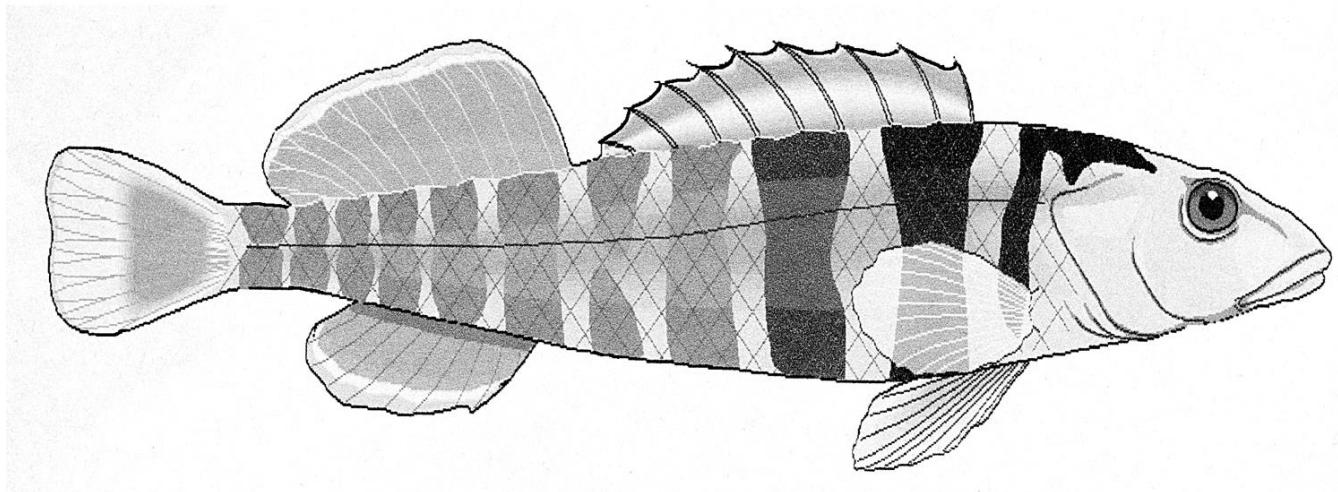


The Darter

May - June 2007



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St. Louis, Missouri**

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

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MASI Exchange
P.O. Box 1682
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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

THURSDAY May 17, 2007

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

SATURDAY May 5, 2007

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

SATURDAY June 9, 2007 (Rain Date is June 23)

MASI Picnic, 3:00 Jim and Brenda Thale's, Executive Council 7:30 after picnic

THURSDAY June 21, 2007

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

THURSDAY July 19, 2007

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

THURSDAY August 16, 2007

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

SUNDAY August 19, 2007

Auction, 12:00 @ the Stratford Inn
Contact: John Van Asch – 618-277-6165, johnsfishy@att.net

SUNDAY October 7, 2007

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

SUNDAY November 18, 2007

Auction, 12:00 @ the Stratford Inn
Contact: John Van Asch – 618-277-6165, johnsfishy@att.net

Presidential Preamble

By Mike Hellweg

Well folks, another MASI Spring Weekend is history. And what a great weekend it was. We had several excellent speakers. Everyone who attended seemed to enjoy themselves. A lot of great questions were asked, and hopefully all were answered to your satisfaction! The Greek food at our Banquet was excellent – the only complaint I heard was that everyone wished there was more! That's always a good sign! The auction went very well, generating revenue for the club, getting a lot of fish out to other hobbyists, and just generally was well-enjoyed by all.

At the Banquet, we handed out our Annual Awards. This year the Member of the Year award went to Dave Rush. The Hobbyist Service award was won by yours truly, with Steve Edie finishing a VERY close second. There was no Novice Service award won last year, but that is more likely due to a lack of information than due to a lack of candidates. We're working to straighten that out for next year. The Steve Edie is the winner of the Ralph Wilhelm Memorial Writer's Award for his article "Statischthyology". He was also the runner-up with another excellent article! Steve generously donated his \$100 prize to Project Piaba. In addition, we handed out several HAP and BAP awards, including several higher level Grand Master Breeder awards, a Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist award and a higher level Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist award. Congratulations to all!

For at least the second year in a row, our membership is up. This bucks the trend of many clubs on the Coasts, where membership has been steadily declining. I guess we're doing something right. Speaking of doing something right, if you would like to share your own ideas about what you would like to see the club doing, please consider running for the Executive Council. The job is not difficult, you do get to see other's fish tanks/fishrooms, and you get a chance to show off your own. In addition, you will get to see some of your ideas implemented in the club for the benefit of all of the members. We always welcome new ideas.

Diane Brown, our Bowl Show Chair, will be stepping down as she is going to be leaving us for the greener pastures of California. I would like to thank her for her years of service and her participation on the Executive Council. Her departure will leave a big hole, but we're hoping someone will step up and volunteer to take over and run the Bowl Show in her absence. If you are interested, let me know.

