

## AGGRESSION DEFINED A CICHLID WITH MANY NAMES

*The Tri-color Cichlid or the Yellow Bellied Cichlid or Salvin's Cichlid or Cichlasoma salvini or Nandopsis salvini or Astatoreochromis straeleni or Heros salvini or Heros triagramma, or mojarra pico de gallo*

### Scott Moreen

The following information is from PetEducation.com

*Cichlasoma salvini, Nandopsis salvini, Astatoreochromis straeleni*

**Family:** Cichlidae

**Range:** Central America: Guatemala, Honduras; Southern Mexico

**Size:** Up to 6 inches

**Diet:** Omnivore

**Tank Set-up:** Freshwater: Fine gravel or sand, rocks and roots for hiding, open swimming

**Tank Conditions:** 72-79°F; pH 7.0-8.0; dH 10

**Minimum Tank Capacity:** 50 gallons

**Light:** Medium

**Temperament:** Aggressive

**Swimming Level:** Middle to bottom

**Care Level:** Moderate

**Reproduction:** Egg Layer

The Salvini Cichlid is also known as the Tricolor Cichlid and the Yellow-Belly Cichlid. *Astatoreochromis straeleni* is also called the "yellow-bellied cichlid." It is a brightly colored cichlid from the lakes and rivers of southern Mexico and northern Central America. It has a bright yellow body with two blotchy dark lines running from the eyes to the caudal fin and turquoise-blue dots scattered over the body. The fins are long and have a turquoise-blue sheen to them. A bright red coloring is seen in the anal fins and on the body behind the pectoral fin, as well as edging the caudal fin. The head has approximately four horizontal stripes running along the forehead.



The Salvini Cichlid requires a tank of at least 50 gallons with a fine gravel or sand bottom. It does not burrow or destroy plants, which are recommended to use as territory boundaries. The Salvini Cichlid should be provided with numerous rocks and roots for use as hiding places. Plenty of room should be left for open swimming. It may be housed with smaller fish that are also more aggressive, be aware, it is territorial and will bite others.

The male has pointed fins, which is one way to distinguish between the sexes. Salvini Cichlids make excellent parents, and both the male and female share in the rearing of the fry. After carefully cleaning the rocks in the tank, the female will deposit up to 500 eggs. The Salvini Cichlid is omnivorous and will eat most prepared and frozen foods, including freeze-dried bloodworms, tubifex, and ocean plankton, as well as flake food and Cichlid pellets.

About 2 1/2 years ago I began to get bored with spawning Old World cichlids. Spawning one was pretty much like spawning another. Yes of course they are "pretty" but having them reminds me of watching Bill Murray in the movie Ground Hog Day - just seems like the same thing happens time and time again. To quell the boredom I innately began to change my fish room by stocking New World Fish (not a great money making idea- but really do I do this for the money!). I remembered what kept me in the hobby when I started in 1974 - having fish with interesting personalities (not just the same old dumb as a box of rocks fish), interesting behaviors, that claim and defend territories and form pair bonds. So after spawning about 100 Old World fish (they generally breed like flies) and about 30 New World cichlids some of my general observations include:

- Most keepers prefer "pretty fish" and do not want to wait for them to become "pretty".
- New World fish can be more "pretty" than the Old World fish (trust me on this) however most are not "pretty" in the same sense as Old World fish.
- Some fish keepers are always talking about big fish, you know big fish this and big fish that, with big fins, n' big trailers, n' big mouths, n' big humps and n' big attitudes.
- It is just not feasible to stock tanks of New World cichlids as heavily as you often can with Old World fish, either size and/or aggression generally limits stocking.
- Fewer fish combined with bigger tanks does equal less frequent maintenance.
- New World fish seem to be generally more intelligent than Old World fish.
- I prefer fish that I do not have to squint to see and that I know see me as well.
- When moving a large fish it is best to wear a wet suit and there seems to be more New World fish that get large.
- Left alone the adult fish population in your aquarium will dwindle (I am sure this is a law of some sort).
- Left alone the prettiest fish will die first.

