and the Australia New Guinea Fishes Association

WHAT IS ANGFA?

ANGFA – Australia New Guinea Fishes Association consists of enthusiasts promoting the conservation, study, keeping and propagation of the native fish species of Australia and New Guinea.

NATIVE FISH FOR YOUR AQUARIUM

ANGFA fish are the native fish of Australia and New Guinea. Although we often tend to think of these fish in terms of angling species such as the Murray Cod, Golden and Silver Perch of southern Australia or the Barramundi of northern Australia, there are many smaller species which are suitable for aquariums. This web page is designed to give you a brief introduction to some of these fish. There are a number of excellent books and magazines as well as a wealth of information available from ANGFA, which can help you learn more about the fish of our region.

KEEPING ANGFA FISH

ANGFA fish are just as easy to keep as other fish. Those from northern Australia require tropical conditions, those from southern Victoria and Tasmania will live quite happily at normal room temperatures in southern states.

Like any fish, each species has preferred “ideal” conditions, but most tropical species will live quite happily in normal community tank conditions with a temperature of from 20°C to 27°C, pH of 7.0 to 7.2 and hardness from 50 to 200 ppm. Many species will quite happily accept conditions outside of this range.

Like any fish, ANGFA fish can be broken up into community fish, i.e. fish that will happily co-exist with other species including normal coldwater community and tropical community fish, and special species, i.e. species requiring special conditions or not suitable for keeping with community fish.

COMMUNITY FISH

This is a list of some of the many ANGFA species suitable for inclusion in your community aquarium.

Tropical: *Those Incredible Rainbows* (*Melanotaenia*, *Chilatherina* and *Glossolepis* species).

Of all the ANGFA fish kept by aquarists, Rainbowfishes are by far the most popular. There are many good reasons for this: they are brilliantly coloured, ideal for community aquariums, readily accept standard fish foods and easily bred.

Most rainbows grow to no more than 100mm and the few that grow a little bigger are still excellent community fish. We have found that rainbows tend to grow bigger in aquariums than they do in the wild. This may be because of the availability of food in the aquarium, or because they get a chance to live longer in aquariums.

Keeping rainbows is easy, the hardest part is deciding which one. Rainbowfish come from streams around Australia and New Guinea and different streams may have different colour forms. For example if you went into your aquarium shop and asked for an Australian Rainbow they could give you one of dozens of types of rainbows that are available. If the fish you want is the Red Rainbow from the Goyder River then ask for the Goyder River Rainbow (or whichever tribe you want).

Some suggestions for really colourful fish: *Melanotaenia boesmani*: orange and navy; *M. lacustris*: turquoise blue and white; *Glossolepis incisus*: male – tomato red, female – bronze-gold; and the best of them all: *M. praecox*: pale metallic blue body and red fins. Not only that, they are the best schooling rainbows. For a true rainbow of colours: *M. herbertaxelrodi*: the Lake Tebera rainbow. Don't stop here though ... there are heaps of other beautiful rainbows ... check out the checkered and the red-eyed tiger!

Other tropical community fish:

The Glass Perchlets. Ambassis species. These small species are closely related to the glass perchlets sometimes offered in shops, which come from south-east Asia. The Australian species tend to be a little larger. They are non aggressive to normal community fish and appreciate an occasional feed of live foods such as brine shrimp, daphnia or black worms.

The Desert Goby *Chlamydogobius eremius* is a small bottom dwelling fish native to artesian springs from the north of South Australia. It is peaceful and readily accepts flake foods. If offered a low cave this species may breed in the community tank, the male will guard the eggs. Hard and alkaline water is preferred.

The Fly-Specked Hardyhead, *Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum* has been around the aquarium hobby for many years and is a well-accepted aquarium fish. It readily accepts flake foods. Very peaceful and prefers to be in a school of 4-6 fish.

Gudgeons, Hypseleotris species. There are several species of Gudgeons suitable for community aquariums. The one most commonly available is the Empire Gudgeon, a really beautifully coloured and well-behaved fish.

The tiny **Threadfin Rainbow**, *Iriatherina werneri* comes from northern Australia and New Guinea. It is a beautiful little fish with long flowing fins. It should not be kept with fin nippers. Makes a great display with very small fish like **Spotted Blue-eyes**.

The Purple Spotted Gudgeon, *Mogurnda* species, is not suitable for keeping with small fish, but is an interesting and colourful species for a community aquarium containing medium to large fish.

