Melanotaenia Trifasciata

By Alex Carslaw

Common name: Regal Rainbowfish, Banded Rainbowfish, Jewel Rainbowfish
Scientific name: Melanotaenia Trifasciata (RENDAHL, 1922)
Etymology: The name is based on Greek, melano meaning black and taenia meaning band and in Latin, tri meaning three and fasciata meaning banded.
Synonyms: Rhombosoma trifasciata
Origin: Northern Australia.

Introduction

Melanotaenia Trifasciata was first discovered in 1895 by Norwegian zoologist Knut Dahl but it wasn't until 1922 before it was formally described by Hiamar Rendahl from a single specimen from the Mary river in north-west Arnhem land, Northern Australia. Since then nearly 40 different varieties have been discovered all with varying colours.

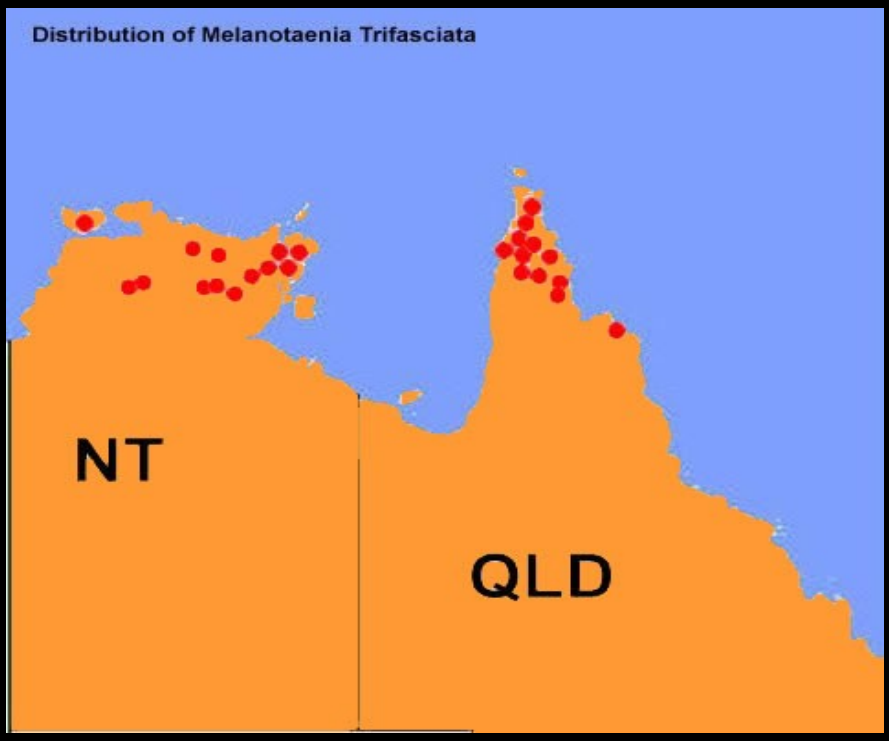
Description

The Banded Rainbowfish has a lateral compressed body with a smallish head. With age the fish develops an deep arched back. Most specimens have a distinct black mid lateral stripe and as with all rainbowfish they display a double dorsal fin with the male specimens first small dorsal overlapping the second. Females are much drabber in colour.

Distribution

Melanotaenia Trifasciata can be found in Queensland from the Holroyd River up to the tip of the Cape york peninsula to down the east side as far as cooktown. Also from Darwin to Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory. Many areas such as Arnhem Land in the northern territory remain undiscovered so many more forms could well be found in the future.

In the wild this fish can be found in a variety of habitats from semi rainforest to open country. It is abundant in small creeks and waterholes as well as rivers and can often be found congregating around floating debris and overhanging tree roots. It can often be found alongside Melanotaenia Nigrans, M. Maccullochi and M. Splendida Inornata as well as some species of blue eyes.



List of some of the locales

Northern Territory

Cape Arnhem Melville Island Cato River Rocky Bottom Creek
Crystal Springs South Alligator River
Giddy River Wonga Creek Goyder River Yirrkala Yirrkala
Lattram River

