



Australia New Guinea Fishes Association

NATIVE FISH FOR YOUR AQUARIUM

By Alex Caughey

ANGFA fish are the native fish of Australia and New Guinea. Although are often tend to think of these fish in terms of angling species such as the Murray Cod, Golden Perch and silver Perche of Southern Australia or the Barramundi of Northern Australia, there are many smaller species which are suitable for aquariums.

This pamphlet is designed to give you a brief introduction to some of these fish.

There are several excellent books and magazines, as well as a wealth of information available from ANGFA, which can help you learn more about the fish of our region.

Further Information

If you require any further information regarding ANGFA please email one of the

[ANGFA's Contacts](#)



Rhadinocentrus ornatus photo© Gunther Schmida

KEEPING ANGFA FISH

ANGFA fish are no harder to keep than other tropical fish. Those from Northern Australia require tropical conditions, those from Southern Victoria and Tasmania will live quite happily at normal room temperatures.

Like any fish, each species has preferred “ideal” conditions, but most species will live quite happily in normal community and conditions with a temperature of from 20oC to 27oC, pH of 7.0 to 7.2 and hardness from 50 to 200 ppm. Many species will quite happily accept conditions outside of this range.

Like any fish, ANGFA fish can be broken up into community fish, i.e., fish that will happily co-exist with other species including normal community tropical fish, and special species, i.e., species requiring special conditions or not suitable for keeping with community fish.

COMMUNITY FISH

There are many ANGFA species suitable for inclusion in your community aquarium. This is a list of some of them:

Ambassis macleaya (Glass Perchlets). These small species are closely related to the glass perchlets sometimes offered in shops, which come from South East Asia. The Australian species tend to be a little larger. They are non-aggressive to normal community fish and appreciate an occasional feed of live foods such as brine shrimp, daphnia or tubifex worms.

Cairnsichthys rhombosomoides (Cairns Rainbowfish) is an excellent community fish which will readily accept normal flake fish foods.

Chlamydogobius eremius (Desert Goby) is a small bottom dwelling fish which comes originally from the North of /south Australia. It is peaceful and readily accepts flake foods. If offered a low cave this species may breed in the community tank, the male will guard the eggs.



Melanotaenia trifasciata photo© Dave Wilson

Craterocephalus stercusmuscarum (Fly-Specked Hardyhead) has been around the aquarium hobby for many years and is a well-accepted aquarium fish. It readily accepts flake foods.

Edelia obscura (Yarra Pygmy Perch) is a Southern Victorian Species so should not be kept in heated aquaria. They are quite peaceful, but need occasional feeds of small live foods.

Galaxias species (Galaxiid) there are several Galaxiids which are suitable for non-heated aquaria. Most species quickly adapt to flake foods.

Galaxiella pusilla (Dwarf Galaxiid) is a Southern Victorian species so requires an unheated aquarium. This dwarf species will happily adapt to living in quite small aquaria and will breed in captivity.

Hypseleotris species (Gudgeon's) there are several species of Gudgeon's suitable for community aquariums.

Iriatherina wernerii (Threadfin Rainbowfish) are tiny and come from Northern Australia and New Guinea. It is a beautiful little fish with long flowing fins. It should not be kept with fin nippers.

Melanotaenia species (Rainbowfishes) which includes *Chilatherina* & *Glossolepis* species. The rainbowfishes are probably the best known of Australian and New Guinean aquarium fishes. They are all excellent community fish, readily accepting flake foods.

Mogurnda mogurnda (Purple Spotted Gudgeon) is not suitable for keeping with small fish, but is ideal for a community aquarium containing larger fish.

Nannoperca australis (Southern Pygmy Perch) is suitable for both heated and unheated aquariums. It does require some small live foods occasionally.

Neosilurus species (Catfish) is a group of small catfish which are generally suitable for community aquariums though they may eat an occasional small tetra size fish. Generally peaceful and no problem with larger fish.

Pseudomugil species (Blue-eye's) are a group of small fish which make excellent community aquarium inmates. They are fairly peaceful and readily accept flake foods.



Pseudomugil gertrudae photo© Hans Booij

Rhadinocentrus ornatus (Ornate Rainbowfish) is an excellent community fish which readily accepts flake foods.

SPECIAL SPECIES

So, you would like something different for your aquarium? There are many ANGFA species which will offer challenge, create great displays and become real pets.

Catfish.

There are several species of ANGFA Catfish which grow really huge. The Northern Australian Group known as the Forktail Catfishes can grow to over 1 Metre and make stunning display fish. These species are often available through aquarium shops as babies measuring only 100mm to 150mm. These catfish can make excellent inmates for large aquariums containing large South American Cichlids.

Gudgeons.

There are several Gudgeon Species which get very large, the Snakehead Gudgeon is common at 200mm and can grow to 400mm, the Sleepy Cod can grow to 400mm and there are several species which can grow to around 150mm. All these species are best kept with fish which are too big to be swallowed, but a warning, you may be surprised just how big a fish some Gudgeon can get in their mouths.

Grunters & Perches.

There are a host of species within this group which make great pets. Some of them can be kept with other large fish, but some are so aggressive that they must be kept by themselves. They are big powerful fish, and should be treated the way you would treat a large Cichlid. Many of these species appreciate a steady flow of small fish in their diet. Gambusia for smaller specimens, Goldfish for larger specimens.

Mouth Almighty (*Glossamia aprion*) is a truly fascinating species. It is a mouth brooder which carries its eggs in its mouth till they hatch. It is almost impossible to keep this species unless you have a good supply of live foods, preferably small fish. Except for its love of a feed of live fish, this is a peaceful species, 3 or 4 can be kept in a 24 inch (60cm) aquarium.



