

Melanochromis cyaneorhabdos

By Tony Jochman



Melanochromis cyaneorhabdos is imported from the Northern part of Lake Malawi. Males grow to be about 5" and females 4". Courting males display a bright blue coloration with black bands running across the body; its anal fin displays only one egg large spot. The sex of adults is difficult to determine by their coloration. The difference in the females is that their anal fin is yellow at the edges.

In nature *Melanochromis cyaneorhabdos* are found in the upper rocky littoral at 20 ft or less. They search for food by roaming the shoreline through fairly wide territories which are viciously defended against others. They primarily feed on small shrimps, insect larvae, and even juvenile fishes. The males are completely belligerent amongst each other, and the females are extremely unsocial and fight one another in the aquarium. This makes them not recommended for the beginner.

I keep my *M. cyaneorhabdos* in a 65 gallon Mbuna tank, in a group with about 30 other different Mbuna. I have one male and two females, and they are kept with fishes of the genus *Cynotilapia*, *Labeotropheus*, *Labidochromis*, *Tropheops*, and *Lamprologus*. A heavily decorated tank with lots of caves and a sand bottoms is the best. I feed mine flake food with spirulina in it and sometimes pellets. Live foods would probably help promote breeding.

Well, as for the breeding, this takes place as a maternal mouthbrooder. What that means is the male does his little dance, or jittering, in front of the females and if any are ready she will follow the male into the breeding pit. The male will then scrape his anal fin on the rocks to show the female a good place to place her eggs. The female will follow, lay her eggs, and then pick them back up very quickly. She does this in a number of times, and as she picks up her eggs the male rubs his egg spots on the rocks as well. The male does this to entice the female to try to pick up his egg spots also, when she tries he will release his sperm into her mouth to fertilize the eggs. This process takes but a few hours. In about 2 weeks the fry leave the mother's mouth and are free swimming.

M. cyaneorhabdos fry are fairly large in size and are feeding on finely crushed flake food right away. Remember that as they grow larger they may eat other species of fry in the tank with them!!!