Speaking of shows, after a couple year break it might be time for us to put together an annual show next year. To do this, we'll need a Show Chairman. There will be lots of experienced hands to help out, but we do need you to volunteer. For more information, contact me.

Finally, I just wanted to let you all know that TFH Editor David Boruchowitz has agreed to publish the MASI Challenge going out to all TFH readers around the world. Hopefully our Challenge will help generate more money for research, conservation, and other worthwhile fishy charities.

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

Editor's Notes

Steve Deutsch

I have been having email troubles lately with my ISP. I hope everything is straightened out and I got everyone's articles, but if you sent me something I did not print, please re-send. Charles Harrison has set up an email address through the club's web site, so now you can send articles and reports to editor@missouriaquariumsociety.com - please note this is at our .com site, not our .org site.

We have two new authors in this issue; Mark and Tammy Langer and Rick Tinklenberg. If you have been to our auctions you have seen their fish and if you have been reading the BAP reports you have seen their names. Part of the higher level BAP awards is sharing your knowledge with the club either through a presentation at the meetings or an article in the Darter. Needless to say, the Vice President wants speakers at the meetings and the Editor wants articles - this time the Editor won. We also have articles by Klaus Bertich (the third of three parts), Mike Hellweg, Ed Millinger, and one exchange article by Pam Chin of the Pacific Coast Cichlid Association.

Congratulations go to Steve Edie for winning the second Ralph Wilhelm Writer's Award for his article on Statisticthyology. All articles of one page or more are entered; plenty of time for anyone to get an article into the remaining three Darter's and be entered.

Article deadlines for the remainder of the year are June 15, August 15, and October 15.

MASI Picnic

Jim and Brenda Thale are again hosting the MASi picnic at their house this year. This is a club tradition and provides an opportunity, like the Christmas party, to socialize with club members and their families. There is more opportunity to just talk and get to know club members than is available at the meetings, as there is no club business and no speakers - just good food in a social setting. The picnic is a barbecue with Jim and Brenda preparing the main course and club members providing appetizers, side dishes, and desserts. All members and their families are welcome. Please let Jim or Brenda know how many people are coming and what dish you can bring, so they know how much to cook and can make sure the menu is at least somewhat balanced. The executive council meeting is after the picnic, and is open to all club members whether or not on council - so if you want to stay, you can see what council does and maybe decide you want to run next year.

Time:

June 9, 3:00 with a rainout date of June 23

Contact:

Jim and Brenda Thale

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Fenton, MO 63026

Phone: (636) 343-8004

Email - tbird55jb@aol.com

Apistogramma diplotaenia, The Sand Cichlid

by Rick Tinklenberg

A whispering, ghostly voice “diplotaenia” again, “diplotaenia”! Finding *Apistogramma diplotaenia* is like chasing a whip-poor-will, can’t be caught. Instead of calling it the sand cichlid, I called it the “Sorry cichlid”... “Sorry, didn’t come in”, “Sorry, too rare”, “Sorry, sold the last pair”, “Sorry, too expensive”, “Sorry, not on our list”, “Sorry, the tank crashed”, etc. I persisted in my quest, hearing stories that a pair sold at a large east coast outlet for \$1000.00. Finally, a friend of mine bought seven for a moderate price. I was then able to observe his and wanted some for myself. Of the seven, only one was a female and she died after a few days, with the males dying one at a time, until they were gone. This fish certainly was living up to its reputation.

Then one day I was talking to a wholesaler in New England, an odd duck and he asked me if I would be interested in *A. diplotaenia*! He had 2 pair that were \$90 a pair. Normally, this is more than I would pay for a pair of fish, but he wanted some of my fish and a deal was made. I was still worried he didn’t know what he was talking about and wouldn’t be satisfied until they were in my tanks. Within a week, the box was at the Post Office and I went there to pick it up. I had bought other fish, so the box was a good size. The clerk brought the box out, it started to leak water. The clerk said, “Sorry, wrong side up” and turned it over. So apparently, it had leaked before!! I took the soggy box and headed for home, imagining I had a box of dead fish. Upon arriving home, I started to dissect the box, finding some live fish, some dead fish and looking for the *diplotaenia*. Finally, they appeared; 3 alive, with one in about two ounces of water and one dead male. I was angry! The box looked like a 3 year old had prepared it! When all the fish were settled, about \$200.00 of very rare livestock had perished. Now for me, it is not the money! It is the fish’s lives! One of the reasons I keep fish is to attempt spawning them and maybe extending their population. A negligent act like this is unbelievable and unforgivable! So, now several years latter, I have calmed down and can tell you how I kept this fish.

