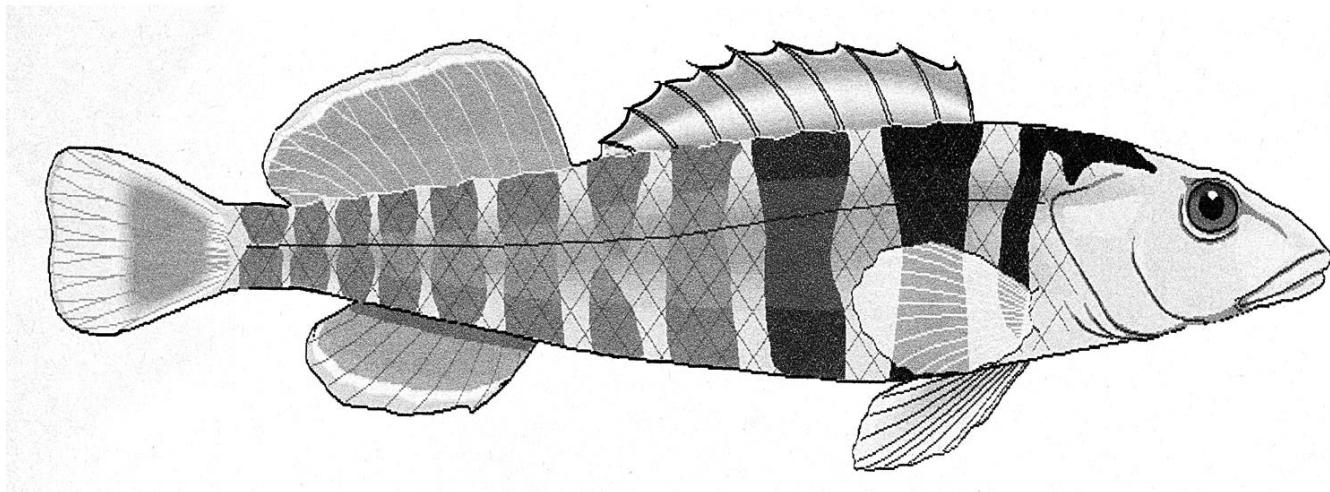


The Darter

September - October 2006



Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc
St. Louis, Missouri

2006-2007 MASI OFFICIALS

PRESIDENT:

Mike Hellweg
511 Sunward Drive
O'Fallon, MO 63366
636-240-2443
mhellweg511@charter.net

VICE PRESIDENT:

Gary Lange
2590 Cheshire
Florissant, MO 63033
314-837-6181
gwlange@sbcglobal.net

TREASURER:

Steve Edie
5 Green Ridge Ct.
St. Peters, MO 63376
636-922-4232
sredie@charter.net

SECRETARY:

Angela Hellweg
511 Sunward Drive
O'Fallon, MO 63366
636-240-2443
pugdog64@yahoo.com

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

Roy Brandhorst	Skipperoy4@juno.com	314-838-8093
Diane Brown	debunix@well.com	314-361-4193
Kathy Deutsch	katfish@i1.net	314-741-0474
Charles Harrison	csharrison@inkmaker.net	314-894-9761
Jerry Jost	jerryjost@jostchemical.com	314-961-0419
Mark Theby.	markrehabber@yahoo.com	314-428-3536

COMMITTEES:

Advertising & Promotions	Mark Theby	314 428-3536
Auction Chairman	John Van Asch	618-277-6165
Breeders' Award Program	Steve Edie	636-922-4232
Corresponding Secretary	Patrick A. Tosie, Sr	636-225-7625
Editor	Steve Deutsch	314-741-0474
-Mail - fishfan@i1.net	9 Old Jamestown Ct. Florissant, MO 63034	
Exchange Editor	Steve Edie	636-922-4232
Fish Raising Contest	Bob Buckles	314-849-0587
Horticultural Award Program	Mike Hellweg	636-240-2443
Historian	Klaus Bertich	314-849-2164
Librarian	Dave Rush	314-291-8932
Membership	Kathy Deutsch	314-741-0474
Monthly Bowl Show	Diane Brown	debunix@well.com
Points Tabulator	Ed Millinger	314-968-8104
Postman	Gary McIlvaine	314-352-3334
Printer	Charles Harrison	314-894-9761
Refreshments	Roy Brandhorst	314-838-8093
Web Mistress	Michele Berhorst	314-894-5543
Welcoming	Ron Huck	314-481-2915
Workshop Chairman	Marlon Felman	636-536-4804

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MASI's official web page: www.missouriaquariumsociety.org

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Please send exchange publications to:

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THE DARTER (ISSN 0192-7833) is published bi-monthly by the Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc., 1813 Locks Mill Drive, Fenton, MO 63026-2662. Periodicals Postage Rates paid at Fenton, MO. This publication is free to members of the Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc. and other qualified requesters as determined by the publisher. Subscription requests can be sent to: Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc., 1813 Locks Mill Drive, Fenton, MO 63026-2662.

POSTMASTER: Please send all address changes to Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc., P.O. Box 1682 Maryland Heights, MO 63043-1682. Please allow 6-8 weeks for change of address. Include your old address as well as new - enclosing, if possible, an address label from a recent issue.

Opinions expressed by the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Missouri Aquarium Society, Incorporated.

Places to Be Things to See

SUNDAY October 1, 2006

Annual Fall Swap Meet, Noon to 3:00 @ the Stratford Inn

Contact: Mike Hellweg – 636-240-2443, mhellweg511@charter.net

THURSDAY October 19, 2006

General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

SATURDAY October 28, 2006

Executive Council, 7:30 hosted by Steve and Kathy Deutsch

THURSDAY November 16, 2006

General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

SUNDAY November 19, 2006

Annual Fall Auction, 12:00 @ the Stratford Inn

Contact: John Van Asch – 618-277-6165, johnsfishy@att.net

SATURDAY December 2, 2006

Executive Council, 7:30 hosted by Charles and Sue Harrison

THURSDAY December 21, 2006

General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

THURSDAY January 18, 2007

General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

SATURDAY January 27, 2007

Executive Council, 7:30 hosted by Gary Lange

Presidential Preamble

By Mike Hellweg

Greetings everyone. By the time you read this, you will no doubt be moving your recreational activities indoors for the fall/winter. Pond season is over for another year, and if you haven't already prepped the pond for winter, this coming weekend might be a good time to do that.

Our second Annual Swap Meet will be Sunday, October 1st. As of this writing, there are still tables available. It's a great way to clean out some unused or extra fishy things and make room and some money to buy the latest gadget or that fish you've been wanting for a while. If you want to reserve a table, they're only \$20 each. Give me a call and let me know you want the table. If you don't have anything to sell, but are looking for a great bargain on fish, plants, and equipment, this might be the chance you've been waiting for. Come on by and see what our vendors have available. I hope we see you there. As an added bonus, there will be raffles going on all afternoon, and a chance to win a great prize at the end.

It's also time to start planning for our next Auction. Sunday, November 19, will be the date of the Annual Fall Auction. This will be just before the holidays officially begin, so you've got a chance to do something fishy and not miss any holiday time with the family, too.

We're lining up speakers for next year. If there are any topics that you would like to hear about, drop Gary Lange or me an email or give us a call and let us know what you would like to hear. We're working on talks about Water Chemistry, West African Cichlids, Loaches, maybe one on Ponds for the spring, and maybe even one on something unusual – collecting Aquarium Antiques. If you'd like to hear something else, if you know of a speaker that you've heard somewhere, or if you would like to try your hand at giving a program yourself, let us know.

Also, the winning T-shirt design will hopefully be available in time for Christmas. There is still time to get your design together and get it in to Cory Koch. And we now have embroidered MASi logo Golf/Polo shirts available. You can even have your name added if you want! Several colors are available. The shirts will be ordered as you place your orders and should be ready for pickup at the following meeting. That way we don't have to tie up club funds and maintain an inventory while trying to guess what sizes you'll want to buy! This could be a great gift for the MASi member who has everything!

