



A PENGUIN TETRA TRIUMPH

by Deborah Ralph

This article was already in preparation when Rene Jez's interesting account of breeding the Penguin Tetra appeared (TANK TALK 13(1), p.11). It is by mere coincidence that both articles are on breeding from the very same pair but that is where the similarity ends. It goes to show that there is usually more than one way to the same successful end result.

The Penguin Tetra, *Thayeria boehlkei* is one of several fish that have a couple of common names, for it is also known as the Hockey Stick. There are another 3 or 4 species that resemble it closely but this one has a black body stripe that extends from behind the gill, along the middle of the body and through the tail to its tip.

A very healthy pair was thrust upon us by a good friend who seemed to be seeing hundreds of little Penguin fish in his sleep. How could we refuse them? Sexing the Penguin Tetra is not an easy task as they all look so much alike, but if the female is full

A few books we had read concerning breeding Penguins had mentioned that a water change was necessary immediately after the spawning and also that the eggs would not do well if the pH was too low. So a 25% water change was given, with tap water at the same temperature. The tank was then completely covered to keep it dark as Penguin eggs are by all reports, quite light sensitive. The next morning revealed a pleasing sight as hardly any of the eggs had fungus. They were again inspected at about 4 p.m., when some had already begun to hatch; by 9 p.m. all that were going to hatch had done so. Tails could be seen hanging from the spawning grid and sponge filter, quivering so quickly for such small creatures. The day after they hatched, they had all moved to the walls of the sponge filter, clinging on tightly with their bodies. They had large black yolk-sacs, which left the rest of their bodies looking just like clear splinters. As they had all migrated away from the spawning grid it was removed. Even though the tank remained covered the newly hatched fry would seek out its darkest corners.

Four days after hatching, the fry began to swim and look for food. The covers were removed from the front and top of the tank only. Some green water infusoria had been added the previous day and this was now supplemented with liquifry and more green water, together with Sera Micron food and some Java moss. It was hard to tell if the fry were feeding as they were so tiny. A small quantity of brine shrimp nauplii was added the next morning and to my surprise a few fry proved they could handle it, although it took only one or two to fill them up. Most fry, however, could not handle the nauplii. Some micro-worms and vinegar eels were also tried, along with the liquifry and infusoria, and a few Mystery snails were added to keep the bottom clean. The tank was given a 10-15% water change, with aged fresh water, every 2 days, with careful siphoning of the bottom with an air hose and maintenance of constant temperature. The fry still seemed to be light sensitive and they liked to hide amongst the Java moss. A tank light was on above but only over about one third of the top, so there was

of eggs she will be extra plump. The male and female were separated for one week and fed on live foods such as *Daphnia*, *Cyclops* and mosquito larvae. Meanwhile, an 18" x 9" tank was thoroughly cleaned with salty water and its sides and back were covered to reduce light levels. Fresh tap water was added to the cleaned tank and allowed to age for a few days. A sponge filter was fitted and the pH of the water was adjusted to about 6.8. The temperature was 25°C. A diatom filter was run on the tank for about half an hour, to clean the water as far as possible, then a sponge filter, a spawning grid and some black-water tonic were added.

That evening, the pair were reunited in the spawning tank, in the hope that next morning would reveal a spawning frenzy. Unfortunately, however, the pair still had not spawned 2 days later. No food could be given because of the risk of polluting the water. We therefore decided to lower the pH a little to see if this would trigger them, but still no result. On the third day, in the afternoon, we tried a 25% water change with tap water but the 4th morning revealed yet again no result. By then we had begun to consider removing the fish as they must have been getting a bit hungry, but as luck would have it, that afternoon we had a visitor who later needed a lift home, so the pair of Penguins were left together longer than intended. At about 10.15 p.m. on that 4th day, the spawning tank was again inspected, in the hope that the fish would have come to realise that only by spawning would they get back to normal life, and they had done just that! The spawning evidently occurred between 8 and 10.15 p.m. and we had just missed it. The floor of the spawning tank was covered with the smallest eggs we had ever seen; tiny and brown in colour, they numbered about 300 at a guess. They had easily fallen through the mesh of the spawning grid. At last the pair of Penguins was rewarded by removal to larger quarters with food, which they eagerly accepted.