

Torture in the Marine Aquarium Hobby - Sacrificing a Hawaii Endemic Damsel fish

- **Saltwater Fish for Cycling Aquariums:**

"Although there are many ways to establish the nitrogen cycle in an aquarium, most hobbyists choose to use so-called "starter fish" for the purpose. Perhaps this is because this method allows the new aquarist to have life in their aquarium while the tank is still new. The key to stocking an aquarium is to be patient! The following is a list of fish (and a few invertebrates), which, in our experience, have proven hardy enough to survive the initial "break in" period, or establishment of the nitrogen cycle in a marine aquarium. The creation of this list was not based on any type of scientific method, but rather on our own experience with the many aquariums we've installed. Each species on this list, has consistently proven **able to tolerate high levels of ammonia and nitrite, for at least six weeks...**"

Included in their list of animals recommended for cycling are the Hawaiian Damsel fish, *Dascyllus albisella*, and two eels collected in Hawaii, the Snowflake and the Zebra Moray.

See: <http://www.aquariumpros.com/articles/fishcyclesw.shtml>

- **Cycling a New Marine Aquarium:**

"Although so[me] people will tell you to cycle your tank by adding a hardy fish such as a damsel, don't do it. While the fish may survive, such a practice is archaic and is really nothing short of **torture**."

See: <http://www.suite101.com/content/cycling-a-new-marine-aquarium-a46295>

- **Kinds of Hardy Fish Used to Cycle a Saltwater Aquarium:**

"In a quandary on what types of hardy fish are used to cycle a tank? The easy answer here would be a chromis or damsel which are often used to cycle or break in a new aquarium. Nonetheless, other options also have to be considered on breaking in a saltwater tank without using any fish at all. Some aquarists frown on the approach of using a fish to cycle a tank, however hardy the choice of fish is. They think that this particular method is outmoded and downright **torture** for the fish.

In cycling a tank using fish, the number of fish needed would be dependent on the size of the tank. **Two damsels is the minimum that some aquarists suggest, and should these die in an incomplete cycling process, the cycling method can prove expensive and inconvenient in the long haul. New fish will be needed in the aborted recycling and contaminants inside the tank will have to be removed.**

There are other cycling methods closer to using fish too. **Molluscs and crabs, definite[ly] more expendable,** can likewise be used."

See: <http://factoidz.com/kinds-of-hardy-fish-used-to-cycle-a-saltwater-aquarium/>

- **Establishing Biological Cycling, Filtration in Marine Systems:**

"About Damsels & Torturing Other Wildlife

In the Dark Ages, back in the 1950's, when such pet-fish luminaries as Robert Straughan were discovering and disseminating how to set-up working marine systems, people fell into the habit of using "tougher" livestock like Damsel fish (family Pomacentridae), Anemones... even brackish Turtle species to provide starter and ongoing ammonia to establish nutrient cycling. Turns out, these organisms aren't necessary, nor advised. There is plenty of ammonia available from live rock, live sand organisms, old/used media, and even starter cultures. Why risk introducing a parasite, pest or pollution to your new system by using live animals here? Don't."

See: <http://www.wetwebmedia.com/estbiofiltmar.htm>

- **Types of Hardy Fish Used to Cycle a Saltwater Tank**

"A saltwater aquarium can be initially cycled in a couple of different ways. The fastest way to cycle a tank is with live fish but what types of hardy fish are used to cycle a tank? **You don't want to drop hundreds of dollars on fish that will die during the process.**"

See: <http://www.brighthub.com/pets/saltwater-aquariums/articles/105874.aspx>

- **How to Cycle a Saltwater Fish Only Tank**

"Add 4 to 6 damsel fish to your tank if your levels have been checking good throughout the week. Damsels are inexpensive fish that will assist in cycling your tank to its optimum beginner levels. Feed them regularly and check the levels periodically for the next 3 weeks.

Add your desired fish to the tank, but remove the damsels first! Damsels are aggressive and will most likely attack the new fish. **Since damsels are cheap, you should get rid of them** or you will find your other more expensive fish floating in your new saltwater tank."

See: http://www.ehow.com/how_4474066_cycle-saltwater-fish-only-tank.html

- **Cycling a New Saltwater Aquarium With Fish:** By Stan & Debbie Hauter, About.com Guide

"You are so excited! You have picked out and purchased your new aquarium, set up and tested the equipment, started up the system, and if you are NOT cycling the tank with live rock, you are now ready to add some fish to get things going. You think to yourself, what am I going to put in it? You recall that you really liked that fish you saw in the store the other day, ya know, the one that had all the bright colors. You remember it was so beautiful, and very expensive, and at this point you ask yourself, do I really want to spend \$70.00 on a new fish? The answer to this question of course should be, NO! What are you thinking?

Aside from being new to the hobby and having much yet to learn, for you to go out on a limb and spend this kind of money for a fish to put into a newly started aquarium is absurd, and don't let your local fish store talk you into it either. If you did your homework prior to starting your new aquarium, you know that the cycling period your tank has to go through to settle in results in high levels of ammonia and nitrites that are toxic to fish as well as all other livestock until the process completes its mission of establishing the biological filter base in the aquarium. Considering the threats that loom ahead for any fish for the first 30 days or so, including your lack of experience, **why would anyone want to put this kind of money into a fish to cycle a tank with?**

To help you make good tank starter fish choices, here are some tips:

* **Buy inexpensive, durable, hardy fish that are known to do well during the tank cycling process.**

Some of the best fish to start an aquarium with are Damsels or Chromis', members of the Family Pomacentridae. Now we know some of you are going to say, but **these fish are so plain looking** and can be very aggressive. Yes they can be, but once the tank has cycled and allowed to run for a month or so after that, you can trade them in at your local fish store or **give them to someone else who may be starting a new tank.** THEN you can step up to one or two of the more elegant beginner fishes for aquarists in the intermediate care range."

See: <http://saltaquarium.about.com/cs/bionitrogencycle/a/aa042098.htm>