

A Closer Look at a Mixed African Cichlid Aquarium

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Established in February 2002, this 155 gallon, All-Glass, bow-front, African Cichlid aquarium is just one of many freshwater and marine aquariums designed and maintained by the Drs. Foster & Smith Aquatic Services Staff.

In addition to affording our customer service specialists the opportunity to apply and advance their knowledge of the hobby, these are the aquariums where we put new products to the Doctors' test before offering them to our customers. We invite you to take a closer look at this beautiful aquarium display dedicated to African Cichlids.

Primary Population

All Cichlids were added simultaneously as juveniles to an established aquarium.

- [Blue Peacock Cichlids](#) (*Aulonocara nyassae*)
- [Frontosa African Cichlids](#) (*Cyphotilapia frontosa*)
- [Electric Blue Cichlids](#) (*Sciaenochromis fryeri*)
- [Cobalt Blue Zebra Cichlid](#) (*Metriaclima callainos*)
- [Bushy Nose Pleco](#) (*Ancistrus sp.*)
- [Clown Loaches](#) (*Botia macracantha*)
- [Catfish](#) (*Synodontis decorus*)

Several Cichlids have since paired off and bred, increasing the original population.

Diet

- [Hikari Cichlid Staple](#) large pellet food as a daily staple
- [Julian Sprung's Sea Veggies](#) once a week in veggie clip
- [Hikari Algae Wafers](#) as a daily staple for plecos
- [Ocean Nutrition Cichlid Veggie Formula](#) as a daily flake food
- [Ocean Nutrition Cichlid Omni Formula](#), fed every other day with veggie flakes.

Feeding times: Daily, between 9-10 a.m. and 4-5 p.m.

Structure

To best fulfill the needs of these beautiful, intelligent, and territorial fish, we designed the caves and nooks to create a healthy, secure African lake biotope. 20 flat and approximately 20 variously shaped stones (3"-6" in diameter) were used in constructing the numerous caves/shelter areas, and medium/large multi-colored gravel was spread 2"-3" deep throughout the aquarium floor.

Water Conditions

Water, treated by reverse osmosis with [R/O Right powder](#), was added to remineralize the water and buffers were added to adjust alkalinity and pH. Additives/supplements (used after a water change or when pH drops) include:

- Kent [Cichlid Essential Water Conditioner](#)
- Kent AF Cichlid Chemistry
- Kent AF Cichlid Buffer

Water testing with [Aquarium Pharmaceuticals Master Test Kit](#) (tests for pH, high-range pH, ammonia, nitrite, and hardness). African Cichlids prefer higher pH, dH and temperatures than other freshwater fish. Parameters of the African Cichlid aquarium should include:

- pH 7.8-8.5
- dH 10-15
- Temperature 72°-82°F

Aquarium Specifications

- All-Glass, 155-gallon Bowfront Aquarium 72" x 17" x 25-1/4" high
- Glass canopy
- Black-finished wood stand 74" x 19" x 28" high
- Two 36" All-Glass 110-watt compact fluorescent strip lights
- Two 250W [Jager Thermostat Heaters](#)
- ATI Thermometer
- Eheim Pro II 2028 and Magnum 350 canister filter with BIO-Wheel
- Recommended Eheim media and [Black Diamond Premium Activated Carbon](#)
- [Timer](#) to create photoperiod: Approximately 12 hours (8 a.m.-8 p.m.)

Maintenance

Daily:

- Feed fish
- Check water level and fill if needed
- Check filter operation, clean if flow rate is slow
- Check water temperature

Weekly:

- Test ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH, and alkalinity
- Add buffer if needed
- Clean magnum filter

Bi-weekly:

- Clean inside/outside aquarium glass, glass canopy, and strip lights
- Perform 25% water change

Monthly:

- Change carbon in Magnum Filter

- Rinse all media in Eheim with non-chlorinated water