

Species Profile: *Cyprichromis leptosoma*

Cyprichromis leptosoma always reminded me of sardines. Not just because of their elongated shape, but also because they school in huge numbers. In the wild they move around in large groups eating plankton in the open water.

They come in many color variants and in two sizes. There are the jumbos which reach sizes of about 4.5-5 inches and the non-jumbos which get between 3-3.5 inches. Both variants do well when kept in large groups in tanks with lots of swimming room. These fish aren't very aggressive and don't do well with fish that are very aggressive.

For years I had always wanted to have a tank full of *C. leptosoma* but the cost got in the way. When the opportunity to purchase a large group juveniles at a great price came up, I jumped on it. The variant was my favorite, Utinta. Utinta males have a fluorescent blue color with either yellow or blue tails. Another characteristic of Utinta males is an ocellus on the posterior of the dorsal fin. Females are a dull gray in color.

The group grew quickly on a diet of flakes, small pellets and Cyclop-eeze. It wasn't long before a few males started appearing. Multiple males in a tank can coexist without problems. They swim around displaying to each other and to females. Shortly thereafter some of the females had mouthfuls of eggs.

Fry are released in about 2 to 3 weeks and are surprisingly large in size. Fry are left alone by the adult leptosomas but are easy prey for other tank inhabitants. Separating the female when their buccal cavity turns black with mature fry serves to save the offspring. Females were soon returned to the main tank and rejoined the group without problems. In a species only tank, females can release their fry into the tank without problems.

C. leptosomas are very colorful and if you have a tank that is at least 4 feet long, you should give them a try.

One thing I did notice is that when I removed Cyclop-eeze (frozen live food) from their diet, the coloration of the males faded and less females were holding. They definitely need more than flake and pellets to be at their best.



Cyprichromis leptosoma
Male, Utinta
Photo by Robert De Leon

— by *Robert De Leon*