



BREEDING THE BITTERLING (RHODEUS)

by Joe Schill

Usually it was easy and suddenly I would have a dozen or so baby Bitterlings swimming about in my tank but recently, I witnessed what appeared to be a mock breeding.

There are about 8 fish in my 5' tank, together with 5 mussels of the species Anodon (or Unio) pictorum, a member of the bivalve group.

The female Bitterling had her long ovipositor hanging down and was inserting its end into a mussel while swimming overhead, the mussel being open about 2 cm. When the female had finished the male took over and went through the motions of discharging his milt into the water above the mussel. However, I think he was not ready, for he lacked his normal breeding colours, which are very beautiful, and no offspring resulted.

Normally, the eggs and subsequent fry will remain in the mussel for 4-5 weeks before emerging into the open water. The breeding temperature is about 18-20°C.

Another interesting habit of these fish is that they clean each other from parasites, etc. and they will often treat other fish in the tank in the same way. The mussels, too, serve another purpose in the tank: they clean the water and so one does not need a mechanical filter.

* * * * *