

Neon Dwarf Rainbow *Melanotaenia praecox*

By John Moyles

The neon dwarf is one of my favorite rainbow fish to work with. I remember when they were first introduced into the hobby in the mid 1990's and they were selling for \$30 each. When I returned to Wisconsin from my stint in the army, I was relieved to find the price had reduced to the much more affordable \$8 each.



These are a small, only reaching about 2 inches, silver fish with a metallic blue sheen with bright red fins. Males have more vibrant colors than females and, when reaching adulthood, have a much deeper body.

They are from small streams in the jungles in Western New Guinea and the Mamberano region of Papua.

Dwarf rainbows eat vegetation, insects, worms and fish eggs in the wild. In captivity they are not picky eaters and will eat the standard fare of prepared, frozen and live foods.

They are a schooling fish and are very active so a larger tank is better than a smaller one. They do appreciate some cover and do well in a planted aquarium. Water temps should be in the mid 70's to low 80's.

Breeding is relatively easy. First, separate a female from the group and place her in a breeding tank. Keep her well fed for a week with plenty of live and frozen foods. The breeding tank should have spawning mops and plenty of java moss. After a week has passed I introduce a male. I keep them together for a week while continuing to heavily feed them. After a week I move both parents back to the display tank. The eggs hatch in 7-10 days. Fry are small but they are not picky eaters. I feed them microworms, spirulina powder, decapsulized brine shrimp eggs and prepared "fry foods". They eat from the surface, so making sure they get enough food is easy.