The trio were all quite small, but seemed healthy. I dripped them into a 5 gallon tank right above the fishroom sink where I could observe them regularly. They settled in nicely and accepted thawed blood worms, live baby brine shrimp, daphnia and even flake food. The tank had a thin layer of sand on the bottom and was planted with java fern and water sprite. There were 2 of the terra cotta spawning huts and a pot shard as furniture. They liked my tap water with a conductivity of about 300us, a ph of 6.5 and temperature of 78 degree F.

The slender male showed the classic double stripes from head to tail as the *diplo* (double) *taenia* (stripes) name indicates. He was a lite tan base color with extended dorsal and ventral fins. The females were slightly smaller than his 2 inches, also having the double lines and black on their ventral fins, reminiscent of a female *cacatuoides*

I planned to move them to a larger tank as they matured. In preparation for the move, I started adding RO water slowly to their tank to bring down the conductivity. Coming from the Rio Negro river system in South America, their water should be very soft and acidic. They surprised me! One female started defending a spawning hut. She obviously had fry, but I could not see them! The young blended so well with the sand that a magnifying glass was required. They truly seemed “Sand Cichlids”. Two days later, the second female had fry! So, in a 5 gallon tank, I had two spawns of *A. diplotaenia*, who are supposed to require large quarters. I moved the second female and fry to another 5 gallon tank by putting my thumb over the hut door after “they were in for the night”. Raising the fry was unproblematic. They readily accepted live baby brine shrimp and with regular water changes, began to grow.

A couple of unusual things did happen at this point. I moved the trio to a larger tank and before they spawned again, both females died. I have had this happen with other Apisto females and wonder if early spawning wears them out physically. The other even more distressing development was all 90 of the young were male! I don't know why this would happen. The water ph was 6.0 to 6.2, the temperature was near 78 degree F. Everything indicated a nearly equal sex split, but it didn't happen. So, I was unable to pass on this wonderful fish or even continue with them in my fishroom. Thus ends my adventures with *Apistogramma diplotaenia*. (Unless, of course, I can find them again.)

GEOPHAGUS Sp. TAPAJOS

Eartheaters

By: Mark & Tammy Langer

These beautiful fish with their reddish fins, iridescent bluish horizontal stripes and body base color of yellow first caught my eye at a friend's house. I thought these fish were cool and interesting so I bought six small Tapajos from a spawn he recently pulled. I took them home and began my homework.

I started my research about my new fish and in my opinion they are a color morph of the Geophagus Altifrons. After setting up my Tapajos in a 40 breeder with gravel and pieces of clay pots and a flat rock. I lost 3 of my 6 and later found I got lucky and still got a pair. I found that the fish don't seem to particular about the water chemistry as long as it is clean. They show their best colors and performance in soft acidic water.

These fish are not picky eaters either. I have fed them frozen foods, beef heart, pellets and flakes. I find they prefer the frozen foods. (Don't they All).

After the pairing, I removed the odd fish and let the happy couple have their space. Within a few weeks I had noticed the pair had chosen a cozy corner behind the clay pot pieces to begin their new family. After some tedious excavation of the gravel, cleaning of the flat rock and an extra hidey hole made, the home remodeling was complete.

Within 3 to 4 days the female was holding fry. Approximately week later the female spit the fry in their excavated area and the male siphoned them in and resumed the parental duty until it was time for them to come out and meet their new surroundings.

A count of approx. 300 to 350 fry were present. After watching for a week or so it appears that the Tapajos are good parents. Except if you forget to feed them. (A warning to you Tapajo lovers... do not skip a days feeding, your population of 300 will drop to 6 to 8. The key here is: Don't Forget to Feed Your Parents).

After removing the remaining fry, I did a 25% water change with a gravel vac and refilled the tank with R/O water. Approximately a week later they are remodeling again and preparing for a new family.

These fish are beautiful peaceful fish to add to any aquarist fish room.

The Nitty Gritty:

Tank 40 gallon breeder, water soft with a ph of 6.2, medium fluorescent lighting and a variety of foods, frozen and prepared. A temp of 82 to 84.

Oh yeah. The fry, they eat anything and everything. Very easy to feed.

