

# Hill Country Cichlid Club News

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HCCC Newsletter Staff



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## Upcoming Events

- ◆ HCCC meeting February 8<sup>th</sup>
- ◆ TCA Spring Show April 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>

## Off and Running!

Things have certainly changed since our first meeting back in November. Our numbers are growing, so expect to see new faces in upcoming meetings.

Other changes include the Discussion Board that will have some new features in the near future. We'll have to twist Paul's arm to get some of the details. Also a new website is in

development along with our Breeder Award Program. I'm also sure there will be other new and exciting things to come.

The newsletter itself is a new addition. We hope to use it to communicate with current and potential members. Content and ideas from members are welcome and appreciated.

## Breeder Award Program

The HCCC Breeder Award Program has officially launched. All HCCC members are encouraged to participate. With this program we hope to recognize breeders of cichlids and catfish for their accomplishments.

A points scale has been compiled dividing different fish into categories. Successful spawns will be rewarded accordingly with additional points awarded for first

spawns of each particular species. Information on housing requirements and breeding techniques will be collected to enable other hobbyists to share in the success of the breeder. The donations of information and animals will go directly to benefit the HCCC and its members.

For more information, visit page 5 of this newsletter or our website at [www.xdeleon.com/hccc/bap](http://www.xdeleon.com/hccc/bap).

## Picture of the Month

I would like to take a moment and thank Lee Ann for our great logo! Not really a picture, but it looks fantastic and sure to be the envy of all other cichlid organizations (eat your heart out ACA). Along with the logo, Lee Ann and Greg have allowed us to use the layout of [www.africancichlids.net](http://www.africancichlids.net) for our website. It has made the

work much easier and has helped the site come along much quicker.



## HCCC Logo Shirts

Amaze your neighbors, impress your boss! All you have to do is wear a shirt with one of our logos. It's that easy.

Dave has found us a local company that can put our logo on a polo or T-shirt at a great price. We still haven't decided if we are going to go with the same color for everyone or if we will each choose our own.

He will be taking orders and payments at our January meeting.

The prices are as follows:

Polos S-XL are \$14.99, XXL \$16.99 and XXXL \$17.99. T-shirts \$7 to \$10 depending on color.

Let's make it easy for Dave and bring cash. Also, the more we order, the cheaper they are.

### Registered Members:

Bruce	Jeff
Charles	Jim
Dave	John
Duc	Paul
George	Robert
Greg	Roger
Karl	Todd
Lee Ann	Tommy

## How I Got Started

Like all of you I like animals and have kept many. I have always enjoyed tropical fish and have a preference for predators, such as Oscars. But my nephew Malawi George rekindled my joy for fish when I saw his Cichlids. I didn't know that the species existed. I enjoy all the color and quantity of Peacocks that you can have in a relatively small tank (75gal). Cichlids are very new and entertaining to me with the way they breed, the changing of color as they mature and their social habits. I have a began a "fish room" now that I have retired from 32 yrs as a SA Police Officer, and can devote more time to my hobby. For those of you who are still working and taking care of family and can not sit down and watch em, sorry. ---*Jim*

I am the token foreigner amongst us (every club needs one right?). I'm from New Brunswick, a small maritime province on the east coast of Canada. I grew up very near the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Fundy. Ever since I can remember I have been fascinated with the ecology of all aquatic life. I began keeping aquariums at the age of 8 and have never not had at least a

couple of aquariums running. Over the years I've kept many different fish. In the early 80's I discovered the magic that is the family Cichlidae. I moved from South America to Africa to a specialty interest in Victorian cichlids.

In Canada I had a large fishroom with over 100 cichlid tanks running. I moved to the Hill Country in 2002 and built a more modest fish hut but the bug still bites for more and more tanks. With the formation of our little group, I'm fairly certain that this urge will become fact as time goes on.

Over the years I've been fortunate enough to meet some wonderful people in the fish world, including my wife. Together we run [www.africancichlids.net](http://www.africancichlids.net) as an extension of our hobby. I'm especially excited to be a part of the HCCC on the ground level and can't wait to see what lies ahead for us. ---*Greg*

In college, I began keeping several different types of exotic pets (primarily chameleons, and poison dart frogs). I lived in Brownwood Texas at the time and there was no (cont'd)

"My interest for fish was apparently born when I was two years old, when I ended up falling into my grandmother's pond and almost drowned."

