

African Cichlid

(Lake Malawi- multiple species)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in various habitats within Lake Malawi, the ninth largest lake in the world.

Size: Varies by species; up to 8 or 9 inches.

Wild Diet: Different species are adapted to eat different foods. Some eat insects, others fish, and still others, algae.

Predators: Other fish and humans.

Life Span: 4-10 years

Reproduction: The brightly colored males attract females to their territory. Males typically act aggressively toward other males. Cichlids are “mouthbrooders”, and Lake Malawi cichlids are immediate mouthbrooders, meaning the female collects the fertilized eggs in the mouth (or sometimes, eggs are fertilized in the mouth), and keeps them safe until they hatch, and often longer. In some species, the males may brood the eggs in their mouths instead of the females.

Behavior: Lake Malawi cichlids are specially adapted to different habitats within the lake. They have specialized behaviors that help them take advantage of their habitat. Some cichlids hunt in open water, while others may live among rocks and graze on algae.

Conservation Connection: Some species are threatened by over-fishing and pollution in Lake Malawi.

Interesting Facts: Malawi cichlids belong to a large family of freshwater fish. An estimated 1300+ species of cichlid have been named, with over 500 species (many still unclassified) in Lake Malawi alone. Malawi cichlids are typically divided into 2 major groups, the mbuna and the Haps.

