



Rift Lake Cichlids -

The African Rift lake cichlids available to hobbyists today are from the two main freshwater lakes in Africa, Lake Malawi and Tanganyika. Lake Malawi being the ninth largest lake in the world and boasts more than 650 species of cichlids. The temperature range in the lakes vary from 23 to 28 degrees Celsius and has a pH between 7.5 and 8.5 respectively. The bulk of African cichlids available to the hobby today are found in lake Malawi. Lake Tanganyika is the second deepest lake in the world reaching a depth of 1470 metres, cichlids only being found in the well-oxygenated layers no deeper than 250m or so. The pH ranges between 7.8 and 9 and is rich in oxygen (up to 100m deep).

Tank Size and Setup

Keeping African (Rift Lake Cichlids) is relatively easy. Most species available in the hobby are very hardy making them ideal for beginners. These fish are maintained in tanks of 3' and upwards although some shell dwelling Tanganyikan cichlids are maintainable in even smaller bodies of water. African cichlids are territorial and require hiding places as well as ample territory. This is best maintained with porous rocks such as limestone, which help provide hiding places as well as maintaining pH and hardness by dissolving carbonates into the water. The substrate is best left fine to medium course, as the cichlids like to dig

Filtration

Most African cichlids are quite messy and require adequate filtration as a result; in most cases the external canister filters have a larger capacity for dealing with fishes waste (**Eheim** Canister Filters). Aeration - Most African cichlids require a high oxygen content especially in the summer months where the temperature may exceed 30 which can lead to suffocation unless the tank is well aerated by an air pump and air stone or by rapid surface movement increasing the oxygen content in the aquarium.

PH: Malawi of 7.5 to 8 Tanganyika between 7.5 and 8.5

Hardness: 6 degrees and up KH and 10 degrees GH (Maintained Using **AQUASONIC** Rift Lake Salts)

Temperature: between 24 -26 degrees Celsius

Water changes as a general rule: a 1/3 change per week using a suitable water conditioner (**Aqua Plus & SERA Aquatan**) ensure well-oxygenated and clean water for the good health of your fish. (Also help your fish grow to adulthood much faster)

Compatibility

Research is of particular importance when choosing tank inhabitants. Species that will live together happily will depend on tank size and aggressive nature of each species. See the **Aquotix Cichlid Introduction List** for a simple guide to get started with.

Breeding

African cichlids are easy to breed when you have the right amount of sexually mature fish. A minimum of a 1 male : 2 female ratio ensures your fish's health as any less may result in injured fish. Most of the cichlids are mouth brooders, males generally coax the female/s into their territory where she if will lay eggs and he will fertilize them. The female then incubates the eggs in her mouth for up to 3 weeks until she releases the fry hatched and large enough to eat finely crushed (**1mm Aquotix granule**) dry and liquid food.

Feeding

African cichlids will accept a wide variety of foods naturally most feed on algae small invertebrates and with some larger species other fish. A good all round staple (**HBH Cichlid Attack, HBH Cichlid Flake Frenzy**) food should be chosen with intermittent feedings of frozen foods, consisting of fish meal or shrimp NO land animal fat or proteins are to be consumed in excess which the fish is unable to metabolise and may cause ' Malawi Bloat' (symptoms enlarged swollen belly) which can kill your prized fish. With species of Mbuna and Tropheus it is sometimes best to feed a vegetable based diet (**HBH Veggie Flake**) as their diet in the wild consists of mostly algae and some small invertebrates.

Good books: Back to Nature - Tanganyika (Konings)
Back to Nature – Malawi (Konings)
Malawi Cichlids in Their Natural Habitat 3rd Edition (Konings)
Tanganyika Secrets (Konings & Dieckhoff)