-- Ad Konings  
[cichidae.com](http://cichidae.com)

## How I Got Started (cont'd)

retail outlet nearby that I could purchase the correct type of enclosures to keep these exotics in, therefore, I began hitting the local garage sales every weekend and buying every aquarium I could find. I had minor success in keeping these creatures. I had several breedings, and even hatched and raised some albino frogs of a species that no albinos were known to exist. Over time, however, the lack of adequate facilities and supplies caught up with me. My aquariums just ended up getting piled up in my garage for a couple of years. Then one day I was watching the Discovery Channel and saw a special about the drastic decline of seahorses in the wild. Well I've always loved those little guys. I started debating the possibilities of putting my aquariums to use and begin breeding seahorses to return to the wild and to offer an alternative to wild caught specimens. I went to a great pet store in Abilene called "Pam's Pets." I told the owner what I was planning to do and she persuaded me not to attempt breeding seahorses as a novice aquarist. While I was in her store, however, I saw an amazing 250 gallon African Cichlid show tank and a beautiful indoor frontosa pond. I was hooked. I purchased about 10 different types of cichlids and a couple of books and headed back to Brownwood. Of course most of those first cichlids didn't survive a month due to my inexperience. Eventually the research and diligence paid off and I've kept cichlids ever since... and probably always will... ---*Todd*

I started keeping cichlids when I went to college in the late 80's-early 90's. I was on the 6-year plan. I had a friend with some huge Oscars and other SAs. I was amazed with them. I soon purchased one tank and began learning about cichlids the hard way. I made all the rookie mistakes. Thinking back on it I don't even know which ones I kept. I know I had an Oscar, some *Pseudotropheus* and a JD. I kept cichlids for about 5 years until I had to put the hobby aside when it became too difficult to keep moving from place to place. It wasn't until a few years ago that I decided to get a 5 gallon tank for my son. It housed the regular tropical stuff but it wasn't long before I started thinking about a tank for myself. The rest is history. Now, my son has no interest in fish, but I more than make up for it. ---*Robert*



*Pseudotropheus demasoni*  
Photo by Robert De Leon

It all started on a dark and stormy day as I was driving along I-35 just south of New Braunfels. The weather had gotten very bad, and I had enough sense to get in out of the rain, so I pulled off at a Tropical Fish store (Darby's) and sought refuge. I had a betta fish in an old 5-gallon tank at home, but he was getting old and wasn't looking so good, and these folks talked me into putting him into retirement in a fish bowl and getting some other fish. I left with a few bags... assorted tetras, a cory, and a nickel-sized Hark the Herald Angelfish, a very beautiful marble koi angel.



*Thorachromis brauschi*  
Courtesy of Spencer Jack

Needless to say, it wasn't long before Hark outgrew the 5-gallon. I  
(cont'd)

## How I Got Started (cont'd)

don't know WHAT they were thinking... an angel in a 5? Anyway, I had to get a bigger tank, and so I was left with an empty 5 just sitting there aching for fish. I had recently discovered the internet, and had found a nice little fish-enthusiast chat called FishRoom. The friends I had made there kept African Cichlids, and they suggested I find some *Neolamprologus multifasciatus* for my 5... and so the search began.

I found them at Amazonia in Austin. I got 2 males and a female (by accident, but one female was enough eh?), and within a few months I had a multitude of multies bobbing up and down in my 5... and so the cichness began.

My next tank was a 55 full of Malawians. My two best online buddies at the time, Steve Lundblad and Jessica Miller, set me up with *Aulonocara mbenji*, *Protomelas steveni* Taiwan Tanzania, some yellow *Labidochromis*, and a *Synodontis flavitaniatus*, which I saw maybe 3 times before he got stuck in a piece of holy rock and expired. Eventually, Jessica sent me some of her *Pseudotropheus saulosi* too. My tanks soon expanded due to all the inevitable fry. I had a few 10's, and a BUNCH of rubbermaid tubs. I think by this time you could say I had a firm start on Africans.

I think I'm pretty lucky for a cichliodot. I met and married someone who was also into the same fish. Greg and I enjoy our hobby together, but I must admit, he wears the net in the family. Don't tell him I told you that though... ssshhh... ---Lee Ann

It has taken me a long time to get to the point I am at now, which isn't that far really!! When I was 16 I had a 29-gallon tank and threw everything in to it that I could find. At one point I had a Texas Cichlid, Salvani, Channel cats, Raphael cats and to top it off a Snakehead. I cringe now at the thought. I started moving around a bit and always kept interest in the hobby. I had heard of African Cichlids but they were way toooo aggressive according to everyone. I finally started to do the research myself and found out that this was manageable. I started out with the assorted mbuna tank like most rookies and that was a disaster.

