

SPOTCHEEK CICHLID, *Thorichthys ellioti*

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, July-Aug 2004



Spotcheek Cichlid,

Photo by Darrell Ullisch

DESCRIPTION

T. ellioti is a very attractive and colorful cichlid from Central America. I found it hard to tell the sexes in my young pair since the female is brightly colored also. With a rich golden background, there are darker vertical stripes on the body. The body and fins are speckled with iridescent blue spots and the dorsal, anal, and ventral fins are edged with this same iridescent blue. The throat area has an orangish-red coloration much like a firemouth cichlid. They have a black spot on the edge of the gill plate similar to our local bluegill panfish. Maximum size is about 5 inches. 72 to 80 degrees F. is a good temperature range to spawn them, and they prefer medium hard to hard water. They will eat just about any food and have a voracious appetite. It is an open spawner that lays its eggs on previously cleaned stones, roots, or other surfaces. The fry are protected and placed in pits by the parents.

BREEDING

Several months ago I purchased at auction 6 fry about 1½ inch long. I placed them in a bare 20 gallon community tank with larger barbs and tetras to grow them up. They ate well and were usually the first to get to the food, but growth was slow. I figured that I had a long wait before they would reach breeding size. When the 2 largest reached 1 1½ inches they started to pair off and drive the other *T. ellioti* away. This surprised me as I didn't think they were mature enough to spawn at this size. Soon I noticed that all the occupants were herded into one end of the tank by these two *T. ellioti*. These fish are very protective parents since many of the other occupants were 2 and 3 times larger than they were! I looked hard but couldn't find any fry on the bare tank bottom—until I got a flashlight and saw a small group of barely free swimming fry in a corner. I removed the fry with a siphon to relieve the tension. Less than 2 weeks later the pair

spawned again! About 30 to 40 eggs were laid each time. Larger adults will lay from 100 to 300 eggs each spawning. The fry are quite tiny but will take newly hatched brine shrimp as a first food. Growth is slow but steady.

Thorichthys ellioti is colorful and easy to breed. Its' small size when first mature allows breeding in smaller tanks, and the fry are easy to raise. If you have bred convict cichlids, these seem quite similar and should be easy BAP points.