

Neolamprologus brevis – Sunspot

By David Ayres – Nov/Dec 2009

The rules of our Breeder Awards Program require that you have to write an article, suitable for publishing on any fish worth more than fifteen points in the program. There's not a whole heck of a lot that I know about this fish except that (1) It is small (2) It is endemic to lake Tanganyika (3) It makes it's home in a shell.

Size: This is the smallest cichlid that I have ever kept. Females are 4cm & males a whopping 5cm. Their coloration is not too much to get excited about, although the type I have sports a large yellow spot on it's flanks hence it is known as the Sunspot brevis. It's a little flashier than the normal type.

Lake Tanganyika: *Neolamprologus brevis* is endemic to lake Tanganyika where according to Ad Konings it enjoys a lake wide distribution. It is a plankton feeder so I find that it enjoys live baby brine shrimp, although mine have to make do with crushed flake food more often than not.

Life in a Shell: The cichlid population of the Rift Lakes of eastern Africa are of such interest to ichthyologists because they have evolved to fill every ecological niche available. The shell dwellers have adapted to make use of the tons of empty snail shells laying around on the floor of the lake. Some hobbyists refer to this group of fishes as “shellies”. *Neolamprologus brevis* sets it self apart from the other shell dwellers in that both the male and female occupy the same shell and they are monogamous. Other species within the group are harem spawners. A male will have within his territory several shells, each containing a single female with which he will breed. The males have their own living quarters. They either have their own shell or utilize nearby rocks for cover.

Because my ten gallon setup is comprised of lots of hiding places – small pieces of rock, some slate, pieces of broken flower pots, as well as a couple of shells, I did not know the couple had spawned until I saw the free swimming fry. Fifteen fry were first seen at the entrance of one of the shells attended by the very vigilant female.