Well, one night my dad and I went out for some food at a local Chinese restaurant and they had a gorgeous setup with all kinds of Africans in the tank. I questioned the owner and decided haps were the thing for me. I bought my first real African from Armke's and it was an *Aulonocara Maleri* Island. Well everything exploded then and I really got into the hobby and started hunting for certain fish I wanted. It turns out that the LFS were not the place for quality fish. During my search I met people like Robert and George, who in turn introduced me to others. I currently keep one tank with different species of Peacocks, *Placidochromis*, *Protomelas*, and *Copadichromis*. Of course I have Yellow Labs in there also. In another tank I currently am trying to breed some Gold *ocelatus*. Right now I am combing the used ads and garage sales looking for a 125 gallon so I can expand this

(cont'd)



*Lamprologus ocellatus*  
Courtesy of Spencer Jack



*Cyathopharynx furcifer*  
Courtesy of Spencer Jack

## How I Got Started (cont'd)

operation, errr, I mean hobby. I am really looking forward to the fellowship of my equally crazy HCCC members. ---*Dave*

It all started with my friend Jeff Ward (aka. "Jeff SAC" around here). You see, my son Justin had been keeping a betta or a goldfish for a few years (nearly half his life since he was 7 at the time). Well there was this yard sale at one of Jeff's neighbors. There was a 55 gallon tank for sale, and we decided to buy it for Justin for Christmas. Jeff and his family made the transaction to keep it a secret and kept the tank at his house (and even cleaned it for us) until Christmas. We quickly outfitted the tank with mollies, platies, guppies, and swordtails.

Around this time, I mentioned to my wife, Sue, that when I was growing up, I thought it would be neat to

have a fish tank as a wall (even though I didn't even have a goldfish). Fish are no stranger to Sue, her dad went through a phase with Jack Dempsey's, Discus, and salt water; and she even had her own Oscar.

After a few months a coworker of mine gave us a 29 gallon tank that he wasn't using any more and we decided to start with Oscars. Yes, we knew that it would be too small for them as adults but we did it anyway. After seeing our new-found hobby starting to take off, our friend Jeff said, "If you want to see some really cool cichlids, go over to this store by Albertsons and you'll be amazed". You can probably guess what happened next..... We visited Armke's and fell in love with the Africans. Soon we had dumped the tropicals and eventually even the Oscars, and jumped whole hog into Africans. --*Paul*



*Astatotilapia latifasciata*  
Photo by Robert De Leon

## Breeder Award Program (Tentative Outline)

### Goals

The purpose of implementing a breeders award program within the membership of our club is primarily to recognize the accomplishments of individual hobbyists in regards to their efforts in the propagation of the fish they keep. Reproduction of captive bred cichlid and catfish species inevitably eases the pressure on wild animals that are taken for the aquatic hobby. The information with regards to housing requirements and breeding techniques enables other hobbyists to share in the success of the breeder. The donations of information and animals will go directly to the Hill Country Cichlid Club for dispersal as the membership sees fit.

### Fish Eligibility

For the time being, only cichlids and catfish will be included in this program. In the future other families of aquatic life may be added.

Cichlids and Catfish will be organized by breeding difficulty level. "A", the first level, will be the easiest fish to propagate. "D" will be the extremely difficult with many "not yet bred in captivity" species. Category "B" and "C" will represent climbing difficulty levels. Fish will be tentatively set in related categories with revisions and inclusions as needed.

## Point System

Successful spawnings of fish from class "A" will be awarded 10 points toward a member's BAP standings. Successful spawnings of fish from class "B" will be awarded 15 points toward a member's BAP standings. Successful spawnings of fish from class "C" will be awarded 20 points toward a member's BAP standings. Successful spawnings of fish from class "D" will be awarded 25 points toward a member's BAP standings.

An additional 5 points will be awarded to the first of each species to be successfully spawned by a club member. For example, the first BAP submission for *Pseudotropheus saulosi* will be awarded an additional 5 points.

