

GFSA – Ask the Judges

Many hobbyists are interested in understanding how to select and judge goldfish. For those hobbyists who have an opportunity to show goldfish, a great deal of knowledge can be gained from talking to the judges, attending seminars, etc. For those hobbyists who can't attend a show, acquiring the knowledge of how judges rate fish, or even how the hobbyist can select fish, is more difficult to obtain.

The GFSA is pleased to introduce a new column which will explain how judges select goldfish. The column will be run by three goldfish judges, who will rate each fish separately, and then the scores will be added-up among the three judges and a consensus winner will be selected. This format is similar to the one used in the AKCA "Associated Koi Clubs of America," in their popular "Judge's Corner" feature in the magazine.

The judges selected for this series of articles are Larry Christensen, Peter Ponzio, and Scott Taylor. Subsequent to publishing this series, John Parker, the renowned U.K. goldfish judge, and GFSA member asked to be included in the judging. We are therefore pleased to welcome John to our ranks, and enclose his comments, as well as a brief introduction in the following revised article. Each of these judges has had years of experience in the goldfish hobby, and have acted as judges and breeders of goldfish. Larry is also an AKCA and ZNA koi judge, and is the only person in the country to be *both* a goldfish and koi judge. A new breed with new fish will be presented each issue, and the judges will rank the fish and provide commentary for their selections.

For the first several articles, we will present pictures of fish from various magazines and books which represent high quality fish for the breed in question. Eventually, we hope that breeders and dealers will send in photographs, so that we can present new varieties to review.

For our inaugural breed, we will rate Orandas. Several of these fish have won major awards at various shows around the country or world.

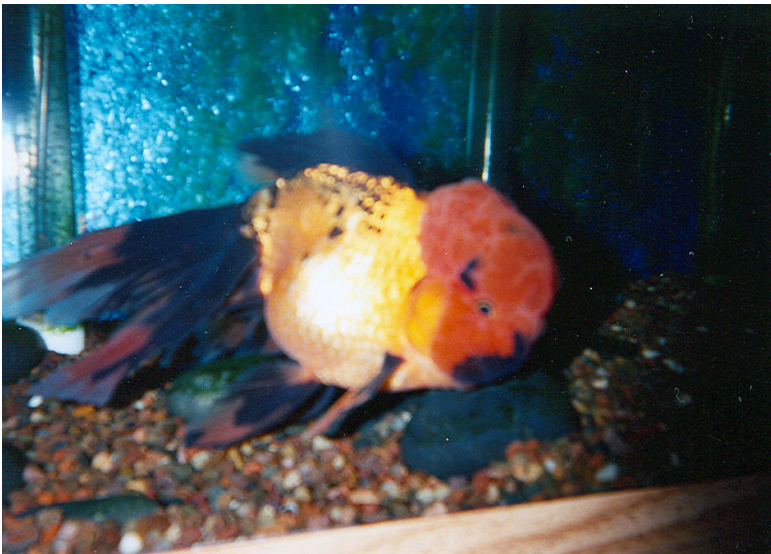
Each judge will assign a rating of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest rating. The results will be tallied and presented in a table at the end of the article.

The Oranda is defined as a double tail fish, with a deep body, high dorsal fins, and paired pectoral, ventral, and anal fins. The body should be relatively deep and egg-shaped. The dorsal fin should ideally be between $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1-1/2 times the

