

## Species Profile: Haplochromis sp. Kenya Gold

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The "Kenya Gold" is a stunning fish, and immediately dispels any thoughts that all Victorian Basin cichlids look the same. This fish has fast become one of my favorites, not only for appearance, but in its behavior as well.

**Location:** This fish is found on the Kenya side of Lake Victoria. I have read in several places that they are also found in Lake Edward, but those sources also say it is collected exclusively there, which if that was the case we would be calling them "Uganda Gold", so I am not sure about all of that info, and for the most part discount the notion.

**Appearance:** Gorgeous, and that is an understatement. The body is a gold color with slight black barring throughout the body. The pectoral fins achieve a jet-black color. The dorsal is also a gold-ish color with a slight green shimmer to them and the top is trimmed with a subdued reddish coloration. The face has two dark vertical bars, one in the jaw area and another one that runs right through the eye. The tail is a continuation of the gold coloring and gradually turns red at the end. Some specimens have red on what would be the forehead. I have seen some fish with no red and some with quite a bit, varying even within a brood. The females look much the same but without the gold color. Both sexes have a horizontal line that runs the length of the body but it is much more pronounced in the females.

**Diet:** The "Kenya Gold" is an omnivore and I feed NLS pellets as the staple food. I also feed Dainichi marine formula also to include some veggies in the diet plus it has cyclopeeze as an ingredient to help bring out the gold color. This is supplemented with occasional servings of frozen krill, plankton, and brine shrimp. They seem to thrive on this diet and have no health issues.

**Aquarium Care:** This is almost a perfect fish. In the

wild this fish reaches a max length of about 1.5". As with most fish they will acquire a larger size in the aquarium, but still only achieve a size of about 2.5-3". This is nice because they can be maintained in smaller tanks for their entire lives. The attitude of this fish is great. Kept alone in a species tank, multiple males don't present a problem. I kept 3 males and 3 females in a 20 long for quite awhile and lost no fish due to aggression and still had breeding. Here is the great part. I have kept them in aggressive setups with nyereri and lutea and they more than held their own territory's and looked no worse for wear. I kept them in much more peaceful setups and they never showed any aggression and were quite content to cruise around looking pretty. This fish will fit in practically any community setting given that the other fish aren't real large. I have read where people have kept them with mbunas and they fit right in.



Photo by Robert De Leon

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**Breeding:** Like most Victoria Basin cichlids they bred pretty easily. I wasn't even really trying to breed them. A couple of other club members had them going pretty strong and I was concentrating on some others. I had seen some females holding a few times and planned to strip the momma but never seemed to get them in time and figured the fry had become supper....I was wrong. I went to clean the tank real good one day and started pulling all the rocks out and found 8 fry hiding in there. They were only about 3/4" and they started swimming around and the adults never bothered with them. All 8 are still alive today!

**Conclusion:** This is an outstanding fish and with the ease of working them into a variety of setups, there is no reason everyone shouldn't have some.



Photo by Dave Hansen

— by *Dave Hansen*