

## **Goldfish Varieties – Shubunkin**

### **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).

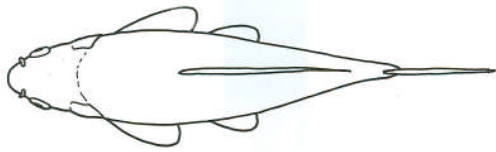
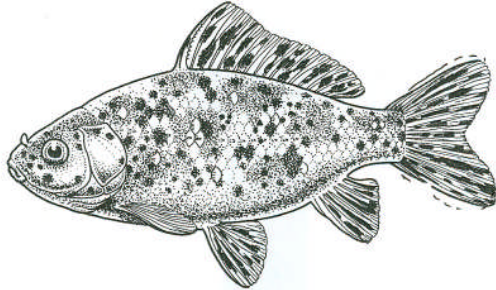
The Shubunkin is similar to the common goldfish, and is classified as a single-tail fish, having a dorsal fin. The fish possess a "torpedo" shaped body, and is from twelve to twenty inches in length. Lengths of twelve to twenty inches occur for fish raised in a pond environment, with lengths of six to ten inches common for tank-raised fish.

The primary difference between the common goldfish and the Shubunkin is primarily the coloring. As mentioned in the previous article the common goldfish comes in a host of colors, including orange, yellow, white, olive or drab green, yellow-brown, and black. The Shubunkin goldfish is a calico fish, and can be nacreous or matte, meaning that the fish can have scattered scales (nacreous) or matte (having the appearance of no scales).

An interesting attribute of the Shubunkin is the caudal or tail fin, which actually comes in three distinct types. The short tail, often seen on "common" goldfish; the elongated tail typically seen on "comet" goldfish; and a unique tail known as the "Bristol" which is a very beautiful, spread tail found only in the Shubunkin.

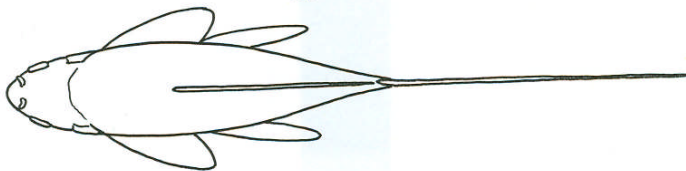
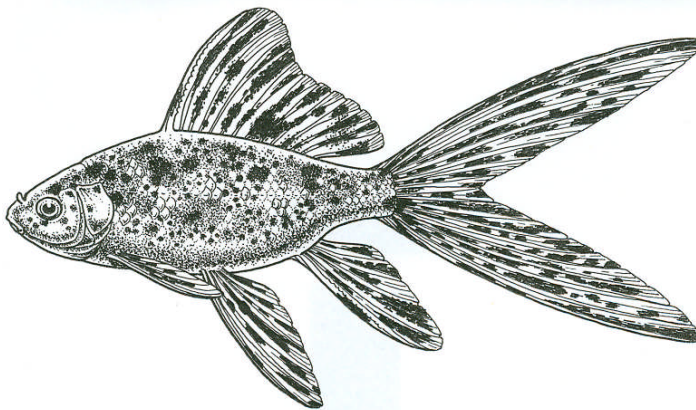
To illustrate these 3 tail types, I have included line art drawings commissioned on behalf of the GFSA by Merlin Cunliffe, a noted goldfish breeder and fancier living in Australia.

The first drawing shows the London Shubunkin, which we would call a common Shubunkin in the States. It possesses a body and tail shape similar to that of the common goldfish, as seen in the illustration.