The Expedition - Part 3

By Klaus Bertich

They go up stream; Ohata just lets the three do their own thing for a while. They find a small stream and they all go up into the jungle. The water is clear and the bottom of the stream is rock covered and they find a few small cichlids in here. Bill sees them first and of course wants to net some as soon as possible. But first he wants identification. He has never seen anything like these fish. They were almost all black except for the tip of the dorsal fin. This was a bright red. The tail was short and was straight. The fish also had binocular vision, so it sees like we do. The fish has a round shape like a cigar. Really strange but the guys are going to get one of these even though it's bigger than what they want to collect. Bill has his net ready and dips for the fish and he has one. He grabs the fish, using the net from the outside. This gives him a better grip on the fish and he doesn't have to squeeze as hard. That having been said, Bill still drops the fish in the water. Bill got a little upset here and throws the net into the water and says a few choice words. Jerry in the meantime also has one of the fish in his net. It's almost too big for the net, he almost loses the fish. He keeps his hand on top of the net and gets to shore. Bill has recovered his net and his composure and comes over to Jerry and as they are looking at the fish Bill looks at Jerry and kind of wrinkles his nose and Jerry does the same to Bill. Then they look at the fish and the odor is unbearable and the fish gets heaved back into the water. Ohata had been watching this the whole time and told them they had just caught the poo-poo fish. What makes them smell like that asks Jerry. Ohata asks Jerry, what makes you smell the way you do? Don't know, do you? Neither do I, says Ohata. Bill Says I think we better leave that fish here for the time being or we may not clear customs when we go back. They threw the fish back, but they couldn't throw the smell with it. Bill and Jerry both smelled like, you know. They washed in the water but it did little good. What they needed was a little soap. Ohata let them smell for a time and then showed them where they could clean up with some natural soap from a small bush called the Eirishnutas aspringniatii. A very rare plant. Modern science has yet to duplicate its oils. Jack was not involved in all of this; he was satisfied just to watch. The guys catch a few more fish and it's time to head back for the village before it gets to be to late and dark. They all get into the boats and start paddling back. Along the way they pass a spot along the shore that is all mud and there are a few fallen trees in the water. In the tree branches Jack sees an Otter, a river otter, he tells Ohata he'd like to come back here tomorrow.

Back at camp the village had set up for a night eating and dancing. These people will use any excuse for a party. They are just party people, something like today's fish keepers, kids with a car and a pocket full of money, or fish people. You know fish people are just regular party animals, but with very little money. The men have a wild boar roasting and the women have all of the rest of the festivities set. The musical instruments have been laid out. All was ready for the evening. Our guys return and get cleaned up and start to visit with the people of the village. They visit with their host families first and then move on to the rest of the village.

Bill is staying with Ohata as he has in the past. You know headman with headman and all that. Bill has brought Ohata some nice gifts that he will use in every day life, some hunting knives and fishing gear. This is in payment for the hospitality. The village wouldn't think of taking money. Bill asks Ohata about the Otters. It seems that the Otters have been adopted by the people and are not hunted or harmed in any way. Ohata tells them we call them "Funny Little Man". Otters do seem to have some human characteristics. It seems they are always smiling; they use tools to open the mussels they find on the river bottom. They cuddle each other, they preen each other's fur. The village considers the Otters theirs. They protect them, even help with house keeping, clearing trees if needed and chasing away any thing that might harm them. One of the kits (Baby Otter) was hand raised by the village children when the mother wasn't able to. This one is now a healthy member of the group and it will still take food

from your hand if you offer it. We will visit the “Funny Little Man” in the morning, Ohata said; maybe we will find some fish. The food was ready and the guys had worked up an appetite. The music had started and Jack had his Boom Box and the microphones all set up. The kids in the village thought it was magic the way the box would play the music back for them. Ohata comes to the eating-place and sits down. He is all dressed up in his best ceremonial dress. He looks stunning. The guys just wear their every day stuff and that is just fine, wouldn’t want to out dress the host. Drinks are served and dinner is started.

The drinks are something special. They are made from a root found in the nearby jungle and if you drink too much you will wake up with a hangover of unbelievable proportions. Not only is the drink alcoholic it also has some kind of a drug in it that comes from the root of the plant. The village calls the plant the happy plant; I’ll bet it is too. The night starts out with a tribal traditional dance showing the bravery of the men in battle and how they would steal their brides from the neighboring villages. It was very fierce and the music was just what Jack was waiting for. It was very early when the festivities broke up and every one was ready for some shuteye. Morning was here and the guys hadn’t had enough sleep, things will be a little dicey for the rest of the day.

Ohata meets the guys at breakfast and they plan the day. They would go back to where they seen the Otters. Not so much for the fish but Bill wanted to get some pictures of the Otters in their natural Habitat. He may be able to use this information for his research papers he was doing on project “Save a Habitat” he was involved in back home.

At the Otter site they find a pair of otters just playing around in the water. Ohata knows that if the otters are nearby that fish aren’t to far off. If they do catch fish around the Otter’s den the village will leave some fish for them as kind of payment for helping to catch the fish, you know they need to live too. They watch the otters for a time and soon decide that the Otters have already eaten so they go to a small pool a short distance away. The villagers know the river and the fish; Ohata knows them best. In the pool is a log and around the log are lots of rocks and fish. They pull the boats up on shore and get into the water nets in hand, hopes held high. They net a few and bring them ashore to look at what they have caught. It’s just what they had hoped for. The rare Saw Back Cichlid or as Dr. Yuno Inyourear has named them Uari Akiidinei, that’s right say it like it looks. Now the guys know that to pick up this fish the wrong way it will cut you just trying to escape. The fish is only about two inches long full grown and really a nice addition for the community tank, just don’t pick it up the wrong way. Well they catch a few more of the little prizes and then move back to the Otter site.