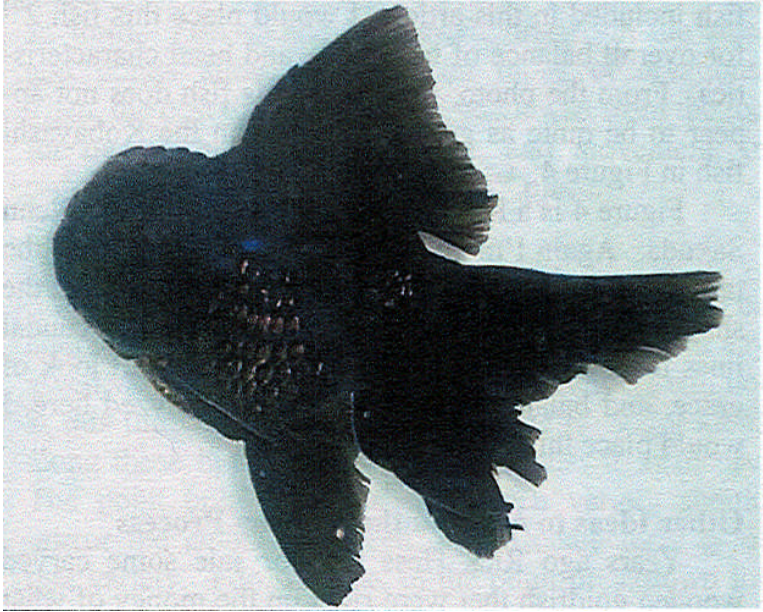
depth of the body. The tail fin may be ribbon-like, similar to a fantail, or similar to a Veiltail, and should be equal to the body in length.

The head growth should be prominent, and cover the top of the head, cheeks and gills. Alternate head growth types can be top only (mushroom head); and top and cheeks. Acceptable scalation is metallic (most prevalent), nacreous (commonly called calico), and matte. Colors can be orange, red, red and white, white, black, metallic blue, black and white, black and red, natural, chocolate, and calico.

Fish 1, Black & Red Oranda



Fish 2, Black Oranda



Fish 3, Calico Oranda



Fish 4, Red & White Oranda



Fish 5, Orange Oranda



Judge's Rating and Comments

Larry Christensen

First Place Fish -- Calico Oranda Fish #3

This fish is the mascot goldfish of the Goldfish Society of America.. I knew nothing about GFSA when my wife gave me "Goldfish Guide" by Dr. Yoshiichi Matsui in 1972 (my first goldfish book) as my birthday present that year. On page 26 of that book I saw the most magnificent goldfish I'd ever seen, it was "Stoney". I've seen thousands of Orandas since, but this Calico's (actually an Azumanishiki) body, finnage, color, poise and attitude are what I've learned to truly appreciate and respect over all these years. He was 4 years old and ten inches long when this picture was taken in 1964. When have you ever seen anything as beautiful as this goldfish since? This is a Calico's beauty in its finest.

The body is very deep with body and tail of equal proportion. The back is high to support the framed depth of the body. Head is nicely developed with good wen on the top, gill plate and cheeks. Dorsal fin is very erect giving him a very proud stature (this is something that can't be trained into a fish, it's something it's born with). The tail is very full (a broadtail) with a high top ray proving the muscle in the peduncle area has strength to support the weight of this arched tail. The lobes of the tail look balanced as well as the ventral fins. Pectoral fins are balanced even though they appear to have a slight curl at the ends.

The color and pattern are something I have only seen twice since. The blue is a deep blue on the back, the belly and face are a soft orange-red , the strips in the fins outline the fins shape and enhance the translucence of the webbing between the remaining structure. His eye has a beautiful silvery pearl ring around the ebony pupil. And his mouth is set to let you know he knows he's magnificent and he wants you to enjoy this photo for posterity.

Second Place Fish -- Red & White Oranda Fish 4

This is a very unique Oranda. The body is very nice , high arching back, deep abdominal area, good body length in proportion with the tail. The head is well shaped with good head growth and I assume the checks and gill plates have nice wen growth also as the eye is small and slanted giving me reason to believe the wen is growing somewhat in the eye area usually only seen on a mature goldfish. I'm a little concerned about the development on this tail as it appears to be somewhat clamped but the tail is not drooping which leads me to believe it's just not the best photo of this goldfish. The dorsal is up but not as high as in our first place Oranda.

What's really eye catching with this Oranda is it's unique pattern and color. This would be called a Lemon Head Oranda if there were no white on the back of the

goldfish (Lemon head Orandas are hard to find). The white comes off the head and travels half way into the back to the middle of the dorsal and the white is as bright as newly fallen snow. The red is a very thick orange-red on the body that extends into the joints of the pectoral and ventral fins and fully into the anal fins. Having made a try at breeding Red and White Orandas with little success I can tell you this is a hard Oranda to develop. And thus my second place choice.

