

Polycentrus schomburgkii (Guyana Leaffish)

Family: Polycentridae (Leaffish)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)

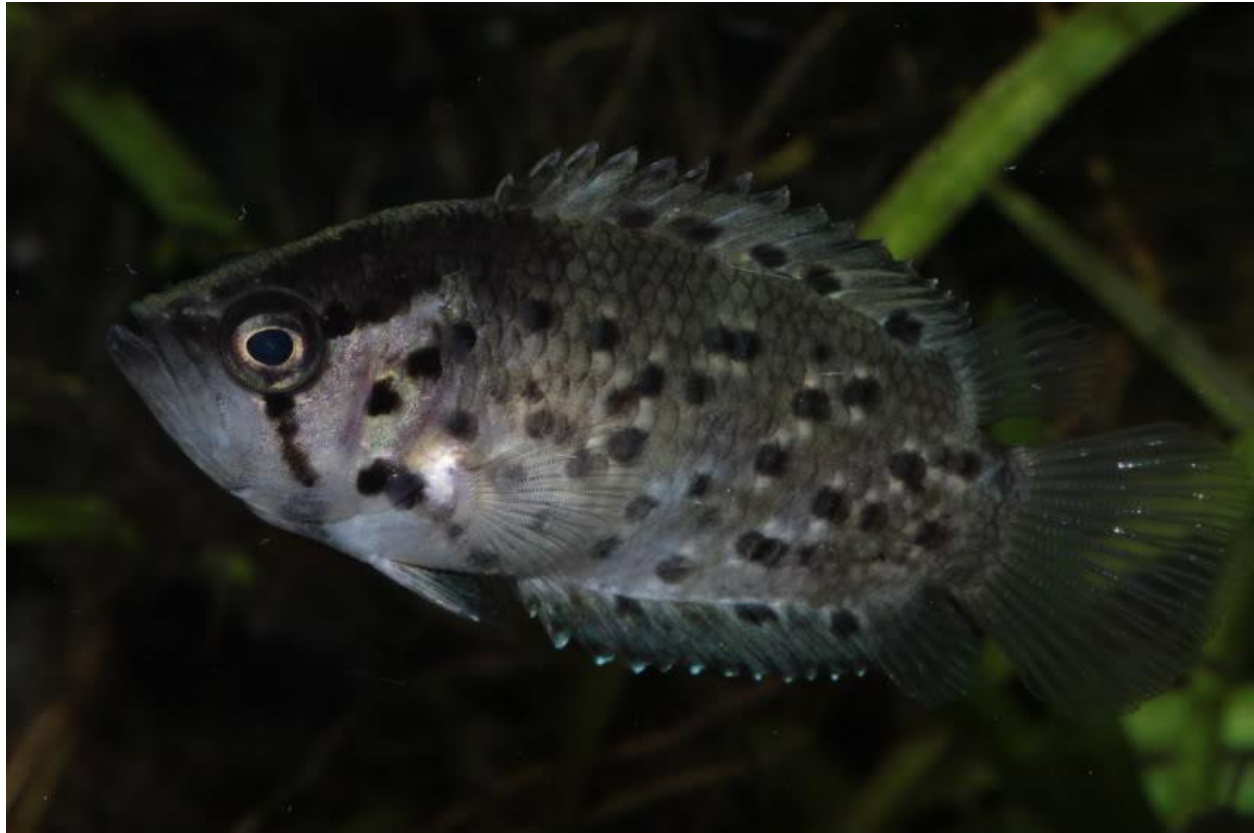


Fig. 1. Guyana leaffish, *Polycentrus schomburgkii*.

[<http://board.raubsalmler.de/viewtopic.php?t=9194>, downloaded 25 November 2016]

TRAITS. The Guyana leaffish, *Polycentrus schomburgkii*, features a characteristic oval body shape and “leaf like” appearance (Fig. 1). Females have a dark brown coloration while males are usually black with silver or slightly green-blue spots. Adult males measure up to 5.5cm long, with females around half the length of males (Britz and Kullander, 2002).

DISTRIBUTION. *Polycentrus schomburgkii* is found within the South American region including freshwater systems of Trinidad, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana and Brazil (Froese and Pauly, 2013).

HABITAT & ECOLOGY. This species typically resides within brackish freshwater ecosystems and tends to thrive in conditions within the pH range 6.0-7.0, at temperatures of 22-26°C (Britz and Kullander, 2002). Being benthopelagic feeders they can be found searching for food near the bed of the river or near the surface.

Although this species prefers clear water they are known to survive in relatively turbid systems. Mainly their diet consists of aquatic worms, insects and occasionally smaller fish species and fish fry (Britz and Kullander, 2002). *Polycentrus schomburgkii* is an ambush hunter and thus has the tendency to remain still, camouflaged by its natural colours among aquatic foliage (Fig. 2), lying in wait until its prey swims close enough for it to snap and engulf the target organism (Froese and Pauly, 2013).

REPRODUCTION. A female can produce up to 600 eggs, hidden on leaves or in small crevices and holes (Froese and Pauly, 2013). Mating behaviour includes gently butting heads, the male will touch its open mouth against the side of the female and slowly close it, followed by a period of twitching movements. Females exhibit spawning behaviour when triggered by the initial spawning of another female. Other females may attempt to infiltrate the spawning area of a female, usually resulting in them being driven away (Barlow, 1976). Eggs usually hatch within 3-4 days of spawning (Froese and Pauly, 2013).

BEHAVIOUR. They stay near the surface of the water to mimic leaves that have fallen and are floating on the water surface. Adult males are territorial and show aggressive behaviour towards other males. Territorial responses include aggressively butting heads, biting, and twitching vigorously in order to show dominance against one another.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. This species is commonly used in the commercial fish industry as aquarium fish. *Polycentrus schomburgkii* is not registered as being endangered by the IUCN (Britz and Kullander, 2002).

REFERENCES

- Barlow, G.W. (1976). Social Behavior of a South American Leaf Fish, *Polycentrus schomburgkii*, with an Account of Recurring Pseudofemale Behavior, *The American Midland Naturalist*, **78**: 215-234.
- Britz, R and Kullander, S.O. (2002). Polycentridae (Leaffishes), Checklist of the freshwater Fishes of south and Central America. EDIPUCRS, Brasil.
- Froese, R. and Pauly, D. (2013). *Polycentrus schomburgkii*, <http://www.fishbase.org/summary/Polycentrus-schomburgkii.html>.
- Wikipedia. (2016). *Polycentrus schomburgkii*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polycentrus_schomburgkii.

Author: Randy Sirjoo

Posted online: 2016



Fig. 2. Camouflage colours of *Polycentrus schomburgkii*.

[<http://www.monsterfishkeepers.com/forums/threads/id-help-on-stelth-predator.134958/>, downloaded 20 October 2016]

For educational use only - copyright of images remains with original source