

Breeding *Neolamprologus brevis*

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I have not had to work very hard to successfully spawn *Neolamprologus brevis*. These shell spawning Lake Tanganyikan cichlids like a temperature of 25 C and prefer a pH of 7.8 to 9 with hard water. The water parameters are pretty much exactly what we get out of the tap, here in Kitchener / Waterloo, although I do add salt at 1 tablespoon / five gallons of water. *N. Brevis* are meat eaters so I've fed mine flake, small pellets, white worms, and blood worms. My biggest challenge, in order to complete the KWAS BAP requirements, was to capture a photo good enough for my article.

After keeping Malawi cichlids for several years I wanted to try some different fish or something with a different spawning technique. With little options for more or bigger tanks and with my water parameters here, some 'shell dwellers' were right up my alley.

These fish are difficult to sex as they look the same. However, once full grown the males can reach up to 6 cm and the females are smaller. These very beautiful little cichlids have an attitude that doesn't fit its' size. The males will aggressively defend their six to eight square inch territory. I currently have three pairs in a small 10 gallon tank.

I purchased three different types of 'shell dwellers', from a fellow club member, six young fish of each type to ensure getting pairs. The *N. brevis* were quite small so I kept them all together in a standard 10 gallon tank, sand for substrate, over sized sponge filter, some shells from a dollar store, and a few small clay pot caves. Sand is essential as they need to burry their shells and love to move it around. These were the first of the three 'shell dweller' species to spawn for me.



I was excited when I first saw a male follow the female into a shell – picture at the left. I was lucky as this shell was right at the front tank glass to boot. It was amazing how they could both fit in that small shell, with just the last third of the male's body visible.

I never saw any young ones until they were larger, say close to a cm; I wasn't looking close enough. In hind sight, I'm hoping I didn't remove too many up when performing maintenance vacuuming.

After watching the sand substrate closer, I did eventually see extremely small fry which 'blend in with the sand' perfectly. They come out of the shell at about 3mm in length. The fry hide in, under, and around the shells and the parents don't seem to bother them or do they provide any care for them.

If you have a small tank, want to experience a different spawning behaviour, or love cichlids I suggest you get some of these *Neolamprologus brevis*. You won't be disappointed!

...Kevin