

Humphead cichlid (*Cyphotilapia frontosa*)

The **humphead cichlid** (*Cyphotilapia frontosa*), also known as the **frontosa cichlid**, is a large, distinctive freshwater fish native to Lake Tanganyika in East Africa. Here's a detailed description:

Physical Characteristics:

1. **Size**: It can grow up to 12-14 inches (30-35 cm) in length, making it one of the larger cichlid species.
2. **Coloration**: Typically has a blue or white body with 6-7 vertical black stripes. The intensity of the blue coloration can vary depending on the variant and age.
3. **Hump**: Adult males develop a prominent nuchal hump on their forehead, which gives the species its name. This hump becomes more pronounced as they age.
4. **Fins**: It has long, flowing dorsal and anal fins, adding to its striking appearance.

Behavior:

1. **Temperament**: Generally peaceful but can be territorial, especially during breeding. It is a slow-moving and somewhat shy fish.
2. **Social Structure**: Prefers to live in groups in the wild, often found at depths of 30-50 meters in Lake Tanganyika.
3. **Diet**: Primarily a carnivore, feeding on smaller fish, crustaceans, and invertebrates in the wild. In captivity, it thrives on a diet of high-quality pellets, frozen or live foods like shrimp and small fish.

Habitat:

1. **Natural Environment**: Found in the deep, rocky regions of Lake Tanganyika, where it inhabits caves and crevices.
2. **Aquarium Requirements**: Requires a large tank (at least 125 gallons) with plenty of hiding spots, rocks, and open swimming space. Water conditions should mimic Lake Tanganyika: pH 7.8-9.0, temperature 75-80°F (24-27°C), and hard water.

Breeding:

1. **Mouthbrooder**: Females are mouthbrooders, meaning they carry fertilized eggs and fry in their mouths for protection until the young are ready to swim freely.
2. **Breeding Behavior**: Males establish territories and court females. After spawning, the female holds the eggs in her mouth for about 3-4 weeks.

Popularity in Aquaria:

The humphead cichlid is highly sought after by aquarium enthusiasts due to its unique appearance and relatively calm demeanor. However, its large size and specific care requirements make it more suitable for experienced aquarists.