

Black Widow Tetra

By: Bob Dempsey

The Black Tetra, also sold under the name Black Widow, is a deep, but flat bodied Characin. The rear half of it's body is grey-black, the front is silver with 2 or 3 black vertical bands anterior to the dorsal fin. The younger the fish the darker the coloration.

This is a fish well-suited to a community aquarium. It remains relatively small and places no difficulties on the fishkeeper - an ideal fish then for the beginner. It prefers a densely-planted aquarium of at least 60cm, with a pH of 7.0 and 10 dH and plenty of open space for swimming.



One reason for the Black Tetra's popularity, is due to it's being a hardy little fellow. A hobbyist told of a power outage he experienced. The outage lasted for 2 days. Consequently he lost all his fish with the exception of the Black Tetras. When he checked the water temperature, it had fallen to 13 C at which it remained for the duration of the power cut. His tetras not only survived but also went on to breed.

Browsing through your dealer's stock you may notice several strains of Black Tetra. Through selective breeding, it has become possible for breeders to bring out certain distinctive features which have given the hobby several new varieties. For example, by breeding specimens with pronounced finnage an new long-finned variety of Black Tetra has been developed. A more recent addition is a silver and gold variety, although the black version still remains the most popular.

This selective breeding is, in one respect good news for the fish keeper, for it means the fish is easily-bred in captivity of any relatively experienced hobbyist.

The main feature for identifying the sexes lies in the females having a more rounded body cavity while the males often have a clear white marking on the caudal fin.

A New President

Chase Klinesteker

Normally, this message would be written by Curt Bitterling. However, Curt's wife was transferred to a new job in the thumb area of Michigan. They moved in July so Curt had to resign as president. As Vice President, I was willing to step in temporarily to fill the Presidents' office and Steve McDonald was willing to be Vice President. These offices were confirmed with a special election directed by Vince at the June meeting. Also, Steve Davis was elected to be on the Board of Directors. There is still a spot open on the Board.

First, I would like to say "Thank you much" to Curt. He stepped up and took control, working on programs and getting things done for the club. I have a few ideas for the club and I will do my best to fill out the rest of the year, but Curt, we will miss you and wish you the best in your new environment.

SWAMAS is a great tropical fish club. I joined in 1983 and have been a proud member ever since. Over the years it has been near the top or led the nation in many categories through the Federation of American Aquarium Societies (FAAS), especially in breeding fish, article writing, and newsletter competition. Many members from those years are still with us. We really appreciate their experience, knowledge, and contributions to the club. And some more recent members have stepped up to help (treasurer, newsletter, recording secretary, etc.). I am especially impressed with the job Kim Nelson is doing with the newsletter with its' color and organization. But for our organization to become more successful, many more will need to step up and get involved. It seems that the more committees, activities, and people involved in a club, the better the experience for all its members. We need several positions to be filled so we can become a more active club. BAP, HAP, FAAS representative, Fry Raising, auction chairman, board position, article writers, shows, bowl show, public relations, and programs are all in need of someone to help. All of these positions will add to every members' experience. Think about offering to help. Many hands make light work. The Grand Rapids club has shown that getting many people involved results in more activities, more interest, and more members.

Promoting the club and making more people aware of our activities is an important thing. Someone working on public relations could help do this. If you have any ideas or e-mails of people that would like to be on our list to receive club information, please let me know. A strong BAP program is essential and was the core of our growth in the past. With Curt gone, we will need a volunteer to step in. The same is true for the HAP program. Interest and competition in growing plants and breeding fish keeps members coming back. Fry raising and the bowl shows create more reasons for people to return to meetings and enjoy the experience. This is a hobby for fun and recreation and if members don't have an enjoyable experience, they may not return. Getting the meeting programs and writing articles are the core of our educational mandate. Learning about fish and their husbandry is what keeps us going in the hobby. All of the above positions are now unfilled. I am asking each member to consider helping in at least one of these areas, and committees can be formed where people work together.