Third Place Fish -- Black Oranda Fish 2

The body though short in comparison to the first two appears to be a newer line of some of the Black Orandas we're seeing imported from Taiwan. Some of the new Black Orandas are also being bred with shorter tails as we see here (note the tail is not as long as the body). Some of this is due to the fact that the bodies are grown so large and fast that the tails aren't able to keep up with the body growth. In time this may correct its self, but you have to be patient. Again look at that high straight dorsal. The black on this goldfish is wonderful on the head and fins. With the growth of this goldfish one of the last places for black to thicken is on the scale of the belly. Remember when fish are growing at a fast rate (Late Spring , Summer and Early Fall) the energy goes into the bone, mussel and finnage development. It isn't until water temperatures start cooling that muscle tissues tighten and energy is redirected to color enhancement as more pigment starts developing in the scale tissues. The belly is nice and black on this male. Why a male? Look at the front ray of the pectoral fin. See the white edge? It's not a disease...he's showing the females he's ready for a little *Hoochy Coochy!*

Fourth Place Fish -- Black and Red Oranda Fish 1

This is a nice large bodied fish. But this goldfish is not doing well from the photo. The water quality may be bad as the fins are clamped and red at the ends which could indicate ammonia problems. On the brighter side, the body is nicely shaped. The hood may be a little to large for this fish at this young age and could make the front heavy as it grows. This is where tails and strong peduncles come into play with the strength to balance one end of the goldfish to the other. Right now the tail is too short and clamped and the heads too large. Nice color in the body and head with good black in the fins and nice accent of black in the face. With the black speckling on the scales on the back, it appears the black is disappearing in that area. This is common on these varieties with soft water conditions.

Fifth Place Fish -- Orange Oranda Fish 5

This Oranda is my last choice. The head is out of balance with the body as it's so large. The fins are out of balance with the body as they are too small. Though the dorsal is erect the front ray hasn't grown at the same rate as the remainder of the dorsal. The tail appears to droop or has a clamped appearance. Note the

beautiful color at the base of all the fins. It matches the head which gives promise to its future.

John Parker

We are pleased to welcome John Parker to our team of judges for these articles. John is a member of the GFSA and is well known to a number of GFSA members through his involvement with the Goldfish Society of Great Britain and his regular attendances to our Breeders' Social gatherings. In addition to being the GSGB's Chairman and Bulletin Editor, John is also one of England's leading Goldfish breeders and exhibitors, regularly winning major awards at specialist Goldfish shows throughout England and all with goldfish he has bred himself. He breeds and exhibits Ranchu, Bristol Shubunkins, Veiltails (calico and metallic), metallic Orandas, Broadtail Moors, Jikin and Tosakin so his knowledge of different varieties is extensive.

John is regarded as one of the UK's senior Goldfish judges and officiates at all the major shows and has the distinction of being one of the few Westerners, perhaps even the only Westerner, ever to judge at a specialist Ranchu show in Japan.

My knowledge of the Goldfish show scene in the United States is limited to seeing photographs taken at various shows from which I recall seeing Goldfish of various varieties swimming together in relatively large glass aquariums. If that is indeed the "normal" then there is a marked contrast between the shows in the US and the UK. In the UK the fish are usually exhibited in plastic tanks measuring 14 inches x 10 inches by 8 inches deep although slightly larger tanks are provided at some shows for breeders' team classes. They are provided by the Society organising the show and are usually filled with water on the evening before the day of the show. All shows are "one day events". Classes are provided for adults/open, breeders' teams and single entry breeders. Entries in the adult/open classes can be of any age and do not have to have been bred by the exhibitor but those in the breeders' classes have to have been bred by the exhibitor in the current calendar year. Each tank contains one fish, apart from those for breeders' team classes which will contain 4 baby fish. The tanks are arranged in class order with all the tanks containing fish in each class being grouped together making life easier for the judges and making comparison between exhibits possible. The major shows are concentrated in the period from late August to early October and as the majority of goldfish breeding takes place between the beginning of March and the end of May most of the fish in the breeders' classes will be between 4 and 7 months old.

I am looking forward to participating in this interesting series of articles and will judge the exhibits as I would in the UK albeit making allowances for differences between US and UK standards. I believe in interactive articles so if you disagree (or even agree!) with my assessment please email me at john@oranchu.com and I will respond in the next Report. Please type fish, goldfish or GFSA in the subject section of the email if it is the first time you have emailed me or my SPAM filter might divert your message!

