

TANGANYIKAN CICHLID COMMUNITY AQUARIUM

Written by John DiVenuti, BAS Published in The Daphnian Nov 1990
Thursday, 02 July 2015 19:09 - Last Updated Thursday, 02 July 2015 19:12

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My first success with breeding Tanganyikan cichlids happened when two Julidochromis Marleri paired off in an African cichlid community aquarium. The fifty-five gallon aquarium held mostly Malawi cichlids except for the Julies and two Brichardi. I moved the Julies to a twenty-nine gallon aquarium and they raised a few broods before one of the pair expired.

Shortly after losing one of the pair I attended a Boston Aquarium Society meeting where I met Charlie who was breeding Brichardi Daffodils. I was interested in trying to breed Brichardi but had yet to obtain a pair. Charlie said the Daffodils were closely related to the Brichardi and may even be a color morph of the Brichardi. Before the end of the meeting we made arrangements to trade six Julidochromis Marleri for six of his Brichardi Daffodils. We exchanged fish at the annual BAS fish show. I believe we were both happy with the exchange. The fish I received were of different sizes but were all healthy.

I had set-up a fifty-six gallon aquarium within which to house the Brichardi Daffodils. It was decorated with chunks of Z-Rock, and the Daffodils wasted little time digging out caves under the Z-Rocks. In a few months they reached breeding age. The largest of the Daffodils paired off with another and they soon spawned. Shortly afterwards they would not tolerate the other Daffodils in the aquarium, and I had to remove the other four. These were placed in a fifty-five with other African cichlids, most of which were Malawi cichlids.

I thought this was great; I had a breeding pair of Daffodils. The pair spawned a few times and

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then just stopped breeding. As the fry became larger they were removed and sold. Eventually the pair were alone in the fifty-six gallon aquarium. I kept them alone for a few months hoping they would breed again. Finally I gave up.

There were five Julidochromis Marleri, two Brichardi, and the four Daffodils which were living in my African cichlid aquarium. I decided to remove them and placed them into a fifty-five gallon aquarium. There also were four mollies in that tank along with two sail fins, two silver mollies, and an Australian rainbow which had also been in the aquarium with the cichlid fry earlier. I decided to add the pair of Daffodils to this collection. At first there were a few battles between the Julidochromis Marleri, the Daffodils, and the Brichardi, but eventually things settled down. I lost the rainbow but that was from old age - not aggression. One of the Daffodils was noted to be missing, but other than that there were no mishaps and the fish co-existed well.

Then to my surprise the pair of Daffodils started to breed again. While feeding one day, I noticed fry in the tank. The new environment seemed to agree with my pair of Daffodils. I never thought they would ever spawn again. My surprise was to double when one of the Brichardi paired off with a Daffodil and they soon had fry. Despite the fact that I now had two pairs of fish in this community tank which were breeding everything was still at peace. The Mollies have become both dither and target fish in this set-up. They may well have been one of the factors that motivated the Daffodil pair to spawn by relieving them of some of their aggression, and giving them a focal point for it. Mollies do well in this role because they are quick and agile enough to escape with little or no harm.

The fifty-six and the fifty-five have similar water conditions. My water is drawn from town wells and is hard and alkaline. With a little buffering the pH can be maintained at 7.6. This is perfect water for keeping and breeding African cichlids. The fifty gallon I used for the Tanganyikan community aquarium is equipped with both an air-driven under gravel filter and a power filter. The heater maintains a constant temperature of 80F. The water is slightly salted using a marine mix at one tablespoon per two and a half gallons of water and I use a marine mix because I want the trace elements in the water. Both the molly and the Tanganyikan cichlids do well in this water. I have several pieces of Z-Rock which also helps to maintain water quality by removing some of the ammonia from the water. This rock, along with a few pieces of rainbow rock, provide spawning caves for the Tanganyikan cichlids. The tank is also decorated with some ceramic ornaments and plastic plants. The aquarium is four feet long which is why I have not had a problem with the two breeding pairs that are in this community. The fish are spread out enough so that this has not been a problem.

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I believe the Brichardi and the Daffodil never mated in the fifty-five because they may have been intimidated by the Malawi cichlids. I don't know if they would be considered to be a cross or not. I have read that the Daffodil may just be a color morph of the Brichardi. If this is true the fry they produce should be fertile. I may try to breed some of their fry when they get older to see if they are able to reproduce normally. The other pair are both Daffodils. I also wonder if the unpaired Daffodils could possibly be females. If this is the case the males will spawn with more than one female or remain monogamous. Well, one thing I'm sure of is this community aquarium will provide me with many hours of enjoyment, as well as many interesting observations.