

Copella arnoldi (Splash Tetra)

Family: Lebiasinidae (Pencil Fish)

Order: Characiformes (Characins and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Splash tetra, *Copella arnoldi*.

[<https://www.aquaportail.com/aquabdd/photos/copella-arnoldi.jpg>, downloaded 20 October 2016]

TRAITS. *Copella arnoldi* is about 3.4-4cm in length and is named the splash tetra as it lays its eggs out of the water on the underside of a leaf near the surface of the water (Weitzman and Weitzman, 2003). The splash tetra is a peaceful fish with a long, slender body which is gold or silver in colour (Fig. 1). The male has longer fins which are more colourful, with red and black outlines, and male tetras are also larger than the females.

DISTRIBUTION. Found in the fresh waters of the lower Amazon Basin in Brazil as well as on the coast of Suriname, Guiana and Guyana (Fig. 2) (Seriously Fish, 2016). It has been introduced into the Nariva Swamp in Trinidad.

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. Found in tropical freshwater habitats with a pH of 6.0-8.0 and temperatures between 25-29°C. This species of fish prefers to live in waters which has a large amount of plants hanging over the surface of the water. It feeds mainly on worms, small insects and crustaceans (Weitzman and Weitzman, 2003). In its natural environment this fish feeds on small invertebrates and zooplankton at the surface of the water and is known as a micropredator (Seriously Fish, 2016).

REPRODUCTION. When these fish are mature enough to reproduce the male chooses a suitable leaf on which to lay the eggs and awaits a female to be attracted to him. When the male attracts the female they both jump out of the water at the same time and on to the underside of the leaf which the male has chosen (Fig. 3). They do this several times and each time the female releases her eggs and the male fertilizes them immediately (Fig. 4), at the end of this there are dozens of eggs on the leaf (Fig. 5). When they complete their mating the female leaves the male to care for the eggs (Keenleyside, 1979). The male splashes water on the eggs every few hours for the next few days with his tail until the eggs hatch and the fry fall to the water (Weitzman and Weitzman, 2003).

BEHAVIOUR. The splash tetra is a peaceful fish with the male displaying an array of colours in order to attract a female to reproduce. This species synchronize their swimming and jumps out of the water to lay eggs on leaves over the surface of the water. The fry of *Copella arnoldi* tend to be in schools in weedy, quiet environments, and are not very active.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. The splash tetra has not been assessed by the IUCN as an endangered species (IUCN, 2016). This species of fish can be kept in aquariums.

REFERENCES

- IUCN (2016). *Copella arnoldi*. IUCN Red List: <http://www.aquariumlife.com.au/content.php/591-Copella-arnoldi-Splash-tetra>
- Keenleyside, M.H.A. (1979). Diversity and Adaptation in Fish Behaviour. Volume II of the series Zoophysiology pp124-148.
- Seriously Fish (2016). *Copella arnoldi*, splash tetra. <http://www.seriouslyfish.com/species/copella-arnoldi/>
- Weitzman and Weitzman (2003): <http://www.fishbase.org/summary/Copella-arnoldi.html>

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Fig. 2. Splash tetra geographic distribution.

[http://www.discoverlife.org/nh/maps/Vertebrata/Fish/Lebiasinidae/Copella/map_of_Copella_arnoldi.jpg, downloaded 20 October 2016]



Fig. 3. Splash tetras jumping out of water onto the underside of a leaf to lay eggs.

[http://paluweb.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/IMG_6800.jpg, downloaded 20 October, 2016]



Fig. 4. Splash tetra spawning on the underside of a leaf near the surface of the water.

[http://getplay.pk/vi/HD_6zPyrb00/mqdefault.jpg, downloaded on 20 October 2016]



Fig. 5. Eggs of splash tetra on the underside of a leaf at the surface of the water.

[<http://www.seriouslyfish.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Copella-arnoldi-eggs-2-Colin.jpg>, downloaded 20 October 2016]