

“Here’s looking at you, big boy!”

No, I’m not referring to the tall Hamburger with the long hair, who now and then surfaces in the depths of the jungle in Papua-New-Guinea, in order to discover rainbows there. In this case I refer to the alpha male of the *Melanotaenia multiradiata* group, which I received by now after such a journey by Hans-Georg Evers.

However, let’s start at the beginning: in April 2014 Hans-Georg Evers and Jeffrey Christian reported “News from the Bird’s Head.” Among other things they described the capture of some probably new species of rainbowfish. In this case they caught, near the village Moswaren in the Sungai Moswaren, the rainbowfish that was provisionally named *Melanotaenia* sp.

“Moswaren.”

This

species is certainly no miracle of colors, but “under-stated” has its own charm.

The size of the animals is impressive too, the alpha male is over 15 centimeters (6 inches)!

Males of *Melanotaenia multiradiata* are colored toward blue-green-brown on top and more whitish below. A bright, sometimes yellow-black appearing median line runs from the eye over the operculum all the way to the tail fin. The rays of the dorsal and tail fin are light brown. The edge of the dorsal fin has a white fringe and sometimes ends yellowish (this is the case with my alpha male). The tail fin is dark to light black and the pectoral and ventral fins are translucent.

Females have, as with almost all rainbowfishes, much less color.

They are silvery-white and are smaller as well. The fins are colorless,



all photos: Rüdiger Bäcker

the dorsal fin however has a black and white fringe on the outer edge. On the female the median line is black without interruptions. The eyes and opercula appear slightly yellowish.

Among other offspring from the journey mentioned before, a little later I also received a group of this *Melanotaenia* sp. “Moswaren.” Unfortunately there was only one male among them, which unfortunately did not provide any offspring before it died after a few weeks, for reasons unknown. So I spent my time on other species first and successfully bred those.

A couple of months later *Melanotaenia* sp. “Moswaren” was described by Allen, Unmack and Hadiaty, from material they collected in 1999 from the same location, the Sungai Sisah near the town Moswaren. The new scientific name was *Melanotaenia multiradiata* (Latin “multiradiata” means “with many rays”) because the species clearly differs from other species in the area by the uncommonly high number of rays in the pectoral fins.

This reminded me that I still didn’t have any offspring of this species and I asked myself who still has these animals and could possibly provide me with males. One look into the IRG database was sobering, according to that there were no others keeping this species. As said, this is not a very colorful representative of the family of rainbowfishes, perhaps that was the cause that they were not common. So I turned to the source of my fishes, Hans-Georg Evers. And as it turned out, he was just then looking for a new home for his group of wild-caught fishes.

As they say, “Hamburg is always worth a trip,” especially when you also have such a reason. The trip expanded into a goby taxi ride, because there was a little creature in North-Rhine Westphalia that wanted very much to get into the care of Andreas Wagnitz. So the transfer from Essen to Hamburg with a stopover in Breckerfeld was arranged as well.

The commission from Hans was also very clear: “Please make sure that these ani-



Melanotaenia multiradiata (male, wild caught)

imals are preserved for the hobby!” Great, definitely no pressure now rested on my shoulders... But it was clear that the animals should be bred as soon as possible after they became adjusted to my care.

The fish took the change from the hard water in Hamburg to my soft rain water in their stride and overall they seemed to feel very well in the aquarium with a length of 1,90 meter (6.25 feet).

Marten Luter Salossa has several videos of the biotopes on the Bird’s Head Peninsula in Papua-New-Guinea, one of them shows underwater shots of the Sisiah Creek. At the location where they were found the water is 15-20 meters (about 50-65 feet) wide and up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) deep with a slow to average flow rate. The bottom soil at the location consists of limestone. Inspired by this I have given the tank a soil of coarse gravel, added a few plants and provided an average circulation.

I did not add my F1-females to the group, this happened later. First off I wanted to create a pure F1 breeding group.

The wild-caught group very quickly produced a decent amount of eggs in the usual spawning mop, consisting of green and brown strands of synthetic wool. I collected the eggs in order to hatch them and put them in small bowls, sized about 1 liter (0.25 gallon), filled with water from the home tank, to which a few drops of Mycopur were added to prevent the growth of fungus. A couple of unfertilized eggs were removed and about 8-10 days later the first fry hatched.

These were transferred to somewhat larger bowls and fed with infusoria, chlorella powder and ArtemioFluid. In the bowls of just under 2 liters (0.5 gallon) the fry was continually well provided with food. I prepare the mix of infusoria, chlorella powder and ArtemioFluid in one container that I also use for feeding. When used for feeding a small air outlet made of sintered bronze is added, this mixes the three components and the fry get provided with all three foods during the whole day. With two more stopovers in 25 liter (6.5 gallon) and 54 liter (14



Melanotaenia multiradiata (male, wild caught)



male, wild caught



female



wild caught couple in my aquarium

gallon) tanks the offspring finally made it into a 570 liter (150 gallon) raising aquarium and grow well in there.

In the meantime I was surprised that young fish also grew up in the home tank. The parents don't bother the fry and so you could observe the large alpha male swimming around in the middle of a school of fry, without considering them a meal... As the offspring grew up some of them were eaten anyway, but about 15 animals did grow up. These won't leave new fry in peace though so they will be moved soon.

For the moment everything works out very well, so you could say: "Mission accomplished!"

Literature

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◀ Video of the wild-caught group, three days after the transportation from Hamburg and move into their new home.

www.lomilo.de/index.php?id=88

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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.

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