

Cyprichromis sp. "Jumbo Black Fin"

Location: Kapemba

By Tony Jochman



One of the nicer Tanganyikan cichlids in both temperament and color comes from the genus *Cyprichromis*. This fish comes from all over the lake and is found in more variants than places. The reason being is that there may be different species living side by side in the same habitat. "Cyps" are generally very peaceful fish. They typically live in schools that number in the thousands but they can wander about in smaller groups. Females are usually very boring in color but this is made up for in the males. They come in a cornucopia of colors that can dazzle the eye. Since these fish are polygamous, maternal mouth brooders, and are schooling fish, you can expect multiple males colored up at the same time. This is one of the main advantages of the *Cyprichromis*. Of course, you will need to set up your group correctly in order to achieve harmony. I can't stress enough to purchase these fish in at least quantities of 12 to look their best.

Cyps come in two basic sizes, regular and jumbo. The regular sizes average about 3.5" while the jumbos can go all the way up to 7". In this case the Jumbo Black Fins. They are plankton eaters picking anything off that might float or swim by. Since they generally eat small snacks throughout the day in the wild, frequent feeding are very beneficial in the aquarium. A diet rich in protein gets your fish in spawning condition quickly. Black worms, red worms, glass worms, brine shrimp, and quality flake food work best. Since they like small particles of food, they work well in a tank with sloppy eaters.

Since Cyps are midwater dwellers they make a welcome addition to the Tanganyikan community tank. Most cichlids occupy the bottom half of the tank where cyps will occupy the top half where your other fish rarely go. Males stake out three-dimensional territories but are willing to let other species or females enter at any time. Since they are not very aggressive (with some exceptions) they make great dithers for your other cichlids. Their mouths are very small and they pose little risk to the other tanks inhabitants. The males tend to do more "flaring" than actual fighting. Their flaring is actually quite entertaining and keeps the males looking their best.

Breeding cyps is not too much of a challenge. I like to keep equal amounts of males to females in order to reduce pressure on the females. The fish will spawn in midwater with their heads pointed down. It's amazing to see the female catch her eggs before they hit the gravel. Females will hold the eggs normally to almost four weeks before releasing the fry. Here's the great part about this fish: they don't really go after their fry! If you give the female some tight spots where only her fry can hide, you can expect most of them to live. No stripping of eggs are necessary! Spawn sizes are small, expect between 4 & 25, depending on the size of the female. The eggs are about as large as any cichlid's. One variant's eggs have been measured at slightly larger than front