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REMEMBER ONE BASIC TRUTH: MOTHER NATURE IS STILL THE BOSS.

ponds that are green at the beginning of the season won't be by summertime, because the daphnia have eaten their food sources and become a nice food source for the Koi. The big daphnia will also attack and eat the smaller rotifers. So, in general, we can say that they eat phytoplankton, detritus, bacteria and small ciliates. On page 54, you can find a rotifer spotted at 100x magnification phase contrast that I found in the filter from the lindia family that was eating debris. In this picture, you can see that the hook is connected to the debris he is consuming.

BENTHOS

This group generally lives at the bottom of the water column, such as the bottom of our filters or a mud pond. Most of the time we recognize them as worms and insect larvae, and most of the time you can see them with the naked eye. The most common one for us is the tubifex. The advantage of larger benthic invertebrates is that they eat and remove detritus and also consume silt. We have found that these animals have a lot of beneficial components like fatty acids, lipids and high protein levels that are needed in the diets of our Koi.

The basic message is very simple: nature can teach us a lot, but we need to respect it. This is the same for water, because most of our ponds are unnatural we should try to copy nature. New food technology and more advance filtration methods are helping us to make better water, but I have learned one thing: the more you know, the less you know. And remember one basic truth: Mother Nature is still the boss. ❁



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Future Koi From Tategoi to Jumbo

Story and Photographs by Mike Snaden

As we all know, Tategoi is perhaps the most abused word in Nishikigoi. It is a word that tricks people into believing that Koi of mediocre quality will blossom into the next decade's champions. In truth, there is a very fine line between extremely high-quality Tategoi and low-quality Koi, with one often being mistaken for the other. High-quality Koi that are ready for shows are extremely easy to appreciate and, if kept carefully, can actually be nurtured to become even better Jumbo Koi. A good Tategoi, however, will have subtle qualities that will take a great deal of time to recognize. Such Koi, in the right hands, can be grown extremely well, with the qualities being kept from finishing until the Koi is Jumbo, resulting in a Koi of extreme class with a youthful appearance. To my mind, any bloodline worth its salt

will yield Koi that can be grown in excess of 80cm/31in by six years old, using only the mud pond for growing during the summer months. I also believe it is possible to match these growth levels in your own Koi pond, using only the summer months for growing.

Many people say that they have no problems growing Koi, and can quite easily grow a 50cm/19in Nisai to 60cm/23in or more. However, it is running them past the 75cm/29in mark that requires great effort and attention to detail.

It is all too easy to believe that in Japan there are masses of Jumbo Koi at every breeder, just waiting for someone to buy them. This is a ridiculous notion. Champions can't be found on the shelf, they have to be created. To raise such a Koi in your own pond requires immense dedication. Growing Jumbo Koi is an

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art of creating a fine balance in the Koi's life, a balance between water chemistry, food, light and temperature. When you get the balance right, you should be able to not only grow the Koi big, but also control the rate at which the Koi develops, so that it peaks later in life, resulting in a better end-product. The following Koi were all purchased in Japan and are good examples of what time, patience and a good understanding of Koi will yield you.

