

## Species Profile: *Altolamprologus Calvus* - Black Calvus

*Altolamprologus calvus* or Black Calvus, are native to Lake Tanganyika. *Altolamprologus calvus* are found along rocky outcrops along the shores of Lake Tanganyika. The climate is tropical with lake temperatures at the surface of 26 degrees Celsius. The pH of Lake Tanganyika is 9.5. I obtained six 4 cm long calvus from Armke's Rare African Fish located in New Braunfels, Texas.

Male calvus achieve a size of 15 cm and are have a black body with a with a pattern of white dots along it's flanks. The body is compressed with a pointy snout. Females achieve a size of 9 cm and also have a black body with a pattern of white dots. What is unusual about the females under my care is that they seem to be blacker than the male counterparts, even when not spawning.

The fish have had spawns in both the 55 gallon and the 240 gallon tank. The 55 gallon has a substrate that is a light brown. The substrate is used in commercial applications as blast sand. The substrate in the 240 gallon is Argonite. Both aquariums have holey rock for shelter and hiding places. Neither tank has live plants or plastic plants. Both tanks are filtered by Eheim 2217's. The temperature in both tanks is maintained between 23 and 25 degrees celcius. The pH in the tanks is unknown since I have never tested the water. I perform weekly water changes equal to 15% of the tank volume. I use fluorescent lighting for duration of approximately 14 hours each day. I feed my cichlids New Life Spectrum pellet and Ocean Nutrition flake. On occasion they will be provided with a special treat - Live Ghost Shrimp.

When Calvus spawn, the male and the female appear blacker than usual. The female becomes blacker than the male, which is unusual in the Cichlid world (the male in most cases is more pronounced and colorful). The white spots on both the male and the female also

appear to be more pronounced but this is probably a result of the pair becoming blacker in coloration. The courtship phase of the Calvus, as I observed it was the

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Photo By David Dockwiller

lowing: The female took up residence in a spawning cave. The dominant male would then investigate the site and tended to blockade the female in the cave. He would bar the entrance and would not let other cichlids come close nor would he let the female leave. Eventually, I would notice eggs along the walls of the cave using a flashlight. The pair laid approximately 60+ eggs that are cream colored. After spawning the female will stay in the cave while the male hovers just outside the entrance. The female is more protective of the fry than the male. The male will leave to eat while the female stays in the spawning cave. I have noted that she will only eat after the fry have hatched, and then only to obtain a few pellets of food, and then hurriedly return to the cave. The eggs will hatch after 10 days. I will remove the cave at approximately 14 days and extract the fry from the cave by placing them in a 5 gallon tank. I will also remove the female. I have noticed that if I leave the female with the fry she will tend to

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eat them. It may also be the case that the fry leave the cave and are then eaten by other fish in the tank. Needless to say there is a high mortality rate for the babies. I have tried to raise as many as possible by raising them in seclusion. I have also noticed that when other types of fry are placed in a nursery tank with the Calvus, since they grow very slowly, tend to become meals for faster growing fry. Many of the eggs hatched but I cannot provide an estimate since they were in a cave.

However, if I had to guess I would say that 80%+ of the total hatch were viable. The fry are translucent with a little black coloration. They had their yolk sacs and tend to congregate in a corner of the cave while all the time wriggling their tails.

As noted earlier the fry are kept separate from other cichlid fry

to ensure a greater portion will survive. The nursery tank uses a sponge filter for filtration. After separating the fry from the mother they are fed crushed flake food.

When breeding Calvus it is important to remove catfish from the aquarium. Calvus are not able to fend off catfish from stealing the eggs. I observed that after the removal of my pair of *Synodontis Angelicus* from the aquarium my Calvus spawned almost immediately. They are very social with other compressed cichlids and tend to roam the tank together as a colony until a pair is ready to spawn. I believe the hardest part about spawning Calvus is the survival rate of the fry. It can be difficult to raise them to maturity since they grow very slowly. It can take several years for a compressed cichlid to obtain sexual maturity.

I would recommend Calvus to other cichlid enthusiasts. They are not hard to maintain if cared for correctly. I have found that they are very sensitive to water changes and thus require a double dose of dechlorinator. When not enough dechlorinator has been used they will sit on the bottom breathing rapidly and could lead to early termination of the fish. At such time it would be wise to add some more water conditioner.



Photo By David Dockwiller

In concluding, I will continue to breed this fish because I find them interesting, and because there is a demand for them with other cichlid enthusiasts. The biggest piece of advice I could give to others who want to spawn Calvus would be the following:

1. Obtain spawning caves.
2. Provide a clean environment for them.
3. Remove catfish from your tank.

If you adhere to the above 3 points you should not have any problems successfully breeding Calvus or any type of compressed cichlid.

— by David Dockwiller