And finally, you've still got time to submit your articles for the final issue of the Darter for 2006 – and have it considered for the 2006 Ralph Wilhelm Memorial Writers Award. This is a \$100 prize!

...and for now, 'nuff said...

MASI Swap Meet Rules

October 1, 2006

Noon to 3:00 PM

1. Admission \$1 per person over age 10.
2. Payment for table(s) must be made BEFORE seller will be allowed to sell.
3. Admission fee of \$1 will be waived for sellers – Limit 2 free admissions per table.
4. Sellers must wear nametags for the duration of the Swap Meet so they can be clearly identified.
5. No outside sales by non-registered sellers will be permitted.
6. Sellers must bring their own change, etc. Change will not be available from the MASI table.
7. Each seller may set their own policy as to whether or not they will accept checks, credit cards, etc.
8. No phone hookup for POS devices is available in sales room.
9. Electricity is available, but sellers must bring their own extension cords, multi-outlet strips, etc.
10. **ALL TRANSACTIONS ARE STRICTLY BETWEEN THE SELLER AND THE BUYER.**
11. MASI is only providing table space and advertising. MASI assumes no responsibility or liability for any sales.
12. MASI reserves the right to refuse table space to anyone.
13. In the case of limited availability, preference will be given to MASI members and MASI sponsors first.
14. Seller is responsible for collecting any sales tax that may be due.
15. ONLY aquarium and pond/water garden hobby related merchandise may be sold. Fish, inverts, aquatic plants, fish foods, aquarium or fish books and magazines, pond or aquarium equipment and related decorations and supplies may be sold.
16. All equipment must be in working order, or be sold clearly labeled as “For Parts Only”
17. Leakers must be labeled as such.
18. NO reptiles or amphibians may be sold.
19. No hybrids, deformed, sick or illegal fish or plants may be sold.
20. No Missouri or Illinois native fish or plants may be sold.
21. Fish must be humanely and properly packaged for sale.
22. These rules are not all-inclusive. The Swap Meet chair is the Final Authority.

**Attendance prizes will be drawn every hour on the hour. Must be present to win.
Raffle will be drawn at the end of the Swap Meet. Need not be present to win.**



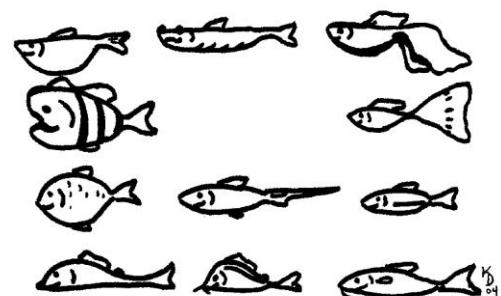
We've got a place for you!



Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc.

Come join us at a meeting, or contact our membership chair, Kathy Deutsch for more information

(314) 741-0474 fishfan@i1.net



The Dusky Millions Fish *Phalloceros caudimaculatus*

By Mike Hellweg

While most of the common livebearers are from Central America and the Caribbean Islands, at least one that is fairly common comes from southern Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. This diminutive fish has been introduced for mosquito control in several areas around the world, and is even considered a nuisance species in New Zealand. It is not often available in its wild form, though several domestic strains are fairly frequently available and it is often found on wholesale lists.

In the wild form, adults develop a dusky gray coloration with one or a few spots at the base of the caudal peduncle. Some specimens have more spotting, and these became the basis for our aquarium strains. Many aquarium specimens are a deep yellow gold, with many large spots. Some strains are gray and covered from head to tail in a pattern of small spots that almost look like someone sprinkled them with pepper. Others with the pattern of small spots have a golden base color. That is the strain that I maintained for several years.

Adult males reach a little over an inch in size, while adult females can reach about an inch and a half or a bit more. They are peaceful among themselves, and in a 10 gallon tank a colony can be established quickly from just a couple of pairs. Some sources (*The Reed Field Guide to New Zealand Freshwater Fishes* by R.M. McDowall, pp 169 – 171) report up to 80 fry from a single drop, but I've never seen more than a couple of dozen. The gonopodium of the adult male is unique in that it ends in a small horn-shaped hook (hence the name *Phalloceros* – literally *Horn-phallus*). This can easily be seen by most hobbyists without the aid of a magnifier.

A ten gallon tank is perfect for a small colony. I set up my tank, as most of my tanks, with a sponge filter, lots of Java Moss and Java Fern, and some Water Sprite floating on the surface. I did 50% water changes once a week, and kept them on a mid-level tank in the fishroom so the temperature was pretty constant in the mid-70's Fahrenheit. Some writers advocate the addition of salt to their water, but I never used it and the fish prospered.

Since this was an aquarium strain, water parameters appeared to be unimportant. pH remained in the low 7's, and total hardness was kept in the range of about 125 ppm. Some of the people I shared them with kept them in softer water, others in harder water with varying pH's. All reported no problems. Small temperature fluctuations throughout the year did not seem to have any effect on their reproduction.

They were fed a mixed diet of finely ground veggie flakes, newly hatched baby brine, mosquito larvae (though I no longer use those due to concerns about West Nile), and occasionally a squirt of Mikroworms or Grindal worms. They were active feeders, but did not aggressively attack the food.

The first female to show signs of being gravid was moved to a separate 5 gallon tank for delivery. She dropped 24 live fry and 3 stillborns in the early morning and was moved back to the adult tank later that day. The fry grew quickly on a diet of newly hatched brine shrimp and Mikroworms, and between feedings they were observed picking at the algae growing on the sides of the tank, and picking at the leaves of the *Najas* floating in their tank. By the time they were a month old, they were already over a half inch long and were moved back to the tank with the adults. A few subsequent broods had already been dropped by the other females, and there were no signs of predation, I wasn't too worried about the adults picking at them. I did occasionally see one of the males chasing fry, but I don't know if he ever caught any – there were always plenty of youngsters in the tank.

A small colony of these unique and colorful livebearers will make a colorful addition to your fishroom.

For more information about these and other livebearers, consider joining the American Livebearer Association. You can get more information, and even join online, at www.livebearers.org or by writing to:

American Livebearer Association

Timothy J. Brady
Membership Chairman
5 Zerbe Street
Cressona, PA 17929-1513
(570) 385-0573 (H)
(570) 385-2781 (FAX)

Editor's Notes

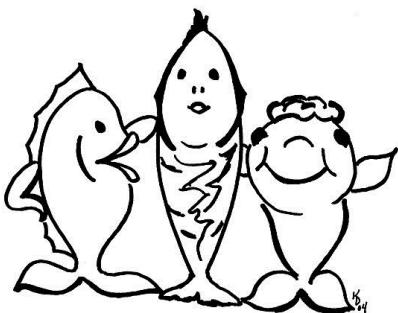
Steve Deutsch

We have four MASI articles this month, from three authors. Thank you Mike, Cory, and Gary. We also have three exchange articles. They cover livebearers, cichlids, bettas, collecting, and auctions. I hope you find something you like. There is one more Darter to be published this year, so you all have one more chance to write an article that will be entered into the judging for the Ralph Wilhelm Publication Award, which is a \$100 cash prize. We have had many good articles this year, but nothing that can't be beaten. The article deadline for the next issue is October 15 (more or less). Cover art is also welcome; I don't mind putting a Darter on every Darter cover but we could use a bit of variety. Luckily we will have some T-shirt contest entries to use.

We have an active HAP program at the moment, but I don't have many articles submitted on plants, ponds, etc. I have asked Steve Edie to look through the exchanges and see what I can bring you, but I know we have the knowledge within the club to put a few articles in the Darter. It also looks like we have some club members who need to complete the article or program requirements for their next HAP level. I'll vote for articles, although I imagine Gary Lange (who finds our speakers every month, in case you didn't know) might vote for programs!

That's all for this issue; I hope you enjoy.