In order to be awarded BAP points, the breeder must complete a BAP form in hard copy and have it signed by a member of the BAP committee. In addition, the breeder must complete one of the following:

- 1 - Present an oral account to club membership on the breeding of the species in question.
- 2 - Present a written account to be published in the HCCC newsletter.
- 3 - Donate at least six fry (three fry in small brooding species) to the HCCC for auction.
- 4 - Donate the breeders to the HCCC for auction.

Any member completing more than one requirement for the species in question, will be awarded an additional five points per task completed.

## Levels of Accomplishment

### *HCCC Spawning Award*

This award is presented to any member's first spawning from any category with awardable points. This award is only presented once per member.

### *HCCC Breeder Award*

This award is presented to any member successfully spawning any five different species with awardable points. This award is only presented once per member.

### *HCCC Advanced Breeder Award*

This award is presented to any member upon reaching 200 points.

### *HCCC Accomplished Breeder Award*

This award is presented to any member upon reaching 400 points with at least one entry in class "C" or higher.

### *HCCC Master Breeder Award*

This award is presented to any member upon reaching 1000 points with at least three entries in class "C" or higher. Levels will be added to the Master Breeder Award at every 500 additional points.

### *HCCC Breeder of the Year Award*

This award is presented once yearly to the BAP leader for that year.

Other categories may be added or revised as the need facilitates.

For more information about the BAP and a detailed listing of what species belong to which category, visit [www.xdeleon.com/hccc/bap/](http://www.xdeleon.com/hccc/bap/). This site will be updated with species list as they become finalized as well as member's successful spawnings and accomplishments.

## Species Profile: *Labeotropheus fuelleborni*

The "fuelleborni" is one of my favorite African cichlids. When I started out keeping "rifters" about twenty years ago, this was one of the first species I tried. I had very limited literature on fish, no access to anything like the internet, and no aquarium society in my community, but this gem is quite forgiving and the success I encountered paved the way for my psychotic interest in mbuna.

My initial setup was a 15 gallon planted tank with six fuelleborni fry. The fry grew, the plants became salad, and I noticed that these fish are territorial! I set up a 33 gallon with shale made into caves, and before long I noticed a fish with a big problem; a huge lump in her throat. I isolated her in the 15 gallon so she wouldn't infect the other fish in the tank. All attempts at feeding were ignored, I was beside myself. Numerous trips to the local pet shops turned up nothing (no local stores carried African cichlids at that time), and instead of treating this fish I decided not to do anything and hope for the best.



A short time later disaster really struck, another of my fish had come down with "bump in the throat" disease! I frantically scooped this fish out and put her in the isolation tank. While I was transferring this fish I noticed the originally "infected" fish seemed to be better. All was not lost. I offered some food and sick fish #1 greedily ate. I thought that maybe she was well enough to go back in the community tank. I got out the net and went after her. In the process, I snagged a rock and couldn't believe my eyes. Some tiny creature was in the tank too! This must have been the cause of the disease, some parasite that had completed it's larval stage, and was now mature, probably ready to spread more disease. Out came the rubber gloves, this creature wasn't going to burrow into my hand! When I lifted the rock I got a big surprise, underneath was a dozen tiny fish! How could this be? The impossible was the only answer, these fish had spawned and the female had carried the brood in her mouth.



The next week I went on a trip to Montreal. The first shop I went to had a huge supply of African cichlids in a multitude of colors. I found the man tending to this section and he explained to me the typical breeding method of mbuna. I felt very stupid but at the same time, learned more about these fish than I had since I'd been keeping them. I was hooked! I left the shop with more African cichlids and a headache; information overload!

In the years since then, *Labeotropheus fuelleborni* has remained one of my favorites. These fish grow to around six inches, and males get slightly larger than females. Two color varieties are most common, the solid blues, and marbled. Most

marbled fish are female but every now and then a spawn will produce a prize, a male marbled. When mature this fish has brown, blue, and greenish marbled pattern on a pink background. The fins will have a blue hue to them, a real gem. I'd guess about one fish in a hundred will be like this.

The fuelleborni has an under-slung mouth much like a *Tropheus* from Lake Tanganyika. Both fish are heavy algae eaters in nature, grazing on rocks. Distinctive to fuelleborni are their snout, a fleshy growth above their mouth. They are not overly aggressive for an African cichlid but are territorial and do need their own space, especially males. They are easily fed and reared on good quality flake with a spirulina content. Lettuce and frozen peas are heartily accepted also. These fish should be kept in high population densities as a lone male is likely to harass anything he can. Crowding deviates aggression.

