FIELD STUDY REPORT
NON-NATIVE FISH RESEARCH PROJECT

Cichlasoma trimaculatum

The Central American Cichlid, C. trimaculatum is a relatively new fish in the tropical fish industry. It is closely related to C. urophthalmus and has often been confused with it. These two Cichlids are geographically separated by the continental divide with C. trimaculatum occuring in streams which flow into the Pacific Ocean and C. urophthalmus indigenous to Atlantic coastal streams. Both of these species are classed as brackish water cichlids.

Several dozen specimens of C. trimaculatum were rescued from rotenone treated water in Manatee County on October 20, 1975 and transported to the Exotic Fish lab in Boca Raton. Those fish were placed in a 600 gallon aquarium with 8 o/oo (parts per thousand) salt water. No shock was noted so two of the fish were transferred to another aquaria containing 24 °/oo salt water. No adverse effects were noted and these fish were observed feeding soon after introduction to the saline environment.

Cichlasoma trimaculatum have well developed dentition with rather prominent white conical teeth readily visable in adult specimens. Food habits are not fully known at this time but they have been observed feeding actively on Platties and Gambusia and are quite efficient piscivores.

The lake, from which these fish were obtained, is connected to the Manatee River where it widens into a salt water bay on entering Tampa Bay. There is little chance that this fish has not been able to establish itself in the Manatee River and perhaps other streams confluent to Tampa Bay.

There was, reported to be, a fairly active fishery for these Cichlids by residents in the area so it may be assumed these fish have been found palatable and grow to be an acceptable size to be harvested. We heard reports of speciments of

about two pounds but did not observe any that large during the rotenone treatment.

The complete absence of largemouth bass from the twenty acre lake containing these Cichlids, probably accounts for their becoming the dominant species there. The accompanying stunted bluegill population was typical of a community lacking sufficient large predator fishes such as bass, pickerel and mudfish. No doubt the Cichlid had been able to consume numbers of the very small bluegills. Their relatively small mouth prevented their being able to consume the intermediate size bream.

The presence of live C. trimaculatum in the shallows one day after treatment with 4 ppm. Noxfish indicates a remnant population of the exotic

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1975