

Oscars (Astronotus Ocellatus)

Oscars come in a lot of different colour varieties and require a large lidded aquarium of at least 200 litres (per pair). They prefer a deep sand bottom and a few large rocks. It is not recommended to have sticks or sharp objects that they can damage themselves on. Oscars will pull out plants, so any that are in the aquarium should be potted with the root surfaces covered with rocks. Some people use floating plants as a compromise to this problem.

Usually an Oscar being sold in a pet store will be 5 to 10cms long, but don't be fooled an adult Oscar is between 30 to 45cms. They also grow rather fast!

Because of their mass they can put an extraordinary bio-load on an aquarium so plenty of water is needed to dilute the waste and massive filtration is critical. Large water changes are also required to keep down nitrates.

Oscars are typically hardy fish for the most part and can take a lot of abuse without displaying outward symptoms of many health problems. This unfortunately leads many people to believe that they do not need much care – this is not the case at all.

Native to South America, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Oscars are of the cichlid family and are not suitable to be kept in a community aquarium.

Oscars can tolerate a p.H of 6.0 to 8.0 and a water temperature of 22 to 26 degrees Celsius. While this is a wide range it DOES NOT mean the water in their aquarium can fluctuate between these extremes. Stability must be maintained or else it is extremely detrimental to the fish.

Oscars need a wide variety of food to remain healthy. This includes insects, insect larvae, crustaceans, fish, plants and a staple quality cichlid pellet. In the wild they eat more insects and crustaceans, but since they are opportunistic they typically won't pass up anything that could be a possible meal.

Oscars are an extremely intelligent fish capable of being conditioned to do many little tricks. They quickly learn to recognise those who feed them. They are mildly aggressive- although mellow compared to some other cichlids and can be bullied by other tank mates. They are territorial and will often lay claim to an area of the aquarium.

An Oscar can live for well over a decade. These fish are a long term commitment that should not be taken lightly.

