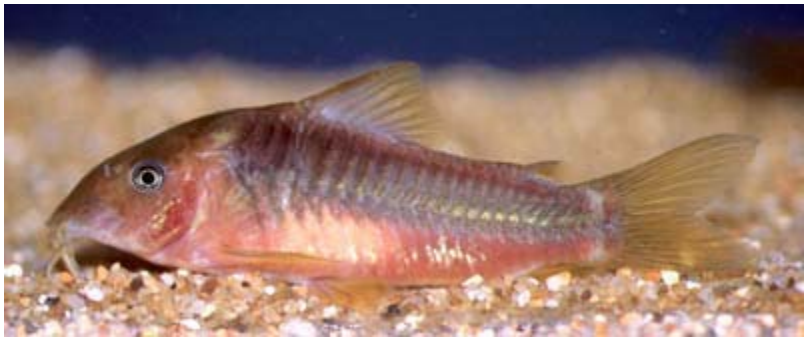
Breeding
Corydoras melanotaenia

By

Mark Bryson

First described by Regan in 1912, *Corydoras melanotaenia* originates from Rio Manacacias, a tributary of the Rio Meta and from various other locations, in Colombia. Body colour is bronze with a yellowish sheen. What catches your eye are the clean fins with bright golden/orange colouration. This colour is more pronounced when the fish are in good condition or ready for breeding.



I bought the fish on 6th March 1999, on one of our club raiding trips south of the border, at Huddersfield Aquatics. This is an excellent outlet that caters mainly for wild caught cichlids and catfish species. I purchased four male (3.5 cm) and two female *melanotaenia*, approximately 5 cm body size for what I thought was a bargain at £2.50 each.

I returned home to Scotland and set them up in a 45 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm quarantine tank. Temperature 22°C pH 6.5. Filtration was by air operated Bio 45 sponge and a corner box filled with ceramic pipes and crushed coral (this prevents the pH from dropping too low). The tank included a small glass trough filled with fine sand and was planted heavily with Java fern. Java moss was weighed down and placed on top of a piece of slate (10 cm x 15 cm). On the slate I had attached small feet which allowed the fish a hiding place and some security as I found them to be very skittish.

The fish were fed at least twice daily on a mixed diet of live white worm, grindal worm, Tetra Prima & Tetra Tabi Min.

The fish were kept in these conditions, until the 4th July 1999, when I re-located their tank to a higher position in the fish hut, which automatically increased the temperature by two degrees because of the space heating. I let things settle down for three weeks and then decided to have a go at getting them to breed. (It's the same old story of when you talk to other aquarists who say they have bred *Corydoras melanotaenia* years and years ago without any problems but they never really enlighten you as to how they did it).

I was did my weekly 25% water changes to all my tanks but I carried out a 40% change to the *melanotaenia* tank using water straight from the domestic supply pH 8.3, temperature below 16°C. Fortunately this had no adverse effect on the fish. Quite the reverse because 72 hours later (29th July) they spawned. The water parameters at time of spawning were Temp 20°C, pH 6.9.

Spawning

Day 1.

The first eggs I found were when I went out to the fish hut to feed the fish at 6.30 pm. Eggs are ivory in

colour and measure 1.5 mm. These had been placed at two different sites within the tank.

Site 1 was on the front glass about 3 cm from the water surface approximately 150 placed in a group 3 cm in diameter with the eggs on top of each other in the same manner that *Corydoras barbatus* lay their eggs.

Site 2 had double the quantity of eggs, the only difference being that some of the eggs were caught up in some Java moss and only 10 cm from the bottom of the tank.

For the purpose of this experiment I divided the eggs into three separate show tanks with water from the breeding tank. An airline was added with slow turnover to give slight water movement and treated as follows:

Site 1 spawning (surface) small amount of methylene blue was added and then removed after 30 minutes by a 95% water change using water from the breeding tank.

Site 2 spawning (bottom) I divided into two separate tanks and labelled them Site 2 and 3.

Site 2 eggs were left as they were with nothing added to the water.

Site 3 methylene blue was added and left for 12 hours and then a 95% water change was done the following morning using water from the breeding tank.

Day 2.

All eggs had now changed colour to light tan, some were eyeing-up. Only six eggs fungused in all of the show tanks. These were removed.

Day 3.

10 am. I carried out a water change to all three tanks after I removed a total of six white fungused eggs.

Day 4.

90% water change was carried out in all small tanks. Again I removed a couple of bad eggs. By the evening most of the eggs had hatched

Day 5.

I carried out water changes to all tanks and removed any shells or dead fry. The fry from lot 2 had started to die off and this had a knock on effect. By the time I returned later in the afternoon, all fry from lot 2 were dead.

Day 6.

Still keeping lots 1 and 3 separate, I transferred the fry into larger tanks (20 cm x 12 cm x 12 cm) with a Bio-foam 45 sponge filter added. Feeding started with micro worm. Prior to each feeding a 50% water change was done using water from the main breeding tank.

Day 7.

All fry were looking well and feeding now was alternated between micro worm and newly hatched brine shrimp. I ensured that a 50% water change was carried out prior to each feeding.

Day 10.

I transferred the fry to 30 cm x 20 cm x 20 cm tanks and they were fed as much brine shrimp as they could eat with a few feedings of grindal worm. Water changes were increased accordingly.

Day 14.

All fry were moved into the same tank (45 cm x 45 cm x 30 cm). I stopped feeding brine shrimp and concentrated on feeding grindal worms, Tetra Prima and Tetra Tabi Min. The fry were now beginning to look like the adults, the only difference being the fins had not coloured up.

Day 30.

All fry were moved to 1015 cm x 45 cm x 30 cm tank. Trickle filter filled with ceramic pipes and crushed coral powered by Fluval 4 internal filter. It is a very rewarding sight to watch up to 300 *Corydoras* fry moving about the bottom of the tank on the lookout for food.

Summary,

I normally like to keep eggs and fry with the parent fish. I believe fry grow faster in that environment. On this

occasion I was quite glad that I did remove most of the eggs because I have never seen a single fry in the parents tank. I know I didn't manage to remove all the eggs at the beginning therefore, from my experience with *C. melanotaenia,* I have observed that they are egg and/or fry eaters. As to the experiment with methylene blue, I'm not too sure what to do about that for the best. I think I'll stick to the method of breeding corys that I have used quite successfully for the last few years, only changing things if the fish are a new species to me. If I do happen to get them to spawn, I normally remove most of the eggs and hatch them in the manner which I have written about, until I know the adults are not going to eat the eggs or fry.