

The maximum body length of the native loach in Taiwan is about 15 cm. The body size of the male is smaller and more slender than the female. The dream to improve those limitations in loach culture was achieved by Mr. Wen-bien Su, a private farmer, through six years of selection.

In loach culture, many strains or species were introduced from foreign countries into Taiwan, especially from mainland China.

Six years ago, one with a bigger male was found by Mr. Su. The body size and growth rate were not improved significantly in first or second generation by selection. However, from the third generation, some bigger loaches were found. The growth rate and body size of males and females became similar. Unbelievably, the mean body weight of adult loaches increased from 50 g to 200 g and the body length was increased from 15 cm to 30 cm.

Because only one bigger male was found originally and used for the breeding, serious inbreeding was observed as many mutant, golden loaches were found in their offspring. The golden ones were used for ornamental aquaria fish. The other finding was that the shape and color of the testis in selected loach are different to "local" loaches with bigger, white testes in selected ones and

The Remarkable Giant Loach of Taiwan

thread-like, reddish-brown in local loaches. The age at maturity was also delayed in selected loaches.

Although the production technique was improved, the price of loach has declined due to overproduction. At present, the price of loach is close to the production cost. The meat quality and taste were also thought to be better in local loach. As a result, the culture of loach is not as popular as before. It is now a very profitable venture in Taiwan to culture marine fish, such as groupers.



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Farmer Wen-bien Su (left) proudly displays a specimen of his giant loaches. Adult male loaches (above), showing the remarkable difference in size between "local" (smaller) and selected loaches. The scale is 30 cm long.

