

The Lateral Line

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BAP Report

The merry month of May had a couple of first timers in the BAP. Spawning was submitted by Greg (Mokkers) with an entry of *Cynotilapia afra* "Red top Chimate". This was Greg's first entry into the BAP and he followed that with another entry of *Labidochromis caeruleus*. Congrats on your entries Greg. Congratulations also to Nick (Nick a) on his spawning of *Cynotilapia afra* "Red top Likoma".

June 30, 2006

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Another Greg we all know as GAS made another entry with a "C" class spawning of *Ancistrus* sp. Large. This is just one of the many that he has added to his credit which has made him a Master Breeder in the BAP. Another Master Breeder in the club, Charles (Tangfish23) also made entries in May. They were *Pundamilia nyererei* "Makobe", *Julidochromis marlieri* "Burundi", *Pseudotropheus elongatus*, and *Neolamprologus caudopunctatus* "Kapampa Red Fin". The Red Fin was a 1st species entry. Congrats to both of the Master Breeders.

Congratulations on another 1st of species entry go to Duc (Bassic) on the spawning of *Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor*, congrats Duc. Diane (Gryhouse) with her entry of *Altolamprologus calvus* Zambian (Black) earns her congratulations this month. I (Bristlenose) finally was able to enter my *Pseudotropheus demasoni*. Congrats to me and to all the members for their entries this month.

■ Jim Beck

Upcoming Events:

- July meeting time and date TBD

Cover Photo:

Neochromis rufocaudalis
by Dave Hansen

Current Standings	
Name	YTD
Greg S.	285
Charles	235
Jennifer	85
Jim	75
Diane	75
David D.	60

Current Standings (cont)	
Name	YTD
Lisa	40
Nick	35
Greg W.	30
Duc	25
Dave H.	25
Walter	20

HCCC Monthly Photo Contest



First Place

Greg & Lee Ann Steeves

Paralabidochromis chromogenys



Second Place

Nick Andreola

Mbipia lutea



Third Place

Greg & Lee Ann Steeves

Pundamilia sp "red flank"

Judging by Yves Fermon

Species Profile:***Altolamprologus calvus* "Zambia"**

Almost from the time that I decided to give the Tanganyikan cichlids a try, I knew that I wanted the *Altolamprologus calvus* in my tank. This amazingly beautiful, unique fish is mild mannered enough to keep in a community environment. There are a lot of variants (both color and location) which can make choosing a type very difficult! My decision was fairly easy because when I set up my Tanganyikan community tank, the Black *calvus* from Zambia was readily available. I picked up a trio from River City Aquatics in Austin. They were fairly small at the time (probably not more than 1.25"). At this size, sexing is practically impossible, so I took my chances. I brought them home and began to nurture them. I did some research and discovered that the *Alto. calvus* is found in Lake Tanganyika along the rocky coast at a depth of 1 to 15 meters. They can be found in the wild, co-existing with *Altolamprologus compressiceps* which look very similar. The temperature at these depths is around 24-27 degrees C (around 77 degrees F) and the water has a pH of 7.8 to 9.5. Due to the high pH levels that occur in the natural habitat - these fish are perfect for our Central Texas waters. The pH coming out of my tap is around 8.5. The *calvus* is a predator and it's natural food source is shrimps and other crustaceans, as well as juvenile fish. The *calvus* has

a body shape that is very laterally compressed which makes it a perfect candidate to search for food by entering very narrow cracks in the rocks of it's natural habitat. In the aquarium, I feed my *calvus* a diet of Spirulina based flake and Dainichi Marine FX (Baby Pellets). *Cal-*



Photo by Diane Tennison

calvus are notoriously slow growers, but I must say that mine have grown fairly quickly.