I would like to suggest that we use nametags for some meetings. As a memory-challenged senior, I need all the help I can get, and it will help us to get to know each other better too. Please send me your suggestions and ideas to improve the club. We all have a stake in keeping it going!

Chase Klinesteker • ckspoonpl1@aol.com • 616-949-8665

For breeding purposes a compatible pair are best removed to a specially prepared breeding tank (the male should be introduced approximately a week after the female). The tank should be large; at least 60cm, and include plenty of plants or artificial spawning mats. The water should be no harder than 8 degrees dH.

Spawning takes place after a courtship display which sees the male dancing around the female, and the release of eggs and milt occurs as the pair rapidly beat their tails. After spawning the parents should be removed from the aquarium, otherwise they will eat the eggs.



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Bowl show schedule

- Sept. Goodies, Mollies,
and favorite
- Oct. Malawi and Tanganyika
Cichlids, and favorite
- Nov. Danios, Rasboras,
and favorite
- Dec. Your Favorite Fish

Get published!

Kim Nelson, SWAM Editor

SWAM needs articles.

Consider writing something for
submission. It can be very informal.
(My editing skills are pretty good.)
Simply a photo with a caption would
be appreciated. If there is a topic you
would like featured, I am willing to
search for an applicable article.

**Due date for Nov./Dec.
is Oct. 15.**

Characodon lateralis Rainbow Goodeid, Red Prince

Courtesy of seriouslyfish.com

This fish is recommended only to the expert fishkeeper. This can be a difficult livebearer to maintain in the aquarium. Entire groups of fish may suddenly die without warning. It is very sensitive to high temperatures and is also disease-prone. This is most likely related to the fact that this fishes' natural environment of clear streams contain very pure water that is being constantly renewed.

Only two species are described in the genus. The other, *C. audax*, can be similarly delicate. The species must never be kept together as they can and will hybridise.

As with other goodeids, there is less of a size difference between the sexes than in many other livebearers. This is thought to be related to the relatively primitive structure of the andropodium, as the fish tend to choose mates that are of similar size so that the sex organs are synchronised.

Goodeids are unique among livebearers in that the developing young are nourished by a specialised structure known as the trophotaenia. This performs a similar function to the placenta in mammals and the remnants of it can often be seen attached to the young fish at birth. Male fish also possess an internal muscular structure known as a pseudophallus, which connects the sperm ducts to the genital opening, which is said to forcibly eject sperm.

Possibly extinct in nature, this species is kept infrequently except by livebearer enthusiasts and usually commands a high price when available. Its precarious natural status means that every attempt should be made to breed these fish should you be lucky enough to obtain some.

Classification: Goodeidae • **Distribution:** The state of Durango, Mexico.

Habitat: Found in clear, stony-bottomed springs and streams that are usually heavily vegetated.

Maximum Standard Length: Male 1.6" (4cm).
Female 2.2" (5.5cm).

Aquarium Size: You could keep a couple of pairs of these in a standard 24 x 12 x 12 – 55 litres tank.

Maintenance: A planted aquarium with a substrate composed of large gravel and/or small pebbles would resemble its natural habitat. A cover of floating plants is also recommended. The water must be kept scrupulously clean, so efficient filtration and frequent small water changes are essential. Any algal growth can be left alone, as the fish will graze on it.

Water Conditions: Temperature: 62-75°F. The temperature should not be allowed to rise above 75°F. This is a subtropical species and will appreciate a temperature drop over the winter months. pH: 6.5-8.0. Preferably on the alkaline side of neutral. Hardness: 10-20°H

Diet: Omnivorous and unfussy. Diet should contain live and frozen foods along with some vegetable matter such as blanched spinach or vegetable flake for the best conditioning.

Behaviour and Compatibility: Best kept in a species tank, not least as the species may be extinct in nature. Males can be somewhat aggressive between themselves, but develop a pecking order over time.

Sexual Dimorphism: Males are by far the more colourful sex and possess a prominent andropodium (a notched anal fin used in reproduction). Females are plumper than males.

