

Compressed Cichlid Breeding

Bonus content from the May 2010 FAMA magazine column "Popular Freshwater Tropicals."

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Trying to pick up a pair of *Altolamprologus compressiceps* from juvenile fish can be difficult. Ideally, one would want one male and two or three females for this aquarium. Males tend to be larger and more aggressive, but the size method does not guarantee the sex of the fish.

You might be able to get help from a knowledgeable assistant at the fish store who might be able to examine their genital papilla after catching the fish. The genital papilla found between the anal fin and the anus tends to be larger in female fish and might be best observed with the help of a magnifying glass and a penlight.

Altolamprologus compressiceps are slow growing and only reach sexual maturity at 18 months or so. If fed with a diet rich in live foods, they should spawn in aquaria.

Their preferred spawning sites are caves, crevices and snail shells, which are usually only accessible for entry by the female. The eggs laid inside the secure site by the female are fertilized by the male, which deposits its sperm outside the spawning site opening. The sperm is then drawn in and over the eggs. The female does all the egg care, while the male defends the territory outside. Once the eggs have hatched, the wrigglers can take as much as another 14 days before they are properly free swimming.

If the female *A. compressiceps* does lay its eggs in a shell that is easy to move, have a small tank at the ready. Gently move both the female and eggs to this small tank, previously filled with water from the spawning tank, if one wants to try and rear the fry.

In the Tanganyikan cichlid biotope aquarium, the fry will most probably all get eaten by other occupants in spite of the attention of their parents. For best results, the very slow-growing fry should be raised on live foods, such as newly hatched brine shrimp and microworms, until they can be weaned on to some flake food. Regular water changes are essential if the fry are to survive and to grow to 1 inch in size within six months.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the May 2010 issue of *Freshwater And Marine Aquarium*, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.