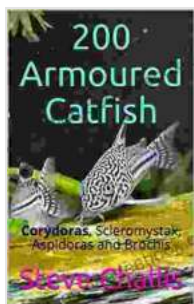


200+ Armoured Catfish: Corydoras, Scleromystax, Aspidoras, and Brochis

The world of armoured catfish is a vast and diverse one, with over 200 species inhabiting various freshwater habitats around the globe. These fascinating fish, belonging to the family Callichthyidae, are renowned for their unique armour-like plates, peaceful nature, and captivating behaviours. In this comprehensive guide, we will delve into the captivating realm of armoured catfish, exploring their taxonomy, habitat preferences, physical characteristics, behaviours, and care requirements.



200 Armoured Catfish: Corydoras, Scleromystax, Aspidoras and Brochis by Steve Challis

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 73340 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 557 pages
Lending : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported



Taxonomy and Distribution

Armoured catfish belong to the subfamily Corydoradinae, which comprises four genera: Corydoras, Scleromystax, Aspidoras, and Brochis. These genera can be further divided into numerous species, each with its own distinctive features and geographical distribution. Corydoras is the most diverse genus, with over 150 described species found in South America,

primarily in the Amazon and Orinoco River basins. *Scleromystax*, *Aspidoras*, and *Brochis* are smaller genera, with fewer than 50 species combined. Their distribution ranges from Panama to Argentina, including the Pacific and Atlantic slopes of South America.

Habitat Preferences

Armoured catfish typically inhabit freshwater environments with specific preferences for water quality, substrate, and vegetation. Many species, such as *Corydoras aeneus* and *C. paleatus*, are found in slow-moving, shallow streams and rivers with soft, sandy bottoms. Others, like *Scleromystax barbatus* and *Aspidoras spilatus*, prefer deeper, more oxygenated waters with rocky substrates. The presence of dense aquatic vegetation is crucial for most armoured catfish, as they use it for shelter, foraging, and breeding.

Physical Characteristics

Armoured catfish are renowned for their distinctive armour-like plates, which are embedded in their skin. These plates, known as scutes, provide protection against predators and contribute to their unique appearance. The body shape of armoured catfish varies depending on the species, but most have a relatively elongated body with a flattened underside. They typically possess a pair of barbels near their mouth, which they use to sense and navigate their surroundings. The size of armoured catfish ranges from the tiny *Aspidoras pauciradiatus*, which measures just 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) in length, to the large *Brochis splendens*, which can grow up to 15 centimetres (6 inches) long.

Behaviour and Social Dynamics

Armoured catfish are generally peaceful and social fish that live in shoals. They are known for their calm and gentle nature, making them ideal tankmates for other non-aggressive species. Armoured catfish are bottom-dwellers, spending most of their time foraging for food on the substrate or exploring the nooks and crannies of their environment. They are relatively active fish, constantly swimming and interacting with their surroundings. During the breeding season, male armoured catfish may engage in courtship rituals, which involve chasing and nudging the female.

Care Requirements

Armoured catfish are relatively easy to care for and can thrive in well-maintained home aquariums. Here are some essential care requirements to ensure their well-being:

Tank Size:

The appropriate tank size for armoured catfish depends on the species and the number of fish kept. As a general rule, a 10-gallon tank is sufficient for a small group of small species, such as *Corydoras pygmaeus* or *Aspidoras fuscoguttatus*. Larger species like *Brochis splendens* may require a tank of 20 gallons or more.

Water Parameters:

Armoured catfish prefer soft, slightly acidic water with a pH range of 6.0 to 7.5. The ideal water temperature varies depending on the species, but most do well within a range of 22 to 28 degrees Celsius (72 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit). Regular water changes are essential to maintain good water quality.

Substrate:

Armoured catfish prefer a soft, sandy substrate that mimics their natural habitat. Gravel or river sand are suitable options. Avoid sharp or abrasive substrates that could damage their delicate barbels and fins.

Filtration:

Armoured catfish require clean, well-oxygenated water. A reliable filtration system is essential to remove waste and maintain water quality. Sponge filters are often recommended for armoured catfish tanks as they provide gentle filtration without creating a strong current.

Vegetation:

Dense aquatic vegetation is crucial for armoured catfish. Live plants provide shelter, foraging opportunities, and breeding sites. Java ferns, Amazon swords, and floating plants are excellent choices for armoured catfish tanks.

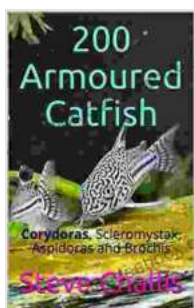
Diet:

Armoured catfish are omnivores that feed on a variety of foods, including algae, small invertebrates, and commercial fish food. Sinking pellets or wafers specifically designed for bottom-dwelling fish are a good staple food. Live and frozen foods, such as brine shrimp, bloodworms, and tubifex worms, can be offered as occasional treats.

The world of armoured catfish is a fascinating one, filled with a diverse array of species that captivate hobbyists with their unique appearance, peaceful nature, and engaging behaviours. From the tiny *Aspidoras pauciradiatus* to the majestic *Brochis splendens*, these fish offer a glimpse into the wonders of the aquatic world. By understanding their taxonomy, habitat preferences, physical characteristics, behaviours, and care

requirements, we can provide optimal conditions for these fascinating creatures to thrive in our aquariums.

As responsible fishkeepers, it is essential to conduct thorough research and choose species that are compatible with our tank size, water parameters, and desired community setup. By creating a suitable environment and providing appropriate care, we can enjoy the companionship of these delightful armoured catfish for years to come.



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