

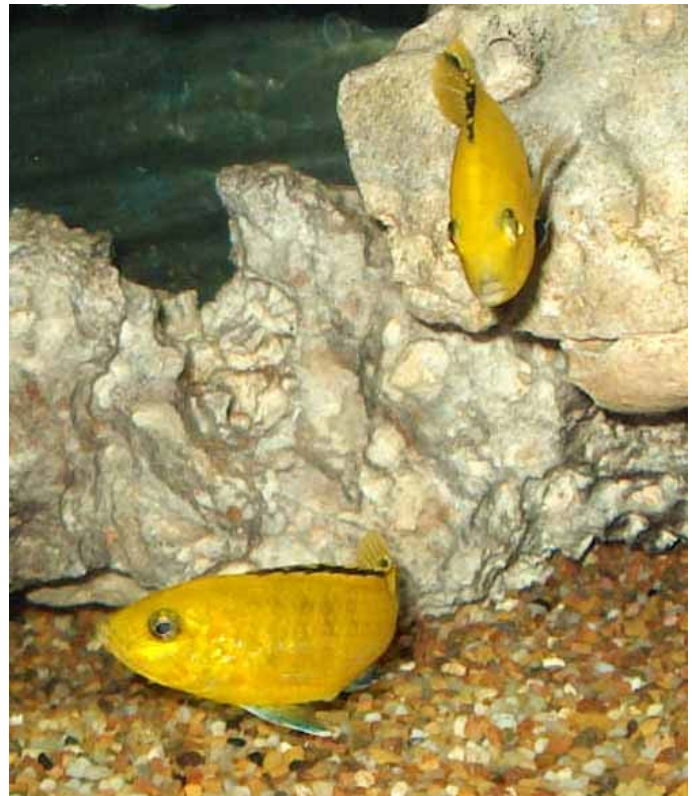
Species Profile: *Labidochromis caeruleus*

This beautiful Malawian is commonly referred to as the "yellow lab". The electric yellow coloration and black lining on the dorsal fin allow *Labidochromis caeruleus* to glow in a tank of mixed mbuna. This fish has been produced in sufficient quantity that it is readily available in almost any store that carries African cichlids. There is always a ready market for any fry produced.

The caeruleus is a slow grower. When compared to other Malawians, it seems to take forever to gain size, but does spawn at around two inches. I had a "raising tank" with *Labidochromis lividus* and caeruleus of the exact same age. The lividus almost doubled the caeruleus in size. While on the small side, these fish can survive in a community tank of mixed Malawians quite nicely. Malawians, for the most part, keep aggression within their species. Community tanks should always be kept crowded with excellent filtration and frequent water changes. Much rock work will also benefit mbuna as these fish are territorial, and like their own "piece of the rock".

As mbuna go, the caeruleus can be considered peaceful. They will chase one another around but rarely do any damage. If setting up a community tank with yellow labs in mind, another species to consider mixing with them is *Iodotropheus sprengerae*. The Rusty cichlid's dark rust/purple coloration makes a great contrast. The

Photo by Greg Steeves



Spawning pair

Photo by Greg Steeves

color extremes show each fish off to its best. Dark gravel with shale caves make a wonderful addition to a lab tank. You really get an awesome look at this fish when it contrasts so drastically with its surroundings.

If there is one single thing you should watch with caeruleus, it is bloat. These fish do well on all types of food, but a large portion of their dietary needs should be filled with plant matter. Romaine lettuce, spirulina flake, and raw peas are readily consumed. Less than adequate water conditions and a high protein diet spell trouble for these gems.

Spawning occurs in the typical mbuna manner with the male and female circling each other. Brood sizes are small compared to other mbuna with 15-20 seeming to be average. *Labidochromis*

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caeruleus have very large eggs for an mbuna and this accounts for the small broods. The buccal cavity is just so big!

These fish are active, beautiful and vibrant. No self respecting keeper of mbuna could not have *Labidochromis caeruleus* in their collection.



Holding female.

Photo by Greg Steeves

— by *Greg Steeves*