At around 2", I began to notice that 1 fish was quickly outgrowing the other 2. My amazing luck because the male is typically twice the size of the female. I had ended up with a trio (1m/2f) on my first try! Now to hope that they could all co-exist. Sometimes *calvus* will form a strong pair and the remaining fish are ousted. I have been fortunate because my 3 fish seem to still get along fine. I did not see

the first spawning of these fish. As a matter of fact, I thought they might still be too small. However, I noticed one day that one of the females was missing. The male seemed to be paying particular attention to a large Apple

Snail shell that was sitting on the outskirts of a male *Lamprologus ocellatus* "Gold"'s territory. Upon closer inspection, I could see the edges of a black tail in the shell! I was sure that one of the females had been chased into the shell and had gotten stuck! I stared at the shell for a very long time. Then I saw movement! She was still alive. Her tail would slowly flick back and forth. I began to ask my esteemed (much more experienced) club mates if it could be possible that she had spawned. The general thought was "could

be"... I removed the entire shell and placed it in a floating breeder box. I use the acrylic type with small slats on the sides. I placed a little bit of sand in the bottom of the box so if the female came out she would feel a little more comfortable. Then the waiting began. After about a week and a half, I noticed that the female had begun to back out of the shell a bit. She was still VERY skittish and darted back in at the slightest movement. I started to put a little bit of finely

crushed Spirulina flake in the box every few days. I had no idea how long she had been in the shell and I thought I could coax her out with some food. At almost 2 weeks in the box, I noticed that there appeared to be some



Photo by Diane Tennison

uneaten food that had settled along the sand at one end of the box. I was afraid that the water conditions in the box might foul, so I wanted to clean the sand. I almost screamed when I saw the "uneaten food" move! There were fry!!! I couldn't believe it. They were VERY small and looked to be mostly eyes and a clear tail. After a few days, I reached into the box and pulled the entire shell out (the female was inside but the fry didn't go near - they stayed on the sand). The

fry were so small I could only estimate their numbers. I guess that there were a minimum

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of 30 fry in the box. I began to feed the fry with freeze-dried Cyclopeeze. I put the female back into the main tank and moved the breeder box (with the fry) to float in my 10g. fry tank.

Amazingly, within about a couple weeks, the male and female began exhibiting spawning behavior that I was able to witness! The male



Photo by Diane Tennison

would approach the female and do a bit of a shimmy dance (reminding me of my Malawi spawning rituals). He would then slowly swim towards the shell. He would stop occasionally and shimmy some more, making sure the female was following. When they got close to the shell he would almost charge her and she would dart into the shell. He would then block the entrance to the shell with his body, in a vertical position. I do not believe that any spawning was taking place (because she came back out of the shell and went to the other side of the tank), but I have witnessed this be-

havior on several occasions. This is perfectly consistent with what I have read about the spawning of these fish. The male will position himself at the opening of the shell and release his milt. At this point, the female will fan the water to draw the milt into the shell where she has laid eggs. I was lucky enough to get some pictures of this behavior. I hope to have more *calvus* fry soon! In the meantime, my first spawn has been released from the breeder box and are now free swimming in the 10g fry tank. They are sharing their home with some *Cyprichromis leptosoma* "Kekese" fry. They are starting to get big enough that you can almost see the *calvus* shape beginning. This is a very interesting fish that I recommend to anyone who is keeping Tanganyikan species.

■ Diane Tennison

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Member Profile:**Master Breeder-Greg Steeves**

I would like to take the time to give you a little inside look at our latest Master Breeder, Greg Steeves. Believe me, a little look is all you want to see. If you spend too much time inside this guy, you might never have a good night sleep again. Let me give you a little background on this guy. He hails from Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. He moved down here several years ago to start a wonderful life with his new bride Lee Ann. They have 3 children Karli, Poindexter (aka Stuart), and Erin. They reside in the Canyon Lake area and I am sure most of us have been to his house, because Lee Ann and Greg have hosted many meetings. SIDE NOTE-Don't eat Greg's hamburgers unless you like 'em hard and black. It is bad enough the cow was slaughtered once, but to watch Greg butcher them on the grill is even more tragic-END NOTE. Lee Ann scored the American woman's dream, a fat, balding foreigner!!! Greg works for Holtz Corporation and is fortunate to have a boss who loves fish as well.