Membership



Yearly membership in the Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc. is \$20 per calendar year. Membership includes the Darter subscription for the year, which is currently 6 issues. New memberships and renewals can be submitted at club functions such as meetings and auctions, or by contacting our membership chair, Kathy Deutsch at 314-741-0474, katfish@i1.net, or 9 Old Jamestown Ct. Florissant MO 63034

Betta unimaculata

by Christopher Smith

reprinted from Nov/Dec 02 *Aqua News* of the Minnesota Aquarium Society

There they were, three pug-nosed, bulldog-faced *Betta* wanna-be's. And I just bought them. It was the spring auction. I had come prepared with a grocery list of fish that I desired, fish that would fill the Pisces hole in my aquarist's soul. However, an extensive search of the auction table turned up precious little that I really yearned for and what did tickle my fancy was being bid up too high (I am, after all, cheap.)

Yet I couldn't go home with just a bag of Java Moss. I needed something new, something different, something rare. Oh, and something that wasn't from a rift lake. These *Bettas* fit the bill. They passed the Christopher Rarity test: I had never heard of them before. I didn't see them on the viewing table, so I bought them sight unseen.

Not that they were much of a sight. They were full grown, about 4", and drab, muddy brown. Yes, they were ugly, but a cute kind of ugly, like E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial. I took them home and placed them in a 30-gallon tank by themselves. The tank was furnished with a sand bottom, sponge filter, several plastic plants, and a whole bunch of Java Moss. Temperature was kept at about 78 degrees in the typical St. Paul water. (moderately soft, pH 7.2-7.4).

Despite their lacking brilliance, there was some color in them. A small amount of blue was present in their fins. They had two brown longitudinal stripes on their sides. And sexing them turned out to be easy. The males have a bright blue scale on their operculum; females do not. By pure luck, I had two females and a male. What these lack in aesthetic qualities they make up in their personality. They were active, and very aware of me, following me as I passed back and forth, begging for a morsel of food. Despite my initial reaction to their drab bodies, they were winning me over with their charming personalities and cute, big-lipped pug face.

It wasn't much more than a week after I obtained them that I walked into the fish room late one night to see the male and one of the females in a classic courting posture. The male was contorting his body around the female. She would release a few eggs, which would drop to the substrate, and he would scoop them up in his mouth. After a several minute break, they would repeat the courtship. The male incubated the eggs in his buccal cavity for about 10 days, constantly passing fresh water through his gills with what appeared to be some degree of labor. About 10 fry emerged, about 1/8" long. They fared quite well eating the wee beasties in the Java Moss, and I supplemented that with vinegar eels. As I had no baby brine shrimp going at the time, and being naturally lazy, they never did get live baby brine shrimp. (I have now confessed, in one article to being both cheap and lazy. I'm sure this will help my social standing in the club.) They grew quickly, however, and by the time they were just over 1/4" long they started ripping into the frozen foods I was feeding the parents. The parents turned out to be well behaved and the fry were raised in the same 30-gallon tank without incident. A second batch of fry magically appeared about 45 days later. Both batches were raised together until recently, when I noticed the male was incubating a third batch. The young were quite large at this time, so I removed them.

So, if you want an unusual, hardy, easy to breed anabantid that has the personality of a cichlid, give *Betta unimaculata* a try!

HAP Report

Mike Hellweg

Hello all,

It was an active Summer! We have a new participant who is growing (pardon the pun!) quickly - Andy Walker.

We have several members who have reached some huge milestones:

- Jerry Jost reached the level of Master Aquatic Horticulturist and only needs to complete the required program or articles on plants to achieve Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist.
- John Van Asch is just 7 species and some articles or a program shy of achieving Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist.
- And yours truly, Mike Hellweg, reached the level of Supreme Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist and the level of 2500 points - the first member in our club to reach either of those lofty heights.

Congratulations to all!

And keep 'em green!

Member	Species	Common	Rep	Pts	Total
July/August '06					
Jerry Jost	<i>Ammania senegalensis</i>	Giant Ammania	S	20	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Anubias barteri nana</i>	Dwarf Anubias	IB	20	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i>	Baby's Tears	V	10	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Echinodorus quadricostatus</i>	Dwarf Amazon Sword	V	15	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Echinodorus</i> sp. Ozelot	Ozelot Sword	IB	20	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Hygrophila corymbosa stricta</i>	Temple Plant	V	5	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Ludwigia</i> sp. repens x arcuata	Narrow Leaf Ludwigia	V	10	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Micromeria brownei</i>	Creeping Charlie	V	15	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Myriophyllum tuberculatum</i> *		IB	10	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Ottelia ulvifolia</i>		S	20	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Rotala</i> sp. Vietnam*		V	15	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Salvinia natans</i>	Chain Salvinia	V	5	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Vallisneria caulescens</i> *	Australian Val	V	10	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Wolfia columbiana</i> *	Columbian Water Meal	V	5	1050
Jerry Jost	<i>Wolfia columbiana</i>	Columbian Water Meal	IB	10	1050
Andy Walker	<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>	Dwarf Hairgrass	V	10	35
Andy Walker	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal Flower	V	10	35
Charles & MaryAnn Lenau	<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Giant Cattail	OB	5	305
Charles & MaryAnn Lenau	<i>Zephyranthes atamasco</i> *	Zephyr Rain Lily	OB	20	305

Member	Species	Common	Rep	Pts	Total
John Van Asch	<i>Canna glauca</i> *	Angel Water Canna	OB	10	615
John Van Asch	<i>Cyperus alternifolius</i>	Umbrella Palm	V	10	615
John Van Asch	<i>Cyperus haspan</i>	Dwarf Papyrus	OB	10	615
John Van Asch	<i>Iris ensata</i> *	Japanese Water Iris	OB	10	615
John Van Asch	<i>Iris crysographes</i>	Black Gamecock Water Iris	OB	10	615
John Van Asch	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Great Blue Lobelia	OB	10	615
Mike Hellweg	<i>Anubias barteri ekona</i> *		V	15	2540
Mike Hellweg	<i>Anubias lanceolata</i> *		V	15	2540
Mike Hellweg	<i>Anubias barteri caladiifolia</i>		V	15	2540
Mike Hellweg	<i>Hydrotriche hottoniiflora</i>		IB	10	2540
Mike Hellweg	<i>Hydrotriche hottoniiflora</i>		V	5	2540
Mike Hellweg	<i>Myriophyllum scabratum</i> *		V	10	2540

Eretmodus Cyanostictus - A “Goby” Cichlid

By Cory Koch

Whenever I talk to “fishy” people and I tell them that I keep mostly Tanganyikan cichlids, I often get a semi-puzzled look which seems to say “Why wouldn’t you want to keep the “pretty” peacocks of Malawi? Sometimes the person will just say “Aren’t the cichlids from Lake Malawi more colorful?” While it is true that most Tanganyikan cichlids are not known for their color or stunning beauty, I gotta tell you that looks aren’t everything! Not that I have anything against colorful fish, I enjoy “pretty” fish as much as the next person. Actually the first cichlid I fell in love with was a *huge* red spotted green *Sympodus aequifasciatus* I saw in a pet shop as a teenager. After later buying one and slowly killing it due to inexperience and misunderstanding, I began to do a little research and came across a picture of teeming Discus fry feeding on the sides of the parents. That T.F.H. picture of such fascinating parental care is what cemented my interest in cichlids in the first place. However pretty can only get you so far, and besides (to use another cliché), beauty *is* in the eye of the beholder.

