

BUMPHEAD CICHLID, *Steatocranus gibbiceps*

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Male Bumphead Cichlid

DESCRIPTION

The Bumphead Cichlids (genus *Steatocranus*) include 9 described species, of which *Steatocranus casuarius* is the most common, and are a very interesting group of fishes. Heavier than water, they hop around the bottom like a goby. Most are from the Congo River of West Africa and are designed with slender bodies for living in current. Although they don't need current to be happy, clean, well oxygenated water is important in their care. Their main attractions are their hopping around, big mouth, and bump of fatty tissue on their head, which gets larger with age in the male. Their appearance and behavior is somewhat comical, they have a calm nature, and they are not overly aggressive with other African Cichlids, making them an interesting fish to keep. This genus is a good example of why we should use scientific names when referencing a species of fish. Some names given these fish include: Lionhead Cichlid, Blockhead Cichlid, Buffalo Head, and Humphead Cichlid. In addition, Frontosas are sometimes called Bumphead Cichlids.

BREEDING

Steatocranus gibbiceps (Boulger 1899) is a species not seen often in the hobby, and I was fortunate to obtain 5 fry from Darrell Ullisch in May of '08. They will eat most any foods, including frozen brine shrimp, beef heart, spirulina and regular flake foods, and they especially relish worms. When they got about 2 inches they began to get aggressive with each other. When they pair bond, it is often for life, but they will drive out any others of their species from their territory. I put the pair in a 20 gallon long aquarium along with *Pelmatochromis buettikoferi*, a Moonlight Gourami, a silver Dollar, and a pair of albino plecos. *Steatocranus* are cave spawners so I put several caves and tubes around the tank, and all the fish seemed to get along. Water changes were done

regularly, and the sponge-pan filter was renewed about every 3 weeks. Not long ago I was observing the tank and noticed a few fry around the ceramic cave. The gibboniceps fry seemed to be about a month old and would not venture far from the cave. Now the parents were getting aggressive with the other fish in the tank, so I removed them all but the pair of plecos, which I hoped would keep the tank clean. Not a good idea---as I later found that the male pleco was beat up pretty bad, so I removed that pair also. These fish are excellent parents. The female mainly tends the fry and the male patrols the territory. An Internet report stated that one pair had attended 3 different batches of their fry at the same time! My male is about 4 inches and the female about 3 inches. About 40 fry are in the batch and they are $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and have vertical black markings and a black spot at the base of the dorsal fin. The adults are black, even in much of the fins. The black dorsal spot remains in the females, but disappears in the males as they mature. Males are larger, sometimes twice as large as the females and have longer extensions on the dorsal and anal fins, as well as the larger nuchal hump.

S. gibboniceps in the wild eats small invertebrates and some algae. Temperatures from 73-81 degrees are best. They will rid a tank of snails quickly. This is an interesting and easily bred fish that I recommend for hobbyists keeping African cichlids. I really enjoyed watching their excellent parental care!