

APISTOGRAMMA

DWARF CICHLID
FROM
SOUTH AMERICA

DISTRIBUTION:

RAINFOREST
REGION OF
AMAZON,
ORINOCO AND
PARAGUAY
RIVER
SYSTEM ALSO
SAVANNAH
OF
ARGENTINA
AND
VENEZUELA



HISTORY ETYMOLOGY

- The first Apistogramma was discovered by Henry Walter in 1852, but the name was only finally attributed in 1913.
- From the greek irregular unreliable lateral line

Description:

- Apistogrammas are generally recognised as a Cichlid that grows to no more than 10 -12 cm naturally, in extremely sexually dimorphic species both male and female should be less than 12 cm in length. They are also recognised as being non destructive to their environment, which means they are suitable to be kept in planted aquaria. Most species seem to thrive in a well planted tank and show their natural behaviour in this environment.

HABITAT:



Apistogrammas are not found in open waters, but in smaller streams, ponds, pools and remaining areas of flooded land, they are usually found in very shallow water in areas that provide a large number of hiding spaces. In their natural biotope this is usually provided by dense leaf litter on the ground as well as roots and dead branches, overhanging terrestrial vegetation or floating vegetation.

Diet :

- By nature These Dwarf Cichlids are micro-predators, feeding on fresh water crustaceans and aquatic insect larvae, so that in captivity they require a fairly high protein diet. They are not necessarily fry predators, of their own or even other species in fact there are reported cases of broody females adopting fry from another species in captivity
- In the aquarium, they can be fussy eaters – if you can feed them close to their natural environment – meaning live food (mosquito larvae, white worms, etc) 2-3 times a week that would be perfect. The rest of the time they will take flake food, small cichlid pellets, frozen bloodworm, brine shrimp, etc.

Keeping apistogramma

A. Hoignei male



■ Maintaining good water quality requires good biological filtration and frequent water changes, but essentially the more the better. These fish come from big river systems where the water parameters change with the season. Good Filtration can be as simple as a decent sized sponge filter, which has the added bonus of growing lots of microorganisms for any fry to feed on.

For general maintenance of most dwarfs a pH of 5.5-6.5, hardness of around 80ppm and a temperature between 23–28°C would be suitable. For successful breeding, pH and hardness need to be matched more closely to the particular species preference.

Housing.....

- Aquariums should provide lots of shelter/cover to make the fish feel secure, this is generally achieved by dense vegetation in the tank, or with some plants and mix of Driftwood, rocks and caves. A sand or fine gravel substrate is ideal – preferably of darker colours as again it makes the fish feel less exposed and vulnerable.
- The tannin rich waters of the black water rivers can be simulated with the use of peat, leaf litter (Oak, Indian Almond), or a commercial “Black Water Extract”, these often seem to trigger spawning when added to the tank.



Companions...

- They are good community tank fish because they show very little inter species aggression and happily co-exist with most other fish. It is not recommended to mix them with fish that are highly energetic. They can usually be kept successfully with *Corydoras*, Tetras, Pencilfish, Endlers *bristlenose*, Discus and Angels in a maintenance situation but also by personal experience with killifish.



Have a pick.....

- There are over 250 types recorded so far and more being found every year, some of these are the same species and just different colour variations, others are completely different species which are just waiting to be scientifically described .

SPECIES FAMILY COMPLEX.....

- Regani complex:

Includes specimens with
clearly pronounced
vertical, horizontal or
head bands

a. Gossei



Complex.....Indeed....

- Macmasteri complex:
Moderately deep bodied, vertical bands well pronounced, head stripes and anterior dorsal fins are black, caudal is rounded

- A. MacMasteri



and on.....

- Commbrae complex

Includes several vertical
but one horizontal
band and anterior
dorsal show a black
tinge

- A. Inconspicua



More.....

- Borelii Complex:

Deep body, males have
extended dorsal, anal
and pectoral fin edges

- *A.borelii*



And more.....

- Agassizii complex:
Elongated body shape
faintly conditioned
vertical and horizontal
band

- A. Agassizii



And again.....

- Pertensis Complex:
Slender body, sail like
appearance, high fin

- A. Iniridae



And finally....

- Cacatuoides Complex:
- *A. cacatuoides*

Serrated dorsal fin,
distinct enlargement
and lyrate caudal



Breeding

- Breeding of Dwarf Cichlids can be accomplished in tanks as small as 30 litres, but a good compromise is a tank size of about 75 litres (2ft tank), it should provide lots of hiding places or shelter to make the fish feel secure, this is generally achieved by dense vegetation, or with some plants and mix of **wood**, rocks and caves. Sand or fine gravel substrate is ideal; some species have extreme requirements in terms of pH, hardness and conductivity and to produce a viable spawn these need to be matched.

A.Mc Masteri female and fry



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- Apistogramma are cave spawners, these can be created out of terracotta pots or coconut shells. If the fish are secure and happy in their environment there is no real need for dither fish. The hatching periods vary from species to species, but usually fall in the 2-5 days for eggs and then 4-9 days as wrigglers, so free swimming fry can be seen somewhere between 6-11 days after spawning. Some females may move the wrigglers around as often as twice a day to different hiding places within the tank.

- Once free swimming most fry are large enough to take vinegar eels, microworms, newly hatched brine shrimps or daphnia.



And now just enjoy.....

■ A.STEEL BLUE MALE



Relax....

A. Mc Masteri male



And wonder....

A. Cacatuoides



In front of.....

A.Agassizzi male



These.....

A. Hoignei male



Gorgeous creatures.....

A. Inka Baenschi pair



The end

A.Agassizzi fry after breakfast.....

By Fred Rivard
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Most photos
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