

Why You'll Love Bleeding Heart Tetras

These peaceful fish are not difficult to keep.

By David A. Lass

The bleeding heart tetra (*Hyphessobrycon erythrostigma*) is a wonderful aquarium fish that has been around in the hobby for many years. It is one of the high-bodied tetras, with a basic body shape similar to serpae and diamond tetras. The body of the fish is a semi-transparent light reddish color, with a deep red circle on the side behind the gill covers (thus the common name). Females grow to around 2.5 inches with a full body, especially when heavy with eggs; males grow to around 3 inches. On males, the dorsal fin also gets very elongated and is deep red with a black edge.

Bleeding heart tetras are from the upper regions of the Amazon River basin in Brazil and Peru. The water that they come from is referred to as "black water," meaning that it is a dark tea color from all of the decaying vegetation. This water usually has a low pH (around 6.0 to 6.5) and is very soft, at times with very low or almost no hardness detectable. In the aquarium, these tetras prefer these conditions, though they can adapt to pH up to 7.0 and to water with some hardness in it.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the March 2010 issue of *Aquarium Fish International*, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.