

Mating Dance of the BLUNTNOSE DACE

by RAYMOND KATULA

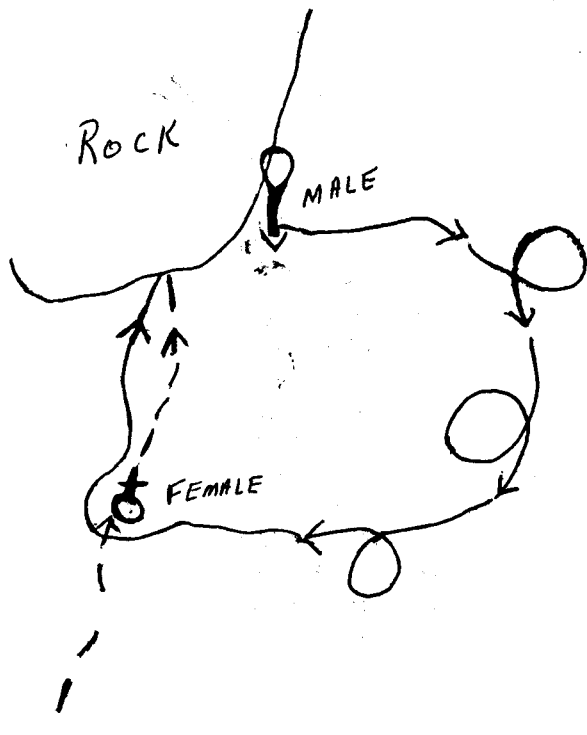
Below my house there is a big slough where I collect small Rainbow Darters, Etheostoma caeruleum, Perch, Perca flavescens, Sunny Madtom's, and one species of minnow — the Bluntnose Minnow, Pimephales notatus.

One interesting feature this minnow has is its mating dance. The male changes his color from silvery with a stripe down its side to a bluish iridescence.

Late Spring is the time when you can expect to find these fish at Nature's task of breeding. They lay their eggs on the underside of a rock during May and June. Here is how I procured my eggs: I set up pieces of slate on the side of rocks, checking them daily, and removing those that had eggs on them. Taking the slate home, I placed it in a large aquarium with an airstone near the eggs to keep oxygen circulating over them.

As I stated before, these Pimephales notatus have an interesting mating dance. The male picks a rock to lay the eggs on, cleaning off all algae and dirt. Having cleaned the rock, he waits for a female to come by. When a female closes in, he begins circling her while nudging her over to the rock where they commence spawning. After spawning, the male chases the female away. He now guards the eggs during their incubation. Three days later, the eggs begin to hatch. Rarely does the fish care for the fry, although I did observe them (in the wild) loyally herd them.

These fish are such eager breeders, that one day while wading after class, my shoe was at such an angle, that a pair of P. notatus came under it and began spawning on them. It was impossible to save these eggs, but I got a very good harvest that day. I recommend these fish to the novice native fish breeder. They are small, frisky, and very easy to breed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ray is an avid beginner in natives. While only 13 years old, he has bred many of them, and is anxious to spread his limited knowledge of them. He has kept fish for only two years and is already on his way to becoming an aquarist who is dedicated to his hobby.

He has 8 tanks set up, presently, which contains an assortment of American fish fed on live and frozen foods. Using both undergravel and outside filters helps Ray keep his fish in good health.

Keep up the good work, Ray .
(You don't need an educational institute to correct or judge a willing worker).