

Species Profile: *Otopharynx lithobates*

Otopharynx Lithobates or Yellow Blaze Lithobate, is a maternal mouth brooder native to the rocky shoreline of Lake Malawi, Africa. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures between 23 - 28 degrees C on the waters surface. And native waters for this fish are pH of 7.8 - 8.5. I obtained six 1.5 - 2 inches fish from JJ Tropaquatics. Males achieve a size of 6 inches and have a dark blue body with yellow blaze and yellow stripe on dorsal fin. Females



Photos by Greg Steeves

achieve a size of 5 inches and are tan or beige with 3 blotches or spots in a vertical row on each side. My male has reached a size of 5 inches and the female approximately 4 inches.

The fish bred in a 46 gallon corner tank which contained small gravel and had no plants. The tank was filtered by an Emperor 280 Bio-Wheel and had an unknown PH with water

temp of 80 degrees F. I performed weekly water changes equal to 20% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for duration of 15 hours each day. I fed the fish HBH Flake "Seafood Lovers" and "Veggie Flake". No special foods to enhance spawning were added.

When spawning, the blue color of the male intensifies. Females tan bodies become a

shade darker. The male's colors intensified and displayed them in the "Peacock" manner. He would dart at female in an attempt to attract her. This process seemed long, and I did not actually observe spawning.

Since I did not observe actual spawning, it was unknown to me that the pair



created approximately 40 plus unknown color eggs. After spawning the female returned to hiding among the rocks. I did not have much

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luck with the first 2 spawns, but each spawning after that has increased the number of fry now produced. I wait 16 days before removing female so not to stress her while I remove rocks from breeding tank. She is placed in a divided 10 gal tank w/sponge filter. Approximately 48 eggs representing 99-100% of the total hatch were viable and hatched after 28 days. Fry remained still on bottom or side of glass for the first day and they were very small with very little yolk sac remaining.



Photo by Spencer Jack

Feed fry 2 - 3 times a day, with water change every 3 days for first 21 days. The tank used a sponge filter for filtration, which I do not clean during the entire time of raising the fry until they are moved to a larger tank. After releasing the fry, the female made no attempt to let fry back in or to care for them. I started the fry off on Cyclop-Eeze & finely crushed flakes. After 21 days, I started feeding crushed flake food in larger sizes. The fry grew slowly.

Dominant males do not accept either sex of the same species or any other fish in their area. During spawning, aggression can be hazardous

to the females as well as the males. This was not easy for me to have an actual spawning. Not enough hiding places at first resulted in damaged or dead females. Females very skittish and I lost first two batches of fry. This fish may not be the hardest of the Africans to spawn, but is more challenging than "Red Empresses" or "Lemon Jakes" to me. I would recommend you have more patience and knowledge when you attempt to spawn these fish.

This was my fifth time spawning this

pair. First two attempts failed due to my impatience in trying to protect the female. Aggression by dominant male led to the loss of one female and damage to two other males. Finally I moved all the males and left only two females in breeding tank. Also I increased rock structure to provide more secure areas. In a breeding tank, both sexes will hide in the rocks and are not visible at all times. In a community tank, a solo male, though nippy, is very visible and very pretty.

■ *Jim Beck*