

Species Profile: *Julidochromis marlieri*

Julidochromis refers to the former marine wrasse group *Julidini* and also the former name for cichlids (*Chromides*). *Marlieri* refers to the Belgian ichthyologist G. Marlier. This fish was originally described in 1956 by M. Poll. It was introduced to hobbyists in 1958.

Julidochromis come from Lake Tanganyika. *Marlieri* are found in the NW part of the lake near Makabola and Luhsanga in Zaire (also in Burundi). They are most commonly found in boulder and rock zones up to 115 feet below the surface.

It is hard to tell the sexes apart in this fish. They are a long skinny fish. The body is yellow with brown vertical and horizontal stripes. These stripes may be intermittent. Their pectoral fins are yellow. All other fins are dark with light spotting on them. They grow 4-6". The one way possibly to tell them apart is that the male has a more pointed genital papilla slanted towards the rear. Females generally grow larger than the males. Females of larger Julies seem to take more care of eggs and fry than the smaller Julies (ie. *transcriptus* and *ornatus*). There are several color varieties of these fish. The darker varieties come from deeper in the lake.

For these fish to feel comfortable in a tank they like to have rock structures, caves, or pots to hide in. The tank should not be rearranged a lot as this causes fights to break out even among mated pairs. The pH of the water should be greater than 7.5 with a temperature of 22-25C (72-77F). dH should be around 15.

These fish are micropredators in the wild. In captivity they seem to do very well on flake food, baby brine shrimp, and frozen foods finely chopped. They seem to ignore pieces that are too big.

When these fish breed they will do so in a cave like structure. Their eggs are grayish green and are laid on the roof of their 'cave'. The fry hatch after 3 days and free swim after another 10 days. *Marlieris* have two methods of raising young. The first is in which they lay a large batch of eggs (up to 300) at a time every 6 weeks or so. The other is where they lay 12-20 eggs every 7-10 days. They can change their method at any time for no discernable reason. Fortunately young fry are tolerated by their older siblings. They become sexually mature at about 14 months.

In the wild these fish are located next a population of *Julidochromis regani*. In the middle of these two groups is a population known as '*J. regani affinis*'. The *affinis* seems to have characteristics of both species. It is a possible natural cross between the *marlieri* and the *regani*.

I received my fish in a trade from Wayne Cole. He told me they were a mated pair. They were placed into a 20g tank with a large conch shell and a sponge filter. They both immediately disappeared into the shell. The pH of this tank runs around 7.8. The temperature is 77F. They were fed



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brine shrimp flakes. However they wouldn't eat when I was watching. I kept an eye out for them through a hole in the end of the shell that let me see the larger fish. Occasionally the smaller one would be kicked out of the shell but was let in a few minutes later. Three days later I saw grayish green eggs at the top edge of the shell right near the hole. I counted 30 eggs. Approximately 2 weeks later I saw 12 fry hanging around the edge of the shell. They were fed BBS for the first couple of weeks and they were also given powdered fry food. Later I discovered that only 9 of them had made it. That was a disappointment. Six weeks later there was another batch of fry. I found that they grew faster than my brichardi fry. But I think that I need more plants or another sponge in the tank so that I can grow a good 'crop' of little critters for the fry. I have a funny feeling that most of the fry starved because the BBS was a little too big for them. They hang around all over the tank after approximately 2 weeks. The ones that hang on the filter are darker than the others, I think it's because the filter is dark and they are 'hiding'. These are fairly easy fish if you can get the fry to survive. They are very pretty and don't seem to fight too much (at least for me). This fish will be one of my keepers.



— by *Lisa Boorman*