

PET SHOP NATIVES, OR HOW TO AVOID GOING SWIMMING WITH YOUR CLOTHES ON

By Dan Kosta

Over the last few months I have noticed more and more natives for sale in pet shops. This is a great aid to those who are either not hardy enough or do not have the time to go collecting. It's also a great way to avoid an unintentional bath.

These fishes are generally of high quality and often are quite young. For years the only natives available from these shops were Flagfish and an occasional Bullhead Catfish. Now the selection has widened considerably. Since these fish are probably tank-raised, they take to aquarium life readily and no long adaptation period is required. Also, the threat of parasites is greatly reduced.

I have acquired Flagfish, Banded Killifish, and Black-Banded Sunfish from local pet shops and am quite pleased with them. Their colors returned after only a couple of days, and all have accepted freeze-dried foods from the

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time that I got them. My only problem so far has been with the killies. When I got them home I placed them in fresh water. A few days later the female was on her back and having difficult swimming. After being placed in brackish water, she recovered and I have had no problems since. I used one teaspoon of salt per gallon along with tetra-cycline.

I strongly suggest acquiring fishes in this way. Any time that it is possible to avoid removing specimens from their native habitats this alternative should be taken. It aids in the conservation effort since no fish need be removed from their native waters and, thus, does not deplete the wild stock of these fishes. We can help this trend along by buying natives in fish shops and by encouraging others to do the same.

Another advantage to natives being sold in stores is that more people in the hobby will have a chance to try natives without having to take the time and effort to collect them from the wild.

Go ahead and try store-bought natives. I'm sure that you won't regret it.