

Along Cenderawasih Bay

The extensive article of Johannes Graf and Gary Lange about their trip to Nabire in 2012 and the interesting account of how they got to Sungai Siriwo, reminded me of our own trip in January 2015. Together with my friend, Jeffrey Christian from Maju Aquarium (Cibinong, Java) and another “northern light” and IRG-fellow, Andreas Wagnitz, we visited Nabire and its surroundings to look for rainbowfishes. Of course, we also travelled to the Siriwo, and were able to catch rainbow fish there (Evers 2015).

In the Topo drainage

We also looked for fishes in the Sungai Topo, however the Topo itself was a huge disappointment. The water was murky

brown due to the damage caused by gold-diggers who are trying their luck further upstream, thereby destroying the whole environment in the process.

We stopped to fish in a small stream along the road to Enatorali, 16 km after leaving Nabire. The locals called the stream Sungai Lebki. The Sungai Lebki is a tributary of the Sungai Wami, which reaches Cenderawasih Bay close to Nabire. The slightly turbid water had a temperature of 26.3 °C, a conductivity of 416 µS/cm, and a pH of 8.2. There we caught a form of *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* whose colours are very different from those of the *Melanotaenia* sp. “Topo” which I kept a few years ago. Specimen collected and preserved by Gary and Johannes at that location were

▼ “Covered in gold” – that’s how I know *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* “Topo”.





Sungai Lebki is a small tributary of Sungai Wami, which empties into Cenderawasih Bay near Nabire (all photos: H.-G. Evers).

▼ *Mating male of *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* “Lebki”.*



used as type specimen for *Melanotaenia grunwaldi*.

We also collected further up in the mountains in a stream called Sungai Pepaya, which is a tributary to Sungai Topo. Sungai Topo also reaches Cenderawasih Bay near Nabire. The colour pattern of these fishes is also significantly different from that of the *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* collected at the type location. Allen et al. (2016) list the fish we collected and preserved as paratypes.

I am currently keeping the form from Sungai Lebki, which I suggest we should call *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* “Lebki”, for the sake of keeping the locations distinct. Similarly, we should use the name *Melanotaenia grunwaldi* “Topo” for the fish from that location, which are currently also being kept in aquaria. This way, we will be

able to differentiate these two forms and avoid mixing them.

Heading west along the coastal road

We wanted to spend one whole day to get as far as possible on the coastal road west of Nabire.

We had spoken with several locals in Nabire, including professional truckers, who all confirmed that a new road was currently being built, that will follow the coastline all the way up to the “neck” of the Vogelkop peninsula and eventually reach as far north as Manokwari.

Jeffrey and I were already familiar with the area between the Vogelkop “neck” and Manokwari, where we discovered a rainbowfish in 2013 which has now been described as *Melanotaenia sikuensis* by Nughara et al. (2015). IRG members will

▼ A quite small rainforest creek with a deeper pool near a gravel road – this is what Sungai Mamah looked like at the location we visited.



also know this fish by its provisional name of *Melanotaenia* spec. “Isim”. I will not forget that ride, as it was one of the toughest and most dangerous road travel experiences I have ever had!

Our trip along the coast started on an asphalt road which was quickly replaced by a gravel track, and was an easy stroll by comparison. We easily made our way from one stream to the next, kept on pushing ourselves forward to go even further (“We will check this on the way back, let’s go as far as we can!”), and eventually reached the end of the road some



Male of *Melanotaenia mamahensis*.

fifty kilometres west of Nabire. From there on, there were only a few more kilometres of cleared construction tracks, and then untouched coastal rainforest.

We stopped at a hut and asked the lady we met there – who was the only human being we ever saw in this place – for per-

▼ *Andreas collecting water parameters at Sungai Mamah, in the pool created by the road and surrounded by untouched rainforest.*





▲ “Yawning” female of *Melanotaenia mamahensis*.

mission to fish in the little stream which flowed near her house. I had seen rainbowfishes, and Andi was already hunting his beloved gobies. The water of Sungai Mamah, which was the name of this stream according to the local lady, was crystal clear. The temperature was 26.3 °C, conductivity was 143 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ and pH 7.9. The coast of Cenderawasih Bay was very close, and we could occasionally see the ocean from the road. I assume that Sungai Mamah empties directly into the bay.

The rainbowfish we caught seemed similar at first glance to those of the Siriwo (*Melanotaenia bowmani*) and those of the Lebki (*Melanotaenia grunwaldi*), however the males were differently coloured. No one had ever looked for rainbowfishes as far west of Nabire before us, and we were sure that this was yet another undescribed species. This species from Sungai Mamah was recently described as *Melanotaenia mamahensis* (in reference to the type loca-

tion), so that there is one more described species available within the IRG. I was able to breed *Melanotaenia mamahensis* without any problems, so that the current stock seems secure.

Literature

Allen, Unmack & Hadiaty (2016): The Goldiei group of rainbowfishes (Melanotaeniidae) from the Birds Neck Region of New Guinea (Papua and West Papua Provinces, Indonesia) with descriptions of five new species and recognition of *Melanotaenia dumasi* Weber. *Aqua*, 22(1): 1-31.

Evers (2015): Siriwo – ein Fluss voller Überraschungen. *AMAZONAS* 60, 11(4): 60-65.

Nughara, Kadarusman, Hubert, Avarre, Hadiaty, Slembrouck, Carman, Sudarto, Ogistira & Pouyaud (2015): Eight new species of Rainbowfishes (Melanotaeniidae) from the Birds Head Region, West Papua, Indonesia. *Cybium* 2015, 39 (2): 99-130.

This paper has been published in:



The publication is under copyright. You may download the PDF for private purposes, print out personal copies and link to www.irg-online.de/rfe in print or communication. For other use please contact info@irg-online.de.

Regenbogenfisch is the quarterly journal of the IRG, published in German and Dutch and included in the membership fee. Some of the content is additionally provided in English as PDF files.

IRG - Internationale Gesellschaft für Regenbogenfische e.V. (International Rainbowfish Association), founded in 1986, is a community of fishkeepers with special interest in rainbowfishes, blue-eyes, and other freshwater species from Australia, New Guinea and the close-by islands. Most of our 500+ members live in Europe. 100+ species and varieties are kept and homebred in our aquaria. In regional meetings fish and information are exchanged. Our transnational, annual convention brings together many members and sees presentations of experts and the world's largest rainbowfish sale. The date is fixed each year to the second weekend of June.

Do you want to know more?
Just browse to www.irg-online.de.

