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Aphyosemion (Fundulopanchax) labarrei

The Belgian Ichthyologist Max Poll (Tervuren) described this handsome, little Aphyosemion in the Rev. Zool. Bot. Afr. Vol. 45 in 1952 (Notes sur les Cyprinodontidae du Mus_e du Congo Belge: "Les Rivulini"). The type specimens were caught in the lower Congo area at the village Kiavo (in 1950) situated 20 km from Madimbe (Inkisi) in a little river joining the bigger N. Gufu in the southern part of the country of the same name. Other specimens were caught at Kisantu (in 1932) and in the neighborhood of Thysville (in 1937) in the river Mausso, joining the N. Gufu at the village of Kigemba (1951). The earlier collections were considered to be Aphyosemion lujae. This species is placed in the subgenus Fundulopanchax because the dorsal fin is placed as in "coeruleum", just above the anal fin.

The male has an overall bluish cast, not only on the sides, as normal in our other species of Aphyosemion, but all over the body and the vertical fins. The metallic brilliance is more intense than in any other aquarium kept species of Aphyosemion. The gill covers have the usual "worm like" red drawings and the usual red dots on the sides of the male on the hindmost part of the body form an unbroken irregular red line in the middle of the body side. The dorsal fin has a row of red dots at the base. The outer edge is black or blackish violet. The anal fin is colored like the dorsal fin. The caudal fin has many more or less complete fine red lines running along the fin rays in a way we never find in any other aquarium kept species of Aphyosemion. The upper and the lower edge of this fin are broadly blackish violet colored. Female is plain, but her fins, in particularly the anal fin, has some yellow color. You easily may distinguish her among other females of Aphyosemion by the color of the fins and by her "shining eyes". The lower part of her body from the anus and backwards is pinkish. Both species are more slender than the "australe" but not as slender as "calabaricus".

My stock arrived from the USA in 1956, imported by a small group of aquarists here. We only got one pair of this species and from this we raised several stocks. According to an article in "The Aquarium" July 1956 the species was imported to the USA from (via) Leopoldville under the name of "Aphyosemion species" (as yet we have no name for this beautiful fish other than "blue panchax". Lateral part of the body is iridescent blue and body is covered with large bright crimson patches. Size 2 inches). This small note is the only information I have been able to find in the common aquarium literature. Dr. Poll kindly helped us in placing the right name on the species.

We keep this species in just the same aquarium type (rain forest) as we keep all other *Aphyosemion*. There were no spawning or keeping problems at all. 18-22_C, 0-0.5_ of hardness. Peat bottom. This species is a very good jumper and I think that I have lost more specimens of this species by that way than of any other species. Please always keep a tight cover on your tank. Specimens are rather shy, to my opinion more shy than other *Aphyosemion* and when frightened it rushes around in the tank trying to hide itself. I never saw a tame "labarrei" indeed. Do not use stones or gravel in its tank, it will destroy itself against such hard and cutting material. Using a peat bottom it will hide itself in the soft material and slowly accustom to the conditions in the tank.

We have had some troubles in our first spawnings. Males were very violent and nipped away the caudal fin of the poor females and many females were killed in that way. In this year's breedings, however, there have not been any difficulties with the males (2 males only, rather small) and no female has her fins eaten away. But these males also are kept together with several males of other species.

Perhaps you have to be careful when placing the breeding pair in a small tank for spawnings because here the female cannot find any cover if the male chases her too violently. Also I know one case where a big female killed a male in such a tank.

The species spawns like other species of the subgenus of *Aphyosemion*. Mostly on fine plants, but if no plants are present it spawns in the mud or peat. Eggs are very big - 1.6-1.8 mm. The membrane has very long filaments and these are concentrated (as far as I can see) mostly in one pole. The surface has many fine dots. It normally is transparent and without any color. The development starts at once after spawning and takes about 2 weeks, perhaps a little more. "Resting fry" do not occur in my stock, but possibly some eggs hatch a little later than they should do. Fry are large - 5.8-6.0 mm. Only "sjoestedti" has larger fry (in *Aphyosemion*). Females do not give away many eggs. Possibly 30-40 within a few hours are the maximum and mostly not half of this amount are spawned, I spawn this species on perlite.

The fry of this species have "shining eyes" (I do not know any other *Aphyosemion* fry with shining eyes). They are mostly found near or at the surface at least during their first days of free swimming. They grow rather slowly, possibly a little slower than "australe". The species grows up to little less than 2 inches, but at least the males are not afraid of much bigger fishes and chase them very often.

Crossing experiments:

Female has been crossed with male *Aphyosemion calliurum ahli*

- on 09 Sep. 57. 24 eggs. Only 4 are fertile. 14 Sep. 57 these hold rather big fry. I had to store these eggs "dry" because I was going away for 2 weeks.
- 26 Sep. hatched 2 eggs out of 3 within 4 hours using dry food. The third egg was then placed in clean water and hatched after 3 hours. Fry had big yolk sack and died soon after hatching.

With male *Aphyosemion calliurum calliurum*.

- 30 Dec. 57. 21 eggs

- 08 Jan. 58, only 2 eggs did not catch fungus. 16 Jan. 58: one fry hatched. Has enormous yolk sack, "waterfilled", not liveable. 24 Jan. 58. The hatched fry is still living. Preserved together with the ripe egg. Too bad.

With male *Aphyosemion australe*.

- 18 Jan. 58. 8 eggs.
- 21 Jan. some eggs have an embryo.
- 29 Jan. 58. Development in some eggs is promising. The blood system is well developed.
- 01 Feb. 58: 4 eggs have large embryo, 1 egg has much smaller embryo and this has a very poor blood system.
- 06-08 Feb. 58: "to be or not to be"??? Some embryos are better than others.
- 15-17 Feb. 58: they live, but not more
- 17 Feb. 58: first egg blood circulation stopped, but heart still beats. Second egg: good circulation of blood elements, ready? Third egg: not as promising as no. 2, fourth egg: best one, will live possibly.
- 25 Feb. 58. 3 embryos still live, but one surely is dead.
- 28 Feb. 58: one fry "hatched" but it is dead. 3 embryos live.
- 09 Mar. (50 days): 1 fry hatched and lives.
- 13 Mar. 58. Yesterday one fry hatched, the one from
- 09 Mar. is dead. Now 2 fry are out and live. Biggest fry is 4.4 mm, another slightly smaller and one very deformed. After some days they all died. Very sad story indeed.

Male: with "cognatum" I had those beautiful hybrids, with "calliurum" female

- 21 Aug. 58: 9 eggs.
- 29 Aug. 58: 6 fungused, 3 have large embryo.
- 06 Sep. 58: embryos in these 3 eggs are dead, blood circulation stopped and blood elements clot in some parts of the blood system.

As "labarrei" belongs to the subgenus *Fundulopanchax* and "cognatum" is a rather typical member of the subgenus *Aphyosemion*, this successful cross (details in a future article on "cognatum") is rather interesting. As far as I have been able to establish, all the about 50 adult hybrids in this crossing are true members of the subgenus *Aphyosemion* and the dorsal fin is placed like in "cognatum", but the hybrids in all other respects are a true mixture of these handsome species. From an aquarists point of view, the "labarrei" could not be a true *Fundulopanchax*, or a close relative to the "gularis group", nor a close relative of the "bivittatum group" in *Fundulopanchax*. I think we have no close relatives of this species in our aquarium kept *Aphyosemion*. But anyhow he certainly will have a chance to be your favorite within *Aphyosemion*.