

COPTODON SPECIES “CROSSRIVER CAMEROON”

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, May-June 2006



Pair of Coptodon Species “Cross river Cameroon” Photo by Darrell Ullisch

DESCRIPTION

In November of 2003 I received a pair of recently discovered Tilapia (now Coptodon) species “Cross River Cameroon” from Darrell Ullisch that had been imported via Paul Loiselle. The female was about 1/3 smaller than the male, who was 3 ½ inches. They were quite attractive and had a greenish-silvery body cast and large outlined scales. The male had a round black spot at the base of the dorsal fin and a chin outlined in white. His body was more elongated with longer and slightly pointed anal and dorsal fins. They seemed quite shy and took several days to come out from hiding, so I put a fast, good sized tetra (Yellowfin congo) in with them as a dither fish. I quickly learned that “shy” does not relate to disposition, as soon after, the tetra was found dead! This fish is quite chameleon like. Sometimes they would have several dark vertical bands on the side of their body, depending on their mood. The most striking colors were when they bred and the male turned dark with a jet black chin and underbelly. The lips and chin were outlined by a striking iridescent blue. Even the scales were outlined with the iridescent blue. If I were to give a popular name to this fish, I would call it “Blue Lips”.

These fish are plant eaters and a good part of their diet should include vegetable matter. Hornwort was stripped to a thin stem and they even started eating my anubias plants! They eat all types of foods including flake, frozen, and pellets, but I suspect they are not able to swallow larger foods, as earthworms were not eaten.

BREEDING

The pair was placed in a 20 gallon long tank with some pots and ceramic caves providing many surfaces on which to spawn. One pot had a hole just big enough for the female to enter but not the male. Darrell had said the pair did not spawn for him but that he kept them at 74 degrees and thought that higher temps would be better for spawning. I raised the water temperature to about 80 degrees and the pair got along fairly well after adapting to their new surroundings. When I didn't see the female for a couple of days, I suspected they had spawned and found the female with eggs in a ceramic tube. I wasn't sure how good they would be as parents, but could not reach the eggs to siphon some out, so I left them with the parents. They proved to be excellent parents, with one parent watching the fry as the other ate. However, things changed drastically at about 1 month when the male severely attacked the female and almost killed her. Possibly the male wanted to spawn again and the female didn't. This fish exhibits the best example of “mood swings” that I can think of!

About 200 brown eggs were laid and the fry were eating newly hatched brine shrimp as soon as they were free swimming. They are easy to raise and grow quickly.