

Species Profile: *Lamprologus signatus*

After not having a shell dweller in a while, I got an itch for them again. Something about how they change their environment by digging and/or burying their shells makes them extremely amusing and addictive. For such little fish, they pack a ton of personality. The question was which shell dweller to go with.

In the past I had kept *Lamprologus multifasciatus* and *Lamprologus ocellatus* “gold”. I like the *multifasciatus*’ colony behavior but their constant spawning can soon become overwhelming. For those Star Trek fans, they are similar to the Borg. I decided I wanted to try something different for a newly vacant 29gal tank.

A little research (actually a lot of it) led me to consider various species. I wanted something with a little color but also with some distinctive markings. I considered some *brevis*, but had heard that they weren’t always active or even visible. I settled on a species that is not very common in the hobby. It took me a while to track them down but I was finally able to obtain a group of *Lamprologus signatus*.

At first I was very disappointed as the group consisted of 4 males and 2 females. Fortunately each of the females picked out a male of their own. The two extra males were removed. The tank was set up with a sand substrate and was divided into 3 separate areas by 2 pieces of holey rock. Each of the three areas had an abundant amount of shells. The pairs took up residence on opposite sides of the tank, leaving the middle area as a no-mans land. I hope that

are fry get larger, they may migrate to the “undeveloped” section of the tank.

What attracted me to *L. signatus* was they more elongated shape compared to other shell dwellers. Another factor which attracted me to them was that the male and female have their own distinct patten/coloration. This is something unusual in shell dwellers as most of the only have a size difference to distinguish the sexes.

Male *signatus* have a distinctive vertical barring. The females on the other hand lack the barring but have a brightly colored area around the abdomen. I can’t quite make out the color as it seems to change depending on lighting. It is however mostly yellow with some blue, pink and green mixed in. Both males and females have yellow and blue on the top of their heads.



Male *signatus*.

Photo by Robert De Leon

They don’t do a much digging as other species, but they do move/reposition shells to suit their needs. The females seem to be more active than the males. The two females often meet each other over no-mans land for a little lip-locking.

I’ve kept both pairs well fed with a combination of flake and Cyclop-eeze. Within a few weeks of this diet, one of the pairs managed to successfully spawn. I’ve been able to count 6 pinhead sized fry at one time. They are extremely fast and very brazen. Despite their small size and short life, they venture very far away from the parents. I am not sure if this has something to do with the parent’s parenting skills. I just don’t know how protective the parents will be or how long they will be tolerated by the parents. I haven’t been able to find any information of the parent-fry relationship if there fish.



Male and Female.

Photo by Robert De Leon

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