At the Otter hole they find that the Otters are lying around taking an afternoon nap. Ohata says we can go in real close to the Otters and see if they have anything in their playground. A few feet from shore and the looking bucket shows them that the Otters have some pets of their own. In the riverbed it looks like the Otters have dug a small hole. In the hole the guys see what they have come this far to see, Cichlasoma Invertulatus, The upside down cichlid, right in the middle of all those Otters, swimming upside down tending the nest. Herding the fry around, moving debris. How are we going to get the fish from the Otters they ask each other? Ohata says that these fish are not to be bothered, they belong to Little Man. Well are there any others around that don’t belong to the Otters? He thinks maybe tomorrow they will find the Cichlasoma Invertulatus away from Little Man playground.

The next morning finds the guys on another stream and they find the fish they are looking for and collect all they want without incident. They are now ready to head home to raise and spawn what they have caught. Back home the guys set up the fish and show them off to the other members of the club. Selling them at this time would not be in the best interest of the fish but trading them is another story.

So you see those simple little fish that you see in the pet shop do take a lot of work to get them there. A lot of people put a lot of work into finding them shipping them and then they find one that is new and the thought of naming one is not that easy. A lot of thought and science goes into those names it’s not like they were made up or something.

Club Hopping

Steve Edie

May 25-27 -- Milwaukee, WI: American Killifish Association -- Annual Convention

May 25-27 – Chicago, IL: Greater Chicago Cichlid Association – Cichlid Classic

June 8-10 -- Raleigh, NC: North American Native Fish Association – Annual Convention

June 23 -- Indianapolis, IN: International Betta Congress – Annual Convention

June 23-24 – St Louis, MO: St Louis Water Gardening Society – Pond-O-Rama

July 18-22 – Sacramento, CA: American Cichlid Association – Annual Show

Aug 19 -- St Louis, MO: Missouri Aquarium Society – Auction

Sept 21-23 – Des Moines, IA: Midwest Cichlid Association – Annual Show

Oct 7 -- St Louis, MO: Missouri Aquarium Society – Swap Meet

Oct 13 -- Cincinnati, OH: Greater Cincinnati Aquarium Society – Auction

Oct 13-14 -- Kalamazoo, MI: Southwest Michigan Aquarium Society - Workshop

Oct 21 -- Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Aquarium Society – Auction

Nov 16-18 -- Cleveland, OH: Ohio Cichlid Association – Cichlid Extravaganza

Nov 18 -- St Louis, MO: Missouri Aquarium Society – Auction

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

Jul xx, 2008 – Atlanta, GA: American Cichlid Association – Annual Show

Oct xx, 2008 – Laurel, MD: All-Aquarium Catfish Convention – Convention

**R&J
FISH
FOOD**

**JIM
314-638-1134**

BAP Report

Steve Edie

Member	Species	Common	Pts	Total
March 2007				
Charles Harrison	<i>Pseudocrenilabrus nicholsi</i>		10	1592
Mike Hellweg	<i>Xiphophorus couchianus</i> "Huesteca Canyon" *	Monterrey Platy	15	2652
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Caquetaia spectabilis</i> **		25	590
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Moenkhausia pittieri</i>	Diamond Tetra	15	605
Mark & Tammy Langer	<i>Telmatochromis temporalis</i>		10	615
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Pelvicachromis pulcher</i>	Krib	10	249
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Puntius conchonius</i>	Rosy Barb	10	259
Philip Newell	<i>Corydoras panda</i>	Panda Cory	10	30
Philip Newell	<i>Pachypanchax playfairii</i>	Golden Killie	5	35
April 2007				
Charles Harrison	<i>Apistogramma hongslooi</i>		15	1607
Charles Harrison	<i>Protomelas taeniolatus</i> *		15	1622
Mike Hellweg	<i>Hyphessobrycon cyanotaenia</i> *	Lapis Lazuli Tetra	20	2672
Mike Hellweg	<i>Nannostomus minimus</i> *	Mini Pencilfish	25	2697
Mike Hellweg	<i>Pelvicachromis subocellatus</i> "Moanda" *		20	2717
Mike Hellweg	<i>Rasbora</i> sp. "thuzari" *	Glowlight Rasbora	25	2742
Cory Koch	<i>Melanotaenia parva</i>	Sunset Dwarf Rainbow	10	425
Cory Koch	<i>Neolamprologus callipterus</i> *		15	440
Cory Koch	<i>Poecilia Sphenops</i>	Black Molly	5	445
Cory Koch	<i>Poecilia Sphenops</i>	Dalmatian Molly	1	446
Cory Koch	<i>Poecilia Sphenops</i> "Roatan Island" *	Roatan Molly	10	456
Cory Koch	<i>Pundamilia nyererei</i>		10	466
Cory Koch	<i>Spathodus erythrodon</i> **		30	496
Cory Koch	<i>Telmatochromis</i> sp. "Temporalis Shell" (<i>Magara</i>) *		15	511
Cory Koch	<i>Thorichthys</i> sp. "Blue Mixteco"		15	526
Gary Lange	<i>Allomogurnda nesolepis</i> **	Goo-Obo Gudgeon	25	1424
Gary Lange	<i>Ancistrus</i> sp L-144 *		15	1439

