

AMATEUR COLLECTORS PERSONIFIED

by Harry E Abrams Jr.

Did you ever go wading with your shoes on when you were a kid and have your mother yell at you for getting them wet? Well, now as an aquarist interested in Native fishes you can do the same and have your wife yell at you. Oh sure, you can wear hip boots but that takes half the fun out of collecting and besides, how many people can afford hip boots just to collect fish?

Well, to get to the title of this article. A member of our club, Tony Benages, volunteered to take some of us out to collect darters and Fundulus. We were very well equipped for this trip, our equipment consisting of one home-made seine whose holes were too large and two 10 inch aquarium dip nets, plus a lot of gallon jugs since Tony wanted to take some creek water back with him.

Our first stop was a small creek north of Indianapolis, Ind., which is relatively unpolluted and while we had no trouble collecting the water, mosquito bites and leeches, we did have some trouble with the darters, (Orange-Throated - *Etheostoma spectabile*). Believe it or not, we tried the too large seine a few times before we finally decided we were wasting our time. Then after some trial and error we hit on two ways to use our dip nets. The first method was for one of us to place both nets side by side on the bottom and another would walk down-stream toward them running his hands close to the bottom. When he got close, the nets were lifted and many times contained several darters. The other method was to hold the net in one hand just downstream from a large rock or group of rocks and then run the other hand around the rock thus chasing some darters into the net. We got a lot of darters this way but we got awfully wet.

Next we went to a state fishing pond to collect *Fundulus notatus*. These top-dwelling killies were a different matter entirely from the darters. Since we did not have a seine, we again used the dip nets in the following manner: we would wade around in the shallows very slowly until we spotted one or two fish, then we would get close enough to reach them and swoop the net down from above and twist the net in coming up. I read another article recently where the author said they caught theirs by bringing the net slowly underneath the fish and then up. Perhaps we were in-ordinately inept but we had no luck this way.

An interesting note to this collecting is that when the Indianapolis Aquarium Society recently had the Director of Fish and Wildlife at one of their meetings, he was asked about any laws governing the collecting of these type of fishes and he did not know the answer. He is supposed to check and let us know if there are any laws and when I find out I will let NANFA know.

Well, anyway, maybe we aren't the greatest collectors in the world, but we did get some fish and had a ball doing so and to me this is one of the best features about keeping natives - the chance to collect your own instead of buying them. I recommend it highly.