Eretmodus cyanostictus (pronounced sigh-an-o-stik-tus) while not very attractive in a conventional sense are another example of a very interesting parenting strategy. These fish are actually bi-parental mouth brooders, meaning that both parents take turns mouth brooding the fry. These fascinating cichlids inhabit the “surf” zone of Lake Tanganyika. The surf zone is just as it sounds...the upper three feet of the lake where the water slaps up against land. *Eretmodus* are well suited for this turbulent environment, as they have an under developed swim bladder which allows them to remain negatively buoyant and hug the bottom rocks. This coupled with the fact that they seem to have very strong pectoral fins allows these fish to flourish where others would surely be crushed on the rocks of the shoreline. *Eretmodus* possess a broad snout with baby blue eyes and an under slung mouth full of *red* scrapping teeth used to graze on the algae and bio cover that grows on the shoreline rock (One fun side effect of this odd mouth is that my gobies always seem to be grinning at me!). These are small cichlids reaching only about four inches. The fish starts with its massive head and powerful dorsal fins and tapers down towards the caudal fin. The fish is a tannish color with some light brown to black vertical banding and baby blue speckling throughout the head and body of the fish. The caudal fin has a very slight tinge of red along the upper edge. Watching *Eretmodus Cyanostictus* “swim” only adds to

the already gangly appearance, as they don't really seem to swim (due to the swim bladder) but instead kind of "hop" around the aquarium.

After reading much about this intriguing cichlid I finally came across an opportunity to purchase a group of eight wild caught adults. I set up two thirty gallon "breeder" aquariums with a fine "play sand", two sponge filters each with the air powered all the way up to replicate the highly oxygenated surf habitat of Lake Tanganyika, and added lots of three and four inch PVC elbows and tees to mimic the rocky shores of the lake as well. I set up two aquariums because I wanted to get at least one mated pair and while this goby cichlid is easy to keep with most other Tanganyikan cichlids, they cannot seem to stand each other unless they are a mated pair. Therefore the plan was to put all of the fish into one aquarium and then remove the outcast's to the other tank. This strategy actually worked quite well and I had my pair within two weeks.

Once established as a pair in the new tank I traded away the remaining fish to a fellow hobbyist and set my sights on getting my first spawn. I began by feeding a variety of foods like spirulina wafers and flake, New Life Spectrum pellet food and frozen myssis shrimp. I also extended the duration of fluorescent lighting to encourage algae growth. The fish instantly accepted all of the previously mentioned foods with gusto, and soon I also had numerous long scrape marks all over my PVC "rocks" from the gobies using their red, shovel shaped teeth to feed on the excess algae growth. I did fairly regular weekly 50% water changes using aged, treated water kept at fishroom temperature (about 78 degrees). The male made a few unsuccessful attempts to persuade the female to breed which ended up with some fin tearing and the female hiding in the upper corners of the tank. To alleviate this problem I floated the sponge portion of a Hydro-Sponge in the tank for the female to use to avoid the males unwanted attention. He searched each and every PVC cave repeatedly during this period, however never managed to figure out that she was hiding just a few inches above him. Having a safe haven seemed to help the female settle down to finally breed, as about a week and a half after adding the sponge shelter I witnessed the fish spawning.

Initially the fish swam alongside each other closely, head to head, back and forth, until the female began to do a little dance, she then released a single egg and immediately swooped around to scoop the egg up into her mouth. At the same time as the female began her dance, the male also began dance and he seemingly fertilized the egg as the female was scooping it into her mouth. This process was repeated eight more times, until the females mouth was bulging with eggs. She continued to hold the eggs in her mouth for the next 10 days or so. In the meantime the male went about his business of eating, eating, and eating some more. On the eleventh day the female began rather impatiently trying to get the males attention, she chased him around the tank, occasionally head butted him, shook, danced, and overall harassed him. For his part the male seemed to be *desperately trying to ignore* the female! He must have finally given up because on the morning of day twelve I noticed that the female came out at the morning feeding and was eating ravenously, while the male lazily hopped along the bottom of the tank with a mouthful of eggs. After seven more days I pulled the male from the breeding tank and stripped him of the fry. He spit the fry into a previously prepared ten gallon tank fitted with only a seasoned sponge filter and water from the breeding tank. The male was returned to the female and was eating again only a few hours later.

The fry were miniature versions of the Eretmodus adults with the exception of coloring. Some were a very dark brown color while others were much more of a light brown. This color change only lasted for a few days and then the fish all seemed to be a dark tan color. I have read that the darker fish will grow up to be males, while the lighter fish will grow into females. As I stated previously, I did not separate the fry to see if this was true but may do so with a future spawn. I fed the fry newly hatched brine shrimp for the first week and a half and then switched them over to crushed spirulina flake. The fry grew well the first few weeks and even began chasing each other around the bare ten gallon tank after the first week! As they grew larger so did the size of the food and soon they were taking small omnivore pellets and the occasional treat of frozen myssis shrimp. I also performed at least 50% water changes

each week as the fry grew. In a few short months the fry were ready for B.A.P. and I turned in three and kept the remaining five because I wanted to keep as many as I could. I have had these fish spawn since and did not strip the male of fry. Both times I allowed the male to spit on his own, I never saw any fry in the tank. Since this is a breeder tank containing only the parent fish, I have to assume that the Eretmodus Cyanostictus are eating their own fry.

Eretmodus Cyanostictus would be an excellent fish for many cichlid community fish set ups, as they are fairly mellow once paired up, easy to please in regards to diet, and only seem to really need good oxygenation. I must say that while not the most attractive fish, Eretmodus Cyanostictus has earned a place on my favorites list with its spunky behavior and comical appearance. This is a fish I would suggest trying to just about anyone. I never seem to grow tired of the wagging puppy dog tails and ugly little smooshed in faces pressed up against the aquarium glass, grinning at me with those red teeth!

As a side note, at the most recent MASI auction I came across a new “power sweep” oscillating powerhead and decided to add it to the already turbulent goby breeding tank. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with this device it is designed to simulate the motion of waves in the ocean with a kind of back and forth continues jet of water, and is used primarily in reef set ups. I attached this powerhead to the tank, opened up the optional venturi air attachment and plugged it in. To say that the fish seem to appreciate this added water movement would be a definite understatement. The difference in behavior was noticeable immediately. The already thriving fish are much more active and seem to be preparing for another spawn.

MASI's Second Annual Swap Meet!

Sunday October 1, 2006
Noon to 3:00 pm
Stratford Inn in Fenton, MO
Admission \$1 per person, children under 10 free!

Got extra fish? Too much Java Moss? Java Fern growing out of the tank? Sell 'em! Got an extra tank in the attic or basement? Sell it! Clean out the extra stuff in your fishroom or closet!

You can sell anything “fishy” or hobby related!
Fish, plants, tanks, equipment, books, magazines, foods, decorations, collectibles and more!

Tables are just \$20 each. Space is limited, so sign up early! We'll also gladly accept 100% donations to be sold at the MASI table.

MASI reserves the right to refuse to allow the sale of any illegal or dangerous items, hybrids, Missouri or Illinois native fish or plants, or anything that is not related to the aquarium hobby. Transactions are strictly between the buyer and seller.
See the rules for further details.

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BAP Report

Steve Edie

Member	Species	Common	Pts	Total
July 2006				
Don Atkinson	<i>Apistogramma tucurui</i>		15	130
Don Atkinson	<i>Cleithracara maronii</i>	Keyhole Cichlid	15	145
Don Atkinson	<i>Crenicichla regani</i> *		20	165
Mike Hellweg	<i>Nannostomus beckfordi</i> "Red" *	Red Beckford's Pencilfish	25	2492
Cory Koch	<i>Altolamprologus calvus</i> *		20	150
Cory Koch	<i>Labidochromis caeruleus</i>	White Lab	10	160
Cory Koch	<i>Telmatochromis temporalis</i> *		15	175
August 2006				
Jack Berhorst	<i>Melanotaenia praecox</i>	Dwarf Neon Rainbow	10	130
Mike Hellweg	<i>Pelvicachromis taeniatus</i> "Bandewouri" *		20	2512
Jerry Jost	<i>Chromaphyosemion bitaeniatum</i> "Zagnando"		15	70
Jerry Jost	<i>Pseudepiplatys annulatus</i> "Monrovia" *		20	90
Jerry Jost	<i>Epiplatys lamottei</i> "Koule GRC 90/178"		10	100
Lawrence Kent	<i>Hemichromis lifalili</i>		10	105
Cory Koch	<i>Cyprichromis leptosoma</i> "Mpulungu" *		20	195
Cory Koch	<i>Lamprologus meleagris</i> *		15	210
Cory Koch	<i>Lamprologus speciosus</i>		10	220
Cory Koch	<i>Neolamprologus caudopunctatus</i>		10	230
Cory Koch	<i>Telmatochromis</i> sp. "Orange Scribble" *		15	245
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Aequidens pulcher</i>	Blue Acara	5	5
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Altolamprologus compressiceps</i>		15	20
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Archocentrus</i> sp. "Honduran Red Point" *		15	35
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Archocentrus spilurus</i>	Cutter's Cichlid	10	45
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Astatotilapia burtoni</i>		5	50
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Chromidotilapia guentheri</i>		10	60
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Cichlasoma boliviense</i> *		15	75
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Cichlasoma grammodes</i> *		20	95

