

Species Profile: *Apistogramma cacatuoides*

Found in Suriname, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru (Rio Ucayali and Amazon) along small shallow rivers in the rainforest that have a bottom of leaf litter and branches. Best kept at pH range: 6.0 - 8.0; dH range: 5.0 - 19.0; 24 - 25°C.



The meaning of its name is cacatu = cockatoo, oides (Greek) = similar. The dorsal fin of the male when it's spread out reminds one of the crest in a cockatoo.

Males are larger than females. Males can grow up to 8 cm whereas the females can get to 5 cm. The first rays on the male's dorsal are greatly enlarged (spiky looking). The dorsal, anal and ventral fins are elongated. Man-made color forms seem to lose a lot of the elongation of the fins. Females exhibit black on the leading edge of the pectoral fins. Females will turn yellow with black when guarding eggs or fry.

Cacatuoides are cave spawners. These fish are territorial and polygamous (more females per male). It is recommended that there should only be one male per tank. Females will deposit 20-80 eggs at the top of the cave. Eggs hatch after 60 hours and the fry are free-swimming after 8-9 days. The female will care for the fry for approximately another 2 weeks beyond this stage. NOTE: high temperatures combined with a high pH will cause a higher ratio of males to females in a spawn.

I obtained a reverse trio of proven breeders from a friend.

I placed them into a 10 gallon tank. I left the two males together in the tank. The tank was bare bottomed and filtered with a small sponge filter. I also had two upside down clay flower pots with the holes on the bottom of them enlarged slightly for decoration and breeding purposes. I kept the temperature at about 76F. I haven't checked the pH in a while but generally speaking the local water is about 7.8 or so. I tried feeding the *cacatuoides* flake food but they wouldn't take it so I was stuck feeding them baby brine shrimp or frozen foods. Since they were on such a good diet they soon spawned for me. I left the eggs in with the mother to guard. The eggs or fry were eventually eaten (The eggs had been there for at least 2 days before I'd noticed them being guarded). I was disappointed but knew they would spawn again. It was a fair bit of time before I noticed her hiding in her pot again. This time I figured I'd play it safe and stole the eggs from her. I placed them in a container with the original tank water, a heater and an airstone. I waited and watched until the fry hatched. I was excited! I finally had a big spawn of *Apisto* fry that I wasn't about to let the parents eat like my *borelliis* have done to me in the past. I had planned on leaving the fry in the container a bit longer but within days of their hatching my *Apistogramma norberti* spawned and I needed the container for their eggs (of which 3 hatched despite my hard water and high pH). I moved the fry into a 10 gallon tank stuffed full of Java moss. I have a huge spawn it seems. The tank seems to be wall-to-wall baby *Apistos*. They get fed a little bit of crushed flake food, which most of the fry don't seem to like but some are taking in (and those ones seem to be larger than the others) and baby brine shrimp. They also get occasional treats of small daphnia. I find these a very pretty fish and fairly easy to breed.

— by Lisa Boorman