

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Discus

Symphysodon aequifasciatus

Range/Habitat

- The discus is a tropical fresh water fish found in the Amazon River basin in lakes, deep puddles, smaller rivers and streams.
- It prefers deep, rocky areas in crevices or among roots.

Physical Characteristics

- This species acquired its name from the shape of its body which is strongly compressed laterally and nearly circular.
- The dorsal and anal fins extend along the body almost to the caudal fin, accentuating its circular profile.
- The discus may reach 5½ inches (14 cm) in total length.
- The colors and patterns on its body are striking and varied. Background colors range from shades of brown to orange to blue. Patterns include vertical bars and wavy, closely spaced, discontinuous horizontal stripes. These markings can be black or blue and are sometimes edged with red or another color.
- The fins can carry a pattern or be a solid color, often contrasting with that of the body of the fish. The eyes are often deep red in color.
- Three variations of color and pattern in wild discus are recognized (see below).

Diet/Feeding

- The discus feeds on insect larvae, insects and planktonic invertebrates.

Conservation Status

- The discus has not been evaluated for inclusion on the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- This species is a member of the cichlid family.
- Three varieties of discus are recognized in wild populations: the blue discus (characterized by a blue body coloring with some red), the brown discus (brown to yellowish-brown coloration) and the green discus (turquoise and blue markings).
- It is normally found in small schools, but is territorial during breeding season.
- The male and female form breeding pairs that work together to clear a nesting site on the bottom. The female then passes over the nest several times releasing eggs with the male following closely to fertilize them.
- Both parents protect the nest and take turns fanning with their pectoral fins to circulate oxygenated water over the eggs. The eggs hatch in 48 to 60 hours.
- Discus fry feed on mucus secreted by the skin of both parents.
- This species is popular with aquarium hobbyists because of its vibrant and varied coloration. It was first acquired for this use in the 1920s.
- Many colorful hybrids have been produced for the aquarium trade. However, it is challenging to maintain discus in a home aquarium.
- Discus coloration is influenced by what it is fed. Those that are fed brine shrimp take on a reddish or pink color.
- This species is reported to live as long as 10 years in a home aquarium.

Sources

www.fishbase.org

www.aquaticcommunity.com

www.freshwatertropicalfishkeeping.com

<http://cichlidresearch.com>

<http://www.gcca.net/fom/discus.htm>