

Species Profile: *Dicrossus Filamentosus*

Dicrossus Filamentosus, or the Checkerboard Cichlid, is an open spawner native to small, slow flowing waters with some still zones in the upper Rio Negro and upper Rio Orinoco, Brazil, South America. The climate is tropical rainforests of South America, and native waters for this fish are pH 4.8-6.0 with virtually no hardness. I obtained 5 approx .5 inch long fish from Aqua-Tek, Austin, TX . Males achieve a size of 3-3.5 Inches and are torpedo shaped, with the tips of the tail fin elongated. Depending on mood, they will have a checkerboard pattern down the side of their body. The fins are iridescent blue/red. Females achieve a size of 2-2.5 inches and are not as long and not as colorful as males and have rounded tail fins. They will show either a light checkerboard pattern or dark stripe down their side. Females that have spawned will show bright red pelvic fins. Virgin females do not show the red.

The fish bred in a 10 gallon tank which contained Flourite and was planted with various cryptocoryne, Anubias nana, dwarf chain sword, and hornwort. The tank was filtered by a Top Fin 10 and water was r/o. I performed weekly to every other week water changes equal to 50% of the tank volume. I used compact fluorescent lighting for a duration of 12-14 hours each day. I fed the fish Tetra Color Bits, New Life Spectrum cichlid pellets, and live black worms.

During and after spawning, the female shows a dark stripe down her side, as does the dominant male. I did not get to see the actual spawning process. I know they spawned once before but the eggs either did not hatch or were eaten. I have observed the males displaying for the female. They spread all their fins and shake and also have mock battles.

The pair laid an unknown number eggs. The female guards the fry after hatching. I observed about 20-25 free swimming fry. She confronts any fish that ventures too close head down and chases them from the vicinity. Overall she has been an excellent mother. I was able to remove three of the fry early on, and left the remainder with the



mother. Those three are being raised in a separate, bare bottom ten gallon with some hornwort. There are about 7 fry left with the mother now. They seem to be growing faster than those in the other tank. Approximately 20-30 eggs of the total hatch were viable and hatched after probably about 2 days. When I first noticed them they were free swimming already. I believe they were eating micro-organisms in the algae and substrate. They had no visible yolk sacs. They were able to consume baby brine shrimp at this time.

The fry apparently were very self sufficient. There was enough for them to eat in the planted ten gallon to sustain them until I noticed them! I feed twice-three times daily baby brine shrimp, with weekly 30-40% water changes. There may have been some sucked up into the filter, but I don't think so as they maintained almost constant contact with the substrate. The female is a very good mother. She still guards the fry, even though they appear to be large enough to make it on their own. I plan to leave the ones that are still with her in that tank until they are large enough for me to be able to catch. I started the fry off on baby brine shrimp. These are my first, but it seems that they are growing fairly quickly.

I did not think I would ever get fry from the group I have now. Four males and one female in a ten gallon! They are very fun to watch when displaying for each

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other, and the female is a wonderful mother! These are wonderful fish to keep, even if not to spawn. They are absolutely gorgeous! They can be a little shy, but dither fish (green neons) help. I do not see myself without these fish in the future. They are very social with each other and I can sit and watch them all night! I would definitely recommend these fish to anyone interested in dwarf cichlids. They are interesting and beautiful. They are supposed to be sensitive to hard water, although I have only kept them in R/O so I do not know how they would fare in different conditions. I believe water quality and stability are the main factors. They are not picky eaters, although they definitely prefer live food! Give 'em a try, you wont be disappointed.

I plan to breed these guys again if possible. The plan is to move them to a 20 long and try with one or two males and three or four females next. I believe that the ten gallon is just too small for these guys and I think they will show different behaviors in a larger tank. Make sure you provide them with lots of cover because when spawning things can get a bit rough. The males will need somewhere to escape the brooding female. Overall they are excellent fish and a wonderful first successful spawn for Dani and I.



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