Gary Lange	<i>Ancistrus</i> sp. "Gold Spot" *	Gold Spot Pleco	15	1454
Gary Lange	<i>Inlecypris auropurpurea</i> **	Lake Inle Danio	25	1479
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Neolamprologus brevis</i>		10	269
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Archocentrus spilurus</i>	Cutter's Cichlid	10	1185
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Corydoras adolfoi</i>	Adolph's Cory	10	1195
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Gambusia vittata</i>		15	1210
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Hyphessobrycon cyanotaenia</i> *		20	1230
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Limbochromis robertsi</i> **		25	1255
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Moenkhausia pittieri</i>	Diamond Tetra	15	1270
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Nanacara taenia</i>		10	1280
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Neolebias ansorgei</i>		20	1300
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Xiphophorus helleri</i> "Red Eye"		5	1305

* = 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)

Congratulations to the following who received Breeder's Awards at the Workshop Banquet:

Mike Hellweg – Ultimate Grand Master Breeder (2500+ points)

Charles Harrison – Senior Grand Master Breeder (1500+ points)

Rick Tinklenberg – Advanced Grand Master Breeder (1000+ points)

Mark & Tammy Langer – Senior Breeder (200+ points)

Gary McIlvaine – Senior Breeder (200+ points)

HAP Report

Mike Hellweg

Hello all,

As you can see from the size of this report, the HAP has been very active for the past couple of months. We've got a new participant as well, Rick Tinklenberg. Welcome, Rick!

At the Annual MASI Weekend we presented 3 HAP awards and I'd like to acknowledge them here.

Andy Walker received his Advanced Aquatic Horticulturist Award.

Jerry Jost presented a program on Aquatic Plants and Water Chemistry and by doing so earned his Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist award.

Mike Hellweg earned his Supreme Grand Master Aquatic Horticulturist Award - the first we've ever presented!

Congratulations to all, and keep 'em green!

Member	Species	Common	Rep	Pts	Total
Jan/Feb 2007					
Andy Walker	<i>Nymphaea lotus</i>	Red Tiger Lotus	V	20	175
Jerry Jost	<i>Cyperus helferi</i>		V	10	1160
Jerry Jost	<i>Echinodorus bleheri robustus</i> *		V	15	1160
Jerry Jost	<i>Echinodorus osiris</i>		V	15	1160
Jerry Jost	<i>Ranalisma rostrata</i> *		V	10	1160
Jerry Jost	<i>Ranalisma rostrata</i>		IB	15	1160
Jerry Jost	<i>Nymphaea stellata</i>	Dwarf Aquarium Lily	V	20	1160
Charles Harrison	<i>Bacopa amplexicaulis</i>	Giant Red Bacopa	V	10	535
Charles Harrison	<i>Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides</i>	Lawn Marshpennywort	V	10	535
Diane Brown	<i>Sagittaria subulata</i> gracillima	Grass Leaf Sag	V	5	305
Gary Lange	<i>Echinodorus</i> sp. Kleiner Bar	Kleiner Bar Sword	V	15	1140
Gary Lange	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal Flower	V	10	1140
Gary Lange	<i>Wolfia columbiana</i>	Columbian Water Meal	V	5	1140
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>	Hornwort	V	5	15
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Ceratopteris thalictroides</i>	Water Sprite	V	5	15
Rick Tinklenberg	<i>Najas guadalupensis</i>	Southern Niyad Grass	V	5	15
Derek Walker	<i>Bolbitis heudelotii</i>	African Water Fern	V	10	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Cabomba piauhensis</i>		V	10	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Cryptocoryne spiralis</i>		V	15	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>	Moneywort	V	10	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>	Green Parrot's Feather	IB	10	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Rotala</i> sp. <i>nanjenshen</i>		V	15	1470
Derek Walker	<i>Rotala</i> sp. green		V	15	1470
Harold Walker	<i>Cryptocoryne lucens</i>		V	15	600
Harold Walker	<i>Echinodorus cordifolius</i>	Radican Sword	V	15	600
Harold Walker	<i>Echinodorus cordifolius</i>	Marble Queen *			
		Marble Queen Sword	V	15	600
Harold Walker	<i>Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides</i>	Lawn Marshpennywort	V	10	600
Harold Walker	<i>Potamogeton illinoensis</i>	Illinois Pond Weed	V	10	600