Instead of pestering one fish all the time, a male will bug many fish giving subordinate fish at least a little time to relax.

Fuelleborni are a forgiving fish, not particular on water quality, or fussy eaters. They are easily spawned and grow quickly. Give them a try.

--Article and photos by Greg Steeves

## Species Profile: *Pseudotropheus acei*

*Pseudotropheus acei* was discovered by Regan in 1922. As is the case with many cichlids, it has been known by a variety of names. It was originally introduced to the hobby as *Pseudotropheus* sp. "acei," but was soon classified as *Gephyrochromis acei*. Recently it has been moved back to the *Pseudotropheus* family and is currently known as *Pseudotropheus acei*. Not too many years ago, this was a very rare species in the aquarium hobby. Today, however, it is a fairly common species. Despite the fact that this fish is always available on the market, there is very little published information available.

In Lake Malawi, *Pseudotropheus acei* inhabits the sandy shallows, building schools of up to 50 around trees that have been submerged or have otherwise fallen into the water. They are specialized to feed on the bark, any leaves that may be on the branches, and the algae that begins growing quickly on these logs. I suspect that they are also accustomed to the occasional insect that burrows into the tree. I say this because in captivity they do not show their best colors unless they are given an occasional treat of brine shrimp or some other high protein source.



*Pseudotropheus acei* is a very peaceful and extremely social fish in the aquarium. Since they are naturally shoaling fish, they should be kept in groups of six or more. They also need plenty of swimming room; therefore, they should be kept in a tank no smaller than 55 gallons. They love driftwood and a sand substrate. In my experience *acei*'s swim constantly through the upper portions of the tank and can be quite jumpy, especially when they see you coming to the tank with food. For this reason, I highly advise a good hood on any tank you keep *acei*'s in.

*Acei*'s are primarily vegetarians and have voracious

appetites. They will devour most aquatic plants. There are a few species, however, that are safe. These species are Anubias, Vallisneria, Hygrophila, and Java Fern. I recommend feeding them a staple high in vegetable content (I use spirulina disks) and a treat of frozen brine shrimp every two to three days.

Sexing *Pseudotropheus acei* can be difficult. Both sexes are similarly colored, and both have dummy egg spots. In fact, the only way to be 100% sure on their sexing is either to vent them or to observe them breeding. There are, however, some very good rules of thumb to go by. Males tend to have more vibrant colors. They are also usually darker as well. In general males are thicker and deeper bodied than the females. The very best guide to use when attempting to sex an *acei* is their behavior. Males tend to flare their fins at passing fish, especially other males. Females, on the other hand, tend to ignore the other fish in the tank and stay in the school. Another good indicator is their adult size. Males reach a size of up to six inches while females usually top out at about four inches. Be aware, though, that adult size is not foolproof, small males do exist.

*Pseudotropheus acei* breed readily in captivity, this is the reason they have become so common in the hobby. Male *acei*'s reach sexual maturity at about three and a half inches in size. Females begin breeding at about three inches in size. The mating ritual begins with the male shaking and fluttering his tail at the female. If the female is not responsive, the male will chase her around the tank for a few minutes in hopes of changing her mind. When the female finally consents, the two will begin circling each other above a flat rock. The rest of the ritual takes place in standard mouthbrooder fashion. Once the female is holding, it is best to either isolate her or strip her because the male will continue to bump and nudge her, trying to entice her to breed again and she will usually end up spitting early. Once you have a successful spawn, you can expect 20-80 fry depending on the size of the female. The fry will do just fine on crushed flake food. But I would suggest keeping them in a nursery tank with plenty of algae so that they can graze all day like they would naturally do in the wild. The fry grow quickly, reaching one inch in just six weeks. After your *acei* have begun to breed, you can expect to see your female holding about every three weeks.

*Pseudotropheus acei* is an excellent cichlid for both the beginner and the advanced hobbyist. In fact, I would have to say that this is my favorite cichlid of all. Due to their peaceful, schooling nature they make an excellent addition to almost any African cichlid tank. I recommend that any hobbyist that is accustomed to using dither fish try *acei* next time they are setting up a tank. I know that it is strange to suggest a cichlid as a dither, but the presence of their school in the tank seems to calm the other fish in the tank. In my experience the work great as dithers and are much more attractive than many commonly used dithers.

