

CICHLID TAILS

The Newsletter of The Texas Cichlid Association

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President's Letter

Hello Everyone!

Last month's meeting was at the La Quinta Inn in Arlington. This was a first for us, since we usually meet at a member's home. While I missed seeing someone else's tanks, it saved someone the time and trouble preparing for a meeting. (Although, for me, having folks over is very good motivation for cleaning fish tanks!) We enjoyed listening to Ron Georgeone from Cleveland. Ron, the premier fish showperson, has won more ACA Mahoney Awards for winning fish shows than anyone else. It was good to see John and Patty Fuhr, TCA members who have moved back to Texas from Arizona.

The Christmas party will be December 10th at Ryan's Steakhouse in North Richland Hills. Bring a wrapped fish/fishy gift for the gift exchange. Our members have gotten very creative over the years; you never know what will be in your gift! Bring your family for a fun time; guests are most welcome, too.

January and February meetings will be at the La Quinta's Conference Center, across from the main conference center on the Steak & Ale side of the hotel. This is a larger room than we used in October.

January's meeting will include the Election of Officers and the Board of Trustees. Again, I want to encourage every TCA member to consider serving. The same, great group of folks has served for many years; it would be really good for some new ones to step up. New folks always have new ideas and TCA can use that right now. Please volunteer!!!

Aside from business, we will watch and listen to some of the speakers from this year's ACA convention. Thanks to Erik Olsen, we have a CD of the speakers. We hope to have a live speaker in February

We are working on the Spring Show & Workshop. Dates are tentatively March 24th – 26th, 2006. I am working with the Clarion Hotel in Irving (formerly the Holiday Inn Select). The hotel's ownership has changed and some very nice renovations have been made. I am also working on speaker lineup. Let me know any suggestions for a particular speaker or topic.

Lastly, I have received some very sad news. We have lost one of my favorite TCA members, and the second individual named a Fellow of the TCA, John Gilliam. John and wife Amy are two of the most positive people I have had the privilege to know. John would do whatever needed to be done for TCA, including hosting meetings, running speakers around, and serving on the board. He secured TCA's non-profit corporate status in Texas. I was so pleased to see him at the ACA convention, even though it was so tiring for him. I think Amy worked double time for both of them at the convention. John will be missed very much by all.

- Kathy

CICHLID TAILS

Cichlid Tails is a bi-monthly publication produced by and for the members of the **Texas Cichlid Association**, a non-profit group of hobbyists dedicated to furthering the aquarium hobby and promoting the practice of keeping cichlids by the dissemination of information. Published since 1983, **Cichlid Tails** is dedicated to sharing technical and educational information on the keeping of the fishes of the family **Cichlidae**, and the keeping of aquariums and aquarium fish in general.

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Photographer	Randy Rhoades

Editor's Notes

The trees are dressed in their glorious fall colors. Frost in some areas has finally killed what grass was still alive after the summer drought. Geese winging their way south testify that Old Man Winter will soon hit us with icy blasts. So, who wants to think about tropical fish now??

Now is the time to break out the heaters and test them to determine if they work properly. Also, now is the opportunity to do that semi-annual maintenance on the sumps that you have been putting off. Time to get everything fishy ready for winter, because it's coming, whether we want it to or not!

The annual meeting of FOTAS was held in September in College Station. This group of FOTAS officers has really worked hard and gotten a lot of things done with regard to "modernizing" FOTAS, the main thing being the updating of the Bylaws. ***FOTAS officers for 2006 will be elected soon. If you are interested in a position, please contact FOTAS President Marvin England.***

Everyone had a great time at the LaQuinta in October. Ron Georgeone's presentation was outstanding. We think of Ron as being more of a showman, but it's amazing what he is doing in the fish-breeding area.

TCA's Annual Christmas Party and Crazy Santa Gift Exchange will be held December 10th at Ryan's Family Steakhouse in North Richland Hills. Come on out and have fun, whether you participate in the gift exchange or not. We always have lots of laughs and good-natured kidding when gifts are "stolen". And you just never know – you might end up with your "dream fish"!

See you at the Christmas Party!

What is a Fish Worth?

by Kevin Thurston *From CAS Newsletter and Aquarist, Colorado Aquarium Society* Aquarticles.com

I recently saw an article in the Buntbarsche Bulletin about how many supposed F0 (wild) African cichlids are actually farmed there at the shore of the lakes. When people are paying premium prices for wild caught fish and they don't get wild caught fish, they are being gypped, aren't they? This issue got me to thinking about an even more general issue and that is how much you should have to pay for a fish and why do we assign the values to them that we do?

My step-son has an 8" red oscar (named Racso) living in a tank in his bedroom. He's (the fish not the step-son) not an exceptional specimen, in fact he has a small notch in his anal fin, but he's very much a pet and his value is immeasurable in that respect. This is despite the fact that it would be easy to come up with the money to get another one like him.

Aside from the sentimental value, what else do we value in a fish? How about color and beauty? Is an emperor angelfish really any more colorful and beautiful than a cardinal tetra? Actually, for my taste the cardinal tetra is the prettier fish, yet the difference in price is orders of magnitude. The cardinal goes for anywhere from a dollar to three dollars while the emperor angel usually can't be had for less than a hundred dollars and a nice big one is going to be priced at nearly two hundred dollars. Granted, a lot of that price difference is due to the expense in collection and transport and that there are not a lot of emperors to be had compared with cardinals. So I'm not suggesting that emperors are overpriced and cardinals are too cheap. What I am suggesting is that for someone like me, my money is probably better spent on a school of cardinals than an emperor angel. I'm also leading up to another issue. I think a lot of hobbyists get caught up in sort of a hobby version of "keeping up with the Joneses". I've seen situations where people will point to their expensive fish and say with a tone of pride "I paid \$300 for that fish". My usual reaction is to think that they got ripped off on that fish for paying so much, but I think the reaction that they are hoping for is that I will be so impressed with their aquatic skill that they feel confident in risking that much money on a fish (which could easily die). I'm much more impressed by people who breed their fish; I don't care if they're platies, convict cichlids or mandarins.

So if somebody is breeding mandarins, does that entitle them to more respect than the platy breeder? I have to admit that the level of difficulty is considerably different, but I believe the level of passion required for each endeavor is just about equal. These considerations should be included in bowl shows, but I think they rarely are.

Consider a bowl show where the category is something we'll call Bigfamilids. In this show we might have entries that include some fairly common members and a few not so common, but also includes the rare and elusive *Bigfamilisomus expensivus*. I've seen time and again where the *B. expensivus* is not such an outstanding specimen and certainly not as nice a representative of its species as the *B. commoncheapus* in the tank next to it. Yet the *B. expensivus* is judged a winner, even though there's no judging category for rarity or price. I contend that this is not only unfair to the person who brought the *B. commoncheapus*, but also perpetuates an artificial valuation system whereby hobbyists have difficulty appreciating fish for what they are.

One of the worst cases of not being able to appreciate a fish on its own merits is the painted or dyed fish that are routinely offered for sale. I'm referring to the painted glassfish, mixed fruit tetras and bizarrely colored "blood" parrot cichlids. How does painting a fish (with a paint that isn't going to last by the way) improve the value of a fish? My feeling is that if you can't appreciate a glassfish as they occur in nature, then why bother with one that has been painted? Why not just stock your tank with plastic replica fish? The glassfish is a remarkable fish that has a transparent body. This particular aspect should merit our appreciation on its own.

Aside from the glassfish, how many other fish are prized for their unique shape, habits and other non-color related traits? I know I tend to prize expensive *Synodontis* spp. This has been born out of my love for the cheapest one of the bunch, the upside-down cat (*S. nigriventris*). I tend to look at things like *S. angelicus*, *S. decorus*, *S. flavitaeniatus* and *S. brichardi* etc. as being just nicely colored and larger versions of the upside-down cat, even though they are not as prone to the endearing trait of upside-down swimming as *S. nigriventris*. The difference in price between *S. nigriventris* and *S. granulosus* is comparable to the difference between those cardinals and emperor angels I was writing about earlier. I've never had the money for a *S. granulosus* when I could find one, so I've never had one, but I've had (and still do have) some relatively expensive *Synodontis* cats, but I'm also never without my beloved *S. nigriventris*. I know that many hobbyists are the same way. They may have some rare and expensive species that they are quite proud of, but they are equally proud of those old favorites that may not be so expensive, but they are the ones that really got their interest in the early days and they still have that intrinsic value.

So how do we value our fish? Like many commodities, a fish is worth as much as someone is willing to pay. So why are people willing to pay hundreds of dollars for one fish? Is it a status thing? Is it because they are going to start breeding them and make a fortune selling these expensive fish? What is it that drives the hobbyist to be a collector? I'm not sure that I'll ever know the answers to these questions. My intent in writing this article was not to berate those who have spent a lot of money on one fish; heaven knows I am just as guilty of that as anyone could be. On the other hand, I think the aquarium in my home office could really be colored up nicely with the addition of some regular old red wag swordtails and it wouldn't cost me all that much to get some would it?

Spawning the Red Lizard Whiptail

by Charles Drew *From the Monthly Bulletin of the Hamilton Aquarium Society* Aquarticles

Hemiloricaria sp. 'Red' (L10a), is a small whiptail catfish. They only showed up in the USA about five years ago and are much sought after by aquarists for their small size and bright red colour. The common name is the Red Lizard Catfish. They come from the Rio Tocantins in Brazil. There is controversy as to whether they are a colour morph of another species or a distinct species of their own. They grow to about four inches in length. The female's colour is a brilliant red and a mature male is more of a brownish red with little hairs covering their heads and pectoral fins.

I first became aware of their existence while cruising Aqua-Bid on the internet. My first impression was "Boy! would I like to get some of those". But for a Canadian to have a fish shipped in is pricey to say the least and the chance it will arrive alive and in a healthy condition is not too great. In Oct. 2004 I went to the All Aquarium Catfish Convention in Laurel Maryland. Guess who was in the sales room with a whole tank full of Red Lizard Catfish? None other than Eric Bodrock of All Oddball

Aquatics. (Incidentally he has an excellent website with good information articles.) They were an inch and a half to about two inches long. Eric told me that he could pretty well sex them and I left with two larger and two smaller ones and they have grown to two adult pairs. They were given a ten gallon tank with a sand bottom and several three quarter inch pieces of pipe to hide in. As the next couple of months went by the males grew to four inches and the females to three. They were getting fat and full of spawn eating small carnivore pellets and frozen blood worms and brine shrimp. They had a tiny Red Sea power filter to give them current and soft water. Finally, after checking Eric's article I boosted the temperature to 82 F. This was the magic number because they spawned two days later.



The number of eggs was small, only a dozen, but they were about the size of a BB pellet. The male guarded the eggs in the tube and I could see them darkening. Having spawned other whiptail cats I knew that the females will eat the newly hatched fry that hatched on the seventh day. So I put my thumb and finger over the ends of the tube and moved the male and eggs to another tank on the sixth day. All went well but the eggs did not hatch until the tenth day. The fry were about three eighths of an inch long and mottled. The male was removed to the spawning tank.

Raising fry can sometimes prove difficult. I read of some awful contraptions and devices that people have constructed to raise lazy feeding fry. I opted to try Eric's much simpler method. I took a large size Hydro Sponge Filter - one that I don't usually like because I feel that they are a little too fine. I placed it in the ten gallon tank with the fry. When I fed them I swished the live, newly hatched brine shrimp toward the filter. Some of course stuck to the sponge held there by the air flow. The fry went onto the sponge and spent most of the next two months there before looking for food on the bottom. From the twelve eggs, all of which hatched, I now have ten, three month old fry up to two inches long. On two other occasions I have seen a few eggs that were eventually eaten. I have also read since that the females can be aggressive egg eaters. They may be out of their spawning season for now but next season I hope they may prove more prolific.

**If you are a BAP participant,
please get your BAP paperwork
turned in by December 1.**

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATED
IN A "FLEA MARKET" TO DISPOSE OF
SOME OF YOUR USED FISHKEEPING
EQUIPMENT?**

TCA is considering hosting a "flea market" in the spring to assist members in disposing of good used "fish stuff". Sellers would be charged for booth space, but would keep

Having an aquarium in your office is a wonderful experience...as long as you do not spend all your working hours staring at it! There are a few things to consider for such a project though. Some may seem obvious, but are still worth mentioning:

a) Time and Labor. How much time are you willing to put into this project? Most employers would insist that any work be done after hours, which will impact your personal time management. A simple display that utilizes moderate light, and slow to moderate growth plants will need only minimal attention. A sealed top aquarium hood with a glass cover inside separating the lights from the water will slow down evaporation. How close is your office to a sink or source of water?

b) Liability. Accidents do happen...at least to me they do! I have had leaky filters, I have connected filter hoses incorrectly and emptied water onto the carpet, marred furniture, had Python water changers turn into a water fountain, spilled chemicals...OK, I am a clutz! But I put up with it at home, learn from my mistakes, and deal with it. At the office though I do not want to become liable for my mistakes! New carpets and furniture are expensive!

c) Aquascaping. To create an interesting aquascape in small tanks, it is important to keep the right scale in mind. This requires using SMALL plants, tight groups, and as in any size tank, varying heights for perspective. Stem plants can be used as background plants, and most can be trimmed and kept to any desired height. Plants with small to miniature size leaves would work the best, while those with very long leaves would look to overpowering. For grass like plants, most any type of *Vallisneria* should be avoided, except perhaps corkscrew vials in ten gallon aquariums. Dwarf sag. and Pigmy Chain Swords, (*E. tenellus*, *latifolious*) can reach heights of 6": to 8" - almost a background plant in very small tanks.

Micranthemoides, (baby tears) is a perfect plant for small tanks with its tiny tiny leaves! It can be grown in groups, "bushes", or carpeting a whole area, kept short or tall. Of course this requires much pruning.

100% of their sales proceeds. If you are interested, please let Kathy Stearns know as soon as possible so we can determine if there is enough interest within the club to do this.

Aquariums for the office

by Robert Paul Hudson from Robert's web site
in Salem Oregon: Aquabotanic.com Aquarticles

Other suitable plants would include Java moss, small *Cryptocorynes*, and *Anubias nana*, which would be lower maintenance plants, not requiring frequent pruning.

Editor's Note: The various small Eclipse acrylic tanks would be perfect for an office, especially if cubicles are involved.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SERVE AS
A FOTAS DELEGATE OR OFFICER,
PLEASE NOTIFY FOTAS
PRESIDENT MARVIN ENGLAND AT
marvinengland@hotmail.com**

LOCATIONS OF UPCOMING EVENTS & MEETINGS

TCA will hold its annual "Crazy Santa" Christmas Party on December 10th at 7:00 at Ryan's Family Steak House, 6835 NE Loop 820, in North Richland Hills. Call (817) 428-0515 if you need directions. Price is \$8.99 for the meal, \$1.49 for a drink and 15% gratuity per check. Bring something "fishy" if you wish to participate in the gift exchange. Not necessarily something alive -- we've had everything from silk boxers to collector edition books -- just something nice to exchange.

TCA's January meeting will be held on the 21st at 7:00 p.m. at the LaQuinta at Six Flags in Arlington. There will be a special guest speaker as well as election of officers and board members. ***There will be no snacks at this meeting, so everyone is encouraged to plan accordingly.***

February's meeting will be held on the 18th at 7:00 p.m. at the LaQuinta at Six Flags in Arlington. There will be a special guest speaker, and we will discuss the spring workshop. ***There will be no snacks at this meeting, so everyone is encouraged to plan accordingly.***

TCA's Spring 2006 Show, Workshop and Auction is tentatively scheduled for March. The November Meeting was 13th at 2:00 p.m. at Lee Ann and Greg Steeves' house. Dr. Herson Lopez-Fernandez, an authority on Geophagine cichlids, discussed collecting in Brazil and Venezuela.

Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 3rd at Bracken United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 20377 FM 2252, San Antonio, TX. For more and updated info, go to: www.xdeleon.com/hccc.

Houston Aquarium Society

Monthly meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:30 at local aquarium shops. For more info, check the calendar at the HAS website: www.houstonaquariumsociety.org

TAKO

(Texas Area Killifish Organization)

TAKO is an affiliate of the American Killifish Association. TAKO holds monthly meetings and an annual Killifish show and auction. There are no membership dues for TAKO. For information on meetings, TAKO, the AKA, or killifish, contact TAKO President Doug

24-26. Location to be announced later. Start thinking now of a speaker you would like to hear.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

What's Going On With Other Texas Clubs

If you are a member of another Texas aquarium club and want to list an event here, please contact the Cichlid Tails editor – it's free!

Hill Country Cichlid Club

Ebeling, via e-mail at ebeling@charter.net, or the TAKO website: www.tako.daelarue.com

Dallas Killifish Association

The Dallas Killifish Association meets monthly at 1 p.m. on the third Saturday. For more information on upcoming meetings, give John a call or contact the DKA at: Webmaster@Dallaskillifish.com

Texas Betta Society

The Texas Betta Society's Fall International Show held on Oct 15 & Oct 16 was a great success. For more information on the TBS, go to their website: www.texasbetta.com.

Earth Eater

by Paul McFarlane From the Monthly Bulletin of the Hamilton and District Aquarium Society, November 2000Aquarticles

The genus *Geophagus* consists of a number of species of New World Cichlids including *surinamensis*, *acuticeps*, *balzanii*, *brasiliensis*

(the subject of this article), and others. Most members of the genus, including *brasiliensis*, live up to the meaning of the name *Geophagus* - "earth eater".

G. brasiliensis is found in eastern Brazil, including the Amazon and Orinoco basins. It can grow easily to 8 or 10 inches but may not reach this if kept in smaller tanks. If allowed, breeding will begin at 3 or 4 inches or even less. Sexing this species is best done by observing the "plumpness" of the female. Males also have a tendency to be larger and may also have slightly more pointed finnage.

Colouration is variable and includes green, blue and red. With age, the fish develops many "mother of pearl" spots on the body and from this comes the common name, Pearl Cichlid. It also exhibits a large black

Tanks of 15 gallons or more are sufficiently large. Of course, the larger the spawning tank, the longer the fry can be left with their parents without stunting their growth. Since spawns seem to average about 200 fry it is sooner or later necessary to split the youngsters up if one wants to raise most of them. My own pair of fish are housed in a 65 gallon community tank in which they start a new batch of young each time the last batch gets big enough to care for themselves.

These fish seem to like to lay their eggs in a flower pot. Whether it is clay or plastic seems to make no difference. The preferred site seems to be the inside surface of the pot. In my tank the pots originally contained plants rooted in potting soil, with a layer of gravel on the top to keep the soil in. The *Geophagus* proceeded to remove the gravel and about one third of the soil the first time they spawned. The second time, they removed the rest of the soil. The third time, they moved to another pot and started the process over again. The only way I have found to stop them is to cover the pots with flat pieces of slate.

After the eggs are laid they are guarded by the female both while they are hatching and after the fry are free swimming. Intruders are

spot in the centre of the body. This spot intensifies with age, temperature and the condition of the fish. In general, the darker the spot, the better the fish is feeling. Young fish have several dark, transverse bands but these disappear with maturity.

G. brasiliensis is one of those cichlids that means to spawn whether you want them to or not. Once they begin, their frequency reminds me of convicts or angels, although, unlike angels, they present no need to separate them from their eggs. They are very careful parents and rarely eat eggs or fry. Spawning requirements include a place to lay the eggs, any reasonable temperature (75 to 85) and a decent diet.

firmly, but not viciously, chased from the area. I have never observed any real damage done to the other tank inhabitants, even though these included *Rasbora* species and some small *Characins*. While the female is doing all the work, the male stays generally in the area but doesn't really get involved.

