

BLUEFIN KILLIFISH

by D. Weber

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The Bluefin Killifish (Lucania goodei) is one of the smaller and more colorful of the native killifish. Bluefin males seldom exceed 2-2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " , with the females a little smaller. The body of L. goodei is elongated, more akin to a minnow than to the typical killie. The major sex difference is in the unpaired fins; blue on the anal and dorsal fins distinguishes the males.

The overall body color of the fish is brown. The fish is bisected by a dark longitudinal line, beginning at the mouth and extending through the eye to the caudal peduncle. Body color above this line is a lighter brown with subtle green highlights. The underside is a more pale brown, almost a cream color.

The dorsal and anal fins are a vibrant, iridescent blue, tinged at their bases with varying amounts of red. All of this is enclosed in a distinctive black margin that serves to highlight the adult male, who seems continually on display. The caudal fin also has its color, though not as distinctive; it begins with small areas of blue at the base and then a noticeable concentration of red, which begins as vivid, pales out to a pink, and finally leaves the last quarter of the caudal translucent. All the fins of the female are void of color.

It seems that color in L. goodei is a variable depending on the health of the fish and the quality of its environment. I have seen this fish in poor physical condition, maintained in a crowded tank; the fish totally lacked any of the vibrant coloring after which it was named.

My pair is maintained in a five-gallon tank with a box filter--for aeration and a mild current which the Bluefin seems to prefer--and a large mop about two inches longer than the tank is deep. The mop is dark green, more for my psychological well-being than that of the fishes. L. goodei are very tolerant of temperature and water conditions. My fish room can vary from the high 80s by day to the low 50s at night.

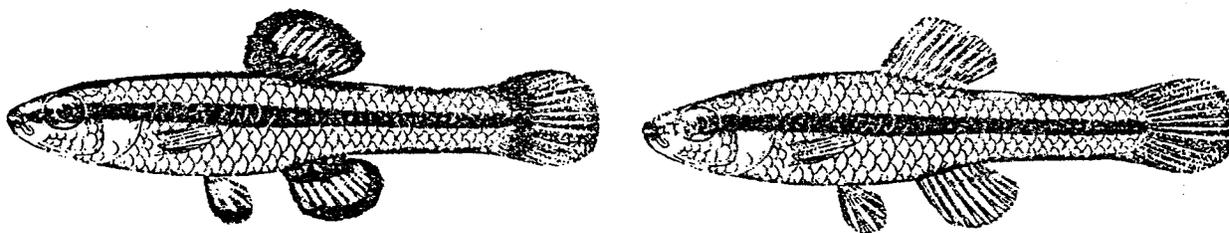
I try to feed only live foods, varying from adult and baby brine shrimp to tubifex worms and daphnia, but the fish have no qualms about freeze-dried or flake foods.

In their spawning, the Bluefins utilize the entire length of the mop, with preference given to the upper portions (though I have collected eggs from the bottom). One strange thing I've noticed is that I don't seem to get eggs daily; rather, I get from six to ten eggs every other day. I think it has to do with the rate or the ability of the female to ovulate successfully, because the male drives continuously, the pair embrace and enter the mop, but no eggs are laid on those intermediate days.

Also, as yet, I have not noticed the need for a "wintering" period, i.e., the need to keep the fish at a lower temperature for an extended period of time prior to attempting to induce spawning.

The eggs and fry are quite small, but present no special problems. Eggs hatch in about 12 days at 68°, and the fry can take sifted baby brine right from the start; however, I prefer to start them off on infusoria and microworms for a few days, and then convert them to larger foods. Fry are relatively slow growers--sexable in three months, but not fully mature until one year.

Raising a batch of Bluefins is rewarding. They tend to be schooling fish, and make a very attractive display.



BLUEFIN KILLIE: Notes

Male left, female right. Illus. of fem. from Atlas; illus. of male modified from it.

COLOR: Black zones in male anal and dorsal never as solid as shown here. Dark zone near body in male dorsal fin sometimes punctuated with yellow spot and red spot; variable yellow and red trim in dorsal. Interior of dorsal and anal of male usually light blue, but mature specimen in right light shows deep blue iridescence. Black horizontal line in both sexes may appear zig-zag rather than solid and thick as illustrated.

RANGE: Most of Florida; S.E. Ala.; coastal Ga. & S.C.

NATIVES IN PET SHOPS

An ancient and honorable way to come by native fishes has always been to look through shipments of tropicals to pet stores. In the Phila. area, this has been unusually productive of late. Lucania goodei--some adults in extraordinarily good color--have turned up in shipments of ghost shrimp and feeder guppies. Ghost shrimp have also been accompanied by Gambusia affinis and Heterandria formosa. The latter have also been turning up at random. Check out the stores, since your area has to be receiving shipments of tropicals from some of the same sources.