--Article by Todd Beasley, photo by Greg Steeves

## Species Profile: *Pseudotropheus saulosi*

Of all the *Pseudotropheus*, this one is, in my opinion, the cutest in both looks and behavior. Although it is perfectly capable of bullying everything else in the tank, this little fish is not nearly as belligerent as other members of its genus. It is a dwarf mbuna, so it stays relatively small, and groups of six or more in a community tank with other species will ensure that nobody gets beaten up.

I first got seven of these fish from Jessica Miller in January of 1998. They grew fast! I had some holey rock (it grows wild in my back yard) in the tank, and I'll be darned if one of those little critters didn't get stuck in one! I was down to six. As the months passed, they grew larger, and I found that I had only one female in the whole bunch! She got a lot of attention, but she survived it and has produced many spawns for me.

The first spawn resulted in thirteen fry, which I sent up to Greg. The second also resulted in thirteen, but I kept these for myself. Of the remaining spawns, the largest was 36! I had stripped her at about ten days of incubation, and because I wasn't very good at stripping yet, I only got about half the fry out. I thought I had them all, as there were eighteen little wrigglers in the bucket, but she had some tucked way back. I released her into the tank, and after a couple of hours noticed that her mouth was still full. I decided to not harass her too much in one day, so I waited another week and stripped the rest from her... another eighteen! They spawned frequently, so I had LOTS of babies to sell.

At one point I decided that all these males in the tank was silly, so I got rid of a couple. I now had three males and one female.



This was a huge mistake. The battle for dominance between the two top males resulted in the lesser male and the female being battered constantly. I had to remove all but my most dominant male and my female, and yet he still continued to take his aggressions out on his girlfriend. Lesson learned from this: there is safety in numbers. I removed the female and let her stay in another tank while the fry from an early spawn grew to such size as to form another colony.



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When my first saved spawn was large enough, I saved back six possible females (the most orange, least striped) and sold the rest. I then reunited my pair in the tank with their now nearly-grown fry. Immediately they spawned. The tank temperature was a bit lower than the one they'd been in, and the spawns that I got until I put a heater in were very small... six to eight fry at a time. After the heater was reintroduced and the water brought up to about 80F, the spawn size increased to over twenty. When the younger females grew to within 1/2" of their parents, they started spawning

too. To date, I have four females that breed regularly, and a constant supply of fry.

I check carrying fish every two weeks. I take the fish in my hand and use a net to hook a tooth from the lower jaw and open the mouth. I either let her release an egg/fry or just look into her mouth if there's enough light to check the development. If the fry have a tail, I strip her. If not, I get her next time. I prefer to take them just as the head and tail pop out, as they don't seem to perish as easily in a tumbler as eggs do, and I get more fry than if they were to carry to term. I'm almost convinced that the females swallow an occasional fry to sustain herself during the incubation.



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The fry are reared in a bare-bottom tank with only a sponge filter. I feed them finely crushed flake (the same that I feed all my fish) and baby brine shrimp when it's handy. I must admit, they grow much faster on brine, but it's not absolutely necessary. I've raised many spawns on crushed flake alone. Water changes help growth too, as do larger tanks. A 55 is the perfect tank size for raising saulosi fry to salable size.

With young fish, it's difficult to tell the sexes apart. They are bright orange when they are babies, and the females in general stay that way. Males turn blue with black stripes, but only if they are the top male(s) in the hierarchy. Subdominant males can take on female coloration (to protect themselves



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from attack), and females have been known to stripe up and even take on blue coloration under the right circumstances. Venting is the only sure way to tell, but I use a much simpler method. If it carries eggs, it's female. If it doesn't, it isn't (but that doesn't mean it's male) :-)

--Article and photos by Lee Ann Steeves  
--Photos by Greg Steeves

## Species Profile: *Spathodus erythrodon*

I recently acquired my first pair of F0 *Spathodus erythrodon* - Ikola in February of 2001. They are very pretty; photographs are located further below.

They come from the surge habitat area of Lake Tanganyika. *Spathodus* belong to a group known as the goby cichlids. Goby cichlids include: *Eretmodus*, *Spathodus* and *Tanganicodus*. These goby cichlids are bi-parental mouthbrooders and typically are monogamous with the exception of *Spathodus marlieri*, which is a maternal mouthbrooder.