Member	Species	Common	Pts	Total
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Cyprichromis leptosoma</i>	Blue Flash	15	110
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Geophagus brasiliensis</i>		5	115
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Gymnogeophagus meridionalis</i> "El Norte"		10	125
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Hemichromis elongatus</i> *		15	140
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Heros severus</i>		15	155
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Iodotropheus sprengerae</i>		10	165
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Julidochromis marlieri</i>		10	175
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Julidochromis ornatus</i>		10	185
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Julidochromis transcriptus</i> "Zaire"		15	200
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Labidochromis caeruleus</i>	Yellow Lab	10	210
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Neolamprologus brichardi</i>	"Red Dot Millma" *	15	225
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Neolamprologus multifasciatus</i>		10	235
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Neolamprologus pulcher</i>	Daffodil Brichardi	10	245
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	Mosaic Guppy	5	250
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Pseudotropheus demasoni</i> *		15	265
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Thorichthys</i> sp. "Blue Mixteco"		15	280
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Vieja synspila</i>		15	295
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>	Sunset Platy	5	300
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Limia perugiae</i>		5	141
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Micropoecilia picta</i>		10	151
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>	Milk & Ink Platy	5	156
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Aspidoras menezesi</i> *		20	1070
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Corydoras gossei</i> *		15	1085
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Crenicichla</i> sp. "Orinoco" *		20	1105
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Megalechis thoracata</i> **	Marble Hoplo	25	1130
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Limia vittata</i>	Cuban Limia	5	1135
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	Double Swordtail Guppy	5	1140
Andy Walker	<i>Xiphophorus variatus</i>	Tuxedo Variatus	5	5
Derek Walker	<i>Apistogramma gibbiceps</i>		15	760
Derek Walker	<i>Apistogramma hongsloi</i>		15	775
Derek Walker	<i>Melanotaenia parva</i>		10	785

* = First MASI species spawn (5 point bonus)

** = First MASI species and genus spawn (10 point bonus)

*** = First MASI species, genus and family spawn (15 point bonus)

Wow. This is the largest bi-monthly BAP report that I have done since becoming BAP Chair 3 years ago, and likely the largest ever. 11 different breeders submitted 57 spawns, including 19 MASI first spawn species. A new major contributor is Mark & Tammy Langer (of JTM's Tropicals over in Alton, Illinois.) They turned in 26 spawns, the largest one month submission ever and the 9th largest total for a full year. Welcome to the BAP

Gary's Fish Room Update

by Gary McIlvaine

Hello friends. I had made a couple goals and luckily I have accomplished some of them for this year, one of my goals was to write an article every issue of the Darter, well I missed last month, but I have a couple good excuses, first excuse is my wife and I had our second child (if that wasn't enough), I also endured the 4 day power outage, while attending the ACA in Chicago. I actually have thought about several different article topics, but finally decided on just a general update on some of my goals.

The goal I am most proud to have achieved is that of breeding a new species of fish every month for the BAP, I am happy to announce I turned in my 18th, 19th, and 20th, species of the year @ the last meeting. I am having so much fun doing this, but do have to admit I am taking the easy route by breeding some livebearers, but nonetheless it is still fun!! I have also enjoyed getting some easy to breed species from fish friends like Cory Koch. Cory gave me a pair of *Neolamprologus Pulcher*'s and he told me, hey just throw them in a tank and your fine, (He was right) I finally was able to get rid of the last of the fry at the last auction. Thanks again Cory! I also am working on a couple things presently, I still am trying to breed Discus and successfully rear the resulting fry, but I have not accomplished this as of yet, I do have two pairs who lay eggs very regularly (every 6-8 days), but the females eat the eggs as soon as they lay them. I am beginning to think maybe a reverse osmosis system is the only way I am going to fix this, because I have tried everything else.

I have a group of fish that I was pleasantly surprised with how much I enjoy. I was late night surfing on Aquabid, looking for my next fish to try and spawn this year, when I came across some *Charcodon Audex* (Black Prince Goodeid) (El Toboso Population). I bought these thinking, easy points for BAP, (WRONG!!) These little guys are so aggressive unlike anything I had seen in a Livebearer. They are neat little fish though, and I should get another drop of fry this week. I had been trying to colony breed these guys, but they eat their fry, and rather voraciously I might add! This is one of the cool things about fish keeping, I bought these thinking I would breed them and get rid of them, but I actually really enjoy this fish enough to keep them!!, and dedicate precious tanks space!! The only other fish I really feel that way about are my Angels, and Discus.

My Angelfish keeping has hit a new plateau. I was eating dinner tonight with my family and looking into the 125 gallon in my kitchen when I noticed a new pair of Angelfish was guarding a new clutch of eggs. I LOVE Angelfish. The fun part about this pair is that I know both of their Parents. It was really just one of those WOW moments for me, the Male is a plain all white almost platinum Blusher. He was the offspring of my Sunset Blushing Koi's that I line bred. The Female is from a cross I did from my Double Dark Black cross with a Marble (R.I.P), (One of the club members who shall remain nameless killed that female.) It may seem silly, but it's so neat to know the history of the fish, and while I am not running a super selective breeding program, I do find from mixing angels that are unrelated, you get a much more vigorous fish, which is what I really enjoy. I literally cannot wait to raise this group of fry and the fun part is you never know what you're going to get. I have a beautiful pair of Koi veil Blushers, and they had one offspring that is absolutely the most beautiful angelfish I have ever laid eyes on, and they have only ever had one in 4 batches of 200 + fry that I have raised. It is what I would call a black blushing veil, simply stunning!! This is one fish I have been codling for the last 6 months, because it is the most beautiful fish I have raised to date!!

Stay well fish friends, and remember the best way to avoid rambling articles in the DARTER is to make sure the editor has choices to cut some articles!!

The Alabammy Whammy

By Charley Grimes

Reprinted from Feb 2006 Fancy Fins Of the Circle City Aquarium Club

Somehow I 'signed on' for a December 2005 fish collecting trip to Alabama with Jim Graham and Phil Kukulski. As with most of my adventures and misadventures the outing sounded like a great idea while in the planning stage -- it was still warm a couple of months ago!!!!

I even have a historical perspective that should have given me a clue that December weather is pretty iffy, at best. Last year, 2004, Jim Graham and Klaus Schoening inveigled me into a South Carolina trip that provided a mixed bag of weather -- a couple of tee shirt and shorts days followed by a couple of days when I couldn't pile on enough warm clothes. And, of course, the locals commented that the weather was unusually cool.

I did an internet search and determined that the odds of pleasant weather for our trio, Tuesday, Dec. 8 thru Sunday, Dec. 11, were pretty good. The historical temperature averaged highs in the 60's and lows in the mid 30's -- pretty nice.

The drive down on Tuesday, which included lunch at Popeye's, was very pleasant -- sunny and warm. We got to our base, a motel in Athens, Alabama, (the north central part of Alabama), in the early part of the afternoon. As Phil was all 'geeked up' to go collecting, we went collecting for the last two hours of daylight of the day. More correctly, Phil and Jim went collecting while I took pictures and shouted advice from the bridge.

