

## **Astatotilapia nubila**

### **B.A.P. Report by Tony Jochman**



Astatotilapia nubila was first described by Boulenger in 1906. It is a small haplochromine cichlid from Lake Victoria in East Africa. It is one of very few cichlids that are also found outside of Lake Victoria, in Lakes Nabugabo and Kyoga and the rivers of the Victoria basin to be specific, and thus it is not facing extinction by the Nile Perch.

A. nubila is a generalized haplochromine species which shows little in the way of specializations that are often seen in other African cichlids. This species has no specialized teeth, jaws, finnage, or habits, just an incredible hardiness, resilience, and a thoroughly vile temperament. Although it is one of the only insect eaters in the lake. Its main claim to fame is the breeding colors of the male. His breeding dress is velvety jet black across his entire body with brilliant crimson red in his anal and caudal fins. He is a striking sight to see, and the only fish in Lake Victoria with this color pattern. The female is a drab greenish-gray and grows to about 3 ½ inches while the male grows to almost 5 inches.

I have a 30 gallon tank set up, sand on the bottom, and a Bio-wheel 330 filter on the back. It is decorated with many quartz type rocks that I pick up and cleaned from my yard. They are piled to form three different piles as territories. I have one males and five females Astatotilapia nubila and some Bristlenose plecos in the tank. They seem to do very well together.

Feeding the A. nubila is not a problem, they eat about anything. I feed them a diet of flake food, spirulina fakes, dried shrimp, dried bloodworms, dried water fleas, and cichlid pellets. Spirulina is a must to keep them from plant grazing.

Breeding is also very easy, they started at just 1 ¼"! A male will quickly established its dominance in the tank. Any of the other males assumed a subdued color staying away from the dominant male territory. If any other nubila swim past or near the dominant male's territory they are quickly chased away. The male then digs a spawning pit, and begins to court any ripe females. The ripe female, which is ready to spawn, follows the male into the pit. The male then presses his splayed anal fin with its bright eggspots against the bottom of the pit, enticing the female to begin spawning. Within a short time the female will lay eggs which are picked up immediately. After which the female also

attempts to pick up the eggspots on the male's anal fin, this is when the male releases his sperm to fertilize the eggs in the female's mouth. Spawning lasts about 30-45 minutes and always seems to be early in the morning.

When spawning has been completed, the female leaves (or is chased from the pit area) to seek a quiet place to begin the 14-16 day buccal incubation period. During this time the female does not eat and tries to stay clear of the rest of the colony. The male, on the other hand, begins courting the next available female.

If one wishes to obtain fry in quantity from such efforts, the female should be removed from the breeding colony. It is best to wait until very near the end of the incubation period to move a brooding female. This is done for two reasons. First, *nubila* females seem less likely to spit fry in the later stages of incubation, and second, if they are spit during the move, the advanced development of the fry will increase their chances of surviving without further buccal incubation. The female should be caught in a brine shrimp net in the event the fry are released. If the fry are spit out, simply release the female back into the breeding aquarium and then transfer the fry to a smaller fry tank. Upon initial release fry are free swimming and ready to begin feeding. They are easily raised on a diet of No B.S. Fry food and crushed flakes. Rearing problems can be minimized with a regular water change, I try and do at least 30% weekly and filter maintenance monthly.

As you can now see, keeping and breeding the *Astatotilapia nubila* is not hard to do. It is recommended for the beginner as well as the experienced hobbyist.