

silver arowana (Osteoglossum bicirrhosum)

The *silver arowana* (*Osteoglossum bicirrhosum*) is a majestic and highly sought-after freshwater fish native to South America, particularly found in the Amazon River basin and its tributaries. Known for its striking appearance and graceful movements, it is often referred to as the "dragon fish" due to its resemblance to the mythical Chinese dragon. Here's a detailed description:

Physical Characteristics:

1. *Size*:

- Silver arowanas can grow very large, reaching lengths of up to 3–4 feet (90–120 cm) in the wild.
- In captivity, they typically grow to about 2–3 feet (60–90 cm).

2. *Body Shape*:

- They have a long, sleek, and streamlined body, which allows them to move swiftly through the water.
- Their body is covered with large, metallic silver scales that shimmer in the light.

3. *Fins*:

- The dorsal and anal fins are elongated and extend almost to the tail, giving the fish a ribbon-like appearance.
- The pectoral fins are large and wing-like, aiding in their ability to leap out of the water.

4. *Mouth*:

- They have a large, upturned mouth with a prominent lower jaw, adapted for surface feeding.
- Two barbels (whisker-like sensory organs) protrude from the lower jaw, helping them detect prey.

Behavior:

1. *Surface Dwellers*:

- Silver arowanas are primarily surface-dwelling fish, often seen swimming near the top of the water.
- They are known for their incredible jumping ability, which they use to catch prey or escape predators. In the wild, they can leap several feet out of the water to catch insects, birds, or small animals.

2. *Diet*:

- They are carnivorous and feed on a variety of prey, including fish, insects, crustaceans, and even small mammals or birds.
- In captivity, they can be fed live or frozen foods such as fish, shrimp, crickets, and pellets.

3. *Temperament*:

- Generally solitary and territorial, especially as they grow larger.
- They can be aggressive toward other fish, particularly those of similar size or shape.

Habitat:

1. *Natural Environment*:

- Found in slow-moving rivers, floodplains, and blackwater habitats with dense vegetation.

- Prefers warm, soft, and slightly acidic water conditions.

2. *Water Conditions*:

- Temperature: 75–86°F (24–30°C).

- pH: 6.0–7.0.

- Soft to moderately hard water.

Aquarium Care:

1. *Tank Requirements*:

- Due to their large size, silver arowanas require a very spacious tank. A minimum of 250 gallons is recommended for a single adult, with larger tanks needed for multiple fish.

- The tank should be long and wide to accommodate their swimming habits.

- A tight-fitting lid is essential, as they are powerful jumpers.

2. *Tank Mates*:

- Compatible with large, peaceful fish that occupy different levels of the tank, such as large catfish or cichlids.

- Avoid keeping with smaller fish, as they may be seen as prey.

3. *Lifespan*:

- With proper care, silver arowanas can live for 10–15 years or more in captivity.

Cultural Significance:

- In some cultures, particularly in Asia, arowanas are considered symbols of luck, prosperity, and wealth. The silver arowana, however, is less commonly kept for this purpose compared to its Asian counterpart (*Scleropages formosus*).

Conservation:

- The silver arowana is not currently considered endangered, but habitat destruction and overfishing for the aquarium trade pose potential threats.

- They are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in some regions to ensure sustainable trade practices.

The silver arowana is a prized fish among advanced aquarists due to its beauty and unique behavior, but it requires a significant commitment in terms of space, care, and maintenance.