

STRIPED LYRETAIL, *Aphyosemion bitaeniatum*

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Mar-April 2009



Pair of Striped Lyretail

DESCRIPTION

The Multicolored or Striped Lyretail, *Aphyosemion bitaeniatum*, hails from the West African coastal plains in shallow streams and irrigation ditches of Nigeria. This killifish is peaceful, hardy, and easy to breed, which makes it a good killifish for beginners. They would do OK in a community tank of other small and peaceful fish, but are best in a species tank. Maximum size is about 2 inches, although they will breed at less than 1 inch. A trio would be fine in a small 2 gallon tank. Their life span is about 3 years. Males will fight somewhat amongst themselves. There are several populations from different locations with a wide variety of color patterns, and it is important to record that and keep them separate. The name “bitaeniatum” means “with 2 stripes”, which reflects another common name, “Two Striped *Aphyosemion*”. The population I bred was “Zagnanado”. The males are colorful with filament extensions on the upper and lower ends of the caudal fin (hence “lyretail”), as well as dorsal extensions that can reach past the tail in some cases. Besides the 2 black horizontal stripes with one going through the eye, it has a large orange dorsal fin edged in blue on the top and bottom. Red coloration as well as a greenish-blue is present on the fins and body. The female has the 2 stripes, but the fins are rounded and clear, with little color in the body.

The Striped Lyretail will eat some flake foods but prefers frozen or live foods. It has a fairly small mouth so smaller foods are necessary. Mine were fed live baby brine shrimp, grindal worms, and small flake food. They do best in soft slightly acidic water but will tolerate some hardness. Cooler temperatures of 68-74 degrees make them the happiest. They are mostly surface and mid level dwellers, prefer heavy plant growth for hiding, and are somewhat shy. Regular water changes are necessary, as they are somewhat sensitive to pollution.

BREEDING

Aphyosemion bitaeniatum is a mop spawning killifish. It is not overly prolific, but will produce eggs on a daily basis if well cared for. The eggs may be light sensitive, are fairly small for killifish, and can be easily seen and picked from a dark colored mop. I hatch them in a pan of water with methylene blue as a fungus preventative. Some eggs will hatch in regular tap water, but I obtained the best hatch and growth rate in RO (soft) water. Hatching takes 12-17 days, and I recommend changing the water in the pan every few days as well as light

aeration on them. Remove the hatched fry with an eye dropper and place them in a growing tank of 2 or more gallons. The fry are small, but can take newly hatched brine shrimp right away. Numerous floating live or plastic plants in their tank will allow more to be raised in a given aquarium, as they will squabble among themselves unless there is plenty of cover. They live about 3 years, longer if kept cooler.

The Striped Lyretail is peaceful, colorful, and can be kept and bred in a small tank. Males are not overly aggressive towards females, a plus when learning to keep killifish!