How did Greg reach his Master Breeder status?? Let's take a look at the numbers and see:

- Victoria: 30 species
- Malawi: 10 species
- Tanganyika: 3 species
- West Africa and Catfish: 3 species

I would highly recommend that you go to his BAP report and take a look at the

impressive list of fish. It is very diverse and not a bunch of the same fish with numerous variants. Greg has also won the Breeder of the Year from the HCCC and truly represents that award. He has gone way beyond just giving away the 6 fish required for BAP submissions. SIDE NOTE-You still owe me 4 more Syno's or I am telling Jim-END NOTE. Basically anyone who has wanted some of his fish simply has to ask and he is more than generous. I think the majority of the club members have some of his fish in their tanks. To breed this many fish and submit the reports is a job on itself and who would blame him for turning in BAP articles to just get by? Not Greg, his articles are truly informative and a pleasure to read. His writing style is distinctive and does a great job of transmitting his passion and hard work that he puts into the hobby. SIDE NOTE-When he is doing his hard work stand back, his Canadian blood hasn't acclimated to the heat and you are

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likely to get bathed from his profusely sweating body-END NOTE. As you can tell by his species list, he is heavily into the Victorian Basin cichlids and has made quite a name for himself in the hobby in that field. Not only does he educate us, he has a dedicated section called Furu Fanatics on the Cichlid Room Compan-



Photo by Dave Hansen

ion, one of the premiere sites on the web for cichlid knowledge. Greg will quickly point out that he isn't any smarter than anyone else, SIDE NOTE-We Know-END NOTE, but it he has an eye for detail and a thirst for knowledge that has elevated him to a respected member in the cichlid community.

Yea yea, we get the point he is great!! Let's look at some other pros and cons of the man.

Pro— He is great to take to lunch, because he always thinks it is his turn to pay.

Con— Don't let him drive, think images of Driving Miss Daisy. Also has no sense of direction and I am shocked he is able to get home every night after work.

Con— Has become a bad Canadian, I called him up one night asked if he was watching the game? He proceeds to say, "Oh, the basketball game is on?" Uhh, no, I meant the hockey game!!

Con— Don't ask him to watch an auction fish for you why you step outside for a smoke, ask Nick for more details about the fish he was waiting for 8 hours to come up at the auction and Greg idly sat by and watched Nick's dream fish go bye-bye.

Pro— Great friend who is a real asset to the hobby and the Hill Country Cichlid Club. Congratulations and well deserved!!

Last little story. We were eating Chinese food and the waitress said something to Greg. After she walked away he says very sarcastically, "Do I look Chinese to you???"

Actually dude, you do!!!

■ *Dave Hansen*

Species Profile:***Paralabidochromis chromogynos***

When I was first exposed to the myriad of colors the cichlid species from the Lake Victoria region possessed, I was instantly hooked. They became the main focal point of my hobby interests. Unfortunately, living in the wilds of New Brunswick, my selection locally was nil. However there was someone working hard towards my passion on my behalf. My fiancée (now wife) would periodically make the trek up north to visit with me. On each trip she would bring a couple bags of Victorian cichlid fry.



Photo by Greg Steeves

Most of the names I had never heard of, but the fish grew quick and I was able to observe and many times reproduce these fantastic animals. One such trip, Lee Ann brought me groups of *Haplochromis* sp. "purple yellow" and *Paralabidochromis chromogynos*. The *P. chromogynos* were very small but looked different from any other small Victorian I had

seen. The fry were all blotched. As they grew, the OB pattern remained. Females maintained a black and white pattern while, when the males matured, other colors, predominantly red and blue, highlighted the piebald body markings.

The distinctive coloration of the Zue Island variant of *P. chromogynos* allow for easy identification. There are many other piebald cichlids from Lake Victoria that are attractive as well, but there is something distinguishing about *P. chromogynos*. We have won several show awards with the species as well so it would seem that we are not the only ones to recognize their beauty. It would seem its attractiveness is not limited to my bipartisan eyes.

