

Some Experiences Keeping a Rare Wild Poeciliid

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photographs by the author

In the June 2005 issue of TFH I wrote about the habitats of *Poecilia vandepolli* in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao (“Orange Tail Mollies in Dutch Waters?”). I also expressed my view of the conservation status of the species. Having kept this rare molly in captivity since December 2004, I’d like to share my experience.

The species seems to vary considerably as to pigmentation, also within a population. Some males have a shoulder blotch that is more or less faint, while others display black marks instead in the same place, especially when courting. Among the 22 specimens that I collected as tiny fry at the beginning of December 2004, five had developed a gonopodium (i.e., had become males) by May and June.

By September the largest male had reached 4 or 5 cm, and the largest female was 6 cm. By the same time two more males—each at least 10 months old—developed a gonopodium. The last male to become mature developed a gonopodium at 12 months old in December 2005.

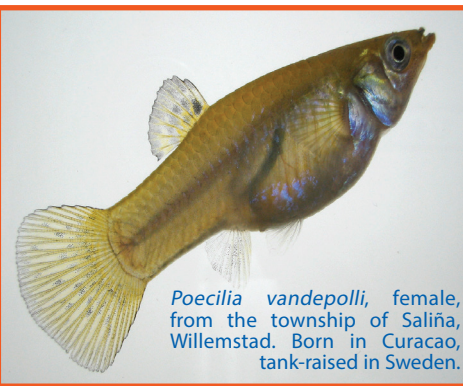
The amount of time it takes to reach maturity seems to be genetically determined; a good example would be with the sailfin mollies. The species seems to do very well in a tank but requires rather warm water at a temperature of about 27° to 30°C (81° to 86°F). I change one-third of the water every month, adding a little bit of seawater salt just as a precaution to prevent fungus. They feed on most stuff, even their own offspring. They are not only apt to eat the young, but they also chase them ruthlessly like tiger barbs. *Poecilia vandepolli* is a very active species and demands plenty of space, but a 20-gallon tank will do for about 10 specimens. 🐟

We are dismayed to learn that commercial development will take place in the wetlands pictured in the author’s June 2005 article. We hope that in Aruba government, business, and conservation can work together to preserve this molly’s habitat before it goes extinct—Eds.

Poecilia vandepolli, male. Born in Curacao, tank-raised in Sweden. Some males show a shoulder blotch, others display black, vertical marks or dots on the side, especially when mating.



Mollies have earlier been reported from this stream (left) that drains into the sea in Aruba.



Poecilia vandepolli, female, from the township of Saliña, Willemstad. Born in Curacao, tank-raised in Sweden.



Poecilia vandepolli, male, from the township of Saliña, Willemstad. Born in Curacao, tank-raised in Sweden.

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