

Keeping and Spawning the Golden Ear Topminnow, *Fundulus chrysotus*

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by

B. G. Granier

608 Maureen Drive, Baker, LA 70714, bgcajun@aquaria.net

The golden ear topminnow, or killifish (*Fundulus chrysotus*, pictured on front cover), is found in much of the southeastern United States. This fish is among the most attractive native killifishes that I have collected and are easily kept and spawned. It inhabits the top one or two inches of the waters in which it occurs and therefore is very adaptable to aquarium life.

Typically, the golden ear is found in shallow to moderately deep areas of lakes, sloughs, bayous and even ditches in my state of Louisiana, as long as there is sufficient weedy habitat to support them. They do not occur in any areas that are devoid of floating vegetation.

The adults reach lengths of three to almost four inches. The males are particularly striking, with a spattering of red dots over the rear half of the body, extending to the caudal fin. Underlying the red dotting effect, male golden ears have a multi-hued body coloration of blue to violet and green. The females are unique among females of any killie species, in that they have golden, metallic like spots over a lime-green, translucent body that is very attractive. In contrast, most other killifish females are quite drab. Both sexes have a golden bar on the gill plates, which is the identifying mark of this species—hence the name “golden ear.”

These fish are easily kept in aquaria and are easily spawned if the sexes are at first separated and fully conditioned with flake, live and/or frozen foods like brine shrimp, bloodworms, mosquito larvae, etc. Males and females can be kept in a community tank and will probably spawn frequently, but the eggs will most likely be eaten.

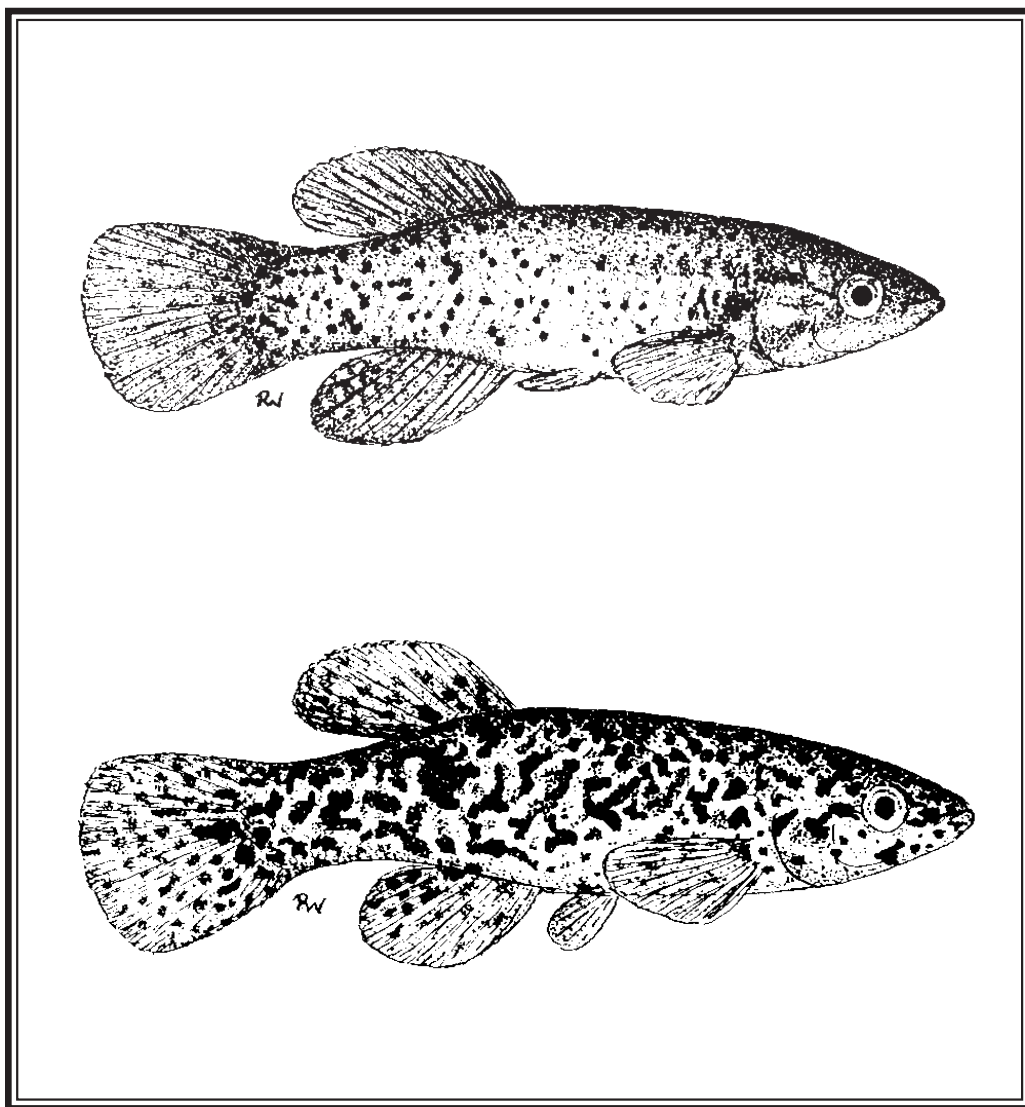
To spawn the golden ear topminnow, you'll need to add the females, one or two at a time, into a tank containing

one male. Keep the tank well lit and the fish well fed. If you are using the natural method of reproduction, the tank must be dense with floating plants such as hornwort, water sprite and duckweed. This gives the young protection from the adults once they have hatched. You'll need to check the tank every day for a little pair of eyes hiding in the vegetation, and rapidly remove the fry to a growing-out container, as the adults will eat them if given the chance.

If you prefer a hands-on, less natural approach, then use a nylon yarn mop attached to a cork. As with the natural method, add one or two females to the breeding tank with one male and then check the spawning mop daily for any eggs. Keep the adults well-fed and use plenty of lighting. Use a plastic container (a margarine tub, for example) for an egg incubator, filling it half-full with the adult's tank water. Gently pick the fairly large and firm eggs from the nylon strands and place the eggs into the container. Store the container in a dark place like the top shelf of a closet and after 12 days check the container for any fry that may have hatched.

For a first food, I recommend newly hatched brine shrimp. Golden ear topminnow fry have large appetites and will grow quite rapidly until they can be graduated to larger foods. In general, males can be distinguished from females at 4-6 months of age and reach full maturity at 12 months of age.

The golden ear topminnow is the first killifish that I ever collected in my youth, and it remains my favorite native killie. To me, they are the essence of native fish-keeping and should be enjoyed by everyone. You'll be amazed at both the size of their eggs and the ease of their maintenance in captivity.



Two forms of the golden ear topminnow, *Fundulus chrysotus*. The top is the regular form; the bottom specimen shows the melanistic form, with many black spots on the body and fins. See B.G. Granier's article on the keeping of this species, p. 15. Illustrations are by Rudolf H. Wildekamp and are from his multi-volume book, *A World of Killies: Atlas of the Oviparous Cyprinontiform Fishes of the World* (©American Killifish Association). See pp. 10-11 for a brief review.