In reality, I am not nearly so avid a fish collector as I pretend. Additionally I am a pretty avid photographer. Here lately, most of my fish collecting outings are at least 50% photography and I have noticed that the interest in photography increases as the outside temperature drops.

When I looked over the north side of the bridge crossing the first stream we stopped at on Dec 8, 2005, and saw ice on a log in the water, I knew this was going to be a camera dominated afternoon.

Early Wednesday morning, 23 degrees, found us heading east to a couple of collecting sites visited during the 2003 NANFA Convention. While I was busily taking pictures of frost coated leaves and twigs, still below freezing, Jim & Phil were in the water catching fish. The day turned off sunny and pleasant with the temperature getting close to 50 degrees. I stayed both warm and dry, took a lot of pictures and the dedicated fish collectors had good success, especially for darters. They caught some colorful Redline Darters along with a mixed bag of other darters and shiners.

Thursday, the 'patented Grimes weather' caught up with us and a cooler rain front was marching thru the entire state. We drove south about 150 miles to look for shiners, especially Rainbow Shiners.

Our first stop did actually cough up some Rainbow shiners and considerable entertainment. Even though it was rainy, the temperature was in the mid 40's —Jim and Phil shamed me into leaving my camera in the van and getting into the water to help with the fish collecting.

When we caught a couple Rainbow Shiners, I decided this collecting thing was a lot of fun and was getting into the spirit of things -- actually contributing, albeit in a small way.

With about 10 Rainbow Shiners in the collecting bucket, the old saying, "The things you see when you don't have a camera handy" again proved itself to be very true.

Jim took a misstep and fell into the creek! When the splashing was all over, there he was with only his toes and nose protruding above water -- what a photo opportunity!!!!

The van, with my two cameras, was only a couple of hundred yards distant.

The big question -- was it reasonable to ask Jim to stay immersed in 40 degree water for the three or four minutes it would take me to scoot to the van and back with my camera????? Probably not.

After Jim was on the stream bank and draining, I did ask, strictly in the interest of photographic history, if he would be willing to re-enter the stream and recreate the 'nose and toes' scene. Jim, usually so accommodating, wouldn't even discuss my proposal.

After a side trip to Wal-Mart where Jim bought underwear, socks, shirt, and, of course, bib overalls, we sorta resumed our collecting. The other spots we tried that day were pretty close to inaccessible to Jim and me. Phil, younger and a lot more agile, did manage to collect some spiffy darters and some little minnows that looked to be a *Pteronotropis* species. If they are, no matter which species, they should grow up to be really cool fish.

It was a long drive back to the motel that evening but, for me at any rate, it was considerably lighted by the memory of Jim's unplanned dip in the creek.

Friday morning went beyond chilly and was downright frigid. We had sort of decided to hunt for Scarlet Shiners, but with the nasty cold, we opted to try a different location for Rainbow Shiners. This location is about 75 miles and allowed the sun drenched landscape to warm to 36 degrees -- the high for the day. It was plenty warm enough for Jim and Phil to hit the water and for me to take a lot of pictures. I needed the habitat pictures for a friend's article on Rainbow Shiners' -- that is my story and I am sticking to it!

In short order, Jim & Phil caught enough Rainbow Shiners for our limited needs and we headed back towards what we hoped was a Scarlet Shiner collecting location.

We did take a short detour to photograph an abandoned cotton mill -- very interesting. I tried to imagine all the activity at the mill when it was in its 'glory', with farmers bringing in huge wagonloads of cotton to be 'ginned' and bales of processed cotton being loaded on trucks. I have a pretty good imagination and I was able to conjure up quite a sight. A very fun spot to visit.

By the time we got to what we hoped was a collecting location for Scarlet Shiners, the temperature had dropped to 33 degrees. I decided to stay in the van and start writing this article while Jim and Phil, wearing waders, winter Jackets, stocking caps, and rubber gloves, hit the water. Those two guys labored mightily and soon caught a number of shiny silver minnows that looked to be different than what we had caught on earlier outings.

I should have been embarrassed by my lack of collecting spirit -- but every time I ventured out of the van to shout a few words of encouragement to the guys, I got a blast of that 33 degree weather and decided there was only enough adventure in that creek for two people and I didn't think it would be fair for me to dilute the fun Jim and Phil were having. That is my story and I am sticking to it!

The weather forecast for Saturday was for a low in the morning of 18 degrees with warming to 45 degrees in the afternoon. I hinted that heading for home a day early might be a good idea. Phil -- apparently he never gets cold -- was already planning and plotting collecting sites in the NW corner of Alabama for Saturday and couldn't be deterred by common sense arguments.

I'll give Phil credit -- he collected from early morning till dark Saturday -- Jim stayed right there in the water with Phil for almost all of it except the last hour. There was ice across parts of some of the streams. Absurd!

They did catch four new kinds of darters and plenty of minnows. They even swore they were having a good time. Absurd! Their brains must have been frostbitten!

The upside of Jim and Phil sloshing around in those iceberg laden waters was that I got to photograph some really nifty darters--nine species that we don't get to see here in Indiana.

I do intend to return to Alabama to do some more collecting -- I have a fishing license that is valid till December 2006 -- I'll go back when the temperatures are a bit more comfortable -- cause there are lots of spiffy fish there just waiting to be caught.

The Computer Page

Steve Deutsch

MASI's official web page: www.missouriaquariumsociety.org

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MASI MEMBERS E-Mail Addresses:

Jim & Sue Amsden	suzjimmie@aol.com
Al Andersen	alander602@hotmail.com
Michele Berhorst	mmberhorst@aol.com
Klaus Bertich	kbertich@sbcglobal.net
Roy Brandhorst	Skipperoy4@juno.com
Jim Brodack	jbrodack@centurytel.net
Diane Brown	debunix@well.com
Scott Bush	sportspicks@charter.net
Dwane & Phyllis Cotton	Infofish@aol.com
Steve Deutsch	fishfan@i1.net
Karhy Deutsch	katfish@i1.net
Steve Edie	sredie@charter.net
Maureen Green	jmsgreen@iopener.net
Charles Harrison	csharrison@inkmaker.net
Mike Hellweg	mhellweg511@charter.net
Angela Hellweg	pugdog64@yahoo.com
Steven Hoffman	hoffmo@cablemo.net
Lawrence Kent	lawkentnorton@yahoo.com
Gary Lange	gwlange@sbcglobal.net
Charles & MaryAnn Lenau	cmlenau@hughes.net
Gary McIlvaine	gmcilvaine@msn.com
Ed Millinger	amazoneddy@sbcglobal.net
Jim Mueller	muellerj44@yahoo.com
Jim & Brenda Thale	tbird55jb@aol.com
Mark & Alice Theby	markrehabber@yahoo.com
Pat Tosie	pattosie@juno.com
Patrick A. Tosie, II	patricktosie@juno.com
John Van Asch	johnsfishy@att.net
Harold Walker, Jr.	fiveinall@sbcglobal.net
Jim & Rosie Yaekel	jryaekel@htc.net

Club Hopping

Steve Edie

Oct 1 -- St Louis: Missouri Aquarium Society – Swap Meet

Oct 7 – Bloomington, MN: Minnesota Aquarium Society – Auction

Oct 14 - Cincinnati: Greater Cincinnati Aquarium Society – Fall Auction

Oct 20-22 – Laurel, MD: Potomac Valley Aquarium Society - All Aquarium Catfish Convention

Oct 22 -- Chicago: Greater Chicago Cichlid Association – Swap Meet

Oct 29 – Milwaukee: Milwaukee Aquarium Society - Auction

Nov 10-12 – San Francisco: Aquatic Gardeners Association – Annual Convention

Nov 17-19 – Strongsville, OH: Ohio Cichlid Association – Cichlid Extravaganza

Nov 19 -- St Louis: Missouri Aquarium Society – Fall Auction

Nov 19 -- Chicago: Illinois Cichlids & Scavengers – Auction

Nov 19 -- Milwaukee: Milwaukee Aquarium Society – Swap Meet

Nov 26 -- Chicago: Greater Chicago Cichlid Association – Swap Meet

Mar 16-18, 2007 -- Hartford, CT: Northeast Aquarium Council – Annual Convention

July 2007 – Sacramento, CA: American Cichlid Association – Annual Show

Apr 11-13, 2008 -- Hartford, CT: Northeast Aquarium Council – Annual Convention

Member Classifieds

Charles Harrison (314) 894-9761, csharrison@inkmaker.net -
OTO Chlorine test kit, 4 ounces \$12.50 last for about 2 years, detects traces of Chlorine in tap/tank water, and other "Chemicals for the Fish hobby"

MASI Members can place a classified ad in the Darter for free. Ads may be up to 30 words in length. Send your ads to the editor. The ad will run for one issue unless you specify how long to run in, in which case it will run as requested.

