

IF THEY'RE GOOD ENOUGH FOR STERBA, THERE GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

by PETE MOSSE

Have any of you fish fans out there ever considered a native aquarium? Don't laugh, stop and think it over. You'll be keeping some of the most expensive and desirable aquarium fish sold in Europe! You have a myriad of fish to choose from - all sizes, shapes, colors and temperaments.

Let's look at just a few of them.

FUNDULUS NOTATUS (black striped top minnow)

A real honest to gosh killifish, approximately 3" in length, typically killie in appearance, with a black stripe full length. Spawnable in the aquarium. (mop spawner) Found locally.

RAINBOW DARTER

An amusing little fish with no swim bladder, perches on rocks, leaves, etc. Rivals killifish in color - alternating orange and blue vertical bands. Goby-like in appearance. Head swivels from side to side.

BROOKS SILVERSIDE

Approximately 2" in length. Body long and slim, similar to *Copeina arnoldi* in appearance (no adipose fin). Body like brightly polished silver. Scales so small as to appear non-existent. Fragile.

RED HORSE MINNOW

Some of you may own this fish already and not know it. It's similar to small tinnoils in appearance and is sometimes sold in aquarium shops as "Asiatic Fire Barbs". Body silver to blue grey in color with orange to red finnage. Can be quarrelsome.

SUNFISH

About a zillion varieties. Avoid the large mouthed varieties (rock bass, etc.) A very intelligent fish. One of my green sunfish was taking meal worms from my fingers the day after I caught it. Somewhat territorial.

In addition to the abovementioned varieties, there are innumerable minnows that have an interesting appearance in the aquarium. Daces, other killies, some compressed minnows that look like tetras, etc.

To collect these fish, all you need is a rudimentary knowledge of their habitats and habits (the *Fundulus notatus* for example, can only be caught with a flashlight on a dark night), a seine, and if you want to play it safe, a collectors permit. Check with your local conservation officer to find the procedure for obtaining this. It varies from state to state.

A few common sense items to remember: wild fish are much more likely to carry disease than aquarium raised fish. A lengthy quarantine period is advised along with medication.

Local fish generally have a low tolerance for salt. Use cautiously and sparingly.

As with tropicals, avoid overcrowding. Although most fish make the transition with little harm, the metabolism is increased and necessitates increased surface area. Many local fish are territorial. Give them floating plants (can be local since these fish have a greater resistance to local diseases), rockwork, caves, driftwood, etc.

(Continued on page 5)

IF THEY'RE GOOD ENOUGH FOR STERBA, ... (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

It should go without saying that you avoid a great disparity in sizes. A Brooks silverside is just a beautiful snack to a hungry rock bass.

All in all, a beautiful native aquarium (community) can be set up with the only expense being your time. If the community tank isn't your bag, the field is even more wide open. How about a pickerel that won't even top 8" in your aquarium? Grass pickerel, a long nosed gar (most seen in shops are from the United States), a dwarf catfish (Brindled Mad Tom) found locally that doesn't exceed 5" even in nature. I could go on and describe more fish for you, but that's the fun of native fish, you never know what's in the next seine. As the badly overworked saying goes, "Try it, you'll like it!"