

SPAWNING THE CHERRY BARB

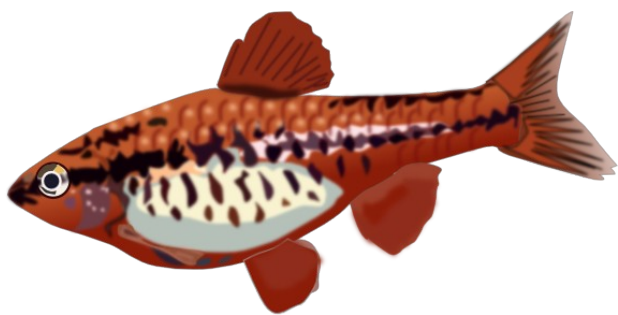
by Deborah Ralph

The beautiful little Cherry Barb comes from Sri Lanka and is known scientifically as *Capoeta titteya*. The males, when in spawning mood, which is often, take on a cherry brown colour, hence their common name. They are peaceful little fish growing only to a maximum of 2" or 5 cm. Along with the Checker Barb, *Capoeta oligolepis*, they will always be a favourite of mine, as they do not nip fins or harrass any other fish. Thus they are always safe in a display tank containing different species.

A bag of 5 cherry barbs was purchased from the club auction and it was worked out that the little ones were 3 months old at that time. They were placed in a 2' tank with very young Keyhole cichlids and seemed content. About a couple of months later they were quite easily sexed for the females were filling with eggs already and the males were colouring up. We had 3 females and 2 males.

When they were about 6 months old we decided to give them a try at breeding as all 3 females seemed replete with eggs and the males were intensely coloured. An 18" x 10" tank was cleaned and a 50:50 mixture of water from where the Cherry Barbs were housed and fresh water was added, at the time we did the weekly water changes for all our tanks. A clump of Java moss was added and teased out to fill about 3/4 of the volume of water, leaving only about 2" of swimming room above it. On the morning of the 3rd day afterwards, the 5 Cherry Barbs were placed in the spawning tank and they immediately hid. They always take a little while to settle in, but after a few hours they were all looking around. It was expected that they would spawn the next morning so, as they were still rather timid and prone to hide, we left them unattended.

Next morning at about 9 a.m., I looked into their tank to check whether there had



Note (2014) The Cherry Barb is now classified as *Puntius titteya*.

been any spawning. I poked the Java moss to inspect the bottom of the tank and quickly spotted an egg which appeared to be at the point of hatching, as it had a tail. The fish must have laid eggs the day before, soon after they were placed in the tank, as hatching was starting after only about 24 hours. Quickly, the 5 adult fish were removed.

That sounds easy but it is quite tricky to catch 5 quick little fish in a tank 3/4 full of Java moss without disturbing the eggs and exposing them to a risk of being eaten. Anyhow, they were all caught in a few minutes and the Java moss was carefully resettled away from the front, leaving any eggs on the bottom readily visible for a quick progress report. However, the eggs were small and clear and difficult to see, so it was not known how many were left. Over the next 3-4 days a few hatchling fry could be seen wriggling and attempting to swim, still with egg sacs attached.

On the 3rd day after hatching a small amount of green water infusoria culture was added and a day later most fry were free-swimming. These were fed green water, with 3 drops of liquifry and a small sprinkle of Sera micron stirred in. It was estimated that there were only about 20-30 fry but of course, we could not see into most of the tank.

The fry were not as small as expected and they quickly ate some vinegar eels that had been added. One very small mystery snail was also added to clean up any leftovers, though we doubted whether it would be able to cope with all but then it could not do any harm.

From the first day after the fry were free-swimming, they could handle vinegar eels, natural infusoria, liquifry and Sera micron. On the 2nd day, a few extra foods were tried. Microworms seemed to pose problems and were only half-eaten; later that day, a few newly hatched brine shrimp were tried and these were taken easily, so more were given. A few more small mystery snails were added a couple of days later and about half of the Java moss was removed to give the fry more swimming space. It was then discovered that we had 50-70 little Cherry Barbs.

The variety of foods was increased, covering microworms, brine shrimp, Tetra min "E", mikropan and a few other fine, freeze-dried foods, together with small live daphnia and cyclops, when available. The fry fed each time until their bellies were bulging and grew quite fast.

Although this is the 60th different species of fish that we have bred, the Cherry Barb is one of the easier ones and we would recommend it to anyone who is interested in raising fish.