

CICHLID TAILS

The Official Newsletter of the Texas Cichlid Association

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Fishy Bits

by Kevin Thurston

*From CAS Newsletter and Aquarist,
Colorado Aquarium Society
Aquarticles.*

Cichlids are not the only fish that are mouthbrooders. Other mouthbrooders include some Anabantoids (Gouramis and Bettas), some catfish and Arowanas.

The genus name *Synodontis* means fused tooth plates. Notice the similarities between the syllables in this word to the English words synergism and dentist.

The genus name for swordtails is *Xiphophorus*, which means sword carrier.

Notice the similarity to the genus name of the marine swordfish *Xiphias*.

When commercially farmed catfish and trout were tested for the biochemical processes for digesting lactase, the sugar contained in milk, the tests were positive. This allowed the inclusion of dairy by-products in commercial feeds. It is strange that fish can digest dairy products when amphibians, reptiles and birds can't. It is an evolutionary puzzle.

When an investigation into the cause of death of a fish is done it is called a necropsy, not an autopsy.

Strangely enough the long-finned or veil characteristic of angel fish is dominant. This means that if you cross a long-finned angel with a normal finned angel you will get either 50% or 25% of the offspring with long fins, depending on if the long-finned parent is homozygous or heterozygous. Homozygous means that both chromosomes that carry the genes for fin length have the long fin gene. Heterozygous means that one chromosome carries the long fin gene while the other carries the normal fin gene.

Many catfish, including the popular *Corydoras* spp., are able to utilize atmospheric oxygen to supplement their normal breathing.

**OFFICER ELECTIONS IN JANUARY.
RUN FOR AN OFFICE AND HELP TCA
CONTINUE TO GROW IN 2008!**

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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TCA's website: www.texascichlid.org

Editor's Notes

Happy Turkey Day! It's come and gone, and we had snow in Eastland! Hope everyone had great visits with loved ones. Most importantly during this holiday season, please drive safely; get where you are going and the back home in one piece, please.

It's supposed to be 34 degrees here tonight. However, all plants are safely in the greenhouse and the ones that aren't have been safely covered until they can be taken care of properly this weekend. What a busy time of year!

TCA's fall auction is over and I think it was very well-received. This is the first time I can remember that TCA had a Saturday auction, and it sure was nice to be able to stay for the whole thing, not to mention sleep late the next morning and maintain a leisurely pace on the way home. Rumor has it that TCA is considering having a Saturday auction in the spring and having a BIG BLOWOUT during FOTAS in September to celebrate TCA's 25th anniversary.

Speaking of such anniversary, I would love to have some of your "war stories" from your years of attending TCA functions. Send them to me and I will publish them next year in Cichlid Tails. I know everyone has at least one - every fish person has some tales to tel!

Mark you calendars and be sure to attend TCA's annual Christmas Party and Crazy Santa Gift Exchange on December 1. If you have never attended a Christmas Party, you don't know what you have been missing!

Hope to see everyone there - December 1

Sorting Out the Grey Dogs

A decidedly unscientific approach to Central American Cichlid Identification

By Rick Bolger

As printed in the North Jersey Aquarium Society Reporter, October 2000

What's in a name? As a fishkeeper, you've seen it time after time: A bunch of guys at a society meeting, arguing over a white plastic pail...

"It's *Heros*," says one.

"I believe Conkel calls it *Nandopsis*," replies another.

"They're working on the whole family...I think they put that one in *Parapetenia*," chimes a third.

After a while the breeder's award honcho steps in, and authoritatively cuts through the clutter with, "we'll just list it as *Cichlasoma*."

Finally, you know what they're talking about: Central American cichlids. The bucket brigaders all shrug their shoulders and acquiesce to the tried and true *Cichlasoma*. Big, ugly, greyish, conspiratorial monsters that go about their plant eating and gravel moving with a deliberate, deranged tenacity...or, highly evolved creatures with tremendous parental tendencies of which the finest specimens always seem to draw the most attention at fish shows. Which is it? Will the real *Cichlasoma* please step forward?