When I moved to Texas, I brought a group of *P. chromogynos* young with me from the line I had been working with for about four years. They had just begun to breed when I encountered a yet unidentified parasite which went on to wipe out 8 tanks of fish. Of course, one of the species that met a dismal fate was our group of *P. chromogynos*. We lost all but one resilient male whom we still have to this day.

The search was on to find replenishing stock of what had become my favorite species. On two occasions I thought I had found fry only to have them grow into another very nice spe-

cies *Paralabidochromis* sp. "red fin piebald". Then, in the summer of 2005, I exchanged some fish with friends from Winnipeg. One of the species sent to me was some supposed *P. chromogynos*. I had been duped before so I was cautiously optimistic. To my good fortune, the tiny fry developed into the fish I had been searching so hard for. As they have grown, they have only become more beautiful. Thanks Shaun!

The genus *Paralabidochromis* (Greenwood, 1956) is designated a small adult size of between 7 and 15cm. The members of this genus have a steeply sloping straight or slightly concave cranial profile and thickened lips. The lower teeth are implanted procumbently (Greenwood, 1980) and the outer rows lining both jaws are cylindrical in diameter, and number fewer than most other genera (16-48). Tooth structure is mainly bicuspid in smaller fish (<6.5-7cm) and unicuspid in the outer rows of larger individuals. The two or three rows of inner teeth are separated from the outer by a distinct spacing. Both jaws protrude equally. The premaxillary is prominent.

Most, if not all *P. chromogynos* females are piebald. The species was found throughout Lake Victoria from Jinja Uganda, south to Mwanza Gulf. The variant we have in the hobby was originally collected at Zue Island as is also distinctive as a high percentage of the males from this location are piebald as well. It is extremely rare here (Seehausen, 1996) and

has not been seen in Nyegezi and Butimba Bays since 1982 (Witte, 1992). At Zue Island, this beautiful cichlid is found living along side other *Paralabidochromis* species including *chilotos*, sp. "Zue rockpicker", and sp. "rock krib". It is found over a pebble substrate, at a 4m depth on a slightly sloping rock decline.



Photo by Greg Steeves

Paralabidochromis chromogynos grows to a length of 11cm displaying very little size differentiation between the sexes. It is difficult to specifically describe the species due to color pattern variation between individuals. Females are black and white on the entire body as well as the fins. The males are similarly adorned with this pattern with additional blotches of blue and red especially on the fins. The cranial profile is curved and the lips are thickened. The pectoral fins are black with blue markings along the rays. The dorsal is blue and black with a red edging. The caudal

and anal fins are black blotched, blue at the base merging to red at the extremities. A small number of egg spots (usually 2-3) line the rear portion of the anal fin. The orange-yellow ocelli cross the fin rays and display a distinctive dark orbit. *P. chromogynos* feeds primarily on insect larvae.

Our present colony is housed in a 55 gallon tank with similar sized *Neochromis* sp. "madonna" and a small school of *Synodontis petricola* "dwarf". The cichlids are around 7-8cm in length so all are showing the brilliant adult coloration. The *Neochromis* sp. "madonna" was added to the mix in hopes of relaxing the *P. chromogynos* who were incredibly skittish. This seems to have had some effectiveness. Spawning occurs in the method typical to Lake Victoria *haplochromines*. I have not witness an actual spawning with this species nor have I noticed any excavating activity. I suspect *P. chromogynos* is a substrate spawning species. Female gestation period is 18 days at which time the female will release her fry periodically scooping them into her mouth again and the first sign of danger. This behavior subsides after a couple weeks and the fry are permanently released to fend for themselves. Undoubtedly some fry will be taken by the other inhabitants of the tank but some will survive by hiding in the crevices of rockwork in the aquarium. Brood sizes have been small thus far at around a dozen fry.