Reproduction Key: V = Vegetative, OB = Outdoor Bloom, IB = Indoor Bloom, S = Seedling
 * = MASI First

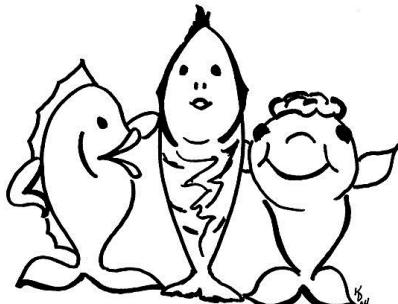
Service Points Update

A points update follows. It's great to see so many members entering the bowl shows. Let's keep it up. I do need to know if you consider yourself a novice. There are separate awards for novice and hobbyist in both the bowl show and service to the society. Refer to the MASI membership book to learn more about how you earn points. You must have earned at least two points by the end of the April auction which this report covers to be included below.

Your points tabulator Ed Millinger.

	service	bowl show		service	bowl show
Jack Berhorst	18		Michelle Berhorst	8	
Klaus Bertich	42	5	Roy Brandhorst	40	
Diane Brown	23		Bob Buckles	15	
Scott Bush	3		Eugene Caldwell	2	
Tammy Clemente	24	5	Kathy Deutsch	28	
Steve Deutsch	34		Steve Edie	59	
Marlon Felman	27	15	Thomas Felman	2	
Maureen Green	2		Steven Green	2	
Dave Hassler	4		Charles Harrison	41	5
Sue Harrison	14		Jack Heller	8	10
Angela Hellweg	15		Mike Hellweg	66	
Ron Huck	10		Jerry Jost	28	
Cory Koch	2		Bart Kraeger	12	
Gary Lange	31		Mark Langer	3	
Micky Lee	3		Gary Mcilvane	18	3
Evan Mcilvane	5		Jim Miller	9	58
Ed Millinger	28		Phillip Newel	14	2
Bob Newton	4		Dwayne Peters	14	11
Ken Porter	4		Brad Riley	2	
Dave Rush	13	3	Mark Theby	35	
Rick Tinklenburg	5		Pat Tosie	37	
John Van Asch	22	2	Andy Walker	12	
Derek Walker	2		Harold Walker	2	1
Jim Yaekel	2		Rose Yaekel	4	

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

From the Fishroom

By Ed Millinger

I enjoy setting up sixteen-gallon muck buckets as a tub garden in the late spring and early summer. The last time I did this I waited too long to purchase the fish I had planned to try and breed. By the time they reached adult size the summer was over and I was hard pressed to find room inside for them. I sold them at the August auction never realizing any BAP points. This year I thought ahead and bought five Brilliant rasboras and five Pristella tetras in early March. I put them in with my geophagus groups to use as dither fish; The cichlids did not bother them although they were twenty to thirty times larger. It took awhile for the dither fish to realize they were not going to be a meal, they were very nervous for the first week.

By the time it is warm enough to move them outside they will hopefully be sexually mature. Natural soft rainwater, live food, and natural sunlight can encourage them to reproduce. The colors the fish show in the sunlight will amaze you. Make sure you are aware of any predators from birds to raccoons.

Some years ago I stopped reading Tropical Fish Hobbyist due to the large number of reptile and saltwater articles. However, last fall I picked up a copy as a door prize and found myself impressed with the quality of the magazine. This issue had an interesting article on freshwater shrimp. I had seen some at Jerry Jost's and Gary Lange's fish rooms and wound up buying some cherry shrimp on aquabid and have enjoyed them ever since. You treat them just like your fish, changing water and regular feedings. They also enjoy grazing on algae, which has led to an interesting scenario. I keep three aquariums next to each other outside of my fishroom. One of the tanks has some chain swords that are covered with algae. I merely switch those covered in algae to the shrimp tank and within twenty-four hours the algae is gone. During this time there is no need to feed crushed flake food.

After the first four months our average monthly attendance is 36. Feel free to invite a friend to a meeting. Gary Lange has worked hard to give us some great programs every month. One of Gary's other responsibilities is recruiting officers and council members. If you have any interest in serving in one of these capacities simply contact Gary.

Girardinichthys viviparous, The Black Sailfin Goodeid

by Rick Tinklenberg

This fish is critically endangered! That means it is swimming extremely close to extinction. The fish's range is reduced to 3 small areas in Central Mexico where water quality and quantity are being compromised by urban pressures. What is probably the largest population is located at Chapultepec Park in the middle of Mexico City. The park has several artificial ponds/lakes, where the goodeid is doing well, but many are infested with parasitic worms. Lago de Xochimilco and a small spring tributary to the Rio Tula are the other two locations where *G. viviparous* is hanging on. All of these locations are tenuous at best; a sewage or chemical spill could wipe out any of them. Plans for a skyscraper or parking lot could mean valuable habitat would be drained! So, yes, this fish is critically endangered.

