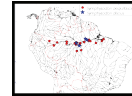




Red Discus (*Symphysodon discus*)

Order: Perciformes - Family: Cichlidae - Subfamily: Cichlasomatinae



Also known as: Heckel Discus

Type: Tropical - Amazon Cichlid

Description: The Red Discus (*Symphysodon discus*), Heckel, 1840 is a very well know fish in the aquarium hobby, and it is know for its beauty and elegance, along with being extremely delicate. However, through countless breeding, discus are becoming more and more hardy. However, this is usually limited to *Symphysodon aequifasciatus*, which is what most fancy discus are. *Symphysodon discus*, the Heckel discus, are harder to come by, and are usually wild caught, thus usually difficult to keep.

Physical Characteristics:

Size: Male: 18cm (7.1") Female: 18cm (7.1")

Color Form: Brown, Black, Blue; Striped Vertical

Sexual Dimorphism: Heckel discus can only be sexed when breeding. During the mating process, the male will have a long, narrow, and pointed genital papilla, while the female's is short and stubby.

Lifespan:

Origin: America - South; Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela are the countries where Heckels are found

Behavior: Diurnal; Diurnal

Habitat / Biotope: River; Heckels are found in the tributaries and slower rivers of the Amazon

Diet: Carnivore; Heckels are very carnivorous fish, but due to their small mouth, are forced to feed on the smallest of foods. Bloodworms, brine shrimp, mosquito larvae, and the like should be large parts of the Heckel's diet.

Breeding: To breed Heckels, the pH should be dropped to about 6, and water hardness should be dropped to about 3 to 4°dH. Usually the male will clean the spawning site, and once clean, 150 to 450 eggs will be laid on the cleaned site. Both parents will take care of the eggs and spawning site. Once free swimming and their yoke sac is used, the fry will eat a special slime coating off of the sides of the parents. After a little under a week of eating off the parents, the fry will be able to accept smaller

Aquarium Setup: Heckel discus are moderately demanding fish. Their demand on pH and hardness usually limit what other life forms can live with discus. They do require soft, acidic water, but can be acclimated to general water conditions if proper care is taken. The habitat where Heckels are from is mostly tree stumps and branches, and their aquarium should be modeled after this. While Heckels make great compliments to a planted tank, they do not like the intense light that planted tanks usually require.

Minimum Tank Size: 20 Gallon for a pair

Care Level: Difficult

Water Conditions:

pH: 5 - 6.5

Temperature: 27°C - 33°C 81°F - 91°F

Hardness: 3 dH - 15 dH

Swimming Level: Middle; Middle

Compatibility / Temperament: Peaceful; Heckels are very peaceful and timid fish. They should only be kept with fish that have similar temperaments. Active fish may stress a Heckel.