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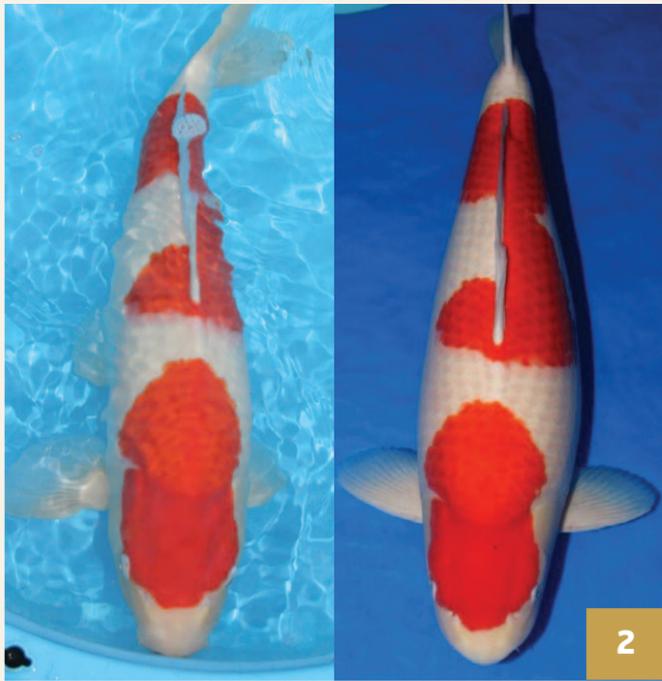
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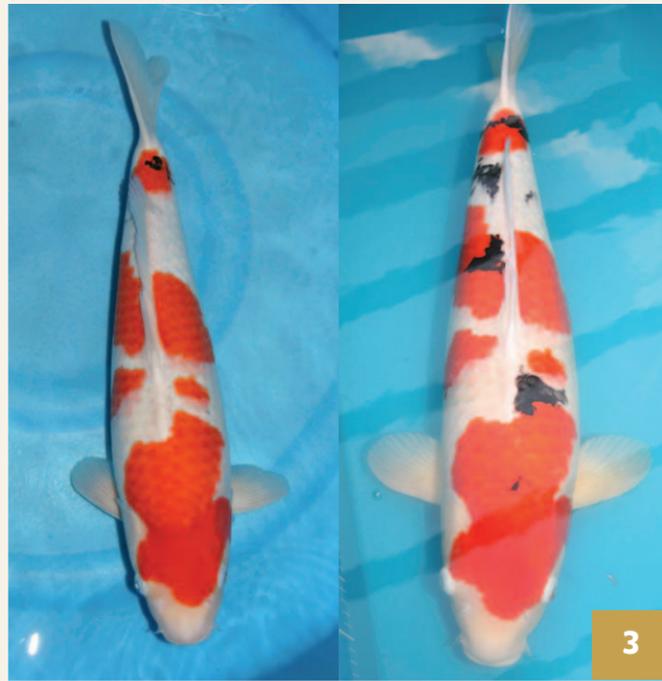


1 This Nisai (two year old) Kohaku measured 59cm/23in, in the autumn of 2006. She was grown from May 2007 to October 2007 in the customer's pond, up to 70cm/27in. Such a Koi should measure around 76cm/30in as Yonsai (four years old) by the fall of the 2008 growing season, and hit more than 80cm/31in as a Gosai (five years old). Notice that as Nisai, her color was very pale, yet with excellent thickness, with nice refinement to both Sashi and Kiwa. As Nisai, this Koi represented Tategoi at its best, and now you can see her qualities becoming far more evident.



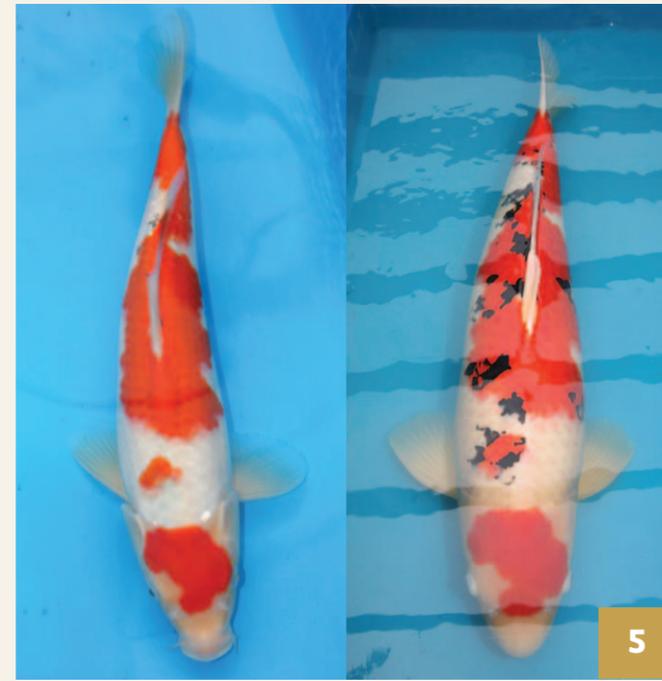
2 Sourced as Nisai of about 53cm/20in, and sold as Sansai at 68cm/26in, her owner then raised her from 68cm, to become 80cm/31in as Yonsai. That is remarkable growth, considering that she has only been grown during the summer months. This Koi was nominated for Grand Champion at the 2008 BKKS National Show.