Hippocampus zosterae The Dwarf Seahorse

By Mike Hellweg

The Dwarf Seahorse has often been referred to as the “guppy of the marine hobby”, and that is not far from the truth. They are small, colorful, hardy, spawn readily, and exhibit many interesting behaviors. While fairly short lived (10 months to one year or so) in the wild, some tank raised specimens will live for two or more years.

They should be kept in a relatively small container, such as a 2-1/2 to 5 gallon tank. The reason for the small tank is twofold. First, they do not require much space due to their limited mobility and extremely small size. Second, it keeps the food concentrated in a smaller area and more easily accessible to them where they don't have to hunt too much to get it.

I used crushed coral as a substrate, but others have reported success with some of the marine sands that are now available. Some aquarists use bare bottom tanks, but I believe using something with a high calcium carbonate content will help buffer the pH and alkalinity and keep the water parameters more stable. Since they are coastal fish, they are tolerant of a wider range of salinity than most marine fish. Normal behavior and successful spawning have been reported in salinity from 1.019 – 1.024. I try to keep them at or very near 1.024. I do 50% water changes every week. They are not really tropical fish, and room temperature seems to be fine for them, so no heater is necessary. If you are comfortable, they will be, too. A range of 68 – 80 degrees seems to be optimal.

I use a sponge filter, and provide plenty of anchoring sites for the fish (I use *Caulerpa*, but this is not available in many coastal states), as they spend most of their time holding on to something with their tail and searching for food. Artificial “hitching posts” work just as well as natural ones. Nerite snails are added to help control algae, and their larvae provide a supplemental food source for young seahorses.

Feeding is the most critical factor. They REQUIRE live food. If you cannot or will not provide them with a constant, daily source of live food, your attempts to keep them will fail. Some specimens will eat the occasional frozen or freeze dried Cyclops, but these should not be relied upon as a staple diet as they are not taken by all specimens all the time, and they have to be moving to stimulate a feeding response for the seahorses.

Like most hobbyists working with them, I use newly hatched brine shrimp as a primary source of food. It must be fed within 6 – 8 hours of hatch for maximum nutritive value. After the second molt, at about 10 – 12 hours depending on temperature, the brine shrimp should be fortified with a food supplement with HUFA such as Selcon. Additionally, after the second molt, brine shrimp are too large for newborn seahorses to eat and they may starve to death surrounded by food! Feeding density is important. Studies show that even a newborn seahorse will eat as many as 3000 Artemia nauplii per day! Add enough food that they can hunt and eat comfortably without expending too much energy.

Since they need to eat every day, when going out of town I use one of the new in-tank brine shrimp hatchers that releases the newly hatched larvae into the tank while keeping the “shells” contained. This will provide a source of food for them for a few days while I am gone.

Mating is a complex and interesting dance that is described in detail in nearly every seahorse book out there, so I won't go into much detail here. If you keep them, you have to make sure you spend time watching them in the early day and watch for this behavior. It is among the most interesting mating displays in all of the animal kingdom.

It is interesting to note that the male carries the fry to term, usually about 10 days. The female lays her eggs in the male's pouch, and he fertilizes them internally. Contrary to popular belief, the male does provide some nutrition to the developing embryos in his pouch. The lining of the pouch is rich in blood vessels and becomes “placenta-like” according to seahorse researcher Alisa Wagner Abbot in her

recently published TFH book *The Complete Guide to Dwarf Seahorses in the Aquarium*. Anyone wishing to work with these fish should seriously consider reading this book first.

Broods are usually small. The first brood I had just a day after they arrived was only 3 fry –two of which were stillborn, probably due to the stress of shipping. But the one survivor did very well. Subsequent broods produced an average of 8 – 10 fry per brood. Newborn Dwarfs are ready to eat as soon as they are born, and, as mentioned earlier, will eat a lot. Feed them well the same foods as the adults and they will grow quickly. By the time the next brood is born, they will have already more than doubled in size. They reach maturity quickly, and will be mating at about 2 months old – another parallel to the guppy.

As for tankmates, aside from the above mentioned Nerite snails, the only other critter I use in their tank is the tiny Hawaiian Red Shrimp, *Halocardina rubra*, which is also an algae eater. Other critters, even seemingly harmless ones like starfish, should go into other, larger marine tanks.

If you are willing to provide them with a constant source of live foods, these “guppies of the marine hobby” will provide you with a lot of interesting behavior to observe and a lot of fry. If you’ve always wanted to try them, go ahead and give them a try. Just remember the key is live food.

Note: The entire genus *Hippocampus* has been placed on CITES II and most wild caught specimens cannot legally be shipped between countries without a lot of paperwork. There are several commercial farms here in the US that are now raising several species of seahorses, and you should purchase from them. You will get healthier fish that are already adapted to captivity, and many of the larger species have also been trained to take frozen foods. Fortunately, unlike many of their other seahorse cousins, the Dwarf Seahorse appears to be relatively stable along much of its range. But like its cousins, you should try to obtain captive raised specimens to start your colony.

For more information about these and other livebearers, consider joining the American Livebearer Association. You can get more information, and even join online, at www.livebearers.org or by writing to:

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A Few Words About Selling at the Auction

by Mike Schadle

reprinted from Mar/Apr 87 SWAM of the South Western Michigan Aquarium Society

I've had the pleasure of acting as auctioneer at many aquarium society auctions in the last few years, and in that capacity have sold thousands of bags of fish and assorted aquarium paraphernalia. In the process I have developed some rather strong feelings on how the aquarist can best realize the maximum profit for his goods, and conversely, on how a seller can guarantee a low return (and occasionally, the wrath of the buyers) by poor presentation of the items he has for sale. In this article I hope to bring out some of these pet peeves and helpful hints with the aim of educating the auction sellers, so they may attain higher profits while adding to the success and reputation of their society's auctions. For the sake of this discussion I will leave out the topic of proper bagging and packaging, as this has been well covered in other articles and should largely be a matter of common sense, and will instead concentrate on the items being sold.

The first and foremost rule to follow as a seller is to consider whether or not you yourself as a buyer would pay money for the item you are considering for sale. No matter if it is fish, plant, aquatic animal, equipment, or other hobby-related items, would you, if you had an interest, pay out your hard

earned dough for the item you are about to put in the auction? If the answer is no or even a marginal qualified yes, you are best off throwing it in the garbage, flushing it, or feeding it off, as the case may be. Let's face it, who profits when a 1-pound baggie of fluorescent purple gravel is placed in an auction and sells for 50 cents? If you really need the 30 cents that such a sale might net you that badly, then maybe you really need to take a look at your priorities and sell off your aquarium stuff and put some food on your table. At any rate, following this basic rule in and of itself will insure that you are welcome back the next time a given society holds an auction, and you will usually not be disappointed with the financial outcome. Not following this guideline can insure the buyers will be on the lookout to avoid your items in future auctions, and auction staffs and auctioneers will be on the lookout for "that cheapskate jerk with the purple gravel".

