

Goldfish Varieties – Ryukin

By Peter J. Ponzio

In the original article for this series, we defined a number of characteristics common to all goldfish, and introduced the concept of goldfish varieties, or different types of goldfish. Each subsequent article would provide detailed guidelines to appreciate and understand the characteristics of each variety recognized by the Goldfish Society of America (GFSA). Line Art for the GFSA standards has been provided courtesy of Merlin Cunliffe.

In the prior article, we discussed the fantail goldfish, which developed as a result of a natural mutation from the original single-tail varieties. The fantail was subsequently bred to achieve consistent tail separation, a deeper body structure, and elongated fins. Gradually, different color types were developed, and the fantail, as we know it, was finally stabilized.

The Ryukin is probably a development from the fantail goldfish and was selectively bred to emphasize the unique characteristics of this variety. Development of the Ryukin occurred in the Far East, with claims being made for its development both in China and Japan. For our purpose, it is not essential to identify the exact locus of development, but rather to acknowledge the dedication of the fish farmers who stabilized this variety in the Far East.

The Ryukin is a double-tail goldfish, which possesses an oval body shape, which is almost round, and paired anal, ventral and pectoral fins. The dorsal fin is usually $\frac{1}{3}$ the depth of the body, and the caudal fin, which is forked, is from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the length of the body. The distinguishing feature of this fish is the hump, which starts at the back of the head, and arches markedly until the start of the dorsal fin. In some cases, the hump can take on a double appearance, with one hump starting at the back of the head and developing into a second hump just before the dorsal fin. The hump is composed of a combination of fat and muscle, and should extend symmetrically across the back of the fish. The head is often overlooked on Ryukins, but should appear triangular when viewed from the top of the fish.

Ryukins are large fish, both in terms of length and in terms of girth. Large Ryukins of ten to twelve inches are not uncommon, and are very eye-catching. Despite their deep body shape, Ryukins do not appear to be as susceptible to swim bladder problems, as are many of the other deep bodied fish. Ryukins swim in a somewhat awkward fashion, and appear to waddle through the water. This awkward swimming motion may be due to the combination of deep body, relatively long fins, and the hump. Ryukins can

be kept outdoors in the summer, but most people prefer to over-winter their fish indoors.

The Ryukin comes in a variety of colors, including red, red and white, orange, white, olive or drab green, and calico. Red, and red and white Ryukins seem to have an intense coloration, and these fish are truly spectacular, when large. Recently all-black, metallic blue, and "Goshiki" (silver or gray with orange markings) have been introduced from the Far East. Another recent development is the importation of short-finned Ryukins (primarily from China), which have an even more round appearance, and drastically shortened fins. These fish are very popular in China, and are being seen more frequently in the States.

Just like in koi, where we have a "big three" of Kohaku, Sanke, and Showa, we have a "big three" in goldfish. The Ryukin is one of the "big three," along with the Oranda and Ranchu. These three varieties win most of the major awards at goldfish shows, although Lionheads and Telescopes win awards as well. Ryukins, due to their impressive appearance, and relatively easy fish-keeping requirements, as well as their propensity to win major awards, are popular with goldfish collectors.

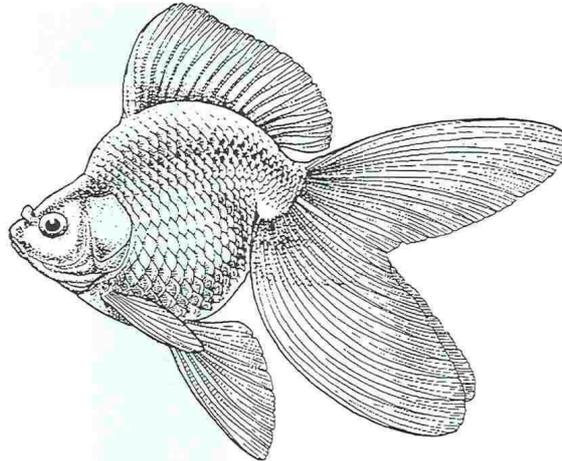
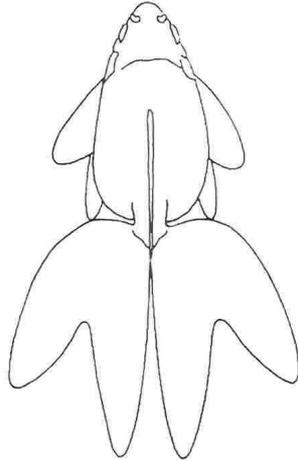
A diet containing more protein than normally fed to single-tail fish is often considered desirable for the development of the hump. In addition to higher protein content, live or frozen foods, such as earthworms, brine shrimp, daphnia, and blood-worms are ideal for bringing out the best in these fish.