Actually, all of it is true, except the *Cichlasoma* part. Central American cichlids tend to be greyish, but they also dress in a rainbow of colorful spangles. They often

pester and kill their own kind, but they are also fiercely devoted parents. They are a little of everything, except the one thing everybody was certain about: they aren't "*cichlasoma*."

Indeed, they are "*cichlasomines*," but not of the genus *Cichlasoma*. After what was probably very dreary research through some moldy volumes, it has been determined that *Cichlasoma* was originally used to describe some of the South American fishes popularly known as Acaras. (But not all Acaras. The best known example is probably the "port-hole cichlid," or *Cichlasoma taenia*, not to be confused with the more colorful "port cichlid.") Thus the Central Americans were cast adrift, with no popular name to anchor to. The scientists, for their part, are redesigning the whole spectrum of Central American names. The problem is that just when they think they have everything sewed up in neat little scientific packages, some hobbyist trudges through a swamp in one of the banana republics and pulls out a new ugly grey dog that doesn't quite fit. Eventually, all the notes will match and we'll have a lengthy list of highly accurate names.

In the meantime, the following descriptions are an easy-to-remember and occasionally accurate way to classify the Central Americans. Perfect for the bucket brigade, and usually garners a grunt of approval from the scientific types. Better still, you can easily memorize these classifications with the help of an acronym. (Be forewarned that the acronym memorization method is unlikely to garner any approval whatsoever

from the scientific types). Here's how it works:

The Acronyms: NATHAT and PHANG

NATHAT represents the six types often mislabeled "*cichlasoma*." PHANG represents the oddballs, the cichlids that defy being lumped into the main six. Again, these six are currently being reclassified into a host of more exacting genera, but if you can learn them at this simplified level you are on your way to a better understanding of Central American cichlids!

The order is approximately by size, largest to smallest, with the exception of the five oddballs that follow. The acronym NATHAT stands for *Nandopsis*, *Amphilophus*, *Theraps*, *Herichthys*, *Archocentrus*, *Thorichthys*. The size ranking is generally that the largest *Nandopsis* is bigger than the largest *Amphilophus*, and so on down the line. There are of course a few *Herichthys* larger than many *Nandopsis*, but for the sake of sanity we'll do it the easy way and stick with NATHAT.

Be warned that the Latin is not exact -- *fenestratus*, *fenestratum*? Sorry, I don't speak Italian.

Nandopsis

If you know what a "managuense" or jaguar cichlid looks like, you'll have a pretty good concept of what the *Nandopsis* are all about. These tend to be submarine-shaped predators, with a concave forehead, upturned mouth, and highly protractile jaw. Known as the guapototes, these fish are built to pursue smaller fish and eat them. *Dovii* and *umbriferum* get size honors, while *salvinii* is regarded as the smallest. If you think only in terms of their silhouette, all of the aforementioned fish are essentially the same. Other well-known *Nandopsis* include the *motaguense*, *loisellei*, *grammodes*,

minckleyi, and the preeminent nasty grey dog, the "red terror" or *Nandopsis urophthalmus*. According to some the prettier red terror, *N. festae*, is also in this group.

Nandopsis species have the widest territorial range of the Central Americans: North and west through Mexico, south to where the *festae* and *umbies* range into Colombia, and east to the Dominican Republic where the *haitiensis* is found.

Amphilophus

Picture the shape of a red devil, and you've got the *Amphilophus*. If you've done your homework, you might be wondering which red devil, *labiatum* or *citrinellus*? Either one; both are *Amphilophus*. Some tend to be slender, with long snouts like *A. labiatus*; others tend to be taller, with pointy snouts like *A. citrinellus*. (*citrinellus* - or is it *citrinellum* - is also known as the midas cichlid). All tend to have concave foreheads, and most display seven wide vertical bars when young. Many *Amphilophus* make their living by sucking crustaceans and other chum out of gravel and crevices in lakes, so you can frequently identify this genera as the fishes with the big lips. Some of the better-known *Amphilophus* include *robertsoni*, *altifrons*, *lyonsi*, and *alfari*. Another fish that typifies the *Amphilophus* is the *trimaculatum*, but some consider this a *Nandopsis*. As time goes on and you learn more about the different types, you'll come to your own conclusion.

Theraps

This is the broadest, most discussed and most disagreed about genera of the big six. Ever seen a black belt cichlid, *T. maculicauda*? Take away the coloring, and you've got the basic outline of the *Theraps*. These fish have convex foreheads prior to

the onset of the nuchal hump (if any), and often show a broad, dark black lateral swath from the pectoral fin through the caudal peduncle. Some are long and slender, exemplified by the popular *T. nicaraguense* and the seldom seen *T. irregulare*, while others have a much taller profile. A lot of *Theraps* resemble the popular *bifasciatum*, such as the *zonatum*, *fenestratum*, *breidohri*, *regani*, *godmanni*, etc. and are known as vieja to the locals. *Theraps* tend to have large eyes, and smaller, terminal or even subterminal mouths. The large eyes, combined with the convex forehead gives these fish an intelligent look (as fish go) and they are often attributed with "personality." The largest *Theraps* is probably either the black belt or *argentea*, which can attain over a foot in length. The smallest is the colorful *panamense*. Other popular species include *guttulatum*, *hartwegi*, and *irregulare*.

Herichthys

Probably the oldest and least-disputed classification, *Herichthys* is best exemplified by our own Texas cichlid, or Rio Grande perch, *H. cyanoguttatus*. Now, if you can get the experts to agree on which fish exactly this is, you'd be in good shape; some say the golden brown *Herichthys* is the *cyanoguttatus*, while others offer up a blue-green species, and still others say they are the same fish. In any case, all of the various *cyanoguttatus* are distinctly different from the *carpintus*, which is another common *Herichthys*. This genera, regardless of species, tends to be rather box-like when viewed from the side, with a decidedly shorter snout than most of the other groups. These fish also have steeply sloped foreheads, and have a high degree of pearl-like spangling. Another noteworthy fact is that this group tends to have the

northernmost range of all neotropical cichlids. The largest *Herichthys* is the *pearsei*; an extended list of this genus includes the *labridens* and a host of undescribed fish, most of which sport the spangled look of the Texas cichlid.

Archocentrus

This might be the easiest one to identify, as it claims the ubiquitous convict among its membership. Identifiable by an oval shape, terminal mouth, small eyes, and generally drab coloring, they don't excite a lot of people. *Archocentrus* fans, however, will argue that this group provides a lot of bang for the buck. They are quite hardy, eat anything, and breed readily. Males are recognizable by larger size, and long, thread-like fin extensions. In the case of a full-grown male convict, the entire caudal fin takes on these wisp-like characteristics; noted aquarist Mike Sheridan likens it to the appearance of the veiltail angelfish. Females, on the other hand, can be recognized by darker or more colorful abdomens, and a prominent black spot ringed with color on the middle of the dorsal fin.

Archocentrus are small, popular fish, and do include the smallest Central American cichlids, such as the *sajica* (t-bar cichlid) and the *septemfasciatum* (also known as cutter's cichlid, but not to be confused with *Ar. cutteri*, which is also known as *Ar. spilurus*). Arguably the most colorful of the group is the recently identified *Archocentrus nanoluteus*, which sports a bright blue and green coloring and is one of the few where the male outshines the female. *Archocentrus centrarchus*, the flier cichlid, claims size honors...or does it? Some studies place the Jack Dempsey in this genus, while others say it's a *Nandopsis*. Wayne Leibel,

champion and defender of all cichlids neotropical, once said "wellll...it looks like a *Nandopsis*...I think it's a *Nandopsis*...what do you think?" One of the most compelling arguments for *Archocentrus octofasciatum* is that the Dempsey readily interbreeds with most of this group, and has given rise to a proliferation of "dempseycons," a hideous grey fish with disposition to match.

Thorichthys

Of the six NATHATs, these are generally the easiest to identify: the firemouths. Now, they aren't all "firemouths" exactly, but when compared in black and white photos, the similarities are undeniable. Like the *meeki*, all *Thorichthys* have a long, sloping snout, with large eyes set far back on the head. Also like the *meeki*, they have a striking, ringed-black blotch at the edge of the operculum, and tails with a noticeably straight edge. The top of the dorsal fin is generally in the shape of an elegant, sweeping s-curve. Almost all have some degree of orange to red coloring on the throat and belly, and a prominent dark area mid body. As a group, *Thorichthys* are probably the gentlest of the NATHATs; the famous firemouth gill flaring is more a reflection of a good publicity agent than any real capability. For this reason, many novice aquarists try to keep firemouths with the other bread and butter cichlids. When all the neighbors are young and small, the bluff and bravado allows the *Thorichthys* to dominate and bully tankmates; as time goes by the firemouths will be steadily killed off. In addition to the *meeki*, popular *Thorichthys* include the *elliotti*, *helleri*, and *aureum*, the smallest of the crew.

The Oddballs

After the main NATHAT six, the remaining Central American cichlids are comprised of

different genera, each with a single (known) species. These can be remembered by the acronym PHANG.

Petenia splendida -- the Red Bay snook, a big reddish, brown or pink fish that looks like a *Nandopsis* with a funny-looking mouth built to inhale food. Biggest of all Central American cichlids.

Herotilapia multispinosa -- the rainbow cichlid. A popular fish, easy to breed, but with an overly romanticized common name.

Aequidens coeruleopunctatus -- an *acara* type. Resembles the green terror of this genus, of which all but this representative hail from South America.

Neetroplus nematopus -- the poor man's *tropheus*, also known as the little lake cichlid, or neets. Usually a black, oval-shaped fish with a prominent light vertical bar midship. Sometimes a light fish with a dark bar.

Geophagus crassilabris -- the only Central American version of this common South American genus. This species resembles the red-hump, *G. steindachneri*.

Hopefully the main theme that came through this brief overview and exercise is the fact that a lot of work remains to be done in Central American *cichlidae*. Each of the big six - with the possible exception of *Thorichthys* - will eventually be comprised of a number of more precise genera. Even the oddball list is likely to swell, as new fish are discovered and the nonconformists (such as the Dempsey) are studied and get new, one-of-a-kind first names. As work continues, our understanding of these fish will expand, and a lot of the current thinking will fall by the wayside. Until then, NATHAT and PHANG are surely the easiest way to remember the main genera.

With any luck, the day may come when the bucket brigade peers down into the pail and says "nice *Amphilophus*" in unison, and you'll know exactly what they are talking about.

Writing Articles

by Adrian Lawler, Ph.D.

(retired) Aquarium Supervisor (1984-1998) J.

L. Scott Aquarium Biloxi, Ms 39530

We can probably all write articles to share our experiences with fish, plants, tanks, ponds, diseases, etc. with people around the world. Such article writing should be encouraged because different people look at things differently and think differently and may have an observation or knowledge that we do not have. It has been by word of mouth, and then by word of pen, and now by computer that human knowledge has been passed on to others in our human history.

We cannot know everything about a subject and convey that in a short article to our readers. We may leave something important out, but we should try the best we can and maybe the next person will pick up on something we might have missed. He should not be overly critical of the previous author, because we cannot list everything, we think differently, and he opens himself up for criticism for things he forgot.

No matter how many times (one article I revised 224 times) I go over an article, I usually find something that should be changed to make the article clearer or more correct. Do the best you can in your writing. A true seeker of knowledge will read your article, think about it, apply what he learned new to his needs, and go on. A nasty person will find fault anywhere and everywhere he

can, citing errors of commission and omission, and even twisting around what you said to make untrue statements. You usually find this type of person in various fish or aquarium forums, seeking attention, and maybe even jealous you are getting attention. In essence he is a troll, attacking others and their works, but unwilling to put his ideas on the line (for inspection and possible criticism) and publishing them. None of us is perfect; we all make mistakes. In fact, making a mistake can prompt others to thoroughly think about something to arrive at good answers. Mistakes, then updates, are constantly being made in scientific work, in computer programming, in space shuttles, etc., etc., and our base of knowledge becomes larger and larger, and better and better. So, exercise your brain. Tell (or show) us what you observed, or found out, or think about the natural or artificial aquatic habitats around you. Send in your article.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

What's Going On

With Other Texas Aquarium Clubs

Hill Country Cichlid Club

HCCC meets monthly and has programs regarding various topics. For more information on upcoming events, please go to: www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com.

Houston Aquarium Society

Monthly meetings are held the fourth Wednesday at 7:30. For more information, check out the HAS website: www.houstonaquariumsociety.org

Dallas Killifish Association

The Dallas Killifish Association meets at 1 p.m. on the third Saturday of each month. For more

information on upcoming meetings, contact the
DKA webmaster at
Webmaster@Dallaskillifish.com_

**ANNUAL TCA CHRISTMAS PARTY
AND CRAZY SANTA GIFT EXCHANGE**

December 1 at 7:00 at Ryan's Grill Buffet
6835 NE Loop 820, North Richland Hills
(817) 428-0515

If you wish to participate in the gift exchange,
bring something fishy to swap and watch the fun
begin!

Archocentrus septemfasciatum

by Ted Guglielmo

The Underwater News, April 2003, a
publication of the Pioneer Valley Aquarium
Society

Archocentrus septemfasciatum is a small cichlid (My male is about 4 inches while the female is about 2 inches). The male is more deep-bodied than the female and has a black spot in the dorsal fin that is lacking in the female (this is typical of the genus). They are an overall grey with some yellow in the breast portion. The eyes are blue. There are six black spots (depending on mood) running from the center of the body to the caudal peduncle. All of the fins, paired and unpaired, have a yellow tinge to them. The fish hails from Costa Rica, but also can be found in Panama and Nicaragua. They are very peaceful except when guarding fry.

This story begins a few years ago at the Monadnock auction. I purchased some

Archocentrus nanoluteus that were Chuck Pixley's. They are a beautiful fish (maybe I can get some back some day). I kept these in a 20 high for a while. I mentioned to Mike Duffy that I had some and he asked if I wanted to trade for some *Archocentrus septemfasciatum* fry. He was sending my fish to a friend in, I believe it was Texas. Well, the *nanoluteus* weren't doing a thing for me so I made the trade. I got two males and two females out of the deal and sold one of the pairs off. Of course in the meantime the *nanoluteus* bred in Mike's tank while he was waiting to ship them out (oh well).

I put the fish in the same 20 gallon high with some flower pots and a few rocks. After about 6 months I noticed the female getting a black coloration all across her breast up to her mouth. Her lips (if you can call them that) were a bright white. I looked in the pot and saw a few wrigglers. The male showed no interest. Two days later the fry were gone. This happened 3 or 4 more times. Finally I decided to put in some dither fish. So in went some Congo tetras. This got the male interested in guarding the fry but again the fry disappeared.

At this point I had obtained some young Jack Dempseys from the Hartford auction. They were placed in a 40 breeder in my room. They proceeded to spawn with the same result as the *septemfasciatum*. So I decided to put them together. The



Dempseys still didn't get the parenting thing

but the *septemfasciatum* did. Out came the female one day with a herd of fry. She and the male had the whole right side of the tank to themselves. The Dempsey pair was to the left and some subordinate Dempseys were relegated to the upper parts of the tank. I left the female with the kids for a few days but not wanting to tempt fate siphoned some of them out. I have about 30 in a ten which is a little small but I am in the process of moving. I don't hatch brine shrimp (unless absolutely necessary) and I didn't have any cultures of small food around. So they were fed ground flake food. They are doing fine and will be moved to a larger grow out tank after I move.

Give these guys a try. They are not as pretty as the convicts of the same genus but then again beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Whenever I can get to an auction I will have some to sell and I'll bring a bag to the next meeting.

TAIL TRADER

Got something fishy to sell or trade? All TCA members in good standing may advertise fish, equipment and related supplies for sale, or place a "want" ad free.

David Andrews

dandrews12@access4less.net

FOR SALE:

Demasoni - 1-1 1/4" \$1.00 each
 Demasoni - 1 1/2 - 2" \$2.00 each
 Snow White Socolofi - 1 1/4 - 1 1/2" \$2.00 each
 Juli Transcriptus - 1 1/2 - 2" \$2.00 each
 Juli Dickfeldi - 1 1/4" - 1 3/4" \$2.00 each
 Juli Marlieri - 1 1/4" - 1 3/4" \$2.00 each
 Albino Dwarf Bristlenose Plecos \$3.00 each
 Neolamp. Leleupi (Orange) 1 1/2" \$2.00 each
 Marble Angels - quarter to half-dollar size \$2.00
 Endlers Livebearers \$0.50 each
 Limia Vittata - Cuban Livebearer \$0.25 each

Pseudotropheus Flavus - 1 1/2" \$2.00 each
 Pseudotropheus Polit - 1 1/4" \$2.00 each
 Yellow Labs - 2 1/2" - 3 1/2" \$5.00 each
 Multifasciatus - shell dwellers \$3.00 each
 Cyphotilapia Frontosa - Mpimbwe - 2" \$15.00

J.J.'s Tropaquatics

(501) 760-3801

jjstropaquatics@yahoo.com

FOR SALE:

Aulonocara species

(all 3.5" plus - \$25/pr. Males \$15; Females \$10):

Tangerine; Albino Red Eureka; Ruby Red;
 Bi-Color 500; Jacobfreibergeri; Ngara Flame Tail;
 Sunshine; Red Shoulder

Tropheus species

(all 3" plus - all \$10 each unsexed):

DuBoisi; Bemba; Kiriza

Lake Malawi

(all 3" plus; all unsexed)

Hap. Moorii	\$8
Red Zebra	\$5
Cobalt Zebra	\$5
R.B. Zebra	\$5
Lab. Fuelleborni (3.5" plus)	\$5
Super Red Empress (4")	\$25/pr.
Males \$15; Females \$10	

New World:

Green Severum (3" plus)	\$3.50
Gold Severum (3")	\$4.25
Cich. Robertsoni (3")	\$2.75
Cich. Red Auteum (2.5")	\$3.25
Cich. Meeki (firemouth) (2.5")	\$2.25
Cich. Hartwegi (4")	\$6.00
Cich. Nicaraguense (3" plus)	\$4.00
Cich. Zonarus (3" plus)	\$5.00
Cich. Brasiliensis (3")	\$5.00
Cich. Balzani (2.5")	\$6.00

Plecos:

Ancistrus regular Large \$5; Small \$2
 Ancistrus Red L-157 Med. \$5; Small \$3

Rob Mears

RMears@BealService.com

(214) 476-5927

WANTED: *Altolamprologus calvus* "black"

**AMAZONIA'S
15TH ANNIVERSARY SALE!**

December 7-12. Giant truckload parking lot sale
December 8 with loads of tanks at cost! Mention
this TCA ad for early discounts.

4631 Airport #116
Austin, TX 78751
(512) 451-0958

December 1, 2007: Annual TCA Christmas Party and Crazy Santa gift exchange; Ryan's Grill Buffet, 6835 NE Loop 820, North Richland Hills. 7:00 until 9:00.

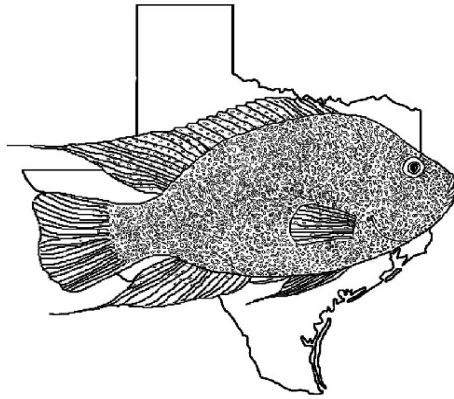
January 19, 2008: Regular monthly meeting, 7:00, location TBA later. Officer and Board Member election will be held. If you are a TCA member in good standing and are interested in running for an office, please advise the TCA Secretary.

February 16, 2008: Regular monthly meeting, 7:00, at location TBA later.

Calendar of Events

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF



THE TEXAS CICHLID ASSOCIATION

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