

# Steatocranus Casuarius - blockhead or buffalohead cichlid

By Michael Dunagan

Steatocranus Casuarius or blockhead or buffalohead cichlid, is a substrate spawner native to the Congo River in Africa. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are pH of 6-8. I obtained nine 1 inch long fish from Cichlidforum member Hornplayer54. Males achieve a size of 4.5 inches and are brownish olive camouflage in color, the fish has a large hump on his head and is about 3 inches long. Females achieve a size of 4 inches and are brownish olive camouflage in color this female has a hump on her head and is about 1 1/2 to 2 inches.

The fish bred in a 29 gallon tank which contained pool filter sand and was planted with no plants. The tank was filtered by a sponge filter and had a pH of pH of 8.6. I performed biweekly water changes equal to 25% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent in room lighting for duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish NLS 1 mm cichlid formula.



Pictured is the fake root used as a breeding tunnel

When spawning, the brown color of the male and female intensifies. The male and female would follow each other around. After the male and female had chosen each other, they pushed all other members of the group away from the fake root entry. I moved all other fish out of the tank. The female took a spot guarding the cave entrance from the top. Food could fall into the hole, so she never left that area, even after the fry were free swimming. The male would guard a hole on the bottom. He would leave the entrance to eat, but remained hidden otherwise.

The pair laid approximately Unknown number and color eggs. After spawning, the female retreated to the root and guarded the entrance. The female never left the entrance. The male would exit the entrance I left the eggs to hatch in the tank with the parents. Approximately 31 eggs representing unknown of the total hatch were viable and hatched after 4 days. The fry were a green-brown in color and about 3/8 of an inch long and looked very similar to their parents.



The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them in the 29 gallon tank with the parents. The tank used sponge filter for filtration. Once the fry were swimming the parents would follow the fry corralling them back toward the root. I started the fry off on NLS growth. After fourteen days I started feeding NLS 1mm cichlid. The fry grew slowly.

When breeding this fish it helps to have tunnel like structures in the tank. The parents will

allow their fry to stay in the tank even after they spawn again. This was an interesting fish to spawn. It is the first substrate spawner and produce a lot of fry and spawn again shortly after. While breeding these fish is easy once they start, it is not as easy to get a pair. I have tried to another pair out of many fish and have had little to no luck doing it. If you can get these fish to breed, you will be overrun with fry in no time.

Be prepared to setup extra tanks. You have to start with a group of them to get a pair. Once you remove all other tank mates, you will be overrun with fry. This is not a fish to just breed once.



A picture of the fry