Reproduction: Not the easiest livebearer to breed, as initial broods may die for no apparent reason. Flock spawning (in which the fish are maintained and bred in groups) is the best method to establish a viable population. The breeding tank should contain lots of plants. Goodeids breed in a slightly different way to other livebearers. Females do not store sperm as in many other livebearing species and must mate separately for each brood of young. They also display no gravid spot.

Gestation takes between 55-60 days after which 5-20 very large fry are produced. Sometimes these may have what appears to be an umbilical cord attached. This is quite normal and will disappear in 2-3 days. The fry are large enough to accept the same foods as the adults from birth. The parents rarely predate on them. Breeding appears to be seasonal as after a couple of broods a female may not produce any more young for 6-8 months.



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Aquarium Size Matters

African Cichlids

Courtesy of africancichlidaquarium.com

When it comes to keeping African Cichlids you want to make sure that you have an aquarium that is big enough for the fish. A basic 20 gallon tank is not quite big enough to successfully keep your fish. While I have read that a 25 gallon tank is sufficient, I would not go with anything less than 29 gallon. The first cichlid tank I setup over 20 years ago was a 30 gallon flat back hexagon tank.

In addition to the amount of water your aquarium holds, you will also want to think about the dimensions of your aquarium. Most African Cichlids are middle and bottom swimmers, so a wider tank is often more appealing to the eye than a tank with more vertical dimensions simply because the top of a tall tank will have very little activity in it. This is not to say that a taller tank won't work, it's just not as interesting to watch once you have fish. As long as you have a rectangle that is wider horizontally than it is high vertically you should be good visually. A wider aquarium is also easier to aquascape to a more natural environment than a taller aquarium.

Supporting Your Aquarium

While some people may use common household tables and furniture to support their smaller fish tanks, a proper fish tank stand is a necessity when keeping an African Cichlid Aquarium. Most African Cichlid tanks keep Mbuna (pronounced um-boo-na) which means "Rock-

fish" in the language of the Tonga people in the area of Lake Malawi, one of the African Rift Lakes that African Cichlids live.

As may have become obvious, to keep your fish in a natural environment, your African Cichlids are going to need a lot of rocks and while you can buy light man-made rocks, they are expensive and don't offer a lot diversity when it comes to shapes and sizes. It's less expensive, and more fun to dig up rocks from your backyard or garden and use those to aquascape your aquarium.

For this one reason alone, you need to invest in a stand made to handle the weight of your fish tank.

Getting Your Water Right

Unlike a basic beginner aquarium setup, African Cichlids have some unique needs when it comes to the water they live in. African Cichlids come from the Rift Lakes of Africa which are formed where the African and Madagascar Tectonic Plates meet. The meeting of these two plates created a rift or tear in the African continent and a number of freshwater lakes were formed. African Cichlids that are kept in aquariums are almost exclusively found in Lake Malawi, Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika. The most popular African Cichlids kept by hobbyists come from Lake Malawi and as noted above are Mbuna.

Be cautious before adding fish to your aquarium. While you can add fish after just 24 hours of setting up your tank with water for Tetras, Goldfish and other tropical species, it takes an aquarium 4 to 6 weeks to completely cycle. African Cichlid tanks should cycle for a minimum of 5 to 7 days or longer before you add fish. Before adding your fish, it is important that you test the water for the toxins Ammonia and Nitrites.

Because of the location (equatorial) and causes of the lakes, the water is warm and has a high pH naturally. At the deepest depths of Lake Malawi the temperature is 72° F and averages in the 78° to 84° F range are ideal. Additionally the pH levels are higher than most freshwater fish tanks with an ideal range of between 8.0 & 8.4. As is common with all freshwater tanks, you want your Ammonia at 0ppm along with Nitrites and Nitrates within acceptable ranges.

You can use chemicals to maintain your pH but a simpler and easier way is to buy a substrate when aquascaping your aquarium that will help to keep the pH high enough for your African Cichlids. You will also need to invest in a good heater for your tank as well, so that your water temperature remains in the right range.

