D-15: Some aspects of reproductive biology and breeding of Ornate Paradise fish *(Malpulutta kretseri,* Deraniyagala 1937), under laboratory conditions

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Ornate Paradise fish (*Malpulutta kretseri)* is an endangered, endemic freshwater fish, which has a great demand in ornamental fish export trade. The new Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance of the Government of Sri Lanka has banned the export of wild caught *Malpulutta kretseri.* Therefore, from the point of view of aquarium industry, breeding of this species in captivity is the only alternative. The objective of this study was to generate baseline information on breeding in captivity, on which the information is sparse.

A study was carried out with wild caught fish. Results show that they can be successfully bred and reared under specific laboratory conditions, namely, water depth, light intensity, temperature, bottom substrate and food. Both sexes reach maturity at the age of 3-5 months (standard length 2.5cm. and 2cm for female and male respectively). They show courtship behaviour. Bubble nests are built under hard objects in shallow water (about 25cm deep pH 7-8.6, temperature 23-27.5°C) under diffused light (800-1200)lux. Eggs are laid 2-4 times per cycle which may last about three months. Fecundity is 98-261 (Mean 179, SD±59). A female takes between 12-25 weeks to remature. Eggs are hatched after 38-60h (water depth 5-10cm, pH 7-8.6, water temperature 24-26°C). One week after hatching, feeding should be done. They reach adult size (2.5-3cm) within 3-5 months when live food such as *Artemia, Daphnia, Tubifex* and *Chironomid* larvae are given.

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