To raise fry in numbers, I would recommend stripping the female of her larvae at 15 days. At this time, the young still have a yolk sac but are survivable in a small tank with a mature

sponge filter. They will "scoot" along the bottom absorbing their yolk sac rapidly and raising from the tank floor. It is at this time that the first food should be presented. I've had fantastic success with a product called Cyclop-eeze®. Newly hatched brine shrimp will work as well. The young *P. chromogynos* will adapt to crushed flake rather quickly and should be started at about a week after they are swimming on their own. The young grow quickly at nearly a cm/month.

With a little care, *Paralabidochromis chromogynos* can be housed with other Lake Victoria species. Provide some rockwork as well as some open areas and this beautiful cichlid will become the focal point of your cichlid collection.

References:

Seehausen, Ole; 1996; "Lake Victoria Rock Cichlids"; Verduyn Cichlids; pp. 172-177.

Greenwood, P.H; 1959; "A revision of the Lake Victoria *Haplochromis* species (Pisces, Cichlidae), Part III. Bulletin of the British Museum of Natural History (Zoological), 5(7): pp. 179-218 (1959: Febuary)

■ Greg Steeves

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Club Event:**Landa Park Picnic**

The idea was great. Let's have a multi-club gathering at Landa Park in New Braunfels. Well, the execution was even better. On Saturday, June 17, the TCA, HAS, and HCCC held a BBQ. This was a wonderful opportunity to visit with some fine folks outside of an auction



and/or show environment. Everyone is always running around at those types of events, and this was a good way to slow the pace down Texas style and relax a bit. Landa Park was chosen for several reasons. It is a very spacious park that can really hold a lot of people without feeling overcrowded at all. There is a beautiful river that runs through the park and you can, swim, fish, or boat in the area. In addition, they have a dedicated water "park" area for some cooler fun. We reserved a cozy place right on the water that gave us perfect

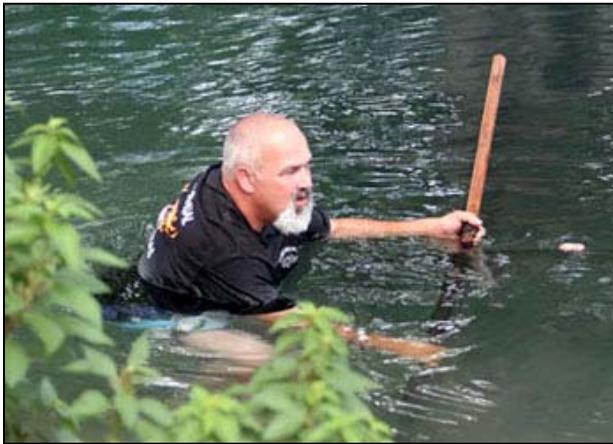
access to the water, restrooms, outdoor play area, and a huge BBQ pit! There was even a railroad system that ran through the area and we had some tracks that went by our location. It would turn out later that I would want to tie my horseshoe partner to the tracks, but I will get to that in a bit. Robert and I had run to Sam's Club in the morning and bought all the stuff we would need to get this going. After arriving at the park and getting everything un-loaded, we fired up the pit. While waiting for the coals to reach goal, a whole lot of people started showing up. They were all dragging more food with them as well. This was shaping up to be quite the feast. We had fun catching up with each other. Being the type of people we are, it wasn't long before people were headed down to the water to see what was in there. It wasn't long before one of the TCA boys pulled out the biggest crayfish I ever saw. I am still not convinced those things aren't cockroaches that just live in the water, but it had awesome size

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and we got lots of pictures of it. Someone busted out a net and started scooping more fish out of the water and some real interesting stuff was found. By the way, thanks to whoever gave me all those fountain darters to take home: Just kidding of course! Sometime during the beginning Jim Beck showed up and basically executed a hostile takeover of the grill and started cooking up some grubbage. I am glad he did because his BBQing was excellent and might be the second best I know. Jim and Patsy really did a great job, and on a hot day like it was, we all appreciate ya all slaving over a hot pit. It was fun to watch everyone doing their own thing. No real structure was planned, nor was intended. Some were playing in the river, others took their kids over to the playground area, some took a stroll around the



