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

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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:

- □ Aqaurium
- □ Gravel cleaner
- □ Water testing kit
- □ Tap water conditioner
- □ Gravel
- □ Filter
- □ Heating and thermometer
- □ Food

Before purchase ensure that:

- □ You have a suitable aquarium.
- □ Water parameters are as advised in this leaflet.
- □ If adding these fish to an existing set-up make sure they are compatible wit those already present.

ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD

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V1.3

How to care for...

Freshwater Sharks

Introduction...

This group of fish are not really sharks at all as they lack cartilage and teeth and are more closely related to the humble minnow.

In a freshwater tropical aquarium, they can make striking additions. In the wild they can be found in South East Asia.

Water requirements...

This group of fish are relatively hardy with the possible exception of the Silver (Bala) Shark. However, it is advisable to keep the water parameters within the following guidelines although fish may acclimatise to different water conditions over time

Temperature: 22-26°C

pH: 6.5-7.5

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

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

Hardness: Moderately soft - moderately hard (5-15°dH)

Biology...

There are five main species of freshwater shark available for the home aquarium, however two of them grow to a size that most hobbyists would not be able to house. These are the Black Shark (*Labeo chrysophekadion)* 90cm and the Iridescent Shark (*Pangasius hypophthalamus)* 100cm.

The three remaining species are the Silver, Red-Tailed Black and Rainbow sharks. These will grow to a maximum size of 12-30cm in home aquariums.

All of these species are endangered in their wild habitats and it is believed that the Red-Tailed Black shark is extinct in the wild due to habitat loss. All specimens found in the aquarium trade are captive bred.

In a well maintained aquarium with good water quality, these fish can survive for many years due to slow growth rates. The Red-Tailed shark has reportedly lived for more than 8 years.

The Red-Tailed and Rainbow sharks are good tank cleaners, with mouths situated on the lower side of the head making them good bottom feeders. They can make useful additions to reduce the build up of micro algae and remove uneaten foods in the gravel.

Aquarium requirements...

Due to the size they can reach when mature, a minimum tank size of 100 litres will be required for adult specimens. This is especially true for the Silver sharks which need to be kept in groups of four or five. Be aware that if a small aquarium is first purchased, a bigger one will be required as the fish grow.

The aquarium should be filtered, heated and aerated.

All of these species are active swimmers so there should be no sharp objects or ornaments which could cause injury, ideally the tank should contain robust plant species and bogwood, with large open swimming spaces.

A secure hood is also recommended as these fish may leap from the water and aquarium lighting should be supplied to aid the growth of the plants and bring out good colouration in the fish. Fine gravel or sand can help to mimic the natural environment of lakes and rivers from which these fish originate.

Wherever possible, try to maintain soft slightly acidic water. This is preferred by these species. Although they will tolerate harder alkaline water, colouration and behaviour may be better in acidic water. If you wish to change the water hardness this should always be done slowly over time to avoid stressing your fish.

Maintenance...

At least once every two weeks a partial water change of 25-30% is strongly recommended (a siphon device is useful to remove waste from the gravel). The water should be tested regularly to ensure that pollutants such as ammonia and nitrites don't build up. Ensure that you either allow the replacement water to stand or aerate it to remove any chlorine present. Ideally treat all replacement water with tap water conditioner before adding to the aquarium.

Filters should be checked for clogging and blockages. If the filter needs cleaning then do not run it under the tap, any chlorine present may kill the beneficial bacterial population that has established in the media. Instead it can be rinsed in the tank water which is removed during a partial water change, this reduces the amount of bacteria which are lost.

Good husbandry is essential as these fish can be stressed by even the smallest amounts of ammonia and nitrite. Test the water to monitor the ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels every week, especially during initial set-up and after adding extra fish.

Feeding...

These species are all omnivores, feeding upon a mixture of micro-algae and plankton in the wild. Therefore, this should be replicated in the home aquarium.

A good quality flake or pellet should be fed as the staple diet with the addition of some live and frozen foods. The Rainbow and Red-Tailed sharks will also feed off micro algae growing on the surfaces of the aquarium.

These fish should be fed what they can eat in a few minutes 1-2 times a day. Remove any uneaten food to prevent waste build up.

Common problems...

A water quality problem will affect fish behaviour and can be shown by clamped fins, reduced feeding, erratic swimming and gasping at the surface. Immediately test the water if any of these symptoms are shown.

If in doubt seek advice from your retailer.

Compatibility...

Silver Sharks are large fish which require a large aquarium to house the required numbers (four or five). However, they are also one of the few larger species which may peacefully co-habit with smaller species such as tetras and danios. In fact they are a welcome addition to most large community tanks.

The Rainbow and Red Tailed sharks are reasonable peaceful fish while juvenile, however they become more aggressive as they get older. Therefore they are not suited to mix with placid fish such as small tetras and guppies. They can be kept successfully with larger tetras, danios, barbs and rainbowfish. Be aware that if two specimens are kept together, one may almost certainly harass and dominate the other, this often leads to reduced feeding, poor health.

Breeding...

These fish are not reported to have been successfully bred in home aquariums, however the majority available are captive bred.