

Among all piranhas and pirambebas, the “racing stripe” is found only on *S. geryi*.



Exotic Fish Exhibit (OPEFE), which is now closed to the public but an online version is available by visiting www.piranha-fury.com and scrolling down to his link within the various forums. I would like to take this time to sincerely thank him for all his work, both past and present, and hope he stays a part of the piranha community for many years to come.

Unfortunately, however, the nature of taxonomy will not allow us to end any possible confusion there, because within the pirambebas there are complexes and subgroups that contain various other allotments of species. One of these subgroups is known as the “compressus” group of pirambebas, and it is this group of which we find *S. geryi* to be a member.

Their membership to such a clan is directly related to their appearance. *Serrasalmus geryi* exhibits an unusually high level of lateral compression. That is, they are disk-like and thin when compared to some of their cousins—who exhibit various shapes ranging from oval to torpedo shaped—and thus the reasoning to their belonging to the “compressus

group” of pirambebas. To put the shape of *S. geryi* more into perspective as compared to other pirambebas, simply think of the vast assortment of shapes in which cichlid fishes are found, then think of discus and how they differ from, say, peacock bass *Cichla* spp. or oscars *Astronotus* spp., and that may help out quite a bit.

There are five valid species within the compressus group—*S. altispinis*, *S. altuvei*, *S. compressus*, *S. hastatus*, and of course, *S. geryi*—and there is potential for several more. Their range is broad and encompasses various biotopes from fast moving whitewaters to medium flowing but highly turbid yellow waters to the highly acidic, but crystal clear, blackwaters. The majority of fishes within the compressus group of pirambebas are found in northern Brazil and Venezuela, but *S. geryi* is often considered the most southern species with its native rivers being the Rio Araguaia and Rio Tocantins, both

of which are located in northern central Brazil.

Features

Their most unique attribute—and the one that gave rise to their popular name—is a dark purple stripe that runs vertically up their heads from just below their lower jaw to the base of the dorsal fin. Simply stated, there is no other known species of pirambeba—or piranha for that matter—that exhibits such a unique feature. In older specimens, the stripe, often called a “racing stripe” by those hobbyists fortunate enough to maintain this species, is wider and darker and thus much more noticeable than that of the juveniles. Some hobbyists claim that the darkness of this stripe is also related to diet and water chemistry characteristics.

Another detail of their anatomy that may be of interest to hobbyists wishing to house this species is their bright,