Eeltailed catfish, *Neosilurus* species. This group of small catfish are generally suitable for community aquariums though they may eat an occasional small tetra size fish. No problem with larger fish.

Peacock gudgeon, *Tateurndina ocellicauda* a small fish (to 40mm) with colours to rival the Killifish in blues, red and yellow. Could breed in a cave in the community aquarium.

The Blue-eyes, *Pseudomugil* species, are a group of small fish which make excellent community aquarium specimens. They are fairly peaceful and readily accept flake foods. Keep the different "tribes" from different rivers separate.

The Southern Softspined Rainbowfish or Rhad, *Rhadinocentrus ornatus*, is an excellent community fish which readily accepts flake foods.

Cold Water Species:

Yarra Pygmy Perch. *Edelia obscura*. This is a southern Victorian species so should be kept in unheated aquaria or outdoor ponds. They are quite peaceful, but prefer small live or frozen foods. Ideal for mosquito control in ponds.

Native Minnows. Galaxias species. There are several Galaxiids which are suitable for non-heated aquaria. Most species quickly adapt to flake foods and are easy to keep. Very good at jumping out of the aquarium, so keep a tight fitting lid..

The Dwarf Galaxiid, *Galaxiella pusilla* is a southern Victorian species so requires an unheated aquarium. This dwarf species will happily adapt to living in quite small aquaria and will breed in captivity. Ideal for mosquito control in garden ponds.

The Southern Pygmy Perch, *Nannoperca australis* is suitable for unheated aquariums. They are quite peaceful, but prefer small live or frozen foods. Ideal for mosquito control in ponds.

SPECIAL SPECIES: So you would like something different for your aquarium? There are many ANGFA species which will offer challenge, create great displays and become real pets.

Catfish. There are several species of ANGFA catfish which grow really huge. The northern Australian group known as the Forktail Catfishes can grow to over 1 metre and make stunning display fish. These species are sometimes available through aquarium shops as babies measuring only 100 to 150mm. These catfish can make excellent inhabitants for large aquariums containing other large fish.

There is a slightly smaller catfish which occurs from northern Victoria through NSW and southern Queensland called *Tandanus tandanus*, the Eeltail Catfish. Again it is a fish which grows big (to around 600mm) and is suitable for heated and unheated aquaria with other large fish.

Gudgeons. There are several gudgeon species which get very large, the Snakehead Gudgeon is common at 200mm and can grow to 400mm. The Sleepy Cod can grow to 400mm and there are several species which can grow to around 150mm. All these species are best kept with fish which are too big to be swallowed, but a warning, you may be surprised just how big a fish some gudgeons can fit into their mouths.

Grunters and Perches. There are a host of species within this group which make great pets. Some of them can be kept with other large fish, but some are so aggressive that they must be kept by themselves. They are big powerful fish, and should be treated the way you would treat a large cichlid. Many of these species appreciate a steady flow of small feeder fish in their diet.

Mouth Almighty. *Glossamia aprion*. This is a truly fascinating species. It is a mouth brooder, which carries its eggs in its mouth till they hatch. It is almost impossible to keep this species unless you have a good supply of live foods, preferably small fish. Three or four can be kept in a 60cm aquarium.

Mudskippers. These require a special aquarium, set up so that they can crawl out of the brackish water onto a beach or rock. The aquarium must have a well fitting coverglass so as to maintain a high humidity in the aquarium. Mudskippers will eat earthworms, black worms and may be trained to eat dry foods and fine slivers of meat.

Saratoga. These are closely related to the South American "Arowana". They are a large fish which can grow to 900mm though normally sold at 100mm to 150mm. They are an active mid to surface swimming fish which should be offered plenty of room and plenty of live fish as food. They tend to be aggressive towards each other though may be kept with large fish of other species.

There are many species of ANGFA freshwater fish which are suitable for the aquarium. This has been just a sample of some of them.

WHERE CAN I GET MY FISH?

There are three ways of obtaining your ANGFA fish. They are:

1. Aquarium shops. Many aquarium shops offer a range of ANGFA species, they can also usually obtain most species you may be interested in. If they don't have what you want ask them to get it for you.
2. Collect it yourself. There are laws in all states about taking fish from the wild. You should check with your State Fisheries office about local rules.
3. ANGFA members have the opportunity to trade fish among themselves. Through ANGFA meetings and the Buy/Swap/Sell column of club newsletters, you can locate desirable species and dispose of surplus stock. Visit or join your local club, you'll find one in most Australian states.

