

STRIPED DWARF CICHLID, *Nannacara taenia*

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Mar-April 2009



Female *Nannacara taenia* guarding eggs in pot

DESCRIPTION

The Striped, or Banded, Dwarf Cichlid has been around the hobby for many years, although it is not seen that often. In Sterba it is listed as the Lattice Dwarf Cichlid. It is quite attractive with 5-6 darker horizontal stripes along the entire body and some red and blue coloration in between. There are several color morphs and they can change color intensity quickly, depending on their surroundings. It is closely related and similar in behavior to the Apistos. Maximum size is about 2 inches for the males with the females being slightly smaller. They have an oval shaped body that is laterally compressed. Mature males will have slightly more pointed dorsal and anal fins, although they can be difficult to sex. They come from the Amazon River system in NE Brazil and Western Guyana. Frozen and live foods are preferred, but they will take flake food in a pinch. This is a very shy fish that hides a lot, so a decent sized aquarium (20 gallon) with plants, rocks, caves, and some peaceful dither fish is recommended. Larger groups of them tend to fight more than if just a pair or trio were present. Temperatures can be a little higher, with 78-84 degrees a good range. They like softer water, but it is not necessary to breed them. They are cave spawners and don't dig in the gravel or uproot plants.

BREEDING

Nannacara taenia is fairly easy to breed if you condition them with high quality frozen and live foods. One report on the Internet mentioned that adding chelated iron plant food to the tank triggered his *Nannacara* to spawn. They like to breed in seclusion and it may be difficult to tell when they have bred. I used a small flowerpot turned upside down with the hole in the bottom just big enough for the female to get inside. I then could watch the female go in and out of it and when she changed to a lighter color and stayed in the pot, I knew she had laid eggs. It is fun to watch her poke her nose out frequently to see what is going on! At this time the

male is in danger and he should be removed if there is not a lot of cover. I chose to remove the pot with the eggs and hatch them in RO water with added aeration and methylene blue for fungus prevention. The female was especially mad and took her fury out on the male, so the hiding places, rocks, and plants were very important! She had laid about 75 dark orange eggs that hatched in 3 days and were free swimming in 3 more. The newly hatched fry were very tiny with short, stubby tails (see microscope picture). The fry needed a couple days on APR and Liquifry before they would take live baby brine. Water changes are important as they are sensitive to pollution. Growth seemed slow as it was over 6 months before they began to sex out.

I recommend the Striped Dwarf Cichlid as a fish that is colorful and fairly easy to keep and breed. Watching their breeding and other behavior is quite entertaining!



Newly hatched *Nannacara taeniata*, 100X