park, and some headed to get wet in the water park area. Good times with good people. If that wasn't the intent from the get go when the club was formed I don't know what was! A

little later in the day the marquee event was about to take place. A horseshoe tournament had been set-up and the brackets were in



place. This stop on the pro tour should have been an easy one for Greg Steeves and Dave Hansen. Let's get in, get out, no injuries and move on. Well it didn't quite go down that way, and it was kind all Greg's fault, but I am not going to bring that up here. Everyone got some practice in and the tournament began. Dave and Greg cruised through the first round as did the squads of Nick and Young Dave, Curtis and Jason, and Jim and Patsy got a bye. Second round went pretty smoothly for the favorites as well. Greg was having a little problem getting the shoes into the pit area and was coming up a bit short, but I won't discuss that here. Jason and Curtis won their semi-final match as well and looked to be getting stronger every throw, unlike my partner, but I won't get into that here. The final was an exciting one and was back and forth

with Greg and Dave twice jumping out to 4-point leads only to have the margin closed time after time. Shoes and dirt were flying everywhere in this epic battle. The crowd was going crazy; you couldn't even hear yourself over the cheering. There were ohh's and ahhh's flying around like sonic daggers. When it was all over the squad of Curtis and Jason beat the heavily favorite defending champs and scored the \$25 gift certificates to Rare Dave's shop. A little controversy developed latter when Dave and Greg got into a throw down in the parking lot and

everyone and have some time to spend talking with each other instead of just passing each other by at events. It reminded me of the be-



ginning of the club when we all knew each other and had the meetings at our homes. A little grass roots action.

Photos by Jennifer Prince

had to be separated by Duc.

■ *Dave Hansen*

By this time it was getting late and everyone chipped in and started helping pick up. Quite a few headed down to Rare Dave's shop for the after party. It was a great day and hopefully everyone had a good time and hopefully this can become a yearly event that takes place among the club's. It was wonderful to meet

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Species Profile:***Neolamprologus caudopunctatus* "redfin"**

Neolamprologus caudopunctatus "redfin", is a cave brooder native to the sandy/rocky habitat of Lake Tanganyika. It is found at depths up to 25 meters along the southern area from Kapampa along the entire Zambian shore. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the low to mid 80's and native waters for this fish are ph of 7.8-8.8. I obtained 12 2inch long fish from Clearwater Aquatics. Male achieve a size of 3.5" and have a cream colored body with specks of blue in the caudal, anal, and pectoral fins. This fish also have blue eyes and a dorsal lined in orange. Female achieve a size of 2.5" and sport the same color as the male.

The fish bred in a 10 gallon tank which contained pool filter sand and several pieces of lace rock. The tank was filter by a sponge filter and had a ph of 8.2. I performed weekly water changes equal to 25% of the tank volume. I fed the fish Omega one cichlid flake and Dainichi ultima.

When spawning, the blue speck on the male's fins and eyes intensifies. The females other wise cream colored body began to show dark barring. Courtship consist of the pair briefly engaging in some lip locking, some fin flaring and body quivering for a period of 2-3 days. Next, the female began to remove sand from the spawning site and place at the entrance to restrict the size and access to the flower pot. Spawning it a secretive affair and generally takes place on the roof of the pot. The only sure way to know that a spawning has taken place is when the male is aloud in the pot and eventually chased away by the female.

The pair laid an unknown number of eggs. After

spawning, the male is chased away from the spawning site to begin his duties patrolling the territory. The female assumed her role as care provider which consisted of her fanning the eggs, removing fungus and keeping the snails away. Approximately 20 fry were seen swimming around the site 10 days later. The fry were tan in color and about 1/16th of in size.

The fry were left in the tank with the parents. Once hatched, the parent's continued to care for the fry. On several occasions, while feeding the adults, the female would take food into her mouth, chew it and then spit it out into the cloud of fry providing additional food. I started the fry off on "green water" due to size and 14 days later I began feeding them Cyclopeeze. The fry are slow growing.

