

THE CREEK CHUBSUCKER (Erimyzon oblongus): Belated Letter to the Editor

by Bruce Gebhardt, Philadelphia, PA

The Creek Chubsucker was the subject of a featured article by Harold H. Gray in the Spring 1981 issue of the old-style American Currents (actually received around February, 1982). The article was an excellent, informative treatment of its subject. It was limited to specimens 5.9" long and longer, however, so some comment on smaller specimens is warranted.

While Mr. Gray noted that the color of younger specimens differs from those specimens he studies, the appearance of the young is quite attractive and deserves special mention. Their outstanding characteristic is that thick, intensely black lateral stripe, as Mr. Gray notes. The belly is white. Above the black stripe is a yellow stripe, and above that a darker zone which appears brown. Larger specimens tend to a broken, indistinct lateral stripe, and sometimes even vertical blotches. Those larger still are more monotonously colored, sometimes olive-green or brassy overall. In times of stress, specimens of any size may show less color than usual. An interesting color variation not mentioned in the previous article is the possibility of red, reddish, or red-orange tint in the fins. This is not usually very noticeable, but occasionally is prominent enough to be an attractive accent.

Creek Chubsuckers can do very well in aquaria, but that is not a certainty. Initially, it may be difficult to bring them back alive. They should not be crowded in bags, and if no oxygenation is available, cooling is a good idea.

Once in the aquaria, Creek Chubsuckers have a reputation for not eating. I have been most successful with fish raised from unrecognizable slivers. Started on infusoria and live baby brine shrimp, they were switched to flake food. The only subsequent feeding problem ever encountered was that when food was introduced to their tank, they went crazy, hurtling toward their objectives with frightening speed and momentum. This frightened other fish and led to surprising amounts of water being splashed on the feeder and the floor.

Most of the time, they are bottom-feeders--in fact, among the most diligent bottom-feeders I have ever kept. This can be a useful aquarium trait, but as they grow it becomes a problem: they tend to keep things stirred up.

--BG