

Goldfish Varieties – Pearlscale

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.

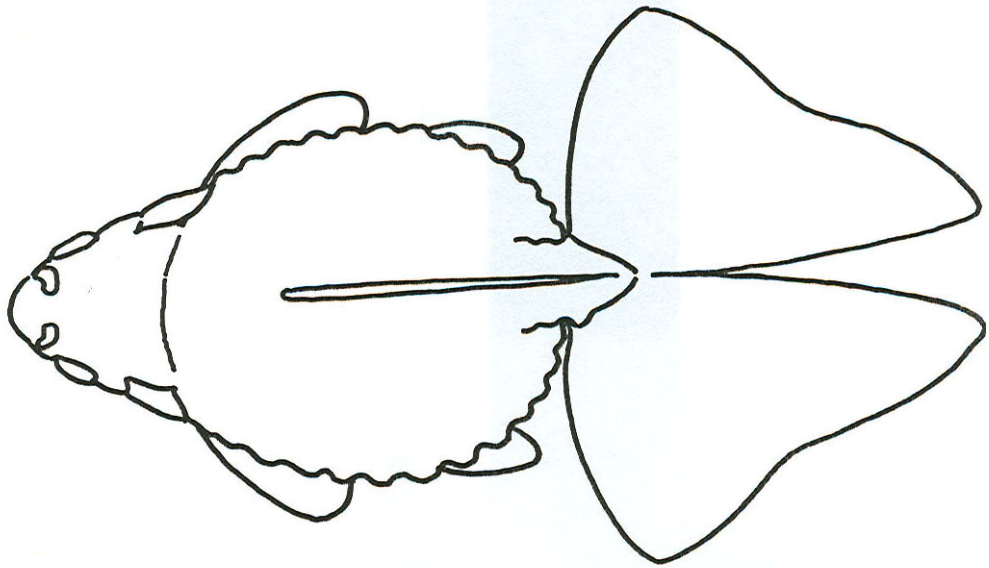
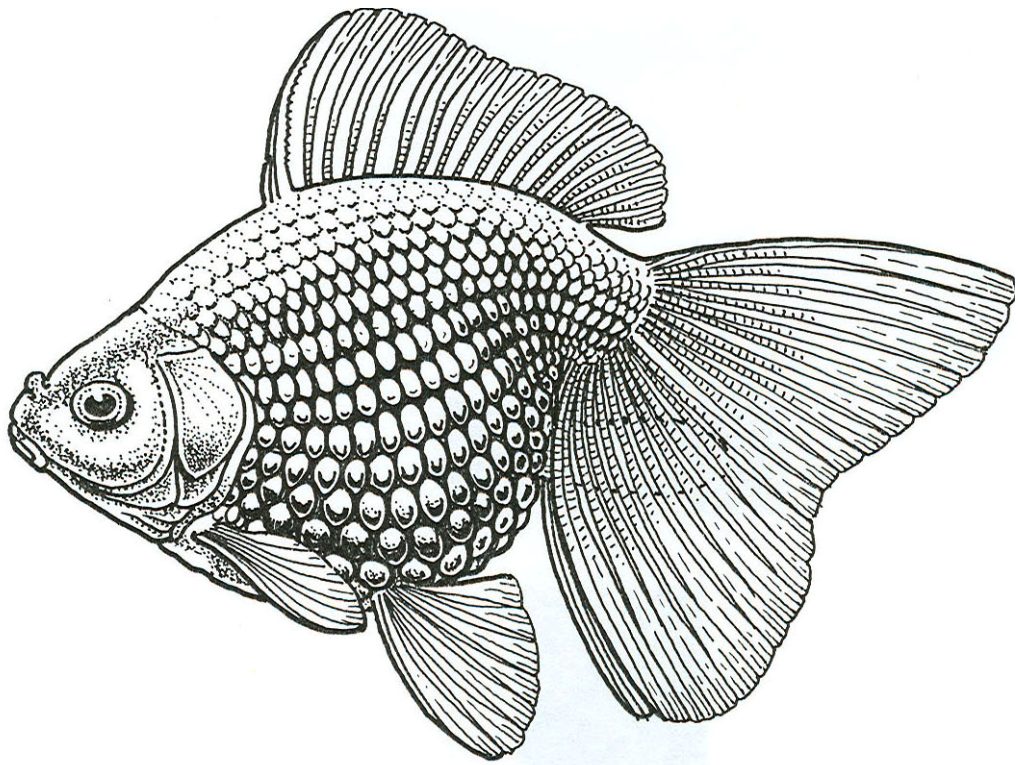
The Pearlscale is one of the most unusual goldfish varieties in existence, and definitely takes some getting used-to. The distinguishing characteristic of this fish is the raised scale, which gives the appearance of a pearl, hence the name.

As you can see from the line art drawing, the Pearlscale possesses a stout, rounded body, smallish dorsal fin, and double pectoral, anal, and caudal fins. The body of the fish is among the most rounded, and therefore, compact of any of the goldfish varieties. In some instances, the body is so rounded as to appear to be ball-shaped. Some people think that these fish look like a golf-ball with fins attached! The compact body shape makes these fish extremely susceptible to swim bladder problems.

The caudal fish of these fish is usually well-developed, which, when combined with the round body, gives these fish an unusual swimming motion, and makes them look as if they were waddling in the water. A new variety (within the last twenty years) from China has very short dorsal, anal, pectoral and caudal fins, and further impairs the swimming motion of the fish.

As mentioned earlier, the scaling is the characteristic feature of this fish. The scales should be raised, with a bump or excrescence appearing on each individual scale. These excrescences are made up of the same material as regular scales, and can be damaged or knocked-off. Scales, once removed, may or may not grow back with the raised protuberance at the base of each scale. In order to be competitive in a judging environment, the scaling should be observed on each individual scale of the fish, without the fish having missing scales. It is important that the scales continue from the belly, through the sides and onto the back area of the fish, right up to the dorsal fin. The following picture, which shows a short-finned Pearlscale, demonstrates the ideal placement of scales up the back of the fish, to the area adjacent to the dorsal fin.

The GFSA breed guideline, prepared by Merlin Cunliffe, is presented below.



This photo is from the book *Chinese Goldfish*.



Despite the rounded body of the fish, the Pearlscale is not large, in terms of the body length. Most examples are five to six inches in length; the girth of the fish makes it appear much larger than it actually is. Having said this, filtration requirements for most aquaria are expressed in terms of fish load, which is best expressed as a function of the mass of the fish. Care should be taken when raising Pearlscale that the additional mass of the fish is considered when developing filtration requirements for the aquarium.

The Pearlscale comes in a variety of color and scalation types (other than the pearling) including metallic, matte and nacreous. Pearlscales are hardy fish, and can be kept in a mixed tank of goldfish, although they may not be able to compete effectively for food due to their unusual swimming motion. I have never kept Pearlscales in a pond environment, but they should be able to be raised in a pond, although I would not recommend over-wintering these fish in an outdoor environment.

A variation of the Pearlscale that has a head-growth is known as the Hamanishiki, or Pearl-Scaled Oranda. These fish have the basic body-shape and pearling associated with a regular Pearlscale, along with a wen-growth, like the Oranda goldfish. These fish are quite handsome when the wen and pearling are of good quality. Sometimes, rather than having one wen, the Hamanishiki can have two wens on top of the head.



Hamanishiki goldfish from the 2006 Portland goldfish show



Red & Black Pearlscales from *Chinese Goldfish*



Calico Pearlscale from Chinese Goldfish



Hamanishiki from Spokane 2006 Show