FEEDING RAINBOWS

Rainbows will happily survive on normal fish foods you feed your other community fish, but it is a good idea to make sure that your rainbows get their “vegies” as well. Commercial fish foods sold as Goldfish foods or “Vegie diet” has a higher vegetable content. Also offer some fresh vegetables occasionally, a squashed pea or a small piece of cooked pumpkin or zucchini are all acceptable.

An occasional feed of live foods such as brine shrimp, daphnia or tubifex worms will benefit your rainbows. Like other species, your rainbows will thrive on a changing diet, and like many of the popular community fish they will survive simply on commercial foods.

The fish don't have to be fed every day and the adults may be better off being fed only 5 days per week.

Showing Rainbows off

You will be surprised at how variable the colour of a Rainbow can be. This variation can be caused by diet, the mood of the fish or the type and direction of the light. Rainbows will show off their best colours when they feel safe and secure. You can help them feel secure by providing the correct environment in their aquarium. Rainbows prefer a well-planted aquarium so that they can dart into the plants and hide if they feel threatened, so a good stand of plants down the sides and along the back will help them feel secure.

Most rainbows tend to look better if the gravel is not too light. Avoid those pale gravels and those crazy coloured gravels, instead use a good quality darker aquarium gravel. The direction of the light will make a big difference to your rainbowfishes' colour. Try this experiment: take a torch and stand in front of your aquarium, look at the rainbow under the normal light, now switch on the torch and point it at the rainbow. Move the torch around, lift it above your head, move it out to the left and right, all the time pointing it at the rainbow. Did you find new colours?

Most aquarists recognise that rainbows look best when the light comes from above and to the front of the aquarium. Try moving your aquarium light about. Find the best lighting position and your rainbows will be living jewels in your aquarium.

Books: (some of these are now out of print – possibly available in your local library)

- Allen, G., Midgley, S., & Allen, M., *Field Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Australia*, Western Australian Museum, 2002
- Hieronimus, Harro, *Aqualog – All Rainbows & related families*, Verlag ACS, Germany 2002
- Larson, H., & Martin, K., *Freshwater Fishes of the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Museum of Arts & Sciences, 1989

- Leggett, R., & Merrick, J., *Australian Native Fishes for Aquariums*, Merrick Publications, 1987
- Pusey, B., Kenard, M., and Arthington, A., *Freshwater Fishes of North-Eastern Australia*, CSIRO Publishing, 2005
- Allen, G., & Cross, N., *Rainbowfishes of Australia & Papua New Guinea*, Angus & Robertson 1982
- Allen G., *Rainbowfishes Their Identification, Care and Breeding*, Tetra-Verlag, 1995
- Cadwallader, P., Backhouse, G., *A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria*, VGPO 1983
- Larson, H., & Martin, K., *Freshwater Fishes of the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Museum of Arts & Sciences, 1989
- Merrick, J. R., and Schmida, G. E., *Australian Freshwater Fishes, Biology and Management*, Griffin Press Ltd, 1984

Magazines:

- *Fishes of Sahul* – produced by ANGFA National
- *ANGFA News* – produced by ANGFA National
- *In Stream* – produced by ANGFA Queensland
- *VicNews* – produced by ANGFA Victoria
- *Rivus* – produced by ANGFA New South Wales
- *Australis* – produced by SANFA South Australia
- *Melanotaenia* – produced by ANGFA Western Australia

Compact Disk (CD): (only available for PCs – not Mac)

- *Rainbowfishes – Their Care & Keeping in Captivity* – produced by ANGFA National

Posters:

- *Australian Native Aquarium Fishes* – set of 5 posters produced by ANGFA National

Want more information?



Books, magazines, CDs, posters, newsletters and a wealth of information on the native fish of our region are all available through ANGFA – visit our website www.angfa.org.au for further information.

Want to learn even more about the wonderful ANGFA Fish of Sahul ... attend a regional meeting of a local state group near you:

- **Queensland:** www.angfaqld.org.au
- **Victoria:** www.angfavic.org
- **New South Wales:** www.angfa-nsw.org
- **South Australia:** www.sanfa.org.au