3 This Sanke was bought as Nisai of 50cm/19in, left in Japan for one summer, and grew to 60cm/



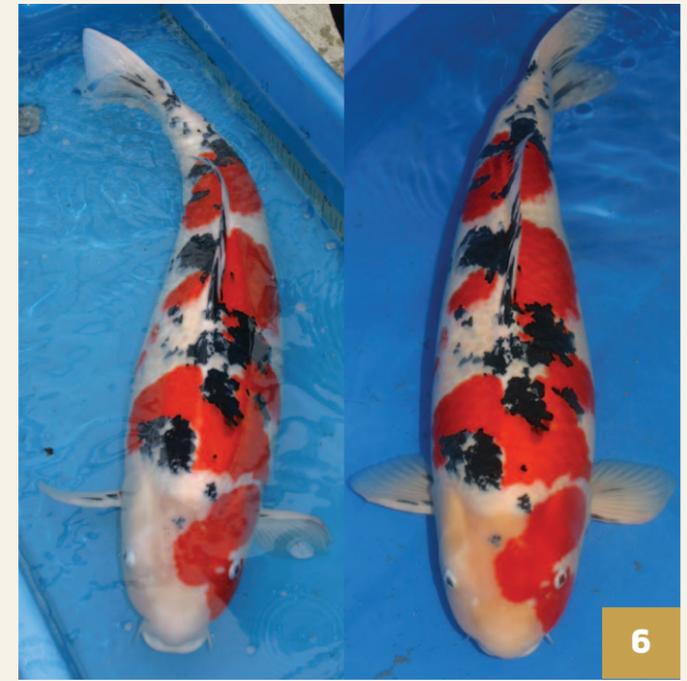
23in as Sansai. Although a client's Koi, she resided with us since Sansai and grew a further 11cm/4in last summer, now measuring 71cm/28in as Yonsai.

4 This Sanke was purchased as Jumbo Tosai. She was left in Japan until Yonsai and 83cm/32in then sold. Her owner then raised her from 83cm/32in to 89cm/35in and she is now Rokku. She was recently exhibited at the BKKS National Show.

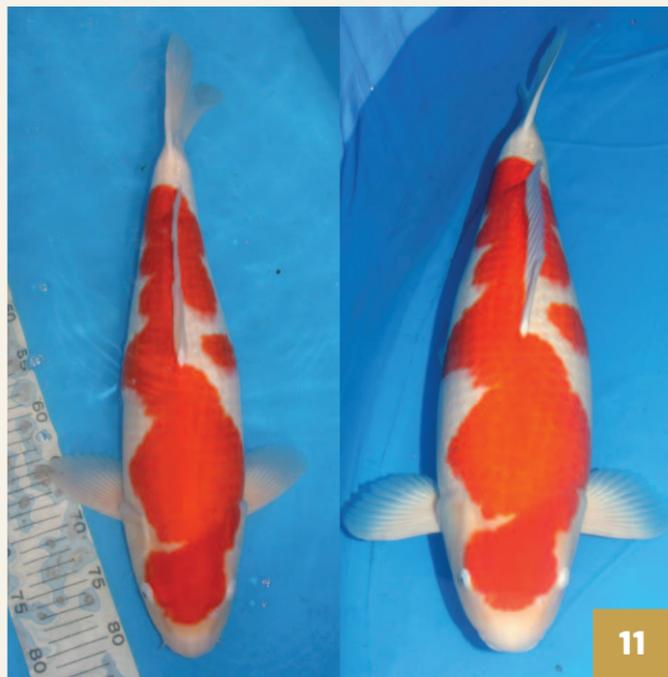
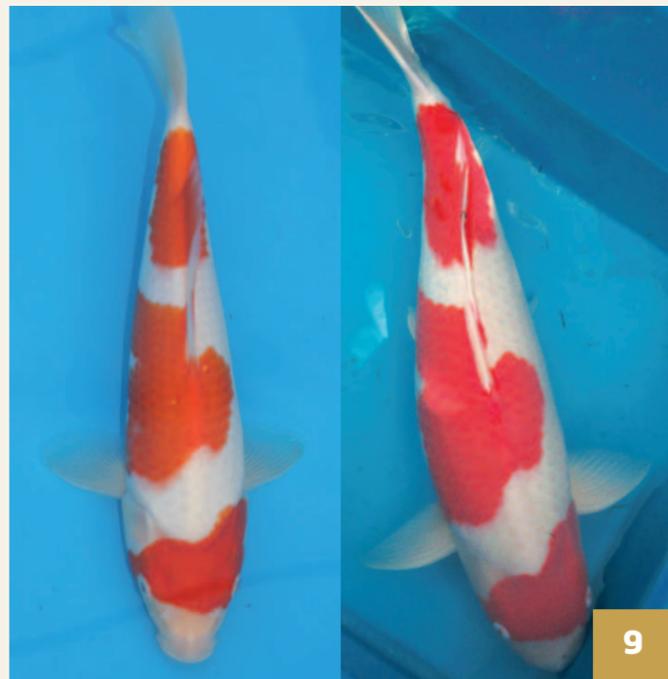
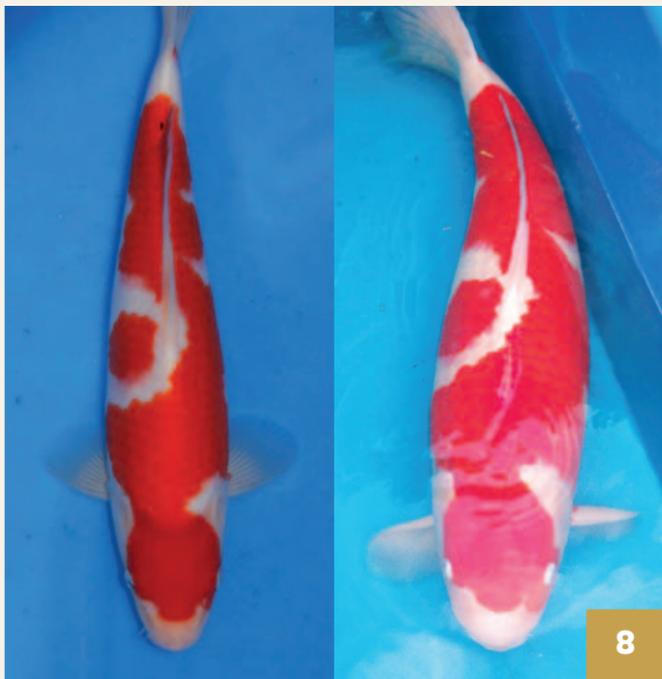


