

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

FISHCARE SHEET No: 36

Pencilfish

03/03/2007

Welcome to these information Sheets that will not only help you make the best fish choices for your aquarium but also provides details on their best care.

Genera: *Nannostomus*

Family: Characidae

Geographic Origin: South America

Common Names: Beckfordi Pencilfish, Eques Pencilfish, Espe's Pencilfish Harrison's Pencilfish etc.

Compatibility: Prefer small slow moving tank mates. Not happy when boisterous fish are around. As they are small fish, they need to be with other small species.

Minimum Aquarium Size: A size of 24 x 12 x 12 inches (600mm x 300mm x 300mm) is preferable.

Temperature: Most are happy with temperatures between 20°/26°C 68°/80°F.

Habitat: These fish are found in slow moving 'back waters' that are full of plants. A well planted aquarium is beneficial. One species (*Nannostomus trifasciatus*) has males that tend to be territorial, so plenty of cover is needed

Water Parameters: These fish are found in soft acid waters but most will readily adapt to hard alkaline water, usually acclimatising at the local shop. *Nannostomus espeii* should only be kept in soft acid water.

Health: Not generally noted for having health problems.

Diet: Their favourite food is newly hatched brine shrimp but due to their size and the amount they require, this is not an option. They will readily accept all manner of live, frozen and dried flake foods.

Plants: Not plant eaters. All species of tropical plant are acceptable in the Pencilfish aquarium.

Breeding Notes : In order to breed these fish, they need to be in soft slightly acid water. They are egg scatterers and will avidly eat any eggs they can see. The use of Java Moss (*Vesicularia dubyana*) as a spawning medium is beneficial. So parents must be removed as soon as they have spawned. Eggs hatch in 24 hours or so and the fry become free swimming a day or so later. Fine foods are required.

Availability: Very a popular group of fishes, you may have to search out the more uncommon species. Only select fish that are alert and swimming with fins erect. Inspect closely for signs of disease. Reject lethargic, damaged or hollow-bellied specimens.

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