

Species Profile: *Pseudotropheus demasoni*

For any hobbyist with an interest in cichlids, it's tough to find a better fish than *Pseudotropheus demasoni*. The demasoni is a dwarf mbuna by Malawian standards reaching an adult size of three inches.

Make no mistake however, these fish may be small, but they can definitely hold their own in a community tank. There are not many cichlids that a demasoni will back down from. The striking dark blue (almost black)



background coloration is a vibrant contrast to the light blue striping. These boisterous little fellows appreciate lots of rockwork on which to graze. There is no noticeable sexual dimorphism. *Pseudotropheus demasoni* do well on a herbivorous diet. Spirulina based flake is perfect for demasoni. Water parameters are not crucial; however, a high pH and hardness will closely match their native waters. Temperature around 78F seems ideal. In the wilds of Lake Malawi, *Pseudotropheus demasoni* are found at Pombo Rocks on the Tanzanian coastline.

I have found these fish mix well with other mbuna as well as *Aulonocara* and *Protomelas* species. Spawning occurs on substrate with the male displaying to the female in a series of "shimmies and shaking". The female nips the males anal fin while dropping eggs. Both fish will then quickly turn and the female will scoop up the eggs. An interesting note here is that females will continue to feed while holding a clutch. We have been feeding our fish a red colored flake and when after 20 days, we stripped a holding female. The fully developed fry all had bright red bellies. This insinuates that while the female is feeding, the fry eat while in her buccal cavity. Fry are easily raised on crushed flake and will grow rapidly. Demasoni will reach sexual maturity in under a year. We have had

successful spawns in aquaria as small as 20 gallons, but our present colony is housed in a 125 gallon tank and seem to thrive nicely. Spawn sizes are small in comparison to other mbuna. We have had spawns as small as six fry and as large as 17.

There is no secret to spawning *Pseudotropheus demasoni*. A larger group will alleviate aggression on an individual fish. Demasoni can safely be housed with larger fish. The fluorescent blue coloration make them a sought after commodity in any mixed Malawian community tank.

— by Greg Steeves



“For any hobbyist with an interest in cichlids, it's tough to find a better fish than *Pseudotropheus demasoni*. “