

Reading Selection

Mosquito Fish: Strong Little Fish

You may have seen guppies in aquaria before. But have you ever seen a **mosquito fish**? Mosquito fish look a lot like guppies. But in some ways, they are different.

Mosquito fish are strong little fish. They don't mind sudden changes or movements. They can survive a wide range of temperatures, from 4°C to 38°C (40°F to 100°F). And they can live in almost any body of fresh water—lakes, ponds, ditches, streams, and even mud holes. That's why they'll do so well in your ecocolumn.

Do you remember what *terra* meant? Think of the word "territory." Mosquito fish are very **territorial**. They will fight off other types of fish in their tank. Remember this after the unit is over.

What's in a Name?

The scientific name of the mosquito fish is *Gambusia*. It lives along the southeastern coast of the United States, in places like North Carolina.

How do you think the mosquito fish got its name? Well, feeding these fish is no problem at all. They like live food—like elodea—the best. In lakes they will eat beetles. But they are most famous for feeding on mosquito **larvae**. This immature form of mosquito wriggles around in the water. Before the larvae become adult mosquitos and can fly away, the mosquito fish eat them. This helps lower the number of mosquitos in the air. Do you know why this is important?

It's important because mosquitos can carry diseases. With fewer mosquitos, there is less chance of spreading disease. No wonder this fish has been brought into more than 70 countries throughout the world!

Who's Who?

The mosquito fish in your aquarium will be either adult males, adult females, or immature **fry** (young mosquito fish). As you observe them, try to figure out which kinds you have.