And so to business. I have been asked to judge the adult Oranda class and my judging sheet shows that there are 5 entries in the class. My first check is to ensure that all the entries are accounted for. Whilst doing this I note that the class contains metallics of various colours and a calico. I quickly check the show schedule to ensure that all the fish have been entered in the correct class. (In the UK there are often different classes for metallics and calicos whilst at the GSGB's main show in London three classes are provided – one for red and red/white metallics, another for all other coloured metallics –blue, black, chocolate, etc. and variegated examples involving those colours with silver – and Red Caps, and a third for calicos. My second check is to make sure all the exhibits have divided tails and twin anal fins. I will assume that they do, if they didn't they would be disqualified regardless of their good points.

MY JUDGING SHEET

	1	2	3	4	5
	Black/Red	*Black*Calico	*Red/White*	Orange	
Body (20)	13	14	17	9	10
Finnage (20)	12	11	15	10	7
Colour (20)	13	16	16	12	14
Condition/ Deportment (20)	13	11	17	12	14
Special Characteristics (20)	14	15	14	14	13
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL (100)	65	67	79	57	56
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

3rd

2nd

1st

4th

5th

In my opinion, as can be seen from my judging sheet, Fish 3, the Calico, is the clear winner. Its body shape is excellent; no lumps or bumps, correct body length/depth ratio, excellent dorsal and ventral contours. The short and slightly soft dorsal lets down the finnage but the tail – substance, spread and carriage – is excellent, truly eye catching, the depth of blue is excellent as is the black flecking and stripes. The distribution of red is not as good and the colourless area on the head is unfortunate. This fish's downside is its hood development or rather the lack of it. It has no "face", needing greater height to the hood whilst that and insufficient development below the eyes gives the fish a strange parrot-beak-like look around the mouth. Nevertheless, a fish I would be proud to own.

Second, Fish 2 - the Black. Excellent colour, extending to the edge of the fins and good hood development make this fish worthy of second place although its quality is a mile behind the winner. The body is short, but the finnage, lacking in substance, frayed and damaged, cost this specimen many points in both the Finnacle and Deportment and Condition sections.

Third, Fish 1 - Black/Red. Very similar in many respects to Fish 2 although it is in better condition but the colour lacks intensity.

Fourth, Fish 4 – Red/White. I get the impression that this is a very large fish and could look spectacular in a crystal clear pond but it is out of place on the show bench. It is coarse and ugly. The body length is too great in relation to body depth and the dorsal contour lacks symmetry – the highest "point" of the top line should be close to half way along the body. On this fish the highest point is three quarters of the way along the body encouraging an almost Ranchu-like curve to the final quarter of the body. Hood growth is inadequate compared to body size but even so it appears to be encroaching on the eye. The tail is short, misshapen and lacks substance whilst the tail's pinkish tinge suggests that the fish is in poor condition. Colour is average. In a variegated fish, I look for sharpness of colour and a pleasing pattern. This fish has no real pattern, the white "patch" is blemished, the red is fading on the stomach and lack of bold colour on the crown of the hood does not help the overall impression.

Fifth, Fish 5 – Orange. This fish has such a poor tail that I am also questioning the shape of the caudal peduncle. This may simply be a poor photograph but a judge can only judge what he sees. I have probably been too hard on this fish and in reality it may well be on a par with the fish placed second and third. This reflects real life scenarios when fish fail to deport themselves whilst judging is in progress and then, as soon as judging is over and the show is open to the public, they deport themselves to perfection and are obviously the best in the class. Who'd be a judge!

Peter Ponzio

First Place Fish – 5 points; Calico Oranda 3.

This fish is the official mascot of the GFSA, and is known as 'Stoney.' The fish possess stunning finnage, with a high erect dorsal, full tail (known as broadtail) and beautiful pectoral and ventral fins. The hood is fully developed, covering the top, cheeks, and gill plates. The calico coloration adds the crowning touch to this fish, with a background color of blue, paired with deep red and orange shading, complete with white and black accents.