This was actually one of the more challenging cave brooders that I have spawned. The difficulty comes from not getting them to spawn but raising the fry past the "green water stage" I've tried some of the commercially available egg layer foods but always seemed to lose the fry after a few days. After some research and few emails, I finally figured out what I was doing wrong, the green water was the key. While breeding the *caudopunctatus* was challenging, I would recommend the to other keepers of African cihlids.

About the only thing I would do next time, is have the "green water" ready and provide a larger tank bottom. Despite these challenge, you should give them a try.

■ Charles Skillern

Species Profile:***Geophagus steindachneri***

Geophagus steindachneri or the Red Humped eartheater, is a maternal mouthbrooder native to the Rio Magdalena, Rio Sinu, and Rio Cauca drainages in Colombia, and tributaries of the Maracaibo basin in Venezuela. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's. I kept the tank at 82 and they seemed to enjoy it there. I did give them a "winter", when I didn't run the heater for 3 months or so. The water dropped to around 70. Native waters for this fish are blackwater and are very soft with a pH around 6. I obtained ten 1 inch long fish from a fellow cichlid clubber about 6 months or so ago. Males achieve a size of 5 inches and have a gold base with blue and red metallic checks. There is also a black center stripe running below and parallel to the lateral line. This seems to be mood dependent. The fins have a red and blue checkerboard type of pattern. They also have a downturned mouth for sifting the floor for food. This adaptation carries through so far as to their specialized gills that have adapted to let sand pass through easily. Females achieve a size of 4 inches and are yellow/gold especially so after spawning.

The fish bred in a 20 long tank which contained medium gravel- blasting media and was planted with pothos, growing hydroponically from the eggcrate on top . The tank was filtered by a Aquaclear hang on back filter, and a sponge filter and had a pH over 8. I performed once

weekly water changes equal to 40-80% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish staple of flake and pellet, with bloodworms, freeze dried and frozen, for conditioning.

When spawning, the blue and red colors of the male intensifies. Females change to a bright yellow and the presence of stripes are visible. I didn't see the actual spawning process, but



Photo by Eric Foreman

noticed that I had 4 females holding. the females turned a bright brilliant gold yellow color with a faint presence of stripes. Interestingly enough, the females that were holding still continued to eat, and actually got extremely aggressive. How you manage to successfully bite someone with a mouthful of fry, I don't know...

After spawning, the females actually became the dominant fish in the tank, and laid out their own little czardoms of territory. I removed one of the 4 holding females to a 10 gallon, and she released around 20 or so fry. I also left 3 females in the original tank, and they held for several weeks, but I haven't seen any presence of fry. Approximately 6-7 survived of the total hatch after about 2 weeks. The fry are tan in color and about 1/2 of an inch long and look very similar to their parents. Just smaller and colorless.



Photo by Eric Foreman

The fry stayed in the 10 gallon. After the majority of the fry were released, I placed her back in the main tank. The tank used sponge filter made from Aquaclear foam block, and 1/2" pvc fitted with an airstone for filtration. It was very interesting the female would release the fry when she thought the coast was clear, but if you'd walk in the room really fast, she would frantically pick up the fry as soon as she saw you.

eventually a few of the fry escaped their mothers mouth and are surviving on their own. I started the fry off on crushed flake and brine shrimp. The fry are growing very slowly at about 1/2" after 2 months.

You have to love that fact that the fish look like little battle cruisers with their domed heads and downturned mouths. the females are really quite spectacular to behold as they claim their own stake of the tank after breeding.

They sift the gravel or sand constantly, hence the name eartheater. these fish breed almost as much as my convicts, if not more so due to the polygamous mouthbrooding nature of the species. I enjoyed greatly that it was almost an add fish and water and your done kinda thing. A large water change or removal and replacement will usually incite a spawn if bloodworms are being fed. I would definitely recommend keeping some of these or maybe a different species of *geophagus* at some point or another. They are relatively peaceful , and would most likely get along with similar sized fish. Their playful skittish nature and earth eating habits are highly entertaining and the fact they are easy to breed just makes it that much better.