I picked up two 2" Salvini from an Aquarium shop in Lombard, IL about 9 months ago - all they had. I was doing my periodic "missionary" search of the local fish shops for New World fish. I look even though most of the shops that are in close proximity to where I live do not generally stock New World cichlids (a few convicts and angels or such maybe). But I shop at the local fish shops anyways and make a point of asking for hard to find New World fish. The local aquarium stores do periodically have something interesting that they got because it was either "too big for the tank" or "is not pretty enough for my spouse" or "I have no idea what this fish is" or "it killed my other fish" (oh yes these are the fish I want).

I took the two Salvini home and put them in a 125 gallon tank with several other types of fish that were much larger but not overly aggressive (*M. festivum*). Within a few hours I

saw the two salvini chasing each other around the big tank, generally ignoring the other fish that were 3-4x their size. Within a two weeks both salvini had staked out caves at the opposite ends of the tank but showed no signs of breeding interest in one another. Maybe too young. I seldom have just two 2" fish if I am attempting to raise/breed a new species. There is a poor chance that you will end up with a pair.



Much to my luck I was able to buy a bag of five 1" plus fish from a club member shortly thereafter. These fish went into a different 125 with ten 4-6" Black Belts (*Vieja maculacauda*) and three 4-5" *Herichthys carpintas* for about three months without a loss. At first the Black Belts and the Texas Cichlids paid little attention to the new pip squeaks. But after a few weeks I found that the salvini had occupied small caves in the tank, too small for the other fish to occupy but very near where the Blackbelts were spawning. As much as the Blackbelts blustered at them the salvini did not move out. The salvini grew fast and benefited from the large water changes I make consistently in the fish room every 7-10 days. Within three months these five fish were almost equal in size to the earlier two I had bought (about 4").

After three months I had to move the fish in my fish room around to make way for new fish, so I ended up putting all seven salvini in with the seven 6-8" festivum in a 125. Things were fine for a month. The festivum seemed to innately exercise great discretion when confronting the salvini. Soon I had what appeared to be two pairs of salvini formed since the "pairs" were spending a lot of time together, their colors were brighter than ever, the fish were all plumping up and had claimed caves. However the festivum starting looking worse for the experience. Over the next few days the other three salvini fought valiantly but two of them were badly mauled. I had to move the salvini pairs but did not have a separate tank for them (I have 33 tanks set up) so I put them in with five 4-7" jaguars (*Parachromis mangense*) "overnight" who had a full 125 gallon tank to themselves.

Soon three of the five Jaguars looked much worse for living with the salvini. I rescued the three Jaguars that needed out and placed them in with much larger Red Bay Snook (big but wimpy—that is unless they can swallow you). However the hostility in the salvini tank increased dramatically with two pairs of salvini spawning at the same time as the two remaining Jaguars paired up. One day later there were ripped fins and gouges apparent on all fish in the tank. I watched what was going on and saw that the salvini work much better as a team than paired Jaguars do. I had to divide the 125 to keep the salvini from ripping the Jaguars apart. I left the two pairs of salvini in half of the divided 125 with the Jaguar pair in the other half. The next day I had to remove one badly beat up pair of salvini which I threw in with the red bay snooks and the other three jaguars.



The original tank now has a pair of salvini on one side of the divider and a pair of Jaguars on the other side. Both pairs have clouds of fry and patrol their respective sides of the divider. Both pairs keep a close watch on the divider and demonstrate threatening behaviors at each other.

Now I have to admit that I am thinking of trying a pair of salvini in the same tank with neetroplus nematopus and then I could try them in the same tank as the red devil pair and then I could try them with Parachromis dovii and then a could try them with Vieja bifasciatus.

I wonder if the ACA would give me a grant to study fish behavior. If not maybe I could get a grant from the professional boxing association. 🐾