Unless you want to raise large numbers of fry, several spawnings can be raised together; the older fry tend to ignore the younger, although a few are no doubt lost. The safest way to raise lots of these fish is to remove the pot with the eggs in it and hatch them artificially as you would angels.

One of the nice things about these fish is that they hold their breeding colours as long as they have fry to care for. They are quite pretty in this condition and since they are spawning or raising fry most of the time, they make a colourful addition to a tank. Their even, generally pleasant temperament also makes it possible to keep them in the company of almost any other fish, even small ones. In fact, their only drawback is their unending desire to dig.

My spawning pair consists of a 5" male and a 3" female. There is also a 2.5" female in the tank (as well as fry of various sizes), but she has never been involved in the breeding. The

pair began spawning when both were about 2.5" long. The female has not grown nearly as much as the male, possibly because of the energy she has expended in the spawning process.

If you set up a tank for these fish, learn to live without rooted plants. Java moss and floating plants can be used to pretty up the tank and provide a sense of security. Expect the gravel to be arranged to the fishes' own liking and add a couple of flower pots sitting upright as spawning sites. The pair can be kept by themselves or other peaceful species can be added to produce a community aquarium. Under these conditions you can expect to have a tank that will result in many hours of pleasure and interesting activity.



Photo used with permission of Jeff Rapps

ATTENTION ALL TCA MEMBERS

IF YOU NORMALLY RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP AT TCA'S FALL WORKSHOP, YOUR MEMBERSHIP HAS PROBABLY EXPIRED. YOU CAN EITHER RENEW AT THE TCA CHRISTMAS PARTY, OR GET A RENEWAL FORM FROM THE TCA WEBSITE, COMPLETE IT AND MAIL IT IN WITH YOUR DUES. TCA APPRECIATES YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN CLUB ACTIVITIES!

TAIL TRADER

Got something fishy to sell or trade? Notify the *Cichlid Tails* editor. All TCA members in good standing may advertise fish, equipment and related supplies for sale, or place a "want" ad at no cost.

Marvin England

marvinengland@hotmail.com

FOR SALE: (Will delivery to Christmas party)

Synodontis petricola – Texas raised!! Size 1 1/2" minimum \$6 each (quantity discounts available)

John Nicholson

(903) 527-5174

nicholsons_discus@yahoo.com

FOR SALE:

Discus, killifish, and bettas. Many types and sizes of each. Call or e-mail for details.

Phil Tucker

philtucker@comcast.net

(817) 726-6262

FOR SALE: (Will deliver to Christmas party)

Challinochromis brichardi-2 1/2".....\$8; 2".....\$6

Bristlenose plecos-1 1/2".....\$2

Julidochromis marleri "Mgara Burundi"-2 1/2".....\$6

Pseudotropheus DeMasoni-2".....\$3

Rob Mears

RMears@BealService.com

WANTS:

Pseudotropheus DeMasoni; Pseudotropheus Socolofi "white"; Cyphotilapia Frontosa; Synodontis Multipunctatus

TCA Calendar of Events

December 10, 2005: Annual Christmas Party and Crazy Santa gift exchange at 7:00 at Ryan's Family Steak House, 6835 NE Loop 820 in North Richland Hills. Call (817) 428-0515 if you need directions. Price is \$8.99 for meal, \$1.49 for drink and 15% gratuity per check.

January 21, 2006 Regular monthly meeting, 7:00 p.m., at the LaQuinta at Six Flags in Arlington. There will be a special guest speaker as well as election of officers and board members. There will be no food at this meeting, so everyone is encouraged to plan accordingly.

February 18, 2006: Regular monthly meeting, 7:00 p.m., at the LaQuinta at Six Flags in Arlington. There will be a special guest speaker. There will be no food at this meeting, so plan accordingly.

March 24-26, 2006 Tentative dates for TCA's Spring Show, Workshop and Auction. Location to be announced later. A special "for kids only" speaker is planned as part of this workshop.

Texas Cichlid Association
Kathy Stearns, President
1515 Creekview Drive
Keller, Texas 76248