

Goldfish Varieties – Comet

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 Comet is a single-tail long-bodied goldfish, and is the fish most people think of when the word goldfish is mentioned to them. The fish possesses a streamlined body shape, and is from twelve to twenty inches in length. Comets are graceful fish, and swim easily through the water, making them a favorite form of pond fish for many people. Lengths of from 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 comet comes in a variety of colors, including orange, yellow, white, olive or drab green, yellow-brown, and black. If the comet appears in a calico coloring, it is classified as a long-finned Shubunkin, rather than as a comet.

The identifying characteristic of this variety of goldfish is the long, flowing fins which occur in the dorsal, caudal, pectoral and ventral fins. The caudal fin is often the length of the body, and in well-developed specimens, may be double the length of the body. A large specimen with a twelve-plus inch body and tail of equal or greater length makes for an impressive sight. The tail, in addition to being long, should also possess a prominent forking, so that approximately 80% of the tail is forked in appearance. In the best specimens, the tips of the tail are almost clear, which produces a beautiful effect against the background color of the fish and fins. The dorsal fin should be carried erect, and should be as deep as the body, or slightly deeper. There is a single ventral fin, which should be consistent with the length of the remaining fins.

The origins of the Comet are somewhat unclear. One school of thought holds that Comets were originally bred in Japan as variants of the common goldfish, or Hibuna. This school holds that the first Comets introduced in the U.S. came by way of the World's Fair held at the turn of the nineteenth century in Chicago. The second school of thought, propounded by William T. Innes, is that Comets were developed in Washington, DC in the 1880's. This school of thought holds that the Comet was the only goldfish variety bred in the U.S. In either case, the comets that are seen today are descended from these original fish. Comets, like common goldfish and Shubunkins are prolific

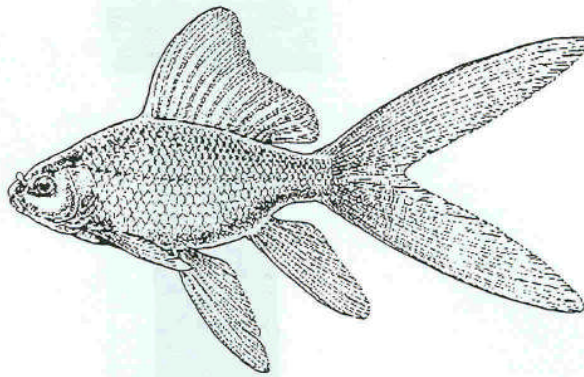
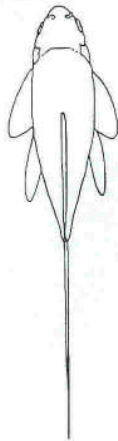
breeders, and are bred commercially for sale to pet shops throughout the country.

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

Single Tail

Breed: Comet

Goldfish Society of America



Description:

The Comet has a long (up to 12" in length) slim body and a high dorsal fin. The body depth of the fish should be approximately 3/8 the length of the body. The dorsal fin should be as high or higher than the depth of the body. The single caudal fin should be deeply forked, with long narrow lobes that end in a point. The caudal fin should be as long or longer than the length of the body. The pectoral and pelvic fins are paired, long, and end in a pointed fashion. The single anal fin should also be long and pointed at the end. The scalation of the Comet is metallic, and acceptable colors are red-orange, or red and white.

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

Judging for these fish is similar to that of all single-tail fish, but with added emphasis on fin development and deportment. As was mentioned earlier in the article, colors can span the range of those seen by most goldfish types, with the exception of calico. Large fish often show intense coloration, especially if raised in outside ponds.

Comets and other single tail fish do not often win major competitions at fish shows (the exception being Shubunkins, which have won major awards), and will usually do better than common goldfish at shows, all other factors being equal.



Red Comet, photo by Fred Rosenzweig



Comets, from *The Goldfish Guide* by Matsui and Axelrod