

Oscars

Astronotus ocellatus



Left: Red Oscar

Above: Red Tiger Oscar

Introduction

Oscars are a beautiful, intelligent Cichlid that are easy to maintain. The most popular sizes are the juvenile 4 or 5cm long fish. The colours on these smaller fish may not be as bright as adult sized fish but they grow rapidly and can reach 25 cm plus in a few short months. For this reason, the Oscar should be kept in a large tank and should not be kept with very small fish. An efficient filtration system is also needed, as they are messy eaters!

Oscars are compatible with other large fish in an aquarium and oddly, aggressiveness in Oscars decreases as they grow older and bigger and juveniles are more belligerent when compared to a mature fish.

Distribution

Oscars originate in the Amazon River, Sth America

Temperature Range

Tropical conditions, 24—27°C being ideal.

Maximum Size

Up to 40 cm. Can live for 10 years or more.

Water Conditions

- Tolerates a wide range of water conditions but prefers slightly acid, soft water
- pH 6—8
- Hardness 50—150ppm

Feeding

Oscars are generally voracious feeders and highly carnivorous. They will readily take a range of live and frozen foods including worms, along with dry food such as Tetra Cichlid Sticks. Oscars will also readily feed on

smaller fish, if they can fit it in their mouth they will eat it. It is extremely important, however, not to overfeed your Oscars as this can lead to fatty degeneration of the liver and compromise their health.

Common diseases

Oscars are notorious for developing a problem known as 'Hole in the Head' in which patches of tissue degenerate around the head leaving large holes in the tissue. This has previously been linked to a parasite known as Hexamita but more recently it is suggested that it is due to poor diet. Feeding of good quality foods and addition of water soluble Vitamin B and C as well as improved water quality should fix the problem.

Colouration

Selective breeding has seen a range of colours being developed. The different colours include tiger, red and albino forms. More recently long tailed or veil-tailed Oscars have also been developed.

Sexing and Breeding

Oscars are sexually monomorphic and therefore there are no external physical differences between a male and a female. They do get aggressive when breeding and can fight between the pair often resulting in injury or death to either fish. Oscars will dig a 'nest' in gravel substrate and deposit their eggs on a flat surface. Eggs hatch after 2 to 3 days and the fry will feed readily on brine shrimp after they begin to swim.

care sheet



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