

# ORANGE CHROMIDE, *Eetroplus maculatus*

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Young pair of Red Chromides, male is larger with more intense color

## DESCRIPTION

The Red Chromide is a color variant of the wild form of the Orange Chromide, *Eetroplus maculatus*. It has a bright orange disk-shaped body with small red spots on its sides. In good health, its brilliant colors make it a real beauty, but it is seldom seen in shops. Sometimes I refer to my Red Chromides as my “mini Discus” because they have several similar traits. Brilliant colors, graceful movements, and a disc shaped body (slightly elongated) are a few. For cichlids, they are generally peaceful and will not dig up plants in the aquarium. They are sensitive to water chemistry changes and pollution, and prefer a warmer temperature range....sure sounds like a discus description to me! Yet they are about as far removed from Discus as a cichlid can get. *Eetroplus* is the only cichlid genus found in Asia and there are only two species in the genus. Both species (*E. maculatus* and *E. suratensis*, the Green Chromide) move freely in marine and brackish environments from the tip of India to the island of Ceylon (SriLanka). I still am puzzled why we aquarists find it sensitive to water changes when it can survive ranges from pure fresh to 100% sea water! For best health, the red Chromide should have live or meaty foods along with some vegetable flake food, and feeding frozen brine shrimp will enhance the red spotting of the males. They like plenty of room with plants and some hiding places. Dither fish can help them overcome their shyness. PH range is from 7.5 to 8.5, and they will not do well in an acid environment.

Spawning temperatures are usually in the low to mid 80s' and their colors intensify at that time. They have a life expectancy of around 8 years.

## **SPAWNING**

E. maculatus reaches a maximum length of 3 inches and can be considered a dwarf cichlid. E. suratensis reaches a length on one and a half feet. They often occur together in the wild in a symbiotic relationship where the smaller species will pick parasites off the larger one. It is quite sensitive to changes in water and to being taken out of the water. Many sources state that they require brackish water and eighty to eighty-five degree temperatures to spawn, yet neither of these conditions were present when my pair spawned. This reinforces my belief that the fishes we keep and attempt to spawn are truly adaptable if only we give them a healthy environment and a varied diet. For several years I had bought and tried to keep alive numerous groups of orange and red chromides. In most cases I did not succeed in even keeping them alive very long. Vain attempts to add salt and increase temperatures met with failure. Then recently I noticed a pair in a local pet shop in excellent health. Sexing them can be difficult, but because of their excellent condition, it was easy. The male was larger, had more red spots on his sides, and more red color in his eyes. I purchased them and decided to try something different. A twenty gallon tank that had been set up for about a week with numerous live plants in the gravel was used. With flint gravel and Lake Michigan water that was partly softened, it certainly was not hard or brackish water. The pair was placed alone in this tank at 76 to 78 degrees and fed frozen brine shrimp, daphnia, and white worms. Within two weeks they had spawned on the underside of a Cryptocoryne plant leaf. Most sources state that they like to spawn in a cave, pot, or in rocks. The eggs hang on a thread attachment and it seems they prefer to lay them so they will hang down, and as no pot was available, they chose the leaf.

The eggs hatch in 2-4 days and the parents will place them in pits in the gravel, moving them around. The fry are able to eat newly hatched brine shrimp when free-swimming. Parents may not be as dedicated because the fry slowly disappeared over time. I had a somewhat better survival rate when I removed the fry and raised them separately, but the fry are picky and slow-growing. Many believe that the fry eat the slime off the parents body similar to discus. It is very likely that adding salt to the water would benefit the survival rate.

The Red Chromide, *Etroplus maculatus*, is a beautiful and unusual fish that presents somewhat of a challenge to breed and raise, but patience and persistence with it can be extremely rewarding!