

Thailand to honor beautiful, violent Siamese fighting fish

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In this undated photo, a Siamese fighting fish is captured showing its bright blue, red and white coloring. The Siamese fighting fish, whose violent territoriality makes it beloved by gamblers who pit them in fish tank battles against each other, is set to become Thailand's national aquatic animal. (Kun Eak Nakhon Pathom via AP)

The Siamese fighting fish, a popular beauty in home aquariums and a popular bet for gamblers for their violent territoriality, is set to become

Thailand's national aquatic animal.

The often brightly-hued fish is also called a betta, but government minister Suwapan Tanyuwardhana noted the species is clearly identifiable as Thai by its name: Siam is the old name for Thailand.

Scientific and historical accounts also call it the Siamese fighting fish and its native waters are Southeast Asia, including Bangkok's Chao Phraya River.

The National Identity Committee, which promotes Thai cultural pride, decided Thursday to forward its recommendation to the Cabinet for final approval, said Suwapan, who is attached to the Prime Minister's Office and vice president of the committee.

Being designated Thailand's national aquatic animal could boost conservation and breeding efforts for the fish, as well as bring commercial benefits.

Private sector breeding efforts of the fish are flourishing, and promoting the fish could push its popularity higher and bring it higher prices, he said.

The fish is especially popular in small office and [home aquariums](#) because of its bright colors and relative ease of care. But they are territorial, especially the males, who will attack other males in the same tank.

Their [aggressive behavior](#) makes them appealing to gamblers, even though most gambling is illegal in Thailand.



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