

Hysophrys nicaraguense

“Nics”



By John Moyles

Common Name: Some of their common names include Parrot Cichlid, Macaw Cichlid, Nicaraguan cichlid and Nicaraguense (pronounced Nick-are-a-gen-zee). Their common name in Central America is "Moga". I tend to call them "Nics".

Scientific Name: *Hysophrys nicaraguense* has been known under several scientific including *Amphilophus nicaraguense*, *Cichlasoma balteatum*, *Cichlasoma nicaraguense*, *Cichlasoma spilatum*, *Heros nicaraguensis*, *Nandopsis nicaraguense* and *Theraps nicaraguensis*. The current name is *Hysophrys nicaraguense*.

Distribution: Nics are found in freshwater rivers and lakes along the Atlantic in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The preferred habitat is a lake or river with slow moving water and rocky areas.

Conservation Status: This species is not listed on the I.U.C.N. Redlist or C.I.T.E.S. Appendices.

Description: Males can reach up to 10 inches long while females usually stay around 8 inches. Unlike most other Central American Cichlids, the female is more colorful than the male. Females are a striking green and gold with a black lateral stripe. Males are tan and gold with a black spot in the middle of the body. Males also develop a small nuchal hump. The eyes of both genders are a golden or amber hue. The body is rather oval shaped with a rounded downward curve with a small mouth towards the bottom of the face.

Care: Because of their large adult size, they should be kept in a 48 inch tank. I kept a trio in a 40 long before moving them into a 110. Fine gravel or sand should be the substrate because they like to dig. Artificial plants work well, so do live just make sure they are firmly rooted because they will get dug up. I used piles of rocks and driftwood to form caves. I kept mine at 80 degrees Fahrenheit, but they can be kept from 72 to 80. My Ph was kept around 8.

Feeding: In the wild Nics are omnivores. They eat seeds, leaves, detritus and mollusks. In my tank they were fed Omega One Cichlid Flakes, Omega One Kelp Flakes, frozen blood worms and freeze dried krill.

Social Behavior: Nics are somewhat territorial but can be kept with mellower South or Central American Cichlids such as Sevrum *Heros severus*, and Uaru *Uaru amphiacanthoides*, larger characins such as Silver Dollars *Metynnis sp.* and Buenos Aires Tetras *Hyphessobrycon anisitsi*. Nics are monogamous breeders and if you have a pair, they will become more aggressive before spawning. They will also dig up and destroy plants although they seem not to eat them.

Breeding: To stimulate spawning, I raised the temperature of the tank to 82 degrees, The parents dug a big pit in one of the caves that I built. There the female laid about 200 eggs which hatched in about 3 days. The females kept the eggs well oxygenated and fiercely defended the nest to the point where I had to move the male. In about 4 days the babies yolk sacs had been absorbed and they were ready to start eating decapsulated brine shrimp eggs, powdered flake food and newly hatched brine shrimp. I kept the babies with the parents the entire time.

References:

<http://www.aquaticcommunity.com/cichlid/nicaraguacichlid.php>

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

<http://www.cites.org/enq/app/appendices.php>

<http://animal-world.com>

