

SeaGram™

African Cichlids

The primary goal of any aquarist, be it freshwater or marine, should be habitat restoration for the housed species. This purist concept is firmly embedded in the marine hobby, but has not been prominently accepted by the freshwater hobbyist. Habitat restoration is more imperative within the Cichlid family than any other freshwater group. It is considered the largest and most diverse in the world of fish keeping, and continues to grow with the discovery of new species almost weekly. Most Cichlids are easily adapted to environments other than those from which they came, but in doing so, the aquarist sacrifices the coloring, behavior, and development seen in nature. Although Cichlids are easily adapted to a variety of environments, they will not thrive under such conditions.

Cichlids from the major Rift Valley lakes of Africa are an ever growing part of the Cichlid hobby. With the advent of Seachem's Cichlid line, Cichlid Lake Salt™, Tanganyika Buffer™, and Malawi/Victoria Buffer™, aquarists can now provide the most natural environment for African Cichlids regardless of the lake of origin. Until now, Cichlid products were designed as though all of the African Rift Valley lakes were chemically the same, which they certainly are not. Although the major lakes contain basically the same mineral salts, they do so in greatly differing concentrations. These concentration differences account for the variance in pH seen among the different lakes. Seachem's Cichlid Lake Salt™ is a chemically sound blend of salts designed to simulate the natural environment of Cichlids. It contains all physiologically essential elements such as magnesium, calcium, sodium, potassium, chloride, and sulfate, and it includes trace components such as iron, manganese, and iodide. It does not contain harmful or unnecessary ingredients such as nitrates, phosphates, arsenic, lithium, or cadmium. Cichlid Lake Salt™ is formulated so that dosages vary depending upon the lake of origin and need only be added when setting up an aquarium or with water changes. Avoid using salt when simply replacing evaporated water. Use 11 g (1.5 teaspoons) for each 10 gallons of freshwater to duplicate Tanganyika conditions, use 5.5 g (3/4 teaspoon) for each 10 gallons for Malawi conditions, and use 3.6 g (1/2 teaspoon) for Victoria conditions. Best results are secured with DI or RO water and soluble substrates such as crushed coral should be avoided. It would be impossible to provide one buffer that could offer the range of pH

found in the Rift Valley lakes. For this reason Seachem offers two different buffers, Tanganyika Buffer™ and Malawi/Victoria Buffer™, which, in combination with Cichlid Lake Salt™ at proper dosage, produce as perfect a semblance of natural waters as possible without a trip to Africa. Seachem's buffers are a blend of carbonate salts designed to enhance the natural environment of Cichlids by increasing alkalinity and adjusting pH. Malawi/Victoria Buffer™ is formulated to maintain a pH between 7.8 and 8.4, depending on the dosage of salt used (Malawi Salt dosage=8.0 to 8.4; Victoria Salt dosage=7.8 to 8.0). Tanganyika Buffer™ is formulated to maintain a pH between 9.0 and 9.4 when used with the recommended dosage of salt for Tanganyika conditions.

Conditions for African river Cichlids, along with Central and South American Cichlids, vary widely, but the Malawi or Victoria dose of Cichlid Lake Salt™ will benefit all those requiring alkaline water conditions. It is not recommended for acid water cichlids, however. It is compatible with all of Seachem's buffers, including Marine Buffer™, Reef Builder™, Neutral Regulator™, Discus Buffer™, Acid Buffer™ (non-phosphate), and Alkaline Buffer™ (non-phosphate), providing diverse possibilities for adjusting pH for some American Cichlids.

In attempting a Cichlid aquarium, keep in mind that Cichlids do have a variety of needs that should be met to optimally maintain such an aquarium. Cichlids generally require aquariums of greater size and with larger biological filter capacity than most other freshwater fish. Due to their territorial aggression, the given area for each fish has to be increased over that of most tropical inhabitants. Filtration must be efficient, and Seachem's de-nitrate™ or Matrix™ or Pond Matrix™ are effective filter media for cichlid aquaria.

A new level of cichlid husbandry is now attainable utilizing Cichlid Lake Salt™ in conjunction with Tanganyika Buffer™ or Malawi/Victoria Buffer™. Cichlids housed using these additives have displayed dramatic improvements in appearance and health, notably increased growth rates, enhanced coloration and increased spawning activity. Seachem's Cichlid line is unique in the thoroughness of its formulation and dosing and is ideal for the replication of the different lake conditions.

