

## Species Profile: *Ancistrus triradiatus*

*Ancistrus triradiatus* or the Bristlenose catfish, is a substrate spawner native to the waterways of South America. They are exported in large numbers via Villavicencio, Colombia for the aquarium hobby. Most likely occur throughout the upper Rio Meta and in the lower reaches of Andean streams that feed the Rio Meta. Records from the Rio Magdalena and Maracaibo basin drainages are suspect. These catfish are found in clear water streams in the Andes to



Photo by Eric Foreman

blackwater rivers in the valleys. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are 6.6-7.6. I obtained 8 2-3 inches long fish from Amazonia and a fellow clubber. Males achieve a size of 5 inches and are pale orange/white and have the standard *ancistrus* body shape with the armor like scales. In addition it has bristle like protuberances on its head arranged down the middle and around the perimeter of its head. It also has red eyes in the albino fashion and small faint white spots all over its body. Females achieve a size of 5 inches as well and are pale white/orange albino with small white

spots all over.

The fish bred in a 20 long tank which contained medium blasting media gravel and was planted with pothos grown hydroponically. The tank was filtered by a Aquaclear 300 set up as reverse flow wet/dry trickle and had a pH of 8+. I performed weekly water changes equal to 40% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish Tetramin leftovers,

algae off the tank surfaces, and the occasional blood-worms.

They decided that an overturned flowerpot with a doorway knocked out of the rim would suffice for their abode. The male

hung out inside and started fanning his fins into the hole, meanwhile the female entered and I assume at this time laid eggs. Then the male let her out, and lodged himself in the entryway and proceeded to fan his fins constantly for the next 3 weeks or so.

The pair laid approximately 40 eggs. After spawning, the female retreated to a hiding place in the tank somewhere. Once the female released the eggs, she did not exhibit any tendency to care for the eggs. Meanwhile the male stayed in the hole except for the covert midnight foray for food. The fry just hung out in the pot in the original tank. Upon my seeing

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them wiggling, I decided to remove them from the tank to another due to the pack of *A. compressiceps* growing out in the same tank. using my trusty siphon I siphoned them into a 10g below. Approximately 40+ eggs represented the hatch were viable and hatched after about 14 days. The fry were a mixture of dark brown color and albino. They were about 1/4 of an inch long and looked very similar to their parents, just smaller. For a day or two they huddled under the sponge filter before they started venturing out into the open tank. Pretty soon they were all over.

The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them in the 10 gallon tank with the *Pseudotropheus acei* fry they were with. The tank used a sponge filter for filtration. I started the fry off on crushed flake food Tetramin and spirulina flake. The fry grew fairly slowly and are at 1-1 1/2" after about 2 months.

These guys are a lot of fun to keep they look crazy, they're great cleaners, and they can go with almost any fish imaginable. I have bristle-nose in almost every one of my tanks. They're great fun to watch as they clean away at the algae on the rocks and walls of the tank. I at

one point had over forty of these guys in a 10g with another forty juvenile mbuna. These catfish are awesome fish. Everyone should have some kind of *ancistrus* in their tanks! As long as you can provide him a hole or cave of some sort in addition to the requisite clean water. They do like big water changes, but the water temperature must be in the upper 70's to keep them happy.



Photo by Eric Foreman

Other than a dedicated river biotope tank I can't imagine doing anything better to ensure success other than water change, water change water change. I change 50 percent at least once weekly, and they stay happy little catfish. When conditioning them to breed, make sure that they get a higher protein diet. It helps the female develop her eggs to their full potential. These are great beginner fish in that big tank with other fish

you have that always has algae on the walls. They'll eat all of the algae up (except hair algae) and look cool doing it intermingled with your existing setup. Get one to clean up. Two to have a constant supply of fry. Good Luck!

■ Eric Foreman