As easy to spawn as these fish were I wouldn't do much other than regular large water changes, and feeding bloodworms or maybe earthworms to them to condition for spawning. All in all a very satisfying experience.

■ Eric Foreman

Species Profile:***Archocentrus nigrofasciatus***

Archocentrus nigrofasciatus or the Convict cichlid, is a substrate spawner native to Lake Nicaragua, and tributary rivers in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, and Honduras. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are somewhat neutral to slightly acidic. I obtained six 2-3 inch long fish from Amazonia aquariums. Males achieve a maximum size of 8 inches and are silver with black horizontal stripes and blue accents on their finnage when breeding. Females achieve a size of 5 inches and are silver with black stripes, and an orange belly.

My fish bred in a 20l tank which contained medium blasting media. The tank was filtered by an Aquaclear 50 and a sponge filter, and had a pH of 8.4. I performed weekly water changes equal to 50-75% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish mainly flake food, and blood worms to condition for breeding.

When spawning, the blue color of the male intensifies. He will chase the female around the tank in a display to impress her. The female starts swelling up in the belly as eggs are produced and the signature bright orange coloration that covers her belly intensifies. Her stripes are also darker and more distinct than the male's. The pair cleaned an area around a

flowerpot laying on its side together, and laid the eggs on the side wall of the pot. Next, the male came in and deposits his milt, and fans it over the eggs. The parents then guard the pot with a mean vengeance for the next few weeks.

The pair laid approximately 100+ clear to amber eggs. The male and female both ac-



Photo by Eric Foreman

tively participated in the protection of the eggs and the fry. They created a small pit in the gravel and the female would herd them to it as wigglers. Once they got to be free swimming the female would suck any errant fry into her mouth and deposit them somewhere safe. Quite interesting. I really didn't do anything special because these fish do a great job of parenting their young. Approximately 100+ eggs representing 90%+ of the total hatch

were viable and hatched after 14-16 days. The fry were black in color and about 3/8 of an inch long and looked like two eyes and a tail for a few days. Then they took on the appearance of a tiny fish at about 1/3" or so they started looking more like their parents.

The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them in the 20 gallon tank with their parents. And they grew and grew and grew. The female was a most attentive mother through the whole ordeal. I started the fry off



Photo by Eric Foreman

on crushed flake food. The fry grew quite quickly despite the large number of fish in a relatively small tank.

I fed some to some *A. compressiceps* and *N. leleupi* as a live food to free up some space. I found a small diameter tube used as a siphon into a pitcher proved to be an efficient fry catcher. I must say predatory fish sure do like live food!

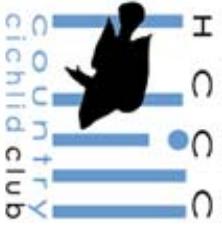
These fish are quite colorful and active critters, and have endearing parental behavior that is

always so fun to watch. They are easy to breed and care for, so they are a great medium sized fish for a beginner to keep and succeed with. I've had these fish for over a year now and they have more or less bred constantly for me after they got up to size. Despite several attempts to free up tank space by getting rid of them in favor of more rare species, I have never quite been able to part with them. Plus the benefit of a source of live food is always there too. Maybe one day I'll get rid of them in favor of a more challenging species but for now I think they have a home in one of my tanks. I would recommend this species to anyone from the beginner to the advanced aquarist looking for a cool personable fish that breeds with ease.

As I have bred this fish in a tank anywhere in size from 15 to 45 gallons, with and without gravel, I wouldn't say I would do any thing different than I did. Like any other fish they thrive on lots of fresh water.

Like many South and Central American cichlids they seem to be more susceptible to hole in the head than their African counterparts, but that is easily avoided by weekly water changes. Overall, this is an exciting personable fish that is easy to care for and breed. In short ideal for the inexperienced aquarist looking for an attractive Central American cichlid to add to their collection. If you've never owned any New World cichlids this is one that anyone can be successful with!

■ Eric Foreman



The Lateral Line

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