CRIMSON TIDE, NEON LIGHTS: *Notropis chrosomus*

by B.G. Granier, Baker, Louisiana

On March 16, 1994, I met NANFA member Dr. Richard (Rick) L. Mayden at his office--Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alabama. "BAMA"! "The Crimson Tide"! Home of Bear Bryant and one of the legendary football teams of the Southeastern Conference. But we weren't there to talk about football; rather, to talk about Alabama's native shiners, especially the Rainbow Shiner (*Notropis chrosomus*).

I had previously mailed specimens of *Pteronotropis welaka* to Rick and had maintained contact with him. When the occasion arose for me to attend a technical training course at the AT&T Training Center in Atlanta, Georgia, I got on the phone with Rick and told him I would be traveling through Tuscaloosa, Alabama, home of the University, on my way to Atlanta. We arranged a collecting trip to Schultz Creek, Bibb County, Alabama, for *Notropis chrosomus*.

After a brief tour of the impressive facilities at Rick's office, we loaded some gear into my truck and proceeded to Schultz Creek, about 30 minutes south of Tuscaloosa. When we arrived at the site, we put on our waders and took a look at the creek. Air temperature was a nice, comfortable 70°F and the water was at 64°F. The creek--shallow on one side, deeper on the other--is bordered by pine and deciduous trees. The substrate is sand and gravel, punctuated by the usual snags of fallen tree limbs, and an occasional clump of aquatic plants. Within the course of an hour, we collected some 20-plus individuals of *N. chrosomus*, about an equal number of Rough Shiners (*Notropis baileyi*), several Striped Shiners (*Luxilus chrysocephalus isolepis*), and one Alabama Hog Sucker (*Hypentelium etowanum*). Most of the *N. chrosomus* were taken by stationing the seine immediately downstream of a depression on the deep side of the creek and driving the prey downstream into the net, using a stomping, splashing action at the edge of the creek channel, forcing the quarry into our seine. After each quick check of the net, we released all but the desired species and placed the latter into a one-gallon bucket before transfer into the transport container, a 40-quart ice chest that was to be their home for the next nine days, while I attended the aforementioned seminar in Atlanta.

When Rick and I shed our waders and took a break from our labors, we assessed the catch of the day. The Rainbow Shiner couldn't be more aptly named! Imagine the vibrancy, the brilliance, of a Cardinal Tetra with its neon colors superimposed onto a shiner! Fluorescent purple sides, neon-pink gill plates, and a scattering of metallic blue spots on the nape of the male fish, together with its powder-blue lower fins, make it a magnificent sight to behold. Both sexes have red in the dorsal and in the other fins, and the female

has some of the metallic blue spots on the nape. The males' intensity seems to have three levels: 110 volts for normal mood, 220v for attracting females, and 440v when actually in spawning activities!

While I may be over-exuberant in trying to describe the various colors of *N. chrosomus* to you, I hope that you get an idea of the splendor of the fishes' coloration! I did take some video of Dr. Mayden and of the fishes. To me, the former subject also shined. He was nursing a recent back injury, but was entirely and unrelentingly devoted to collecting!

I delivered Rick back to his office and offered my thanks, time and time again, and was off on my way to Atlanta with a total of nine males and 11 females of the Rainbow Shiner and six unsexed Rough Shiners.

After nine days in the motel room and 600 miles from Atlanta to Baton Rouge, they all survived! And that in itself is a story, which I'll tell in another issue.

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