



### **89. BITTERLING (*Rhodeus sericeus amarus*)**

**IDENTIFICATION:** Bitterling are small fish that reach a length of no more than 15 cm. Incomplete lateral lines similar to the Moderlieschen which extend over only 5 to 12 scales.

Bitterling have a relatively tall back. Fishing laws grant them all-year protection. Bitterling are popular aquarium fish.

**HABITAT:** Bitterling prefers small, still waters, but can also be found in river bays with little current. Bitterling inhabit the plant filled area of waters.

**FOOD:** Bitterling feed on water-bottom animals, which they find when burrowing through the mud and sand.

**SPAWNING:** Bitterling spawn from April through June and have an interesting reproduction ritual. During the spawning season, the female forms a "Legeröhre" (laying tube), which she uses to deposit eggs in fresh-water or swan mussels. The male will then move above the mussel and release sperm. The mussel absorbs the sperm and the eggs inside the mussel are fertilized. The female deposits a total of 40 to 100 eggs. Mussels protect the eggs against enemies, which ensures a high rate of survival. Hatched Bitterling larvae stay in the mussels adhering to their gill lamella. When Bitterling are able to swim, they leave the gill area of mussels when water is released.