



**83. THREE SPINED STICKLEBACK / DREISTACHLIGER STICHLING
(*Gasterosteus aculeatus*)**

IDENTIFICATION: The Three spined Stickleback is a small fish that reaches a length of about 10 cm. The body found in inland waters is different from the migrating marine fish. The body inhabiting inland waters has a thinner outer skin. Three spined Stickleback has a three strong, well-developed, pointed dorsal spines, which are characteristic of this type of stickleback.

HABITAT: They are found around the world in sea and freshwater, in cold and moderate latitudes. Larger schools of Three spined sticklebacks can be found in coastal areas and in lower stretches of rivers. In inland waters, it is found in bays of rivers and lakes and in small ditches.

FOOD: Three spined stickleback feed on insect larvae, worms, and small crayfish.

SPAWNING: Between March and July. The spawning of younger fish is fascinating: the colorful males use plant fibers to built nests, court females, and make them move to the nests to deposit their eggs. Males will watch the nests, which usually contain up to 1,000 eggs, without being assisted by females. Males mostly stay close to the nest opening. They use their pectoral fin to fan fresh water to the eggs. And will aggressively attack fish swimming close to the nests and chase them out of their territory. Their interesting reproduction procedures prompted scientists to conduct behavioral studies.