5 This Sanke came to us as 28cm/11in Tosai. This Koi is male, but was kept here to try to grow big. This Sanke is now Yonsai and measures 75cm/29in.

6 You could argue that the BKKS 2003 Grand Champion was 'finished.' But, her owner grew her from 85cm/33in when we sold her in spring 2003, to 92cm/36in to win again in 2005. On reflection, you could say that, since she has improved and grown so much, that she was her owner's Tategoi.



7 This Kohaku was sold as Nisai at 50cm/19in and shipped straight back to the UK. Her owner grew her to 85cm/33in as Gosai. It is clear to see that all of the exquisite qualities of the Koi as Tategoi, when Nisai, have resulted in her becoming extremely beautiful as a Jumbo Koi.



8 Sold as small Tosai in autumn 2004, this Koi was moved to the client's pond in spring 2005 at 41cm/16in. In the autumn of 2007, she measured some 75cm/29in as Yonsai. Her Beni was a little too hard for my liking as Tosai, and when grown up, her Beni became much redder as a result. Such Beni is a little hard to keep in good condition, but her owner has done very well nonetheless.

9 Bought as 26cm/10in Tosai, we raised this Kohaku to around 50cm/19in by September. Her owner then raised her (summer growth only) to 72cm/28in as Yonsai. She would have easily run past 80cm/31in at Rokku had her owner not sold her to another hobbyist.

10 Bought and sold as Tosai in May 2007, at 27cm/10in, she grew to 53cm/20in in her owner's pond last autumn. When looking for Koi with a great future, you need some imagination to be able

to get an idea of what the Koi will look like as a Jumbo Koi. Looking at the Nisai picture of this Koi, it is far easier to imagine this as Jumbo than when looking at her Tosai picture. It is important to understand the breeder's raising techniques when buying Tategoi and, in this case, the breeder's Tosai are raised just big enough to ascertain sex and, hence, are very slim. You can see this in the body of the Koi when Tosai. But, notice also the head and face of the Koi. Imagine the areas of the head and face that are fleshy, and those that aren't. Imagine the skull of the Koi with no meat at all. The gill covers are bone, with just a thin layer of skin. The mouth is bony, as are the nostril areas and areas above the eyes. Look again at the Tosai picture and you can see the lack of flesh/fat in the facial areas and, in particular, below the eyes. Yet, as Tosai (one year old), the mouth was wide, eyes were well set, and the head was long. As Nisai, you can see that the face has filled out nicely with flesh and now has a perfect 'U' shaped head. When looking at Tosai to get big, don't be fooled into buying a fat one because the body looks good. A fat Koi seldom gets big.

11 This Koi was bought as Nisai at 55cm/21in and grown in the UK. She was sold at Yonsai at about 77cm/30in and went on to grow to 85cm/33in at Gosai. ■

 **Mike Snaden** lives in Bristol, England. He has been keeping Koi since 1993 and started Yume Nishikigoi in 2000. Mike's forte is being able to 'read' young Koi and understanding how they will develop and grow in the future. Reach him at writers@koinations.com.

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