Filtration, Filtration, Filtration

Last and certainly not least is the filtering of your water to keep it clear and healthy for your fish. African Cichlids can be very territorial, aggressive and they are known for digging up the aquarium substrate and moving it around.

One of the best ways to keep aggression and territorial behaviors down with African Cichlids is to overload or crowd your aquarium. There are a couple of rules when

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Continued: Black Widow Tetra

The fry hatch from the transparent eggs within 26-34 hours and usually remain attached to a plant or among the spawning mats, or even the aquarium glass, for the first five or six days as they allow their swim bladders to develop before they begin to free swim.

The developing fry will grow rapidly and consequently require a good and regular supply of adequately sized live food; rotifers, daphnia and brine shrimp nauplii being the order of the day.

Although not a very colorful fish, the Black Tetra remains popular with beginners and experienced fish keepers alike.

Black Tetra: *Gymnocorymbus ternetzi*

Family: Characidae

Feeding: Active

Environment: Community Fish

Tank position: Middle

Temperature: 23-25 degree C

Distribution: South America, Brazil, Rio Paraguay and Rio Negro

Size: 6cm

Diet: Flake food, whiteworms, blood worms.

Daphnia, tubifex, and eggs, mosquito larva and earthworms



stocking a freshwater tank, the most common is 1 inch of fish per net gallon and another is 1 fish per net gallon. This works well with Tetras and with Cichlids, but if you want to keep aggressive behavior from your Cichlids to a minimum, you need to double the standards so you will want 1.5 to 2 fish per gallon. Of course doubling the standard means you need to filter (or turn your aquarium water over) twice as often.

Because African Cichlids are notorious diggers of the aquarium substrate, you do not want to use an under gravel filter as they will just render it useless in a day or two.

Basically, if you have a 55 gallon tank, you want a filter or filters that will turn the equivalent of a 110 gallon tank. Not only will this double filtration keep your African Cichlids happy, colorful and active, it will provide crystal clear water that has the right balance. The only downside is that your filtration medium has to be purchased twice as often, but that is a small price to pay for a clean, healthy, clear African Cichlid aquarium full of happy fish. Remember you cannot over filter an aquarium!

Meetings are the first Friday of each month!

Every meeting begins at 8 p.m.; is located at **Best Western Gateway Hotel, 3640 E. Cork St. Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001.** Raffle and mini-auction are held (*70% of auction sales to seller*); question and answer session follows all programs; and a bowl show takes place.

Sept. 6, 2013

8 p.m.

Characodons

By Don Brandt

Board meeting at 7:15 before
the general meeting

Oct. 4, 2013

8 p.m.

African Cichlids

By Ron McNeil

Board meeting at 7:15 before
the general meeting

SWAM

Southwestern Michigan Aquarium Society (S.W.M.A.S.)

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Calendar

SEPTEMBER 2013

6 SWMAS Mtg.: Characodons
by Don Brant
smas.org

14 GVAC Mtg.
grandvalleyaquariumclub.org

15 Michiana Aquarium Society Mtg.
michianaaquariumsociety.org

OCTOBER 2013

4 SWMAS Mtg.: African Cichlids
by Ron McNeil
smas.org

12-13 SWMAS Fall Auction
SAVE THE DATE! smas.org

NOVEMBER 2013

1 SWMAS Mtg.
smas.org

DECEMBER 2013

6 SWMAS Mtg.: Holiday party
for SWMAS members
smas.org

Exchange Clubs

If you have a show or auction that you would like to see included here, please send the notice to the P.O. Box on the back cover of this bulletin, or to kim.nelson@wmich.edu. Remember that the SWAM is a bimonthly publication, so send those notices at least 3 months in advance!

We will exchange publications with clubs that want to receive SWAM. Send your publication to SWMAS, P.O. Box 3095, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-3095.

Wanted to Buy or Sale

SWAM accepts ads from SWMAS members of up to five lines free of charge. Ads can be for items you wish to trade, sell or would like to find, but must be related to the aquatic hobby.

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