

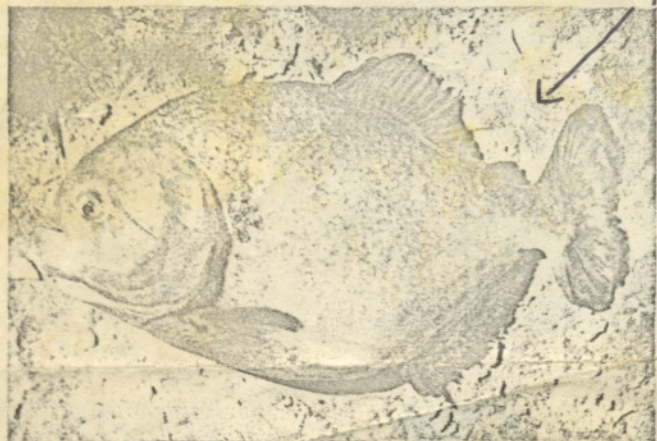


Kitchen Boy Piranha



Red Piranha

ADIPPOSE IS RAYED



Natterer's Piranha



Blacktailed Piranha

The Little Fish

The piranha can be harmless or deadly. Finding out which can be a highly costly process

Two years ago, a young boy fishing with his father in a canal outside of Fort Lauderdale caught a "funny looking bluegill." Its teeth clicked like Spanish castanets, but somehow the lad managed to juggle his prize into a bucket of water to take it home, his father meanwhile insisting that it was just another "brim" with a very red belly and a dental problem. The fish (the same one that appears in our photo) was soon identified as a red piranha.

Several months later, an off-duty Florida highway patrolman went fishing in a barrow pit which joins the Snapper Creek Canal west of Miami. The trooper was still-fishing with minnows and after being mysteriously cut-off several times he finally landed what he believed was "that little fish who eats people." A posi-

tive identification was made by the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission—another red piranha.

At both locations the waters were poisoned with rotenone over an extensive area by Florida biologists. No more piranha were found. Nevertheless, these isolated events confirm the necessity of present state regulations which strictly prohibit their importation.

Like so many exotics, piranha can survive in Florida's climate and certain species might readily live in more northerly waters. The illegal release of aquarium fishes is a problem that extends all the way to Wyoming and Montana, where tropicals such as the swordtail, guppy, and platy form reproducing populations in thermally warmed ponds and streams. These live-bearers have the same temperature tolerances as the

BY A. J. McCLANE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR