

Midas Cichlid

Cichlasoma citrinellum

Order: Perciformes

Family: Cichlidae

Description: Midas cichlids have 6 dusky to black bars on their flanks, a large black blotch on their midside, and a smaller black blotch on their tail fin. Two different color morphs of this species occur. The "typical" morph is gray with a series of markings along its flanks, which vary from bars to large spots. This is the most common morph over the natural range of the midas cichlid. The second morph is bright orange to red in color, which is the most common variety found in Florida.

Special Features:

- **Coloration** - This species exhibits two basic color morphs, gray and orange. The exact color depends on whether or not the fish is in its native habitat.
- **Size** – The midas cichlid may reach lengths of up to 16 inches.

Similar Species: There are two species similar to the midas cichlid: the convict cichlid, *Cichlasoma nigrofasciatum*, and the black acara, *Cichlasoma bimaculatum*.

Range and Habitat: Over their native range, midas cichlids are most abundant in lakes with sufficient cover. They thrive in areas rich in macrophytes, sunken bushes and trees, and they frequently inhabit crevices in or between rocks. They have been known to dig burrows under rocks and sunken logs, which they use as cover or for sleeping.

Midas cichlids are native to the Atlantic slope drainages of Central America, from Nicaragua south to Costa Rica. In Florida, they are established in Black Creek canal and adjoining canals northeast of Homestead, Dade County.

Specimens have also been collected from Broward County and Hillsborough County. This species has not been found in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; however, there is an established population slowly expanding its range on the Atlantic coast of Florida.

Reproduction: Over its native range this species typically builds nests in caves, crevices among rock piles, or less frequently digs a pit in an open area adjacent to a hard vertical structure. Eggs are deposited on the walls of caves and crevices, or if pits are dug, on the hard vertical structure adjacent to the nest

Notes:

- **Common Names** – Frequently called Mojarra; *Heros erythraeus* and *Cichlasoma erythraeum* are listed as possible synonyms.
- **Means of Introduction** - Introductions into Florida were via aquarium or fish farm releases. In other states, introductions most likely represent aquarium releases.
- **Importance to Fisheries** - Over its native range, the midas cichlid is among the most popular of food fishes.
- **Ecology** – The impact of the midas cichlid is currently unknown.
- **Feeding** - Midas cichlids frequently feed by sifting through substrates, straining out edible materials, and then spitting the remaining substrate from their mouths. They scrape and pick off food items from rocks and plants. Midas cichlids feed mostly on benthic items, such as snails, other molluscs, algae and insects.
- **Life Span** – The midas cichlid may live up to 15 years.