

NORTH AMERICAN FISHES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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It has often been said that the temperate fishes of North America, particularly those associated with the family of Sunfishes, Centrarchidae, are popular throughout western Europe and are well sought after; though I must confess the fishkeeping circles within my area of travel in the United Kingdom have not revealed the number of enthusiasts I'd like to see. However, there may be a move afoot in the not too distant future to form a "North American Native Fish Society of Great Britain". I have spoken to some friends who, like myself, interest themselves in the coldwater fishes from your part of the world and are highly enthusiastic about the idea.

It is unfortunate though that the variety of fishes at our disposal is not considerable. Owing to the complete lack of demand, the minnows, northern killies, darters and a great number of your sunfishes never find themselves on the British market owing, in turn, to the much greater leaning towards tropical fishkeeping and to a lesser degree specialization in marine fishes and fancy goldfish.

Purely by chance we may encounter the occasional fathead minnow (*Pimephales promelas*) which have come over with a consignment of goldfish and a rare batch of red shiners (*Notropis lutrensis*) being sold as tropicals. I even saw some *Notropis hypselopterus* on two isolated occasions. I am personally perhaps rather fortunate, having, on two occasions, been on vacation in the U.S.A. during the last three years and as a result returning to England with a variety of fishes that I had caught in the local ponds and streams. It will, however, be quite a prodigious task breeding some of them.

The fishes we are able to obtain from time to time are confined to the family Centrarchidae. Small consignments of Pumpkinseed, (*Lepomis gibbosus*), green sunfish, (*Lepomis cyanellus*), blue-spotted sunfish, (*Enneacanthus glotiosus*), fliers, (*Centrarchus macropterus*), and rock bass, (*Ambloplites rupestris*) are imported from Germany and the Netherlands. Black-banded sunfish, (*Enneacanthus chaetodon*) are invariably imported from the far east.

You will see then that we, in England, have very little scope as regards variety; furthermore the fishes in contention for study in this country tend to be large as opposed to small. It would be in our interest to obtain more of the ideal aquarium fishes of the three inch adult range though the sunfishes would still have their place on the required list.

Returning once more to the possibility of forming a North American Native Fish Society over here, it will be my intention in the not too distant future to get together all the prospective members throughout the country with the view of a campaign to obtain a

variety of fishes in bulk supply. Of course, this can only materialise if the acquisition of the required fishes is at all possible - at your end.

In the event of a successful bulk importation all costs will be shared by the interested participants and the fishes shared out accordingly. I now pose the question - is this possible from your end? I would be glad of any guidance but at the same time ready to accept a 'not on' if your answer is in the negative and leave it at that.

It has been my ambition for some time to get 'coldwater fishes' on the map and I know for a fact that less is known about them than a larger percentage of their tropical counterparts. It will of course be of interest to you to know of any successes we may have in breeding. No doubt you are well aware that there exists a considerable variation of pH values and degrees of hardness throughout the waters of England, Scotland and Wales. For example, in the Portsmouth area of which I am a resident, the water has a pH value of 7.2 and the degree of hardness is 350 parts per million. In complete contrast Edinburgh's water is very soft; the pH value I don't know but the DH is 20.

In respect of temperature ranges, at least in my own case, I believe in 'wintering' my fishes properly. Living in the south of England it is possible for me to maintain January and February temperatures at the low thirties without having to use a greenhouse heater in my fish-house though when the winter is really hard the heat from the apparatus is adequate enough to prevent the formation of ice on the surface of the water. Summer water temperatures usually reach the low seventies.

All my tanks are adequately self-supporting without the use of the artificial aids of fluorescent lighting, air pumps and filtration. In consequence they are heavily planted; with an American rooted plant *Sagittaria subulata natans* being by far the most prolific. The above mentioned is certainly an invaluable species for giving life support to the types of fishes I keep. Not all the fishes of my requirements will tolerate such an environment though. I have never kept any of the darters and I believe it is imperative to keep them under fairly constant aeration because of their high oxygen requirements. Obviously for these particular fishes I would need a different set-up. At the time writing I am totally unaware of the nature of fish-house arrangements employed by my coldwater colleagues over here but, as I said earlier there will be a get-together as soon as it can be arranged.

Last August, the Portsmouth Aquarists Society held a one week open show and exhibition. There were over thirty classes in the judged show and eight exhibition stands and it was the latter which appealed to the general public most of all. One of the stands was entitled "Coldwater Fishes of North America" for which I was solely responsible. The naturally live specimens were mostly fishes I had caught in New Jersey and imported one month earlier and they made a great

display, particularly as most of the different species benched had never been seen before. I was hoping for a greater selection than I already had but this wasn't possible, but the fact remains, I was trying to advertise the fact that there were more fishes to be had in the coldwater field if only it was possible for this particular range to become an established market 'product'.

I'm afraid a number of the fishes were lacking in colour- a few redbelly dace, redbelly dace and rainbow darters would have been eye-catchers.

It is essential then that we must make an effort to get these fishes 'on the map' so to speak in order to harness the interest of the coldwater specialists over here and we can only do this, initially at any rate, by injecting an immediate flow of supply from an originating source. If you can assist us we shall be overwhelmed with gratitude and if it is at all possible to return the favour in some way we would, I know, bend over backwards in our efforts to try. Possibly you may be interested in some of the temperate fishes at our disposal which you never see!