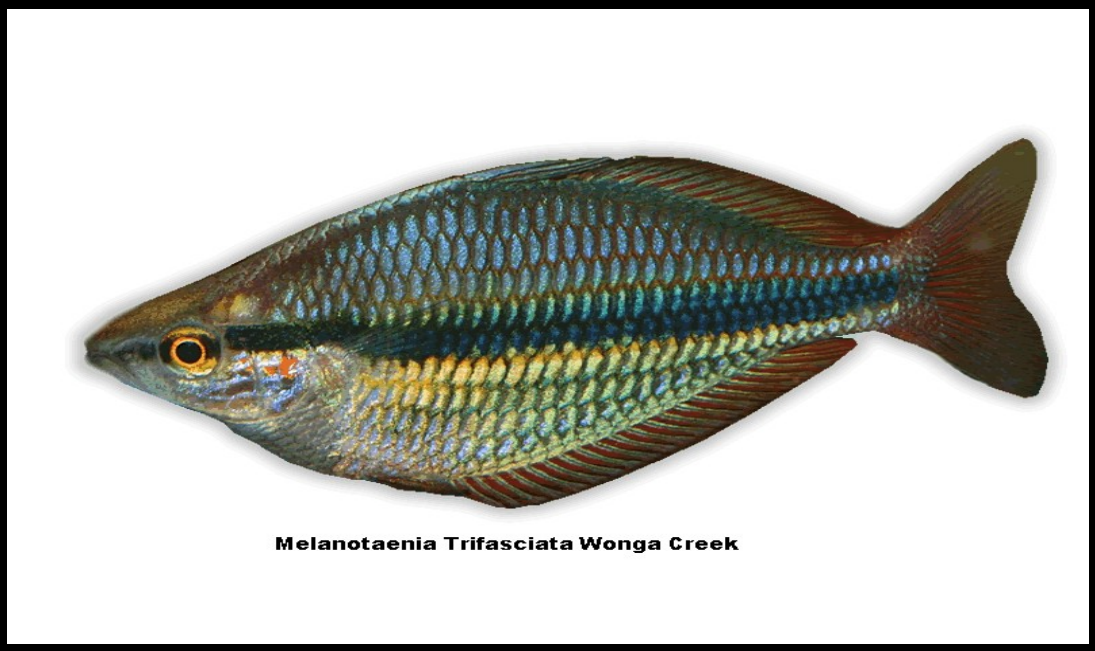
Queensland

Archer River Burster Creek Skull Creek Claudie River Cockatoo Creek Coen River
Dulhunty River Eliot Creek Marmoos Creek McIvor River Pappan Creek Pascoe River
Running Creek Tentpole Creek Wenlock River

Eliot Falls, Eliot Creek, QLD

Aquarium Care

M Trifasciata makes an excellent addition to the home aquarium provided it is given enough room as it can be quite robust particulary in the morning when sparring with tank mates for dominance, so keep with species that are not shy or retiring. Growing to up to 13cm this is by no means a small fish and a shoal of six in a tank of no less than 200 litres is recommended. To see this fish at its best then aquarium décor and lighting is of the up most importance and a well planted tank is recommended with a dark substrate to show of this fish at its best. When it comes to light , there can be no real substitute to natural sunlight backed up with gro-lux bulbs. Rainbowfish need clean well oxygenated water to thrive so water changes of up to 40% weekly will see them thriving. In the wild these fish come from waters with a ph ranging from 6.5 – 8.0 so can be quite adaptable to suit the home aquarium but you may find your fish will show off its colours best at a specific parameter with a temperature of around 25 c.



Melanotaenia Trifasciata Wonga Creek

Feeding

A diet consisting of both live/frozen and green foods are best. Try not to restrict its diet to live food when young as your fish may grow fast but this could lead to problems like bent spines etc when older. Like most other Rainbowfish, M Trifasciata in the wild, can be found picking at algae and this must be replicated in the home aquarium so be sure to feed them things such as shelled peas or spinach. Try to fast your fish one day a week.

Breeding

Breeding this fish is non problematic and is best achieved using a trio of fish (1m/2f) in a separate breeding tank at a temperature of 26-27c and include either a spawning mop of java moss. Place the two females in the tank and feed plenty of live food for about 7 days. After this introduce the male before you put the lights of for the night and spawning should take place the next morning. Personally, I leave the fish for two days and then remove the spawning medium to a separate tank/container and hatching usualy occurs after about 6-7 days. Newly hatched fry can be fed infusoria or liquify for a few days followed by newly hatched brine shrimp or microworm. Given the long incubation period for Rainbowfish eggs this makes it viable to send/receive eggs by post from all over the world and is steadily becoming a popular method of obtaining much sought after species.

Hybridisation

A lot of work has been done by researchers into natural hybridisation in wild rainbow fish such as Melanotaenia fluviatilis/Melanotaenia duboulayi and M. eachamensis /M. s. splendida Which may conclude that these fish may possibly have naturally hybridised or indeed be the same fish that have naturally evolved depending on location. it’s a big task and is still ongoing and will take a lot of research. This is one reason why we should only breed and pass on M.Trifasciata that come from a proven source and carry the same locale.

Colour forms

Why so many colour forms? This is a good question and one that has many possible answers. Most Tris are found in the small creeks and springs that feed major rivers with each creek having a different colour form. One theory is natural predators may be fewer in the places where the more colourful fish are to be found. Some creeks have fish that have a completely different colour from the fish that can be found further up the creek.

Cato River

Burster Creek

Yirrkala Creek

Upperr fish Goyder River Lower fish Coen River

Pappin Creek

Cape Arnhem