

Thoracochromis brauschi

By Duc Nguyen

Thoracochromis brauschi 'Fwa River' or Blood Throat Cichlid, is a maternal mouthbrooder native to the Fwa River region of Zaire. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are pH of 7.4. I obtained six 3/4 inch long fish from Greg Steeves . Males achieve a size of 5-6 inches and have a body shape that is typical of haplochromine species with greenish coloration. Dominant males have a very distinct blood red colored throat. There's also a diagonal pattern on the dorsal fin.. Females achieve a size of 3-4 inches and also have a body shape that is typical to haplochromine species. Body color is tan-ish green. Females lack the diagonal pattern on the dorsal fin.

The fish bred in a 55 gallon tank which contained sandy substrate and was planted with Anubias barteri, and Anubias nana. It was also lined with a number of slate rock and holey rock . The tank was filtered by a Power Bio-Wheel and had a pH of pH of 8.0. I performed weekly water changes equal to 25% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish TetraCichlid Cichlid Flakes, Omega One Spirulina flakes, live baby brine shrimp.

When spawning, the red throat color of the male is intensified. Females remain the same coloration. Pre spawning behavior consisted of the dominant male picking up mouthfuls of the sand from the substrate and moving them across the tank. The pair cleaned a piece of slate together. Next, the female laid an egg and picked it up in her

mouth. The pair assumed a "T" position and the female then bit at the egg spot of the male fertilizing the eggs.

The pair laid approximately 20-25 eggs. After spawning, the female retreated to a hiding place to avoid harassment by the male as well as other members of the tank I



moved the female to a lightly planted ten gallon tank. I used a sponge filter to provide filtration as well as a source of food for the fry. This tank provided lots of hiding places to make the female feel comfortable. Approximately 5-10 eggs representing 33% of the total hatch were viable and hatched after 20 days. The fry were yellow-white in color and about 3/8 of an inch long.

When breeding this fish, you have to be very patient. It takes quite a while for them to mature. These fish do not reproduce as often as most other Victorians or Mbuna-type fish. It appears to be seasonal. The females do a wonderful job of holding their clutch. This was actually one of the more

difficult mouthbrooders that I've kept. I have them in a 55 with a number of Malawians (*Ps. saulosi* and *Ps. lanisticola*). Additional tank mates are *Synodontis petricola* and bristlenose pleco. The male *brauschi* seem to be more aggressive towards conspecifics and leave the others alone. The reason they are more difficult is mainly because of the fact that they don't spawn as frequently as other mouthbrooders I've kept. While breeding *Thoracochromis brauschi* 'Fwa River' was challenging, I

would recommend them to other keepers of Africans. They are beautiful, if aggressive, fish.

In conclusion, the best advice I could give on the *Thoracochromis brauschi* would just be patient with these fish. I kept mine for quite some time before I had my initial spawning (about a 1.5 yrs). They are a very slow growing fish as well. Fry will take longer than normal to grow out.