

Bandit Corydorras

By: Edward Curran II
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Typically, when I go to a pet store or fish store, I have no particular fish in mind so I never really know what I'll leave with. So walking down the aisle of a local tropical fish store I noticed some Corydorras melini, in the bread and butter section marked as Cory's \$1.99 each. So being the fish addict that I am I purchased all eight of them a little over 18 months ago.

I housed the melini in a 20 gallon high tank, with a bare bottom, 2 sponge filters and a power filter. The day I purchased the Corys they were only an inch long and very skittish. The fish were fed a diet of high quality flake food, black worms, white worms and frozen food. After about a year they were fattened up pretty good and about an inch and a half long. At this time I felt the melini were ready to try spawning so I lowered their pH to about 6 and increased their water current, I also noticed they all looked fat. Typically when you look down on a Cory cat the more round ones are female and the more streamlined male, but I thought we'd have a go at it anyway. And sure enough I had eggs, all over the place, so I proceeded to pluck the eggs just to watch them turn white. Now this went on for a few more times till I purchased 6 more melini that I felt could help the cause and introduced them to the original 8. Now I'm not going to say it was love at first sight but the catfish got along great.



Corydorras melini call South America their home, more specifically the upper Negro River and the Meta basins in Brazil and Columbia. These cats actually live in tropical climates with the water temperature ranging from the low 70's to the upper 70's, with a more neutral pH between 6-8.

They eat insects, crustaceans and plants and prefer to be in a group of 6 or more. The *Corydoras melini* has the typical cory look, with a black band running vertically across the eyes and another black band slanted through the dorsal fin down to the bottom of the caudal fin. There are black flecks on the side of an olive-silver colored body and the rest of the fins are clear.

In September of 2007 I was able to collect twenty or more eggs to have the majority of them hatch on the 11. The fry were kept in a jar and fed micro worms and crushed flake food. After about a month they were placed in their 20-gallon high tank and fed Hikari sinking wafers, black worms, frozen food, and crushed flake. At this time they are about $\frac{3}{4}$ " long and look like miniatures of their parents. For me this fish was a challenge from the standpoint it took more than just food and water to get them to breed. I have what I like to call an insane passion for Cory's of all types and my hope is spawn many more.