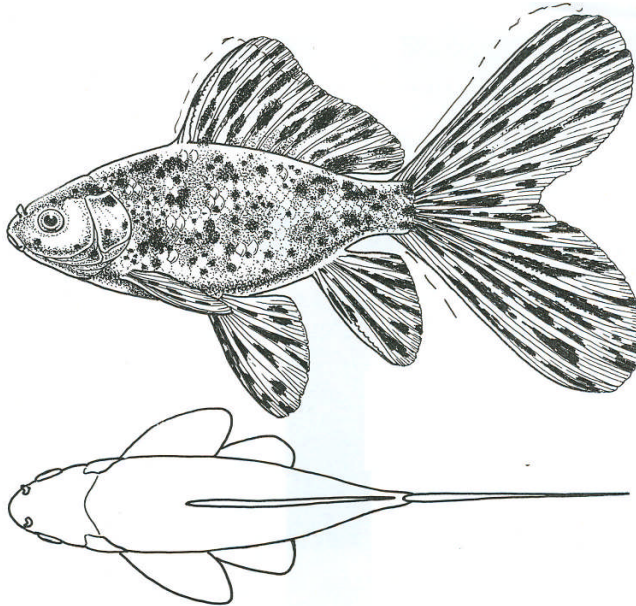
*London Shubunkin,  
GOMMATA*

The second line drawing is called the Japanese Shubunkin by Merlin, and possesses a body and tail shape similar to that of the comet.



*Japanese Shubunkin*

The final form is the Bristol Shubunkin, which possesses the body shape of the common goldfish, but with a beautiful, flowing single tail.



*Bristol Shubunkin*

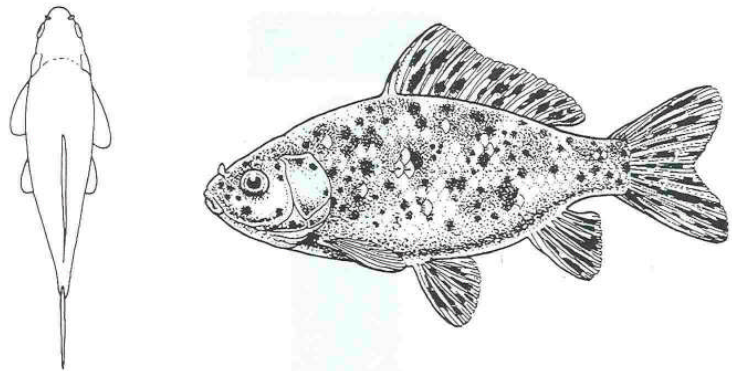
Judging for these fish is similar to that of the common goldfish, but with added emphasis placed on coloration (since these are calico fish), and the tail fin. Theoretically, each of the three types of tail fin are judged similarly, although in practice, the "Bristol" type fish, if it possesses good finnage, and other characteristics are equal, will always be judged ahead of the other two varieties.

Since coloration is so important to this fish, it is important that three primary colors are shown on the fish. The first of these colors is black, which should appear on the body, as well as in streaks which appear on the fins. The second primary color that must appear on the fish is red. The red should be as deep as possible, with an intense vermilion color being preferred. The third primary color that must appear on the fish is blue, which should be as intense as possible. Shubunkins often have the most intense blue coloring of any goldfish, and the color is often so deep that it appears purple. Other colors are permissible on the fish, as long as these three primary colors are included. Other colors seen on Shubunkins include: pink, yellow, white, and orange.

Several years ago, a color variety of Shubunkin known as the "Midnight Blue" was developed that was colored black and blue. This is a special variety of the fish, and most trained judges will recognize the fish, and judge it accordingly. These fish are truly spectacular when bred according to type, with no additional colors appearing on the fish, besides the black and blue.

**Single Tail**

**Breed: Shubunkin**      **Goldfish Society of America**



**Description:**  
 The Shubunkin is a long (up to 12" in length) fish with a body depth approximately 3/8 the length of the body. The dorsal fin should be from 3/8 to greater than the depth of the body. Finnage may be broken down into three distinct types. For the American Shubunkin, the caudal fin should be deeply forked, with long narrow lobes which end in a point; the length of the caudal fin should be as long or longer than the length of the body. The pectoral and pelvic fins are paired, long, well-matched and pointed. The single anal fin should also be long and pointed. For the Bristol Shubunkin, the caudal fin should be moderately forked, with broad rounded lobes; the length of the caudal fin should be approximately 1/2 to 7/8 of the length of the body, or longer. The pectoral and pelvic fins are paired, long, well-matched and rounded. The single anal fin should also be long and rounded. For the London Shubunkin, the caudal fin should have short, rounded lobes with moderate forking; the length of the caudal fin should be approximately 1/4 the body length and carried erect and well-spread. The pectoral and pelvic fins are paired, short, well-matched, and rounded. The anal fin should be short and rounded. In all types of Shubunkins, should have calico coloration, with large patches of sky blue, brilliant red, dense black, and pure silvery white. Dense black streaks appear on each of the fins. The scalation is nacreous, with or without spangled scales.

