

Melanochromis auratus

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Natural Range

Lake Malawi, Africa

Maximum Size and Longevity

Maximum length is 10-15cm with a life span of 5-10 years when cared for appropriately.

Water Quality

- Temperature: 24°C - 28°C.
- pH: 7.8—8.2
- General Hardness: 200—350 ppm.

Feeding

Mel. auratus will accept most foods offered, but vegetable matter in the form of spirulina, spinach etc should form a large proportion of the diet. This can be supplemented with live and frozen food varieties, such as Aquarium Industries Naturals Range Leafy Spinach, and Malawi Cichlid Mix.

Compatibility

This is one of the most aggressive and territorial of the 'mbuna' (Rock dwelling cichlids). Be sure to provide plenty of hiding places such as rocks, which will reduce the impact of its aggression on tank mates.

Colour and Varieties

Basic colouration is bright yellow, with black horizontal bars. Males are mostly black with white stripes.

Sexing

This species is easily distinguished between male and female, due to the differences in their colour. Males will have a dark black belly, and will retain their yellow colouration as they mature. Females on the other hand, will not.

Breeding

Very easy to breed, females are 'mouth brooders' (that is, the eggs and fry are looked after in the mother's mouth). Spawning will happen every month. Females will not eat while carrying young, so it is a good idea to rest the female after every batch.

Be aware that when kept with other Melanochromis species, there is a risk of hybridisation.

General Information

M. Auratus was one of the first cichlids to be exported from Lake Malawi, and is very popular with cichlid enthusiasts.

Due to its aggressive nature, care is needed when housing Mel. auratus with peaceful cichlids. It can be combined with other mbuna provided they do not resemble its patterning. The tank should be crowded—this 'spreads' the aggression, and is better for the fish. Provide a large amount of rock work to reduce aggression and territory formation.

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