

## THE BREEDING OF GEOPHAGUS BRASILIENSIS

by Toni Kinnane

*Geophagus brasiliensis* is usually known as the Pearl Cichlid and, of course, it belongs to the family Cichlidae. Its generic name means 'Eartheater' or 'Dirteater'. The natural habitat and climatic conditions of this fish are the running waters of the southern tributaries of the Amazon River in south Brazil and Uruguay. The species can withstand temperatures in the low 60's (F.) and it prefers soft, slightly acidic or neutral water but will tolerate somewhat harder and moderately alkaline conditions.

Geoff and Gina *Geophagus* I named them, as I acquired these two beautiful fish, taking a chance that they were a pair. They were approximately 3" long for Geoff and 2.5" for Gina.

### Description of the fish

**Colour:** yellow to reddish-brown background, with variable bars and numerous gleaming bluish-green dots on the side of the head and fins. Dorsal and caudal fins relatively large. Mature length 11" but in captivity, capable of reproducing at 2.75".

**Sex differences:** slight: dorsal and anal fins are more pointed in the males.

**Temperament:** Very quarrelsome, pugnacious and fond of digging.

When purchased the fish were placed in my main community tank with other cichlids and after a few days I noticed that they were splaying fins at each other. I was very excited as I was now confident that I had a compatible pair. Immediately, I moved them to a 3' tank by themselves, with temperature at 79°F and with various rocks and gravel. The pH indicated neutral to slightly alkaline; filtration was via a medium internal power filter and airstone. Straight away the fish started digging great amounts of gravel about a clump of 4 smooth surfaced rocks and chasing each other around the tank. I fed them cichlid pellets twice daily, tubifex worms, live brine shrimp, and various flake foods to

bring them into breeding condition.

Approximately one month later I found about 100 eggs laid on one of the rocks and the parents were taking turns at fanning and guarding them. Five days later a hollow was dug in the gravel and the newly hatched fry were placed in it by both parents. A further 2 days and the fry were free swimming. The parents took special care of their new family for 4 weeks, herding them around the tank in the daytime and putting them back in their hollow when the lights were turned out.

I then decided, reluctantly, to separate Geoff and Gina from their family, who were doing very well. The fry up to this time were feeding on a residue of cichlid pellets, so I started to give them live brine shrimp and grated flake, mosquito larvae and freeze-dried tubifex.

The babies are now 14 weeks old and all are doing well, while Geoff and Gina have just started their second family of about 100. It has been a wonderful experience, owning and raising such a beautiful breed of fish

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