

tiger shovelnose catfish (*Pseudoplatystoma fasciatum*)

The *tiger shovelnose catfish* (*Pseudoplatystoma fasciatum*) is a large, predatory freshwater fish native to South America, particularly found in the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. It is highly prized by anglers and aquarists for its striking appearance and impressive size. Here's a detailed description:

Physical Characteristics:

1. *Size*:

- Tiger shovelnose catfish can grow very large, reaching lengths of up to 3–4 feet (90–120 cm) in the wild.
- In captivity, they typically grow to about 2–3 feet (60–90 cm).

2. *Body Shape*:

- They have an elongated, streamlined body with a flattened, shovel-like snout, which gives them their name.
- The body is muscular and built for powerful swimming.

3. *Coloration*:

- The body is silvery-gray with bold, dark black or brown stripes and spots, resembling a tiger's pattern.
- The underside is usually lighter in color.

4. *Fins*:

- The dorsal and pectoral fins are equipped with sharp spines, which can be used for defense.
- The tail fin is deeply forked, aiding in swift movements.

5. *Barbels*:

- They have long, whisker-like barbels around the mouth, which are used to detect prey in murky waters.

Behavior:

1. *Predatory Nature*:

- Tiger shovelnose catfish are aggressive predators, feeding on smaller fish, crustaceans, and other aquatic animals.
- They are opportunistic feeders and will eat almost anything that fits in their mouth.

2. *Nocturnal*:

- They are primarily nocturnal, becoming more active at night to hunt for food.

3. *Temperament*:

- Generally solitary and territorial, especially as they grow larger.
- They can be aggressive toward other fish, particularly those of similar size or shape.

Habitat:

1. *Natural Environment*:

- Found in large rivers, lakes, and floodplains with slow-moving or stagnant waters.
- Prefers areas with plenty of hiding spots, such as submerged logs, rocks, and vegetation.

2. *Water Conditions*:

- Temperature: 75–82°F (24–28°C).
- pH: 6.0–7.5.
- Soft to moderately hard water.

Aquarium Care:

1. *Tank Requirements*:

- Due to their large size, tiger shovelnose catfish require a very spacious tank. A minimum of 300 gallons is recommended for a single adult, with larger tanks needed for multiple fish.

- The tank should be long and wide to accommodate their swimming habits.
- Provide plenty of hiding places using driftwood, rocks, and plants.

2. *Tank Mates*:

- Compatible with large, peaceful fish that occupy different levels of the tank, such as large cichlids or other catfish.
- Avoid keeping with smaller fish, as they may be seen as prey.

3. *Diet*:

- In captivity, they can be fed live or frozen foods such as fish, shrimp, and worms.
- They may also accept high-quality pellets or other prepared foods.

4. *Lifespan*:

- With proper care, tiger shovelnose catfish can live for 15–20 years or more in captivity.

Conservation:

- The tiger shovelnose catfish is not currently considered endangered, but habitat destruction and overfishing pose potential threats.

- They are sometimes bred in captivity for the aquarium trade, which helps reduce pressure on wild populations.

Hybrid Variants:

- Tiger shovelnose catfish are often hybridized with other large catfish species, such as the red tail catfish (*Phractocephalus hemioliopterus*), to create unique and highly sought-after hybrids for the aquarium trade. These hybrids often exhibit a mix of characteristics from both parent species.

The tiger shovelnose catfish is a fascinating and impressive fish, but it requires a significant commitment in terms of space, care, and maintenance. It is best suited for experienced aquarists with the resources to provide for its needs.