

BREEDING THE DWARF PLECO, ANCISTRUS LINEOLATUS

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Ancistrus Lineolatus or one of the many species of what we in the hobby call the dwarf Pleco, is a relatively small fish reaching an adult size of about 12 cm or 4 1/2 inches. It is primarily found in ponds that are fed by slow to moderately moving streams in South America. It enjoys a water temperature around 78 degrees with a pH of 6.8. Food as with most of the fish from the Loricariids family consist of scavenging for about anything that is available, but it needs a large amount of plant material in its diet. You will be most likely to find this little fish hidden in holes that are carved out of sunken wood or under a rocky outcropping along the shore. If you are serious about finding or collecting this little fish in its native home, you would be best to try around dusk as they are very nocturnal.

My experience with the dwarf Pleco began several years ago when I decided to make an effort to breed them. I had maintained them for many years but never thought about breeding them. At our Spring Auction in 2002 I purchased a bag of 5 dwarf Plecos and placed them in a 10-gallon aquarium in my fish room. This tank was complete with driftwood and pieces of pipe covered by rocks to make caves. I left these little guys alone for about a year except for water changes and food. After about a year I became impatient and moved the 4 that were left to my 30-gallon community tank on my desk at work. While this was a nice aquarium that got a fair amount of maintenance, it was not set up to breed Plecos. In fact breeding anything in this aquarium was not my main priority.

While sitting at my desk doing paperwork one afternoon, I spotted a little Pleco. There he was sitting on top of a rock right in the center of the aquarium as he were saying "Look at me!" I instantly tore the aquarium apart looking for more, but to my disappointment, didn't even find one more. I found that my original group of five was now down to 3, 2 males and a female. Having no ideal as to who was the male that spawned with the female, I decided to take all 3 home. I set up a 10-gallon aquarium once again just about the same was as I had before.

It was now the summer of 2004 and again for several months, nothing happened with my little Plecos. Then one evening while feeding I happened to find a small clump of eggs with a male standing guard. I removed the odd male and the female. Disappointment came once again as three days later, there was nothing. Yep - nothing!

I really put no effort into them then for several months I left the male in the 10-gallon aquarium and the other two in my community 55-gallon.

It was October of 2004 while cleaning my fish room that I put the pair back together again. About a week after putting them together, I was cleaning aquariums and just taking my siphon from

one tank to the other when I bumped the flower pot in the Pleco tank. A clump of golden eggs came rolling out. I was frustrated at first thinking that once again I would lose a spawn of dwarf Plecos. Then I decided to give it a try by artificially incubating them. I set up a half-gallon bowl with an air wtone and about half teaspoon of Jungle Fungus Stop. The bowl was setting on top of a 10-gallon aquarium so the water stayed about 81 degrees. Success!!

The eggs began to hatch three days later and became free-swimming about five days after that. During this time I did daily water changes with nothing added to the water. On the eighth day when the little fish became free swimming, I started to add 2 frozen peas to the bowl twice a day. The fish have now grown to a nice size and will either be sole at auctions or given to other hobbyists as I am currently on my third spawn of them.

I hope I have given you a little insight here. While I didn't give you a lot of technical information on spawning the dwarf Pleco, I do hope I showed you that sometimes al you need is a little luck.