

LABYRINTH FISH

Labyrinth fish belong to the sub-order Anabantoidei which include (debated) five families; [Anabantidae](#), [Belontiidae](#), [Helostomatidae](#), Luciocephalidae (controversially), and [Osphronemidae](#). Labyrinth fish inhabit Africa, Asia, India, and Southeast Asia.

Their name is derived from the Labyrinth Organ that all the fish in the sub-order possess. This organ enables this fish to breathe in oxygen-deprived waters. This organ is located just above the gills and consists of folded skin tissues that are lined with numerous blood vessels. This accessory respiratory organ allows Labyrinth fish to breathe air from the surface of the water. Due to this advanced organ, some species such as *Anabas testudineus* are able to leave the water for extended periods in humid climates. This species moves about on land by using its pectoral fins.

SIZE: The fish of this family are generally small to medium-sized.

HAB: Generally stagnant waters where little oxygen is present. Four families are from Asia, India, and Southeast Asia, while one family inhabits Africa.

S: Depends on the species

TANK: Since the sub-order of Labyrinth fish contains such a diverse group of fish, a generalization regarding tank size or set-up would be inaccurate.

WATER: Again, due to the wide distribution of Labyrinth fish, an accurate pH range can not be given. Generally a pH from 6-7.5, a water hardness from 4-15 dH, and a temperature from 72-82°F (22-28°C) is satisfactory.

SB: Although some species are pugnacious, and at least one genus is predatory, most Labyrinth fish are suitable for community tanks. Males are frequently territorial and may harass females around spawning times.

SC: See individual descriptions.

FOOD: Many Labyrinth fish accept a wide range of live and dry foods.

B: Labyrinth have developed different spawning behavior in order to adapt to various environmental conditions. These include bubble-nest builders, mouth-brooders, and open-spawners.

(1) Male bubble-nest builders gather debris and create a nest of bubbles encased in saliva at the water's surface. Spawning takes place below the nest, and the male takes the eggs or fry into the nest. He tends to the eggs and guards the territory towards other fish-including the female.

(2) Mouth brooding is another technique used by several types of labyrinth fish. After spawning the eggs are taken into the mouth of the male or female, depending on the species. There the eggs are incubated for a time.

(3) Open water spawners simply release their eggs with little regard to where the eggs end up. These species do not take part in brood care.

BP: The difficulty of breeding depends entirely on the species.

DC: Labyrinth fish offer a wide range of possibilities for the beginning aquarist to even the most advanced aquarist.