

# Black Convict

## *Ametitlania nigrofasciata*

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*By John Moyles*

Convicts are a member of the Cichlidae family found in Central America. The convict cichlid shows great variation throughout its range, and many of these varieties have been split into separate species such as the Honduran Red Point.



### Description

The wild type of this fish has 8 to 9 dark vertical bars on a blue-gray body with a dark spot on the operculum (gill plate). Males are mostly gray with light black stripes. Males are larger than females and have pointed ventral, anal and dorsal fins often ending in filaments. Females are brightly colored, having more intense stripes and a pink to orange area on the sides.

### Feeding

They are omnivorous in the wild and eat insects, crustaceans, algae and plants. Flakes and pellets should make up the bulk of their diet and should be supplemented with live, frozen and freeze dried foods.

### Breeding

The convict cichlid can reach sexual maturity as soon as 16 weeks, though 6 months is more typical. Mature convicts will form monogamous pairs. Eggs are laid in caves that are dug under rocks. Eggs and young are cared for by both parents with the females caring for the eggs and young while the males defend the territory. Eggs hatch about 72 hours after fertilization. In the wild, convicts will breed once a year, however in captivity they will have several clutches of eggs a year.

### Habits

They are aggressively territorial while breeding and will attack fish many times their size. Keeping them with plants is problematic since they will eat them as well as dig them up. It's ease of care, small size, and readiness to breed make this fish an ideal candidate for both beginner and veteran fishkeepers that are interested in observing breeding and brood care behaviors.