Let's take a look at the fish you bag up for an auction. If your krib spawned three weeks ago and right now you're sitting on about 500 three-eighths inch long fry, do you bag up three to a bag and put twenty bags in the auction? If you do, you are guilty of at least three auction mistakes. First of all, your fish are not ready to be sold - they simply aren't yet big enough. Especially for a more or less common fish, such as a krib, tiny fry are just not large enough to place in an auction and expect someone to part with several dollars to obtain them. Only in the case of extremely hard-to-come-by fish are small fry really acceptable for an auction (and then, if they're really that rare, you ought to have a long list of ready buyers at hand for private sale with no need for an auction). A good rule of thumb for most species is that the fish be about one inch long before they're ready for auction (obviously this doesn't work for *Heterandria Formosa*, among others, but, hey, the whole point here is think before you bag). Here's another test to try: would you take the fish to your local dealer and ask him to buy them from you for sale in his shop? Again, if the answer is no, what makes you think that they are any more desirable in an auction? If you don't have the room to raise up all your fry to a saleable size, then use the excess as feeders. Why waste time bagging stock that will not net you any money and just bogs down the auction? Excess baby fish are a wonderful source of live food. Remember the old rule - big fish eat little fish! It doesn't really matter that it took you a year to spawn the suckers - if you can't raise them they'll be stunted, which means they aren't good for anything but feeders anyway!

The next mistake is usually made in the number of fish placed in the bag. Almost every article you read about spawning fish says, "purchase at least six fry to insure obtaining a pair". Assuming that there is a fifty-fifty mix of males and females in every batch of fry (usually a false assumption, but that's another article), purchasing six at a time gives roughly a 97% probability of obtaining at least one pair - pretty fair odds. However, rarely do I see six unsexed fry bagged together in an auction. It may be two, three, or four, but rarely six. Here's a tip from the auctioneer: unless it is an expensive or desirable species (like *Tropheus* or *Discus*) your best bet is to place four fry to a bag. Four in a bag will bring a far better per-fish price in most cases than two or three, and a marginally better price than five or six. It all has to do with buyer psychology - particularly as the price per individual rises. For expensive species, buying three bags of two fish each for ten dollars somehow seems less expensive than buying one bag of six fish for thirty dollars. However, as the price per fish falls, four to a bag seems to make more sense than either two or six. I'm not defending this behavior from any logical or rational point of view; this is simply my observation of what really happens during an auction. Take advantage of it!

The third big mistake of the breeder/auction seller is to flood any single auction with too many fish. If you've put more than half a dozen bags of single species in the auction, you simply will not see the return you might expect. All the fish are on the table for everyone to view before the auction starts. As a result, if there are twenty bags of a particular fish available, everyone knows it, and there is little incentive to bid up the price on the bags of that fish that come up early. Later, as the crowd thins, there are less people bidding on those fish, and again, the price won't rise as desired. Finally, if there were simply too many bags of one species to be comfortably distributed throughout the auction, they will end up practically being given away in a lump towards the end of the sale. Always remember to apply the law of supply and demand. Too many of your fish plus too few buyers for your fish always equals low

prices! You can't do much about the number of buyers, but you can certainly limit the number offish available, thus raising the price on at least one side of the equation.

Let's move on to the non-fish items in an auction. I've seen some tricks that can do a lot to raise selling prices on normally ho-hum items. For example, every auction seems to have more than its share of microworm and white worm cultures. Each of these can normally be counted on to bring in its half or one-dollar bid. BUT - try including a typewritten sheet of culturing instructions and see what the price is. Many people know that live foods are good for their fish, and are willing to buy them, but simply don't have the know-how to sustain them. I've seen a simple set of culturing instructions triple the price of a food culture over those without them. A few minutes' time at the typewriter and judicious use of a Xerox machine may well net you a few bucks in the future. How about equipment? A little bit of elbow grease and some time are all that is needed to turn a \$5.00 grunge covered 20-gallon high tank into a sparkling \$15.00 or more bid winner at your next auction. The same holds true of any piece of hobby equipment. If it is clean and shiny, be it tank, hood or box filter, it is guaranteed to do better than an algae-encrusted, water-stained piece of crud that someone obviously didn't give two hoots about. Again, this goes back to our primary rule. My final point/tip has to do with labeling. Personally, I feel that every item sold at auction should be labeled with the seller's name and complete phone number, over and above any descriptive information on the item to be sold. Putting your name and number to something indicates that you personally have no problem with the items you are selling - in effect, a guarantee, since if there is a problem the buyer has ready access to you. If you can sincerely stand behind each and every item you sell, providing this information should be no problem, and can strengthen a buyers resolve to purchase an item offered in an auction. As far as information on the item itself goes, the more information provided, the better - up to a point. First, the information must be accurate; I've seen three-inch diameter Discus labeled as "large", "pairs" of two inch Angel Fish, and many "female" male Kennyi, to name just a few exaggerations.

If you aren't sure of the identity or sex of an item, don't guess, and please don't insult the auctioneer's intelligence by stretching the size - if the auctioneer is a specialist in the field and catches your mistake/exaggeration/guess while looking at the bag before selling it, his comments may only make you feel dumb and the price may drop. On the other hand, if he sells it "as is" and it is not what it is represented to be, the host club and eventually you yourself may come in for a whole slew of trouble and bad feelings once the error is discovered. If you don't know the identification of the fish you wish to sell you have three options: 1) Find someone who can identify it (and not your six year old kid looking through his natural science book); 2) Sell it as an unidentified species, but at least try to narrow it down somewhat (Cichlids, Guppies, Killies, and Gouramis are usually fairly difficult to confuse); 3) Don't sell it and use it as a feeder. You will never lose by being honest in your descriptions, yet you might never be trusted by being caught once in a lie, er, excuse me, by stretching the truth. Whatever you do, please don't leave the item devoid of any description - a sure way to stop an auction is for an item to come up with no description whatsoever, and have the auctioneer try to figure out what it is. No matter how good an auctioneer is, he cannot know every fish, plant, or device that comes up for sale, so please give him a little help, however limited it may be.

I hope that you find this information of some use. There are other tricks and techniques which I'm sure others could add, and I don't expect that this article should be the last word in helping those who sell at aquarium auctions. Much can be learned by attending auctions and observing what sells for good prices, and what doesn't "meet expectations". Experience, of course, is the best teacher. I'm sure that the things I've mentioned have hit home with most readers in some way. Please accept this information in the spirit that it is offered – as help, so that auctions may be more interesting and profitable for all of us.



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2. Maximum 4 colors including black
3. Must be aquarium or fish-related subject
4. The design is for the FRONT or BACK of a T-shirt only, no designs for sleeves, both sides, etc. will be considered.
5. No photos allowed
6. Each entrant may submit as many entries as they like.
7. The club will vote on the most popular design. The Executive Council will take this vote under advisement when choosing the final design.
8. The winner gets the first T-shirt, plus a copy of the final design suitable for framing. This will also be used as a cover for the Darter.
9. Minimum allowed design size is 8" x 8"; maximum allowed design size is 12" x 12".

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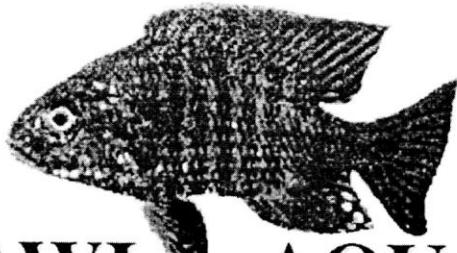
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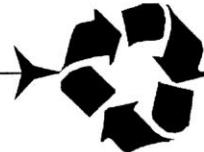
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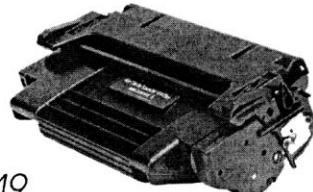
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