

Catfish from Peru

Stephen Pritchard (December 2000)

This is not a comprehensive list of all the catfish from Peru, nor is it a document that describes all the catfish caught in Peru on the trip we took in July 2000. It is a summary of the species that I have brought back and a little about their progress since arriving in my fish house.

Starting with the *Corydoras*, we were fortunate enough to find a group of *Corydoras elegans* in the clear water creek on that runs through the Madre Selva 2 reserve on the Rio Orosa. Both Jools and Allan, especially Allan, were in 'Catfish heaven', net after net contained plenty of these delightful cory's.. I brought a dozen back and they are doing well sexing out now I have set up a breeding tank and put a trio in the tank to give them a go.

Back in Peru the local peoples have become aware of the 'fish people' trips on the rivers and as the boat arrives at villages and various stopping points on our journey villagers come to trade bringing bowls of fish they have caught and mostly catfish, at one such meeting a number of small *Corydoras trilineatus* were offered for a tee shirt or two, major currency in the areas away from Iquitos. These fish are doing well and growing fast although not as big as the *C. elegans* but then they were very small when traded, I hope to get these fish to breed next year, (I'm writing this as 2000 comes to an end)

While on the cory's I must mention the species I caught in good numbers in 1998, *Corydoras acutus*, these were caught in a 'cocha' that we were unable to get to this time because increased water level, some 3 to 4 feet higher than before, although when in the exporters there were plenty to buy. I did not purchase any as the ones I brought back last time are waiting tank space for a breeding attempt but I did buy some *Corydoras fowleri* when leaving Peru. Packed five to a large bag because 'they do not travel well', only 20 to a box when exported combined with the very high price per fish means they cost a lot to get to the UK, so if you see them for sale in your retail outlet do not be surprised at the price.

A number of Bristlenoses were caught on the trip but just one from here and one from there so I decided to buy 5 from the exporter when we left. Staying for just over two weeks gave me the benefit of visiting the exporters on three separate occasions. Picking small fish they all traveled home successfully and are now growing up in a 24x12x12, bristles are starting to develop so I will be looking to rehouse them in a larger tank shortly. Unfortunately I cannot identify the species but I hope I'll breed them and then get some of the fry to a catfish auction.

In 1998 we were going to 'catfish alley' where in previous trips plenty of catfish have been caught both *Brochis splendens* and *B. multiradiatus*, having a desire to keep and hopefully breed multiradiatus this was truly an excursion I wanted to be on, as with all trips you cannot guarantee what you catch, and I did manage to collect one *Brochis splendens*, the only one of the trip. 2000 a different story we were catching

Brochis splendens all the time, no *B. multiradiatus* unfortunately, again these fish are doing very well and I have passed some on to other members in the hope of getting them to breed.

With the debate about *Brachyrhamdia* vs. *Pimelodella* I will call this sp. cf. *B. marthae* because this is as near as I am willing to go at present. When these were caught the initial thought from David Schleser was *Corydoras pygmaeus* as we all (about twelve of us) bobbed about in the skiff catching as many different fish as we could, I ended up with five very small specimens no bigger than a *C. pygmaeus*. In a 24x12x15 without lights they were moving about all over the place eating all that could be put in front of them. Now in a 48x12x15 in reflected light from the big tank they are more secretive keeping hidden beneath the bog wood, I will move them into another darker tank in the near future so I hope to see more of them. While they could be *B. marthae* they have an additional dark blotch on the side behind the pectoral fin, which needs some further investigation.

While in the exporters I did see a nice tank of small *Panaque* sp. and purchased 5, all survived the trip home and look like L90 in the Aqualog book Loricariidae all L numbers, they are all living in the same tank as the *B. marthae*, eating cucumber, sinking pellets and frozen foods although I would like to see more growth on them than I'm getting at present, when I have a change round I'll try increasing the water flow and oxygen levels as they keep to the filter outlets most of the time. One point with the cucumber is that they don't eat very much of it although when I say that what seems to happen is they don't touch any for a few feedings, I remove the cucumber the day after putting it in the tank, then a few days later they will devour a piece, has anyone any experience/advice with L90's?

Another Pim species caught on the second week took my fancy again a very small pim wouldn't take up too much room in the box, so home it came I was thinking *P. gracilis* type but it soon began to grow and grow and now looks like a *Rhamdia*, possibly *R. wagrieri* and as it has grown more than 5 inches in less than four months I'm going to look for a bigger tank for it to go in although at present it is sharing a tank with some of the Cory's and Brochis with out causing any harm it eats well, dining on pellets, frozen foods, lob worms and Moro worms (a large beetle larvae)

In various nets during one trip on the second week up the Rio Ucayali we caught three sucker-mouth probably from the genus *Loricarichthys* and as David Sands' book Catfishes of the World vol 4 lists two separate species from the river they could be either *L. chanjoo* or *L. ucayalensis*. The three are housed in a 24 x 24 x 12 with internal power filter providing the fast flowing water, they have grown and judging by size and body shape I have two males and a female again another tank move is required to get them into a breeding tank.

Last trip I turned down a *Caliichthys caliichthys* that was returned to the water as no one want it this time even though only one was caught I brought back a *Hoplosternum thoracatum* in fact a very small *Hoplosternum thoracatum* at less than an inch total

length the colour on this fish is amazing and it has now grown on well it's over 3 inches total length.

This is just the catfish I brought back; there were at least six other catfish members on the trip all with their own boxes containing different species of fish.

There is something to be said about collecting your own fish, other than 'it's fantastic!' you do need a lot of tank space when growing up the fish you bring back. While I have only mentioned the catfish I have all the others; silver dollars, pyrrhulina's, characins, dwarf cichlids and killies that are growing well, I did try to limit myself in what I brought back. Anyone interested in going in 2002?