

Species Profile: *Tropheus rainbow*—a personal log

4/8/04

I picked up 24 Rainbow *Tropheus* fry from John Yull. They are about a ½ " big with vertical stripes.

I placed the bag into a bucket; cut the top of the bag off and made a drip line to siphon the 55 gal tank water they were about to be introduced to.

(Acclimating) The hose is a regular air hose, enough to reach mid water inside the tank and down below the lowest part of the tank. I then siphoned out the water, which is regulated by a two-way valve that allows me to change the amount of water flowing through it (Practically a drip).

After filling the bag slowly (no quicker than 45minutes). I remove the inner bag and place it into the tank. Prior to placing the bag in the water I turned off the tank lights, to lessen stress the fry. I clamp the lid of the tank on the open bag to seal it and allow the water to adjust to the tank temperature (15minutes).

I then release the fry into the tank. If there were fish already in the tank that would cohabitate with the fry, I would have placed a blanket over the tank in order to relieve any nosey fish.

After placing them in the tank I noticed that there were two fish that constantly lip-locked. I was confused that the fry had already begun their ritual of obtaining a pecking order. I through this question to members of the HCCC club (Hill Country Cichlid Club) and learned that the pecking order is learned at a very young age.

4/11/04

At about 1:30 AM I arrived home from work to a dark office where the fish are kept. I turned on the light in the room first to acclimate them to the light without a shock to their system. I allowed them a few minutes to start swimming around but I noticed they all remained almost motionless on the substrate.

I became concerned and started to panic, recalling all the horror stories I had read about health problems with *Tropheus*.

I immediately broke out all of the water testing chemical, vials and charts I had. The ammonia was zero, the nitrites were zero but the NITRATES were sky high! I really became paranoid then until I realized that the fish would parish only after a substantial exposure to the high nitrates. I then remembered reading what Jessica Miller had written about the health maintenance on these little fellows. I unraveled the 25' Python (water siphon) and proceeded to change 20 percent of the tank water. I ensured that the water was close to the same temperature as the tank so I wouldn't cause more stress. I added the de-chlorinator (prime) and waited.

In approximately 10 minutes the little guys were showing signs of recovery from the shock I had placed them in. I dropped a pinch of food to entice them to move more actively, they did and I began counting. I reached 19 out of the 24 but felt the others were either miscounted or hidden well.

If you recall I stated, "the shock I put them in", let me explain. Due to my stupidity I failed to insure that the tank these guys were placed in was properly cycled. What I did not remember was that I had emptied all of my 20 to 25 Malawi cichlids from the tank and the tank was still functioning at the level I left it. Well when I put the 24 smaller cichlids in, I did not account for the water chemistry that they would be trying to complete from their counterparts. After I calmed down from the shock I checked the Nitrate level 15 minutes later and it went from about 80 ppm to about 50. I realize that this is a sudden jump in nitrates but it's my belief that they were not exposed to it for a long period of time. (Basically only maybe 10 hours).

I learned something very important this day. I learned

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that just because your tank is cycled, (regardless of how long you've had it up and running) when you change the number of fish in it, the cycle would automatically cycle again.

If this is of any help at all, feel free to use it. I'm not ashamed to admit when I make mistakes. The one thing I do know is that I won't make that mistake again, and hopefully if anyone reads this they will have dodged this dilemma as well.

— by *Brian Turner*



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