Shown below is the GFSA variety guideline, which indicates the judging criteria, and emphasizes the finnage and body shape which we discussed above.

Double Tail

Breed: Ryukin

Goldfish Society of America



Description:

The Ryukin has a very short egg-shaped body with a double caudal fin. The depth of the body should be $\frac{3}{4}$ to equal to the length of the body. The distinguishing characteristic of the fish is a humpback feature which begins immediately after the head, and may in fact, appear as a double hump. The caudal fin is long, double, and should be 90% or more divided; the caudal fin is $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ times as long as the length of the body, with rounded lobes and moderate forking. The dorsal fin should be approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ the depth of the body. The pectoral and pelvic fins are paired, of moderate length, and well-matched. The paired anal fins should match the pelvic and pectoral fins in length and shape. The Ryukin can occur in any of the scale types common to Goldfish: nacreous, metallic, or matt. Acceptable metallic colors are orange, red & white, and white. Nacreous coloration includes bi-color, tri-color, solid red, and calico (with or without spangled scales). Matt coloration includes pink, bi-color, and tri-color.

Point Schedule:

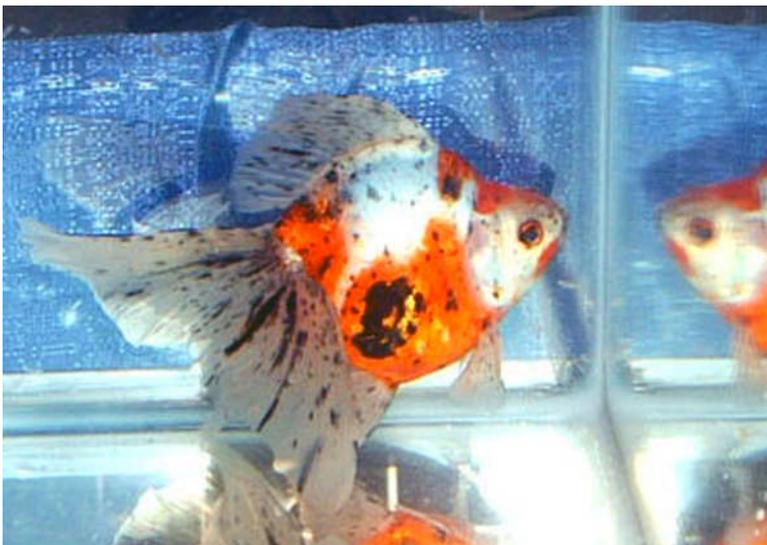
Body Style	20 points
Coloration	20 points
Finnage	20 points
Special Characteristics:	
Hump development, coloration, carriage of caudal fin	20 points
Department and Condition	20 points

Ryukin line art courtesy of Merlin Cunliffe.

Judging for these fish is somewhat different than for single-tail fish, since the tail and double fins present unique challenges (they should be matched and proportional to the size of the fish). In addition, particular attention should be paid to the body depth, the height of the dorsal fin, and of course, the development of the hump. As mentioned above, the hump should be symmetrical, and full. Care should be taken to ensure that the head, when viewed from above, is triangularly shaped, and that the mouth is well-formed. It is important that the head not be pinched-looking, which can occur in this type of fish. As was mentioned earlier in the article, colors can span the range of those seen by most goldfish types, with calico, red and red and white fish being especially striking.



Red and white Ryukin - Grand Champion at the Portland Show a few years ago.



Calico Ryukin - Reserve Grand Champion, MAKC Show 2005; and Grand Champion MPKS Show, 2005.



"Goshiki" Ryukin - Grand Champion, Tropical Koi & Goldfish Show, photo courtesy of Carolyn Weise, VP Long Island Chapter, MAKC.



Red & White Ryukins, photo courtesy of Southwest Koi & Goldfish