

Xenotoca eiseni
The Red-Tailed Goodeid
by Al Ridley

Here is a fish that was around in the hobby when I first started keeping fish in the late Seventies. I had not kept this fish previously, so when I saw some in a local store I jumped at the chance to buy some. The storeowner was not too keen on selling any as they were breeding them to get a good colony going, but my persistence paid off and I left with four fish.

Xenotoca eiseni is a livebearer from Mexico and Central America. They are extremely tolerable of many water conditions and in the wild are found in clear mountain streams as well as polluted roadside ditches. The male is more colourful by far with a bright orange or red caudal peduncle and a steel blue body. The body is high and robust with a pointed head. The dorsal fin is set far back on the body and is much larger and rounder than the females. The males also have dark black dorsal fins. Temperature does not seem to be important. Many books I read suggest that this fish can withstand temperatures from 15 degrees Celsius to 33 degrees Celsius.

I gave them a home of a twenty-gallon high aquarium and filled it with driftwood, real and plastic plants and a number of round fist sized rocks. They also had some other platy's to keep them company while they grew to breeding size. Unfortunately, the books had suggested that this fish was known to be a fin nipper but most authors suggested that they were quite peaceful. I discovered that my fish were cold-blooded, ruthless killers. Within two days, they were happily living in a very endemic environment. I feed them on regular flake food, frozen bloodworm and the occasional treat of live mosquito larva and daphnia from our rain barrels. They grew quickly and the males coloured up beautifully, all three of them. This left me with one female and I was concerned that they might get too aggressive when it came time to breed. Luckily, they seemed to get along just wonderfully together.

My first sight of babies came when I had been away for three days. I returned home to find five small babies swimming close to the surface. I knew that the female was pregnant by the dark area at her anal fin. I left the babies with the parents thinking that they had eaten all of the young and five wasn't enough for BAP points anyway. These five fish continued to thrive and swim within the group of adults with no losses. Thirty-four days later, another twenty-two babies appeared and once again the parents and older siblings ignored them. The group continued to grow and breed without any extra effort by myself. This was my kind of fish. I did make the mistake of moving half a dozen into my large aquarium. The tank was well planted, (plastic again), and had a lot of driftwood and rocks. Unfortunately, the Severum's and the Firemouths managed to eat the *eiseni* before I could get them out. Note to self – "next time don't be so stupid!"

This is a wonderful, colourful fish that requires very little work to successfully breed. If you can get your hands on some, give them a try.