

Bekko by Dick "coach" Benbow



Bekko (bek-koh) may be the Rodney Dangerfield of the Koi World...not much respect. In fact many clubs have downgraded the classification into the catch all class because it seems few are entered in shows.

The fish pictured to the right is a Shiro Bekko, probably the most common. Occasionally you find Aka Bekko (below), an all red fish with black "stepping stones". Rarely seen these days is the Ki Bekko, a yellow fish with black.

Bekkos come from a Sanke breeding. The three colored koi discovered during the Taisho Era of the emperor of Japan and known officially as Taisho Sanshoku. Shiro Bekkos make their appearance as being born without a red plate or because of stress the loss of it as they age. Aka Bekko must have the red completely covering the body. Often some white appears to change the official designation to Aka Sanke which must compete in the Sanke class and does not do well in that class. Ki Bekko used to occasionally show up decades ago but now has really become a thing of the past, its genetics slowly worked out of the system.

Breeding koi is a business in Japan and elsewhere and when a pecking order came in place in shows where in the Bekko class, even if all three colors were equally the same quality, the nod always went to Shiro Bekko and then Aka Bekko, hence the reason why investments in time and money were not pursued for the yellow version. This same thing occurred with Utsuri, but fortunately a demand by collectors for the yellow version has made it economically possible to begin breeding again as of late. But the Ki Bekko, is not as fortunate.

The Shiro Bekko is often used to help explain what a good Sanke should look like. Instructors often combine the red pattern of Kohaku and

then override the black pattern of Bekko to make the illustration.

A good white is critical for show, and often times you will find Shiro Bekko with off-colored heads with a pinkish tan look to them. Females often absorb this coloration as they begin to produce eggs their third year. Water often dictates this off-colored head, especially as they are removed from mud ponds. The black or as the Japanese call it, the sumi (sue-me), needs to be a shiny lacquer black. Most important is to find a strong shoulder placement in the pattern, then using the description as stepping stones to walk the rest of the black pattern down the body to the odome (oh doe may) or tail stop area.

The fish below is owned by myself and is a product of Kleinholz Koi Farms, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

I like the simplicity of the simple black and white. It reminds me of the drawings made while using Sumi-ink. Maybe I also like it because you

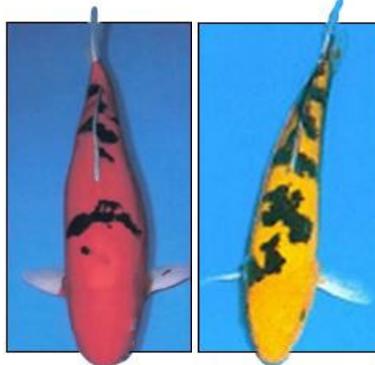
don't see them as much as I think they deserve to be noticed. But more importantly I like them because I enjoy them as part of my pond, and after all, isn't that what having koi is all about.

Dick Benbow, aka coach, has been with koi for close to 35 years. He is a Pacific Northwest Koi Club Association (PNKCA) Bronze Koi recipient and founding father for both Puget Sound Koi Club and Washington Koi and Water Garden Society. Dick is active on many of the koi chat lines. He is married, has two children and two grandchildren. His favorite koi subjects are filtration and understanding tosa development.



Shiro Bekko

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Aka & Ki Bekko

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