

Julidochromis transcriptus "gombi"

By Al Ridley

The Julidochromis genus consists of five species (some with multiple color forms), all native to Lake Tanganyika in Africa. I have successfully spawned J. dickfeldi and J. regani and I am currently working on J. marlieri and J. ornatus.



J. transcriptus are found only in the extreme north (Burundi) and southern (Zambia) parts of the lake. It is the smallest Julie, with adult size less than 3 inches, but has the characteristic torpedo shape and mottled brown and white patterns found in the genus. This fish is found from 1 metre to 10 metres deep along rocky habitats where oxygen rich waters are between 23 to 27degrees Celsius. The pH is very high between 8.5 and 9.5 and the dH is in the range of 8.0 to 14.0. The rocks are covered with algae where they graze for invertebrates

Currently it is found in two color forms, including the popular ``Gombi''. This fish has clear black and white bands with brilliant, iridescent blue margins to the tail and anal fins. I have not seen the old form (which has a white underside) in many years. This particular fish is the smallest of the Julies and are considered a true dwarf. Males attain a length of approximately 3" (7.5 cm). It was originally discovered in 1959.

I have kept and bred these fish on numerous occasions but decided to start up a colony again about a year and a half ago. I purchased two bags at our annual auction making sure that the sellers/breeders were from different cities. I had a twenty gallon set up featuring round river rock about 4" in diameter and slate piled almost to the waterline. The temperature was 80 degrees and I added my secret cichlid salt mix. I never check my pH or gH so I can't be specific but let's just say it was good old Kitchener Waterloo cement that comes out of our faucets.

I had seven fish which I introduced to this set up. They immediately dashed into the rocks and hid. For the next few weeks, I would see them when it was feeding time as they would dart out to grab the sinking food before high tailing it back into the rocks. After a while, I noticed that they seemed to have found their comfort level and would cruise from rock to rock. After six months they had grown considerably and one day I noticed a deceased floater. Over the next week or so I found a few badly beaten up fish leading me to believe that I had a pair and perhaps a successful spawning. There were so many rocks in this tank that I couldn't net out the bullies targets so I suffered a couple more losses. It wasn't long before I spotted fry.

The fry should were nearly jet black with just slits of white, while the belly and chin was a brilliant white. They hang around on the underside of the rocks in an upside down position – quite comical at times. The parents looked after the fry with vigour. Shortly after, I had fry of all sizes living among the rocks. It was a wonderful time. Suddenly the spawning seemed to stop. For six months, no new fry. I guessed that I had reached a maximum population so I decided to move the parents to a 32 gallon aquarium. I left the

majority of the fry in the twenty gallon but moved some of the medium sized fry into the 32 with the parents. Almost immediately, there were fry again but this time the broods seemed to be double the size of the ones previous. Could it have been the extra space in the three foot footprint? They continue to spawn every few days and I now have an abundance of fry.

I want to touch on feeding and water changes. I found that my fish would not take flake food. They basically were raised on frozen bloodworm and mysis (that I had to crush up). In the summer they would also get mosquito larva which I would scoop out of that rain barrel that I “forgot” to put a screen on! They would take sinking pellets such as Tetra Bits or sinking shrimp pellets but they had the diet of royalty. Also, I found that regular water changes seemed to slow down the spawning process. I actually would do a 10% water change every two to three weeks and that gave me optimal results.



This is an easy fish to own and care for. Both parents will switch off caring for the fry and are truly devoted parents. Like other julies, you can raise several successive spawns in the same tank which is a delight to see. Juveniles up to an inch or so, take part in raising their brothers and sisters. Their odd behaviour of scooting around and under rocks and the brilliant blues in the fins add some spark to their black and orange body colouring.

Just in closing, I want to point out that there have been some articles written on this fish stating that perhaps it has been misidentified. Some feel that this fish grows bigger than *J transcriptus* and the markings on the body or the *J transcriptus* “gombi” are more similar to *J regani* or *J marlieri*. Regardless, I found this fish to be very rewarding and I am hoping that I have the same success with my other Julies.