

# Spawning the Marsh Killifish, *Fundulus confluentus*

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by

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The marsh killifish is primarily a brackish water killifish found along the Florida coastline from Pensacola to Key West, and up the eastern coast to Jacksonville. While the species prefers brackish water, it is also found in freshwater and marine habitats, in shallow, warm water that is heavily vegetated. *Fundulus confluentus* is a medium-sized killie, reaching three inches in length when mature.

The male *F. confluentus* displays alternating bars of light and darker colors, usually silver-gray and charcoal-gray along its side. Its orange-tinted dorsal, anal and caudal fins possess many silver-gray spangles.

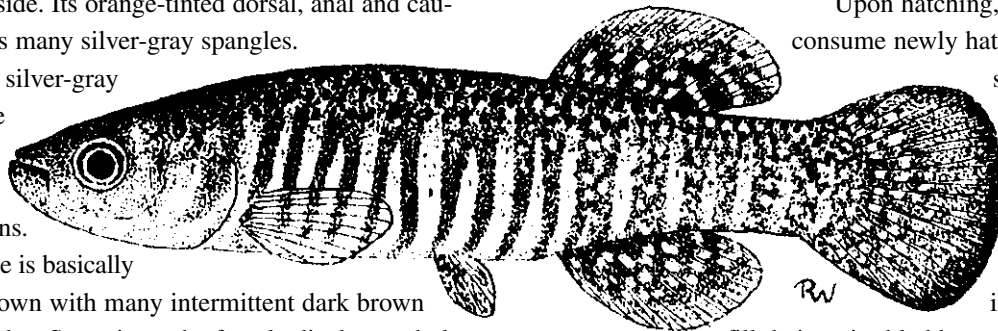
There is also a silver-gray variation of the male which lacks the orange-hued fins.

The female is basically a yellowish-brown with many intermittent dark brown spots on her sides. Sometimes the female displays a dark ocellus, or eye spot, on the dorsal fin.

The species should be kept in hard freshwater, with one teaspoon of marine salt added per gallon. I keep mine in a bare 20-gallon tank with an outside power filter and a nylon spawning mop that has sunken to the bottom of the tank. The specific gravity (salinity) is 1.008, and the temperature of the water is 80°F. The pair in this tank is doing well on a diet of flake food with occasional feedings of mosquito larvae and brine shrimp nauplii. The tank is situated on a stand outside on my patio and receives about 14 hours of indirect sunlight each day.

I recommend checking the spawning mop daily for eggs. When eggs are present, put some water from the tank into a small container with a lid, carefully collect the eggs, then place them into the container. Keep the egg container in a darker area so that the eggs are not exposed to bright light, and maintain them at approximately the same temperature as the adult's tank. The eggs should begin to hatch in 15 to 21 days. So far, I've had no problems with fungus.

Upon hatching, the fry will consume newly hatched brine shrimp. Be sure the hatch in shallow water so that they can immediately



fill their swim bladders with air, otherwise they will be "belly-sliders" and won't survive to maturity.

Marsh killifish grow to sexual maturity in six to eight months. They show very little aggression towards each other and can be kept in a community tank. That is, until you decide which specimens of this highly desirable North American native are the most desirable to spawn and move to a spawning tank!

*Illustration by Rudolf H. Wildekamp, from his book A World of Killies: Atlas of the Oviparous Cyprinodontiform Fishes of the World. Volume III. © 1996 The American*