

## Glass Cutter Catfish

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*By Ginny Eckstein*

Q. About six months ago I purchased what my dealer called a "glass cutter" catfish. He was unable to provide any other information about this fish. While looking through an old issue of AFI, however, I saw a photo and now realize I am the owner of a *Chrysichthys auratus*. Even supplied with the scientific name, I have been unable to locate this fish in any of the aquarium reference books. Can you please provide me with some information regarding *C. auratus* so that I can provide it with a next-to-nature existence?

A. Before we consider your fish, I'll have to remind you that I'm a proponent of the K.I.S.S. (keep it simple stupid) school of aquarium management. In other words, don't fix something that isn't broken. If your fish has been doing well under the aquarium conditions you've been keeping it, why change things?

To begin with, identification of the species in the photo you are referring to was supplied by the photographer. I will confine my remarks to species of the genus *Chrysichthys*. They are members of the family Bagridae. Bagrids are found in both Africa and Asia, although *Chrysichthys* are indigenous to Africa. They have large eyes and four pairs of barbels.

I would consider a 55-gallon aquarium the appropriate size for your fish, because they reach a large size. Although predatory by nature, they will adapt to standard aquarium fish food. However, when choosing tankmates, you should obviously avoid anything they can easily swallow. As with all soft-skinned catfish, avoid using rocks or decorations with rough surfaces that could injure the fish if they become frightened. Be sure to provide a sheltered area for the fish to retreat to.

I must admit that "glass cutter" is a new trade name to me. On the East Coast, we frequently see another African catfish, *Schilbe mystus* (Family: Schilbeidae), available under the trade name "grass cutter" catfish. Although probably the most popular *Chrysichthys* species with hobbyists is *C. ornatus*, due to its attractive color pattern, occasionally other species appear under the name "aluminum" catfish.