

Corydoras Look-a-likes

By
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Twenty years after I first spawned and raised the two look-alike species *Corydoras rabauti* La Monte, 1941 and *Corydoras zygatus* Eigenmann & Allen, 1942 there is still a great deal of debate as to which one is which. Here I will try to eliminate all doubt.



Corydoras zygatus

Corydoras rabauti

Corydoras zygatus

Size: mature adults

males 65 mm females 70 mm

Colour pattern:

Body light reddish tan, lighter on the belly. A dark broad dark grey band extends posteriorly, from the centre of the head just below the dorsal fin spine, along the dorsal scutes to the caudal peduncle and does not pass either into the caudal fin or onto the ventral scutes. There is a metallic green sheen covering the dark band. There is in most specimens a break in the band, which occurs on the scute adjacent to the dorsal fin spine.

There is a light pink/orange patch below the band just above the eye.

Corydoras rabauti

Size: mature adults

males 45 mm females 50 mm

Colour pattern:

Body reddish tan, lighter on the belly. A dark broad dark grey band extends posteriorly, from the centre of the head just below the dorsal fin spine and along the dorsal scutes to the caudal peduncle. From where it extends across and down into the ventral scutes, then into the lower caudal fin. The band has a matt appearance with very little if any metallic overlay. There is a bright orange patch below the dark band and above the eye, positioned in line with the dorsal fin spine.

The first point to establish is the fact that we are indeed looking at two distinct species, when the type specimens were examined, the differences between them were very small and the debate was whether in fact they were one and the same species. I spawned *Corydoras zygatus* on 21st April 1980 and then three months later on 23rd July my *Corydoras rabauti* spawned. Here I must say that I had not set out to prove anything, other than that I could successfully induce *Corydoras* species to breed. I had at that time successfully spawned and raised sixteen species, keeping detailed notes on all of them, especially the patterns of the developing fry. This was something that had interested me from my very first *Corydoras* spawning, the tiny fry of *Corydoras pygmaeus* were so different from the adults I thought it would be something worth keeping notes on.

The fry of *Corydoras zygatus* at 6 –7 weeks looked very much like many other species of *Corydoras* that I had spawned. It was not until the *Corydoras rabauti* had spawned that I saw a dramatic difference between the developments of the two groups of fry. The *Corydoras rabauti* fry were a stark contrast to those of *Corydoras zygatus*. Several specimens of fry from each spawning, along with an adult female from each spawning group were preserved and sent to Dr's Nijssen and Isbrücker for examination. Their conclusion was that they were indeed two distinct species having almost identical adult colour patterns.

So how do we tell these species apart, with some difficulty I may say? Having kept both species for more than twenty years, I have become quite adept at separating them. The biggest setback is that they are usually imported together, although they come from different localities, because of their colour pattern similarity they are very often mixed together at holding stations prior to being exported.

There is also another area where these two species differ; this is in the eggs that they produce. A single female *Corydoras zygatus* can produce in excess of 600 eggs in one spawning session. A *Corydoras rabauti* female on the other hand only produces up to 100 eggs. There is also a difference in egg size and the number laid at a time. *Corydoras zygatus* lays 1.0 mm diameter eggs and produces them in groups of 4 – 12 at each mating. *Corydoras rabauti* lays eggs that are nearly twice the size at 1.75 mm diameter but only produces 3 – 6 at each mating. The sites favoured to deposit their eggs by each of these species also vary. *Corydoras zygatus* prefer to deposit their eggs on solid objects near to the surface of the water; *Corydoras rabauti* however like to lay their eggs in a variety of places and at all depths, mostly they favour fine leaf plants such as Java moss, or the fine roots of plants like Java fern.



Corydoras zygatus at 6 – 7



Corydoras rabauti at 6 – 7 weeks

Originally there was another species involved, *Corydoras myersi* Miranda Ribeiro, 1942 this proved to be a synonym of *Corydoras rabauti*, although I still see the name being used today.