COLDWATER SCENE

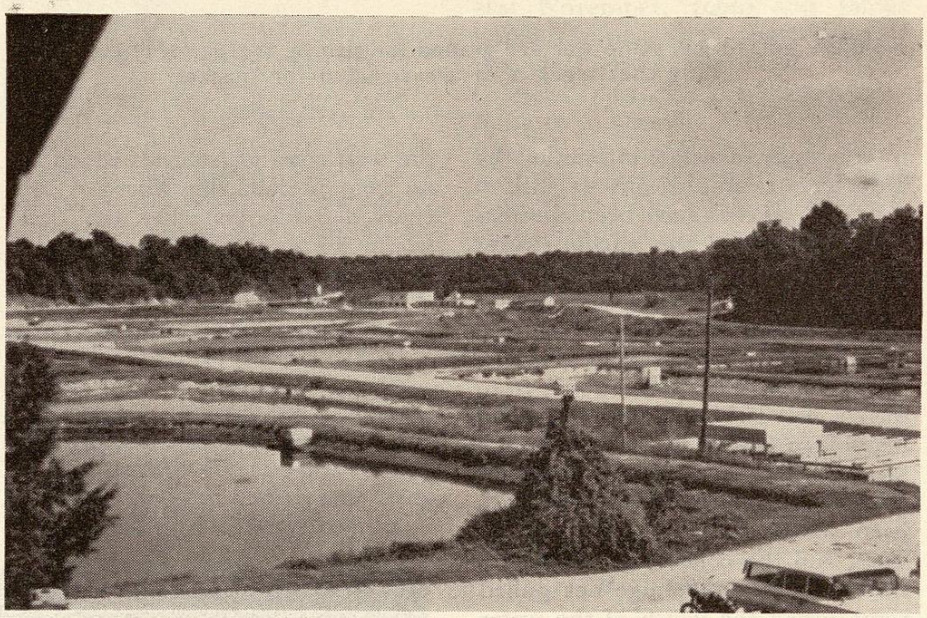
World's Largest Producers of Goldfish

GOLDFISH keepers in the U.S.A. do no believe in applying to their fish rigid show standards such as British coldwater enthusiasts use. Although they support the strict propagation of distinct basic varieties, American goldfish-keepers think that breeders should be free to develop and concentrate upon whatever special features, of finnage or eye development, for example, that might attract them. Thus the blue of the shubunkin is a characteristic that could be developed and recognised in other goldfish varieties according to this viewpoint.

This was but one of the many interesting facts that emerged from the talk and film show given in London by Mr Neal Teitler, co-founder of the American Goldfish Society and editor of THE GOLDFISHOLOGIST. A special meeting was organised by the Goldfish Society of Great Britain at short notice to enable members to meet Mr Teitler while he was in Britain on a short visit.

Part of the reason for the very different attitude towards fish 'standards' in the U.S.A. has its roots, Mr Teitler explained, in the fact that the number of amateur hobbyists deeply interested in goldfish breeding is quite small there. The majority of serious breeders are involved also in the goldfish trade, which in the States is immense.

American fish farms are the largest producers of goldfish in the world. A single farm, for instance, supplies for sale each week $\frac{1}{4}$–$\frac{1}{2}$ million fish of one of their varieties alone. No goldfish breeder on such a scale is prepared to accept rigid standards that make his particular strains 'poor' fish! Efforts by amateur groups in the past to achieve such standards have resulted in the ultimate collapse of the amateur group. For this reason, the American Goldfish Society believes that 'progress by inches' is likely to be the most successful policy.



Ponds at Ozarks fish farm. The white buildings in the distant centre are the shipping offices

Mr Teitler showed films of a tour of fish farms in Missouri that made it very clear what an enormous area many of them covered. Ozarks Fisheries, for instance, had 400 acres under water, divided into some 400 natural ponds each of an average size of 100 ft. by 25 ft. Six springs (four of hard water and two of soft) and two or three wells supplied 30 million gallons of water every day, which enabled every pond to be given a 10% water change daily.

A thriving farm devotes much time to ensuring that ponds are not allowed to flow into each other and to preservation of stock varieties by keeping strains in distinct areas. Thus if marauding birds accidentally drop their prey the fish are likely to be still within the confines of the pond area of their own particular variety. Ponds receive a carefully controlled amount of pest-killer each

Goldfish netted by seine net are graded for size by the use of boxes so that only the larger ones are selected for market

month and although infestation by tadpoles of amphibians is still a problem, crayfish have been eliminated and so has the anchor worm parasite.

Some of the film shots, taken by Mr Teitler himself, caused the audience much amusement. Feeding was done by the bucket load, from lorries, but although feeding looked haphazard it is in fact very carefully and scientifically assessed. Fish are deliberately crowded in ponds to keep down their size for popular sales, and the collecting of breeders from a pond in a huge net pulled right across the width of the water produced such an abundance of fish that they had to be dealt with by the handful. Rods set at different widths from each other in the holding tanks enabled the fish to practically sort themselves out into four different size groups.

Breeding was carried out on a vast scale. For instance 400 male and 300 female fantails (with a few red and white fish to keep up the intense red colour) are used at a time in a pond, and the percentage of good quality fish is very high. Only about 2% 'culls' result.

Answering questions, Mr Teitler explained that Missouri is particularly favourable for goldfish breeding. As part of the 'bog belt' of swampy land that runs from Maryland, the water shed is sufficient to provide areas for natural ponds and, unlike the west coast of America which has no cool period, the Missouri area enjoyed 8 months when the water would be at a temperature of 76–78°F (25–26°C), but then has a 4-month period, ideal for resting the breeding fish, when temperatures are down to 38–40°F (3–4°C).

On the subject of feeding, Mr Teitler expressed his firm belief that correct feeding played a larger part than movement of water in producing deep-bodied fish. A heavy protein diet is required. He had, for instance, found that heavy protein diet, compared with a largely carbohydrate one, produced very superior bramble-heads.

With regard to goldfish names, Mr Teitler agreed that as much common usage as possible between American and British nomenclature should be aimed for but he thought that certain British names could be improved. For instance 'bramblehead' he would personally prefer to be replaced with 'bisonhead'.

'Broadtail' was the name given by Mr F. Barrett and Mr Schaffer to the breed that they fixed from mutations found in a batch of Japanese ryukin goldfish and from which all subsequent fish known as 'veiltails' to British aquarists have come. Mr Teitler traced the spread of this fish from the original five specimens that appeared in 1889, through the turn of the century (by which time the broadtail had become established) to exporting of the fish to Germany in 1905 and England in 1908. By 1920 every aquarium magazine in the U.S.A. carried advertisements offering them for sale. The name 'veiltail' was popularised when Mr W. T. Innes used it in his writings. As a name for the variety, Mr Teitler considers that 'veiltail' is quite unacceptable.

Photos: NEAL TEITLER

Ryukin breeders are selected from goldfish netted in mass in one of Ozarks ponds