**Point Schedule:**

Body Style	20 points
Coloration	20 points
Finnage	20 points
Special Characteristics:	
Caudal fin carriage and development	20 points
Department and Condition	20 points

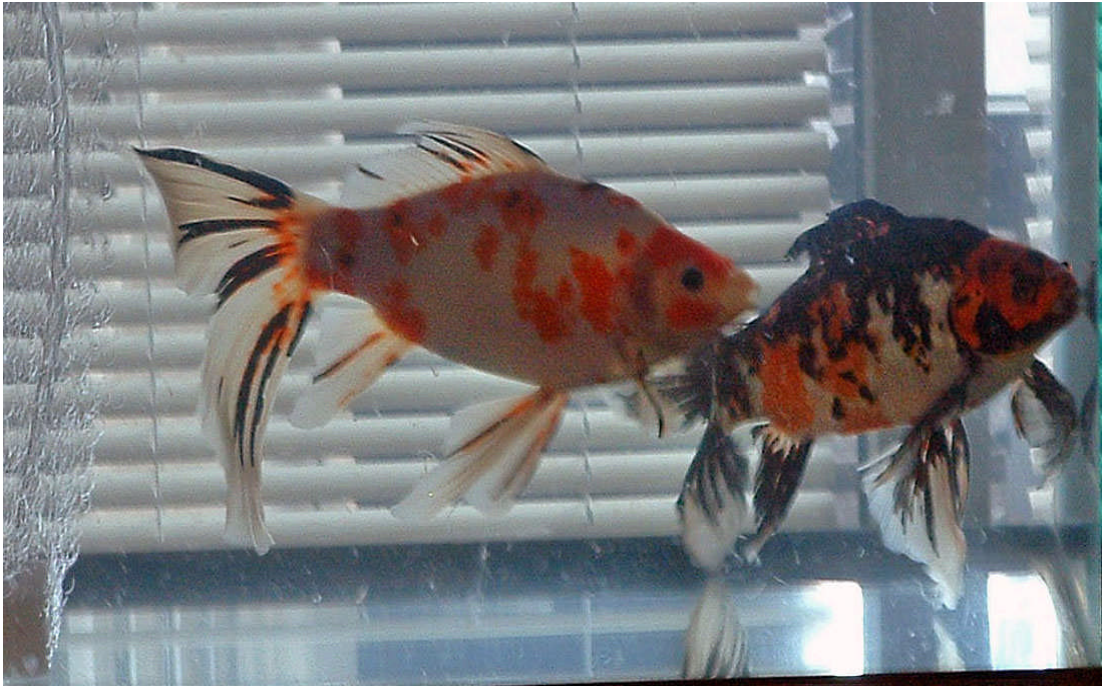
9

Shubunkins do well in goldfish competitions, and several have won Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion designations at fish shows, although not with as much regularity as Orandas, Ranchus, and Ryukins. As with all fish which are to be shown, the fish should be free of defects and disease, and should swim vertically through the water. Scalation should be regular

and even, and scales should not be missing on nacreous or "spangled" fish. For matte fish, it will appear as if the fish is scale less, and the body will appear dull. Fins should be in good shape, with the tail fin being about  $\frac{3}{8}$  the length of the fish for the "Common Shubunkin;" to up to double the length of the body for the "Comet-type Shubunkin;" and equal to the length of the body for the "Bristol" Shubunkin. The dorsal should be carried erect, and should be about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  the depth of the body. Paired pectoral and pelvic fins should be the same size, and should be full.



Bristol Shubunkin, photo by John Barcellona



Shubunkins, including Grand Champion from Spokane Koi & Goldfish Show, 2004