



**African Cichlids**

**South American  
Cichlids, Catfish  
Stingrays and  
Piranha**



**Wild Bettas  
&  
West Africans**

**Sponsors of the  
Rare Fish  
and  
Cichlid  
Conservation  
Internet Forums**

**Fishpost.com**  
1321 Ava Rd.  
Severn, MD. 21144  
Phone/Fax 410-519-6431  
**sales@fishpost.com**

highly reflective scales that seem to glow a purplish blue iridescence under fluorescent lighting—especially fluorescent lighting that is heavier in the blue spectrum, such as bulbs that are marketed as “50/50” lights. While the anatomy of *S. geryi* is certainly unique and quite interesting even to those not interested in the fish, their behavior and interaction with each other is even more fascinating.

In general, true piranhas are schooling fishes, while pirambebas are considered solitary. For those of you who are experienced “piranha” keepers, you certainly know that several species of pirambeba can be housed together in what are best coined as loose groups. However, *S. geryi* seems to be bit different.

### **Behavior**

Many hobbyists have reported that their captive specimens of *S. geryi* do quite well together, and some have even stated that they do better in larger groups. This may be a common attribute with those species within the compressus group, since many are often caught in the same haul of a net, thus indicating that all collected specimens were in relative close proximity to one another. Other larger species of pirambebas such as *Serrasalmus rhombeus* are often quite intolerant of each other in aquariums but may be seen swimming in small groups of a half dozen specimens or so. Such observations have never been confirmed, or even reported, in popular literature for the aquarium hobby, only from personal communication with local fishermen in Brazil, so we cannot apply a theory to the members of the compressus group regarding this behavior—yet.

### **Ecology**

One of the most talked about topics among hobbyists regarding *S. geryi* is their ecology. As mentioned previously, the Rios Araguaia and Tocantins are where the *S. geryi* call home. The Rio Araguaia is a whitewater river located in northern central Brazil and generally flows from south to north where it joins

the Rio Amazonas. This river seems to be where most of the specimens that are exported out of Brazil for the aquarium trade originate, so we will focus on that system in this article.

The water ranges from mildly acidic along its main course to highly acidic and blackwater within its many smaller tributaries and as the river nears its junction with the mighty Amazon. This is where *S. geryi* is most commonly found. The Rio Araguaia has been heavily influenced by human activity such as damming and overfishing for years now. The impact that humans have had on the system remains largely unknown, since the general public of Brazil does not inhabit the area, and the river is fairly remote compared to other more accessible systems, all of which still need quite a lot of survey work performed on them.

In its natural habitat, *S. geryi* lives among submerged structure and plants, where it awaits the opportunity to capture its next meal—which is primarily composed of small whole fishes and fin parts. In faster flowing habitats, submerged structure is more consolidated and does not provide a broad expanse for many hiding places, which may be a reason why *S. geryi* are more tolerant of each other's presence as compared with other pirambebas—they simply have to live among each other or not at all.

In the aquarium, this species is outrageously competitive for food and there even seems to be a primitive type of pecking order associated within certain captive groups (such as mine). So hobbyists that are keeping this species now, or those that plan on setting up an aquarium devoted to this species, may need to brace themselves for the shock of several quite large (by aquarium standards) fish racing toward the surface in order to get the most food. It would be one thing if these fish had small, dull teeth, but they don't; they have rather large, insanely sharp teeth that are capable of doing severe damage to any appendages that may get in the way during feeding time.