

*If in doubt contact your  
local OATA  
retail member  
for further information*

**IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:**

**ALWAYS PURCHASE** test kits and regularly check the water for ammonia, nitrite, nitrate and pH. This will allow you to ensure that the water in your aquarium is not causing welfare problems for your fish.

**ESTABLISH A ROUTINE** for testing the water in your aquarium. Record your results to enable you to highlight fluctuations quickly. Also check the temperature of the water.

**MAINTAIN** the water in the aquarium within the accepted parameters highlighted in this leaflet. You may need to undertake regular water changes to achieve this.

**ALWAYS** wash your hands, making sure to rinse off all soap residues, before putting them into your aquarium. Wash them again afterwards and certainly before eating, drinking or smoking.

**NEVER** siphon by mouth. A fish tank can harbour bacteria which can be harmful if swallowed. Purchase a specially designed aquarium gravel cleaner which can be started without the need to place the siphon in your mouth.

**NEVER RELEASE YOUR AQUARIUM ANIMALS OR PLANTS INTO THE WILD.**

Never release an animal or plant bought for a home aquarium into the wild. It is illegal and for most fish species this will lead to an untimely and possibly lingering death as they are not native to this country. Any animals or plants that do survive might be harmful to the environment.

## Checklist...

### Equipment:

- Aquarium
- Gravel cleaner
- Water testing kit
- Tap water conditioner
- Gravel
- Filter
- Heater and thermometer
- Food

### Before purchase ensure that:

- The aquarium is suitable for an adult of the species chosen.
- The water parameters are as advised in this leaflet.
- If adding to an existing set up ensure these fish are compatible.



**ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD**

*"The voice of the ornamental fish industry"*

[www.ornamentalfish.org](http://www.ornamentalfish.org)

Photographs courtesy of INTERPET

V1.0

© COPYRIGHT OATA Ltd 2011



## How to care for...



## Wild-Caught Freshwater Fish

## Introduction...

The vast majority of fresh water fish offered in shops have been bred in captivity. Yet wild caught fish can add to the value and interest of the species available. Wild caught fish also help to provide livelihoods for families who collect them from the wild, and in turn will maintain these natural habitats to ensure the livelihoods of future generations.

Because of their wild origin, there are a few extra key points to consider when looking after them in captivity.

## Water requirements...

These wild caught fish all require very good water quality. Because there are a large number of species that may be wild caught, please refer to the other care sheets for species specific water quality requirements:

Ammonia: 0mg/l (0.02mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

Nitrite: 0mg/l (0.2mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

Temperature, pH & Hardness: Species dependent

## Biology...

The fundamental biology of wild caught fish is not significantly different to that of captive bred fish. However, there are some minor differences that do occur due to their development in natural bodies of water.

By appearance, wild caught fish are often described as more colourful than captive bred fish. Reasons for this include obtaining a natural diet they have evolved to consume combined with a healthy set of genes. A further peculiar example is that of the gold tetra, *Hemigrammus rodwayi*, where only wild fish exhibit the highly reflective gold sheen. This is thought to occur by the fish's response to a harmless skin parasite that is present in their natural range.

Wild caught fish have also evolved to live in particular water requirements. In contrast to captive bred fish, wild caught fish are much less tolerant of water quality parameters outside of their normal range.

Prior to import, wild caught fish may have also had a greater exposure to disease-causing organisms. Much of the time, the fish's immune system will be sufficiently strong to keep these pathogens at background levels where they will not harm the fish. However, if the fish become stressed through poor husbandry or other means, the fish's immune system may become weakened, allowing these pathogens to take hold.

## Aquarium requirements...

Owing to the number of species that may be obtained as wild caught individuals, please consult the appropriate care sheet for the aquarium requirements. Always ensure that the aquarium is sufficiently sized for the chosen species and is filtered and heated appropriately.

Wild caught fish may initially act skittishly, especially when aquarium lights are turned on. Ensure that the aquarium has a tight fitting lid to prevent nervous fish from attempting to jump out of the aquarium. Consider using floating plants to help provide shade and refuge from bright lighting.

Some wild caught fish may seek shelter, so caves constructed of rocks, wood and plants can be used to achieve this. Any nervous or reclusive behaviour should slowly disappear as the fish become accustomed to the aquarium. Ensuring that wild caught fish are not subjected to sudden stress-causing changes such as changes in lighting or inability to seek cover is key to keeping wild caught fish healthy.

## Maintenance...

Maintenance of your aquarium should be determined by the chosen species. Every two weeks, a partial water change of about 25-30% is recommended. Smaller, more frequent water changes are less stressful for fish and are therefore preferable for more sensitive species. A gravel cleaner can be used to remove waste from within the gravel as well as performing the water change. Test your water frequently to ensure that pollutants such as ammonia or nitrite don't build up. Replacement water should be dechlorinated using aeration or a proprietary dechlorinator.

Filters should be checked for clogging and blockages. If the filter needs cleaning, do not use tap water as any chlorine present may harm the beneficial bacteria in the filter media. Instead, rinse it in the water removed during a partial water change.

Good husbandry is essential to keeping wild caught fish healthy. Any sudden or large changes in water quality can quickly stress these fish. Test kits are crucial for monitoring water quality. Test the water for ammonia, nitrite and nitrate frequently and also pay attention to other water quality parameters such as pH and water hardness. Also take time to slowly acclimatise wild caught fish to your aquarium. Preferably, try to make sure your aquarium water is similar to that of the place of purchase.

## Feeding...

The diet of a wild fish ranges from small live invertebrates to different types of algae. When kept in captivity, these fish may not recognise or accept proprietary feeds as food items. If this does occur, you may wish to train your fish to accept these proprietary foods. This can be achieved by starting with live foods which all fish should accept. The fish can then be weaned onto frozen foods and finally a proprietary food like flake or pellet. These foods provide the fish with all the nutrients they need for a full and healthy long life.

For the correct diet for your chosen species, follow the advice provided in the other care sheets including feeding

## Common ailments...

Wild caught fish are susceptible to all the common ailments of captive bred fish. Because part of their life has been spent in natural habitats, wild caught fish have a slightly higher risk of carrying exotic or rarely seen disease-causing organisms. Again, the key to keeping these fish healthy is to ensure that their immune system is not weakened by becoming stressed.

Before you introduce wild caught fish to a tank stocked with captive bred fish, consider temporarily holding the new fish in a separate aquarium to avoid the spread of any potential pathogens. Captive bred fish may have developed low or no immunity to any disease that a wild caught fish may have.

Monitor all fish for signs of ill health such as clamped fins, lack of appetite, erratic swimming, and gasping. Always test the aquarium water if any of these symptoms are shown.

## Compatibility...

As some wild caught fish may be more aggressive than captive bred fish, so always take care when mixing individuals of the same species. Compatibility also depends on the species being kept. More specific compatibility details can be found on the other OATA care sheets.

## Breeding...

Captive bred fish sometimes require a trigger to initiate spawning and wild caught fish are no exception. In some instances, a wild caught fish may more likely need a trigger for spawning. Please consult the other OATA care sheets for specific breeding details.