

Archocentrus nigrofasciatus - Convict cichlid

By Mike Dunagan

Archocentrus nigrofasciatus or Convict cichlid is a substrate spawners native to the shallow rocky area, Central America on the Pacific slope from Costa Rica to Guatemala and on the Atlantic slope from Honduras to Panama. The rivers they inhabit are the Tarcoles, Aguan River, and Guarumo River. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are pH of 6.6 - 7.8. I obtained 2 3-4 inches long fish from Bobby Sutton. Males achieve a size of 5-6 inches and are blue-gray, cream, or blue-purple body with 8 to 9 dark bands that run vertically, with clear to yellow fins. Females achieve a size of 3-4 inches and are blue-gray, cream, or blue-purple body with 8 to 9 dark bands that run vertically, clear to yellow fins, and red on the belly.

The fish bred in a 55 gallon tank which contained black small gravel. The tank was filtered by a two sponge filters rate for 80 gallons each on a central air system and had a pH of pH of 8.2. I performed monthly water changes equal to 50% of the tank volume. I used shared over head room lighting for duration of 12 hours each day. I fed the fish NLS 1mm cichlid formula.

The normal coloration of the fish becomes darker and the red on the females belly becomes darker. The pair cleaned all the gravel in the corner of the tank around one of the sponge filters on the left side of the tank. Next, the female laid eggs on the bare glass and the male fertilized them.



The pair laid approximately 35 eggs. After spawning, the female and male guarded the eggs until they hatched three days later. The female stayed close to them and the male would actively chase other fish away. I left the eggs in the tank until they hatched. After I siphoned the fry with egg sacks attached into a bucket and put in their own 40B. Approximately 35 eggs representing 100 of the total hatch were viable and hatched after 2-3 days. The fry were a gray in color and so small they were hard to see and looked very similar to their parents.

The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them in the 40B to grow out. The tank used I used two 80 gallon sponge filters connected to a central air system for filtration. The parents stood guard over the fry until they were large enough to swim on their own. They would

chase any other fish that came into their area. I started the fry off on crushed NLS pellets. After seven days I started feeding NLS growth. The fry grew quickly.

This fish is a fun fish to spawn at least once. They are relatively easy to spawn and produce a large number of fry. The parents are amazing at guarding the fry, even attacking my hand when I put it in the tank drawing blood. This fish is fun to keep seeing their aggressive behavior and absolute dedication to guarding their fry. I was pretty happy to get them to breed since their previous owner could not. This is an easy fish to breed and I would recommend anyone who wants to try and breed to start with this fish. I would not recommend breeding often as not many pet stores will take them or fish keepers. If you are looking for a fish to breed as a feeder it could work well.