So far, the *Spathodus* have been doing pretty well. I feed them with regular flake foods and with spirulina flakes and they are voracious eaters. The temperature is kept at approximately 78° F - 80° F. I also have an external filter as well as an air stone running to increase oxygen amounts in the water. Goby cichlids like highly oxygenated water.

April 26, 2001:

Latest update: Wow! I just checked on my *Spathodus* today and I think they spawned!! Hurray! I was feeding them and of course, the female was not eating and normally, she has the most voracious appetite of everyone in that tank. In addition, as I continued to watch her, I noticed her gill covers were sticking out more than normal and you can see a small extension in her buccal cavity. These are all 'typical' behavior that I've seen in other mouthbrooders I have had. I continued watching but noticed that the male is still somewhat rough with her which concerns me. The literature states that they form a tight pair bond and will defend a territory together. So I am not completely sure what his aggressive behavior means. I will definitely keep this file updated. I'm very leery of taking photographs of her this early in holding because I have also read that *Spathodus* have a high probability of losing their clutch. As far as I know, this is her first one. This is VERY exciting for me and I will keep this file updated as I make more observations. Stay tuned...



April 27, 2001:

(Continuation from yesterday)

Appears as if the female is still holding...although the extension in her buccal cavity is not as evident. Please view this image I have to see what I mean. I took a number of pictures earlier but unfortunately, none turned out as well as I'd like. She hides very well and is not very photogenic. This is the one picture that turned out half way decent where you can somewhat see the extension in her buccal cavity. Please let me know what you think.

As some of you know, she lost her clutch about four days into carrying. It was very sad but I'm awaiting for the next spawning. I will keep you posted.

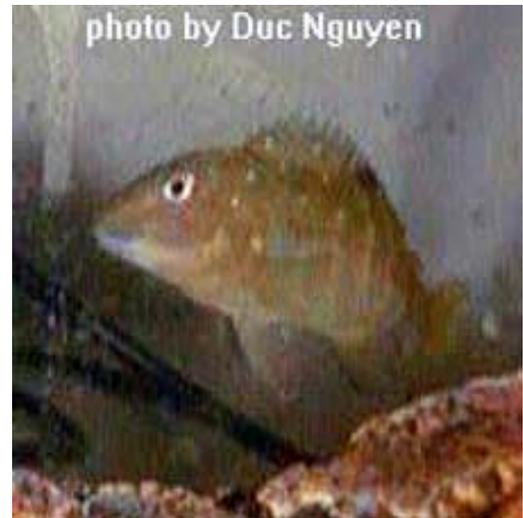
June 14, 2001:

Latest update:

She spawned AGAIN today. I was so excited :) I'm going to try to do a few different things. One of the main things (which sometimes can be the most difficult), is to not pay attention to them too much. I think I

scared her the previous time which caused her to lose her clutch. I read somewhere that gobies for some reason are very prone to losing their clutches. This time around, I will try not to freak her out too much. Maybe when I feed them, I should feed small amts instead of so much where it will tempt her to eat and lose her eggs that way. I think the key is for her hold up to 6 days. After that point, the fry should be viable. I will keep you posted on the latest. I just noticed her carrying today. I'm very excited.:) And the other thing I'm going to change is that I won't be taking pics this time. I'm pretty happy with the above pic you see. I think that may have freaked her out too.:)

Thanks for reading. Again, if you have any suggestions on what I should do, please don't hesitate to email at the link at the bottom of the page.



June 20, 2001

Rats! She lost her clutch again. I thought everything was going pretty well. Today was day #6. I noticed she was still holding this morning before I left for work. She was doing a lot of the chewing motion indicative of mouthbrooders. She was moving the eggs around in her mouth to promote oxygen exchange. I came home from work and I noticed her behavior was completely different. So I placed a small amount of food in and she was eating voraciously. I'm very disappointed but am hopeful for the next time. My reading has indicated that these guys are very particular about mouthbrooding. If anyone out there is reading this and knows of suggestions or personal experience with this species, please do not hesitate to drop me a line via the email link below. I will keep this journal updated with my personal observations on this wonderful species.

--Article and photos by Duc Nguyen

*A special thank you goes out to Greg Steeves, Lee Ann Steeves, Dave Hanson, Jim Beck, Todd Beasley, Paul Barber, Duc Nguyen and Spencer Jack. It is through their contributions of pictures, articles, efforts and experiences that this newsletter was possible. Thank you all very much; I could not have done it without you.*

*Robert.*

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