Second Place fish – 4 points; Fish 4, Red & White Oranda.

This is a large fish, with excellent finnage. Note that the dorsal is not quite so high as the first place fish, and the tail is more of a ribbon type. The hood is well-developed and full, covering all areas of the face, cheek and gills. The red and white coloration is excellent, and seems to separate the fish into two areas on the head and upper portion of the body.

Third Place fish – 3 points; fish 2, Black Oranda.

This is another large fish, and possesses good finnage. The dorsal fin is exceptionally high, and the tail is close to that of a fantail. Note the differences in tail structures among the 3 fish reviewed above. The head growth is again excellent, with full coverage. The fish is black, which until 10 years ago was rare in fish other than telescopes. The black is matte and is accented by a metallic sheen over the body.

Fourth Place – 2 points; fish 1, Black & Red Oranda.

Another large fish, but due to the picture, it is difficult to see the finnage completely. The fish appears to have red streaks in the fins, which would indicate ammonia problems. The fish actually had black fins with red tips, making it rather interesting. The dorsal and caudal fins were actually quite good (large dorsal and tail fin), but it is difficult to tell from the picture. The fish has a full hood; some would say too full. The color combination is interesting, especially on the hood and fins, but the black appears to be fading in the area of the dorsal fin.

Fifth Place – 1 point; fish 5 Orange Oranda.

Our final fish is a large Orange Oranda. The dorsal and caudal fins appear to be the smallest of the group, and suffer by comparison. The hood growth is again excellent, and covers the top, cheeks, and gills. The orange coloration is excellent, and there is a white tip at the end of each fin.

Scott Taylor

1st Place – 5 points, Black Oranda, fish 2

Black fish have always pealed to me, and the color seems to be enjoying an increasing popularity in recent years. The black Oranda in the picture has a high quality black color combined with impressive finnage, making this my choice for the #1 fish.

2nd Place – 4 points, Calico Oranda, fish 3

The calico Oranda is a beautiful fish with good coloration, head growth and finnage, placing this fish as # 2 in the contest.

3rd Place – 3 points, Red & White Oranda, fish 4

The Red & white Oranda has good head growth and interesting coloration, with finnage that is slightly below that of the prior 2 fish, making this the number 3 fish of the group.

4th Place – 2 points, Red & Black Oranda, fish 1

The red & black Oranda has good head growth, but suffers from its fins being less full than the prior fish. In addition, as Peter notes above, the black looks to be fading on the body. This fish is # 4 of the fish we are judging.

5th Place – 1 point, Orange Oranda fish 5

The Orange Oranda is a nice fish, but its fins appear less full than the other fish, and the color more ordinary than the other fish in the group. While this is a fine fish, it suffers in comparison with the other fish in the group.

Judge's Consensus

Fish 1 – Black & Red Oranda

Fish 2 – Black Oranda

Fish 3 – Calico Oranda

Fish 4 – Red & White Oranda

Fish 5 – Orange Oranda

Fish number 3, the Calico Oranda known as "Stoney" came in first, with fish number 2 coming in second, and fish number 4 coming in third. In the previous edition of the column, there was a tie for 2nd place. While John's voting changed the contest somewhat, the voting remained remarkably consistent with "Stoney" still coming out on top. We hope that this column will become a regular feature on both sides of the Atlantic, and help goldfish enthusiasts understand how fish are graded.

The results of the judging were remarkably consistent, and we hope that this exercise makes it easier for people to not only understand how fish are evaluated, but also how to select fish on their own.

This collection of Orandas demonstrates the variability in the group, in terms of finnage, color, and head growth. Due to their variability, the Oranda remains perhaps the most popular goldfish variety.

Thanks to the judges for participating in the exercise. The next category to be covered is the Ryukin class.

Fish #	Larry		John		Peter		Scott		Total
	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Points
1	4 th	2	3 rd	3	4 th	2	4 th	2	9
2	3 rd	3	2 nd	4	3 rd	3	1 st	5	15
3	1 st	5	1 st	5	1 st	5	2 nd	4	19
4	2 nd	4	4 th	2	2 nd	4	3 rd	3	13
5	5 th	1	5 th	1	5 th	1	5 th	1	4