

Severum (Heros severus)

The *severum* (*Heros severus*), also known as the *banded cichlid* or *severum cichlid*, is a popular freshwater fish native to South America, particularly found in the Amazon River basin and its tributaries. Known for its peaceful nature and striking appearance, the severum is a favorite among cichlid enthusiasts. Here's a detailed description:

Physical Characteristics:

1. *Size*:

- Severums can grow to about 8–10 inches (20–25 cm) in length, with some individuals reaching up to 12 inches (30 cm) in optimal conditions.

2. *Coloration*:

- Wild severums typically have a greenish or yellowish base color with dark vertical bands running along their body.
- Captive-bred varieties come in a range of colors, including gold, red, green, and turquoise, often with iridescent scales.

3. *Body Shape*:

- They have a deep, laterally compressed body with a rounded shape, giving them a disc-like appearance.
- The fins are large and flowing, with the dorsal and anal fins extending toward the tail.

4. *Fins*:

- The dorsal fin is long and runs along the back, while the anal fin is shorter but equally prominent.
- The tail fin is fan-shaped and often displays subtle patterns or coloration.

Behavior:

1. *Temperament*:

- Severums are generally peaceful compared to other cichlids, making them suitable for community tanks with other large, non-aggressive fish.
- They can become territorial during breeding but are less aggressive than many other cichlid species.

2. *Social Behavior*:

- They are social fish and do well in pairs or small groups.
- They are intelligent and can recognize their owners, often becoming interactive over time.

3. *Diet*:

- Severums are omnivorous and feed on a variety of foods, including plant matter, small invertebrates, and detritus in the wild.
- In captivity, they can be fed high-quality pellets, flakes, frozen or live foods (such as brine shrimp, bloodworms, and vegetables like spinach or zucchini).

Habitat:

1. *Natural Environment*:

- Found in slow-moving rivers, streams, and floodplains with plenty of vegetation and submerged wood.

- Prefers warm, soft, and slightly acidic water conditions.

2. *Water Conditions*:

- Temperature: 75–84°F (24–29°C).
- pH: 6.0–7.5.
- Soft to moderately hard water.

Aquarium Care:

1. *Tank Requirements*:

- A minimum tank size of 55 gallons is recommended for a pair, with larger tanks needed for groups or community setups.
- Provide plenty of hiding spots using rocks, driftwood, and plants. Severums appreciate a well-decorated tank with open swimming areas.

2. *Tank Mates*:

- Compatible with other peaceful cichlids, tetras, catfish, and larger characins.
- Avoid keeping them with highly aggressive or fin-nipping species.

3. *Lifespan*:

- With proper care, severums can live for 10–15 years or more in captivity.

Color Varieties:

1. *Green Severum*:

- The wild-type variety with a greenish base color and dark vertical bands.

2. *Gold Severum*:

- A captive-bred variety with a bright golden-yellow coloration.

3. *Red-Spotted Severum*:

- Features a red or orange hue with spots or marbling across the body.

4. *Turquoise Severum*:

- Displays a stunning blue-green coloration with iridescent scales.

Conservation:

- Severums are not considered endangered and are widely bred in captivity for the aquarium trade.
- However, their natural habitats in the Amazon are under threat from deforestation, pollution, and dam construction.

The severum is a beautiful and rewarding fish to keep, suitable for both beginner and experienced aquarists. Its peaceful nature, striking appearance, and interactive behavior make it a standout choice for community tanks or species-specific setups.