

BREEDING CICHLASOMA NIGROFASCIATUM

Sam Borstein

Cichlasoma nigrofasciatum or, Convict Cichlid, is a substrate spawner native to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The climate is sub-tropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are variable in pH. My Dad obtained twelve one-half long fish from GCCA's mini-auction. There are two different varieties of this cichlid— pink and gold convicts and blue and black convicts. The stripe on the male black convict is bolder than the females. The pink male convicts are pink and gold. The shape of the black and pink convicts are the same. The body shape looks plump and is a standard *Cichlasoma* shape. Males achieve a size of four inches . The female convicts have the same body shape of the male. On the pink female convicts, the bellies get red. On the black female convicts, they have lighter strips than the males and the colors are white and black on them.

The fish bred in a 40 gallon tank which contained medium gravel. The tank was filtered by a Bio-Wheel 30 and a sponge filter and had a pH of 7.0. My Dad performed weekly water changes equal to 50% of the tank volume. We used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. We fed the fish Doromin and cichlid flake.

Male pink convicts at breeding time will get gold edges. The pink females will get really dark red bellies. The black males will get blue in-between the bars. The black females will get gray in between the bars. A pair will find a vertical or horizontal spawning site and will defend that area from all other fish.

The pair laid approximately 75 eggs. After spawning, the female and male stayed where they laid the eggs and defended them. I decided to put in some dwarf bristlenose plecos as dither fish. When the convicts bred, I left the fry in the tank. Approximately 65 eggs representing 80% of the total hatch were viable and hatched after two days. The fry were white and very small. At first they were belly floppers and kept their yolk sacks for about three days. Then, the parents started to move them around. After that, they were free swimming.

The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them with their parents to raise them up . Once the fry hatched, the parents took care of them by defending them from other fish. I started the fry off on Cyclop-Eeze. After five days, I started feeding crushed flake food. The fry grew at a good pace.

When breeding this fish, I saw aggressiveness at breeding time. This was actually the easiest fish I ever bred with my Dad. It was a really fun experience. Since breeding *Cichlasoma nigrofasciatum*, I would recommend this fish to people that want to start breeding cichlids. If I were to breed this cichlid again, I would not do any thing different. I thought it went smoothly.

That summer we put the convicts in a tank outside. It was amazing that they stayed alive even though we fed them only once a week. ■

My name is Sam Borstein. I enjoy fish. My Dad, Rick Borstein, shares his tank with me. I also have my own fish tank with a cichlid my Dad bred. I'm ten and I live in Buffalo Grove Illinois.