

Catfish

General Overview

Natural Range

Catfish have been found in virtually every continent and have evolved to allow them to adapt to various environments. They live in habitats from fast flowing rapids to poorly oxygenated swamps.

Maximum Size and Longevity

Size depends on species type. They can range from as little as 2 to 3cm for dwarf *Corydoras* species up to 1 to 2 metres or more for giant *Pangasius* species.

Water Quality

Generally they will thrive in parameters such as

- Temperature: 22°C — 28°C
- pH: 6.4 — 7.4
- General Hardness: 50 — 200 ppm

Feeding

Catfish in general have quite a varied diet, but some are very specialised (eg some species feed solely on algae or plant matter, whereas some large species prefer to only feed on fish.) Most common species that are available for the aquarium are excellent scavengers and will happily accept a mix of vegetable matter and protein. Most good quality dry foods cater for these needs, feeding dry foods with occasional feeds of frozen foods or live black worms will keep most catfish satisfied.

With herbivorous catfish species like bristle nose and sucking catfish, sometimes the aquarium does not have enough algae present to meet their needs. We recommend feeding these fish with a variety of vegetable based foods such as: algae wafers, Spirulina and Aquarium Industries frozen naturals leafy spinach.

Expert tip: It is always a good idea to research the preferred feeding level of your catfish to help you select the correct food (eg for bottom feeders, ensure the food is a sinking type).

Compatibility

Most small to medium sized catfish species are compatible in a community tank, however some larger species can be aggressive or predatory, particularly at night. In general, smaller species such as *Corydoras* make excellent community species and can be kept in groups of 5 or more. Other species such as Bristlenose, Upside Down catfish and Sucking catfish are commonly kept in community tanks.

Colour and Varieties

Due to their diversity catfish occur in a large range of sizes and colours.

Sexing and Breeding

Due to the diverse nature of the group, there are many variations in sexing and breeding. Most species are substrate spawners laying eggs in a nest or on some type of substrate. Many species will aggressively defend this nesting site. Spawning activity is often triggered by rapid changes of water quality (this may be temperature and/or mineral composition), with activity often seen after a water change is done. Some catfish also have very unique methods of reproduction, the cuckoo catfish have a very unusual breeding habit; breeding pairs eat the eggs from recently spawned cichlids and replaces the eaten eggs with their own. There is no parental care invested from these breeding Synodontis catfish, they rely entirely on the surrogate or foster parent fishes to raise their progeny.

General Information

Catfish are possibly one of the most popular fishes maintained in aquariums throughout America, Asia, America and Europe.

One of the most well-known groups of catfish is the *Corydoras*, the popular schooling, bottom-dwelling catfishes found in many home aquariums. Affectionately coined 'Corys' by hobbyists, these fish average between five to seven centimetres in size. They are easy to care for and are undemanding in terms of their habitat requirements. Most *Corys* need a habitat of neutral pH (6 – 7.5) and a low hardness level (50 – 150ppm). Their temperature requirements depend on their location of origin, but the recommended temperature range is 21 -26 °C. They are great scavengers and look good in schools.

Other examples of commonly seen catfish in most home aquariums are the Loricariid or bristle nose catfish and sucking catfish. These catfish are mainly kept because they feed on algae and are very useful for cleaning the aquarium glass and plants of excess algae. While the common bristle nose is frequently seen in many aquarium shops and is easy to keep, there is another increasingly popular species, which is the highly attractive Peppermint catfish with their jet black coat and striking white spots. The Peppermints require an environment with a slightly acidic to neutral pH 6.0 – 7.0, low hardness of 20 – 150ppm and temperature between 23 – 27 °C.

Glass catfish are unique in appearance; almost all of their body is transparent. Their bone structure and nervous system is easily visible and the internal organs of these fishes are enveloped in a reflective silvery sac. These animals school so it is best to keep a group of at least four to six fish in the same aquarium. They have a relatively high pH tolerance 5.5 – 7.2 and do well with low hardness levels 50 – 150ppm, with temperatures between 22 – 27 °C. Please check our website for specific care instructions for individual species.