

Species Profile: *Paracyprichromis nigripinnis*

Paracyprichromis nigripinnis "blue neon" is a maternal mouth brooder native to the rocky habitat of Lake Tanganyika, Africa. Males are normally found in hanging vertically in caves with the female hanging just outside of them. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are pH of 8.2-9.4. I obtained seven 2.5-3 inches long fish from Blue Chip Aquatics. Males achieve a size of 4-4.5 inches and are salmon colored body with several horizontal neon blue stripes that extend from the mouth to the base of the tail. Females achieve a size of 3-3.5 inches and colors are same as male but not as intense.

The fish bred in a 29 gallon tank which contained black gravel and several caves made using lace rock. The tank was filtered by an undergravel filter with Aquaclear 201 powerhead. The tank pH is maintained at 8 and the temperature is kept at 78 degrees. I performed weekly water changes equal to 20% of the tank volume. For lighting I choose an Aqua Rays fresh/salt water fluorescent bulb for lighting because it enhanced the red and blue colors of the fish. I usually kept it on for about 12 hours each day. I fed them Dainichi Ultima, Omega One cichlid flake and HBH krill pellets.

When spawning, the blue stripping of the male intensifies. Females assume a reddish/pink color. After some displaying by the male, which consisted of him shaking for the female, the pair chose a piece of petrified wood, placed at a 45 degree angle as a spawning site. The female laid an egg which was fertilized by the male before she took it into her mouth. The egg would actu-

ally begin to roll down the rock but was always picked up before it reached the tank bottom.

The pair laid approximately 10-12 eggs. After spawning, the female returned to the group of non breeding females. I left the female in the tank with the other *P. nigripinnis*. Approximately 7 eggs representing 70% of the total hatch were viable and hatched after 18 days. The fry were a brownish/ grey in color and about 1/4 of an inch and looked very similar to their parents.

The fry didn't require any special care on my part; they were placed in a 10 gallon tank. The tank used a Hagen 802 air pump with a Hydro 1 sponge filter for filtration. Once the female released the fry, she did not exhibit any tendency to care for the fry. I started the fry off on Cyclopeeze. After two days I started feeding crushed krill pellets. The fry are slow growing.

When breeding this fish, you have to be patient. It takes sometime for the blue neon to settle and get use to their new environment. This particular fish was one of the more difficult species of the *Cyprichromis/Paracyprichromis* group I have worked with. In addition to proper food is proper environment. *P. nigripinnis* requires "subdued" tank conditions, by that I mean subdued lighting, dark background and substrate, caves, and a vertical surface for spawning. While breeding the *P. nigripinnis* was challenging, I highly recommend all hobbyists to give them a try. They are very peaceful and beautiful fish.

■ Charles Skillern