Iriatherina wernerii photo© Hristo Hristov

Mudskippers.

These require a special aquarium, set up so that they can crawl out of the water onto a beach or rock. The aquarium must have a well-fitting cover glass so as to maintain a high humidity in the aquarium. Mudskippers will eat earthworms, tubifex worms and may be trained to accept fine slithers of meat.

Saratoga.

These are closely related to the South American “Arowana”. They are a large fish which can grow to 900mm through normally sold at 100mm to 150mm. They are an active mid to surface swimming fish which should be offered plenty of room and plenty of live fish as food. They tend to be aggressive towards each other though may be kept with large fish of other species.

There are many species of ANGFA Freshwater Fish which are suitable for the aquarium, these are just a sample of some of them.



Melanotaenia duboulayi photo© Gunther Schmida

Those incredible Rainbows.

Of all the ANGFA fish kept by aquarists, the Rainbowfish is by far the most popular. There are many good reasons for this, they are brilliantly coloured, ideal for community aquarium's, readily accept standard fish foods and easily bred.

Most Rainbows grow to no more than 100mm and the few that grow a little bigger are still excellent community fish. We have found that Rainbows tend to grow bigger in aquariums than they do in the wild. This may be because of the availability of food in the aquarium, or because they get a chance to live longer in aquariums.

If you decide to add some rainbows to your collection you will be faced with the problem of selecting which type you want. Because Rainbowfish can look so different depending on where they come from, you must be sure of the particular tribe you want.

For example, if you went into your aquarium shop and asked for an Australian Rainbowfish, they could give you one of dozens of types of Rainbows that are available. If the fish you want is the Red Rainbowfish from the Goyder River, then ask for the Goyder River Rainbowfish, or whichever tribe you want.

Feeding Rainbows.

Rainbowfish will happily survive on normal fish foods you feed your other community fish, but it is a good idea to make sure that your Rainbows get their "vegies" as well. Commercial fish foods sold as Goldfish foods or "Vegie Diet" has a higher vegetable content. Also offer some fresh vegetables occasionally, a squashed pea or a piece of cooked pumpkin are all acceptable.

An occasion feed of live foods such as Brine Shrimp, Daphnia, or, Tubifex Worms will benefit your Rainbows. Like other species your Rainbows will thrive on a changing diet, and like many of the popular community fish they will survive simply on commercial foods.



Scaturiginichthys vermeilipinnis photo© Gunther Schmida

Showing Rainbows off.

You will be surprised at how variable the colour of a Rainbowfish can be. This variation can be caused by diet, the mood of the fish, or the type and direction of the light.

Rainbowfish will show off their best colours when they feel safe and secure. You can help them feel secure by providing the correct environment in their aquarium. Rainbowfish prefer well planted aquariums so that they can dart into the plants and hide if they feel threatened, so a good stand of plants down the sides and along the back will help them feel secure.



Glossolepis incisus photo© Hristo Hristov

Most Rainbowfish tend to look better if the gravel is not too light. Avoid those pale gravels and those crazy coloured gravels, instead use a good quality darker aquarium gravel.

The direction of the light will make a big difference to your Rainbowfishes' colour. Try this experiment, take a torch and stand in front of your aquarium, look at the Rainbowfish under the normal light, now switch on the torch and point it at the Rainbowfish. Move the torch around, lift it above your head, move it out to the left and right, all the time pointing it at the Rainbowfish. Did you find new colours?

Most aquarists recognise that Rainbowfish look best when the light comes from above and to the front of the aquarium. You can't go setting up special spotlights just to make the Rainbowfish look good. But try moving your aquarium light about. Try putting it to the front of the aquarium, and to the back, does this make a difference to the colours of your Rainbowfish? Find the best lighting position and your Rainbowfish will be living jewels in your aquarium.

Where can I get my (Rainbow)fish?

There are five (three, in the original document) ways of obtaining your ANGFA Fish. They are:

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## ANGFA - Native Fish for your Aquarium

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1. Aquarium Shops: Many aquarium shops offer a range of ANGFA species, they can usually obtain most species you may be interested in. But, if they don't have what you want, you could ask most of them to get it for you.
2. ANGFA Members have the opportunity to trade fish amongst themselves at ANGFA Meetings and the Buy/Swap/Sell Column of the ANGFA Bulletin, where you can usually locate the desired species.
3. At your State Branch General Meeting Auction. Most State Branches will have a few Auctions throughout the year where Members are able to sell/auction off the fish that they have bred to other Members, and sometimes, Non-Members.
4. Personal connections between Members that you've met at an ANGFA State Branch General Meetings.
5. Collect it yourself. Be very careful here, you can get into serious trouble if you don't follow the Rules, Regulations, and, Laws. You should check with your State Fisheries Office about the local Rules for both the collection of Fish and Critters, and, also about the Equipment allowed to be used to collect them. Check it at least once before every collecting season, to check for changes, as they do from time to time and don't tell anyone.



Pseudomugil mellis photo© Gunther

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This *Native Fish for Your Aquarium* Booklet forms part of the 'ANGFA Making it Easier Series' of brochures to aid its members. This is not a reprint of an old pamphlet; it has been retyped with minor changes, and, re-formatting. The Binominal (Genus & species) and Common Names have been checked to see if there have been any changes between its creation and then retyped by Geoff Allen ([geoall461@gmail.com](mailto:geoall461@gmail.com)) in 2025