G. viviparous is a member of the family Goodeidae, an interesting group commonly called Goodeids. Goodeids are mainly found in the highlands of Central Mexico. The male's sexual organ is an only slightly modified anal fin called a pseudophallus, used for clasping. Compared to a gonopodium which is a highly modified anal finned used more for thrusting. Female goodeids provide nutrition to

their embryos through trophotaenia likened to the placenta/umbilicus in mammals. Newly born goodeids are fewer but larger than other comparable sized livebearers certainly attributable in part to the trophotaenia arrangement.

I obtained the start of my *G. vivipaus* colony at the American Livebearers Association Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Goodeids require cool, hard, alkaline water. So, I established mine on the bottom shelf against the coldest outside wall in the basement portion of my fishroom. They are housed in a 40 breeder tank with no heater, large sponge and box filters. The tank is bare bottom with water sprite, java ferns and najas grass thickly established. I keep the front portion of the tank open and allow the back to "grow-up". Algae are a natural part of the Goodeid diet, so it is encouraged except on the front glass. Morning feeding is usually thawed blood worms, live baby brine shrimp and a good balanced flake food. Evening feeding is flake and other live foods, depending on availability. Water changes are 30-40% biweekly, but watch your fish; if they are not happy, a water change will usually bring them around.

Females give birth about every 55 days to 10-25 large (1/2") young. If you are lucky, the trophotaenia may still be attached; although I have never seen it. If you are unlucky, the young may be stillborn. This has only happened to me after moving the fish and the next spawn yields live young. Dynamics in the colony are interesting. One male usually becomes dominant and turns completely black (Black sailfin) while only portions of other males will be black. Females become quite large (2 1/2 +") and I have never seen them turn black. The size of the colony ebbs and blooms, depending on water temperature and harvesting. Summer usually brings a reduced colony while the other 3 seasons stronger growth. I have not seen the adults prey on any young, but it may happen.

Overall, this is an attractive species which is not very demanding. Give them cool water, regular water changes and good foods and they will thrive. Unfortunately, this is not happening in their native habitat. So, I encourage hobbyists who can establish a long term colony to assist this critically endangered fish in their fight to remain on our planet.

MASI Monthly Bowl Shows

by Diane Brown

So you've got a cool fish, and want to show it off....or you want to show everyone what those fry you brought for BAP auction will turn into when they're grown. Maybe you have a fish that you'd like to take to a convention show, but need to practice first. The monthly bowl show is the place to do all of these things, and earn points towards annual member awards.

We now have a bowl show page on the MASI web site, which has all the details:

<http://missouriaquariumsociety.com/monthlybowl.htm>

Briefly, you should bring the fish in a small clear container that doesn't distort the fish. Make sure they have plenty of room and plenty of air. It's easier on you and the fish if you transport it in the container in which you'll be showing it—less opportunity for unexpected flying leaps. The fish are judged on standard criteria --basically, size, finnage, color, deportment. The judge is looking for a well-grown healthy fish with intact fins, good color, and an appropriate attitude. A fish that is well fed, lives in a good-sized tank with gentle companions and frequent water changes is most likely to live up to its potential.

Each month we have a special class and an open class, so any fish is welcome at any time. You must show in at least 7 monthly Bowl Shows to compete for the new Annual Bowl Show Champion Award. The winner will be determined by the entrant with the most points overall for the year (5 points for first place, 3 points for second place, 2 points for 3rd place, one point each for all other entries (up to

5 per month)). Not happy with how your fish placed? You could take it up with the judge, or better yet, volunteer to be the new bowl show judge (I'll be leaving in June, so the position will be open). Along with the job comes custody of a giant axelrod book to help you learn the fish, and you can always tap a more experienced member as a guest judge while you learn the ropes.

In January we had a large turnout of specialty fish for Cyprinids: Barbs, Danios, Rasboras, Minnows, Goldfish. Jim Miller got first place with a T-barb (*Puntius lateristriga*); Marlon Felman was 2nd with a Rosy barb (*Puntius conchonius*), and Dave Rush was 3rd with a *Neetroplus* sp shiner. Also entered were a Rosy barb (*Puntius conchonius*) Jim Miller; Longfin Rosy barb (*Puntius conchonius*) Gary McIlvaine; Gold barb (*Puntius semifasciolatus*) Marlon Felman; White cloud (*Tanichthys albonubes*) Phillip Newell; Goldfish (*Carassius auratus auratus*) Jim Miller. In the open class, Jim Miller took 1st place with a Halfbeak livebearer (*Nomorhamphus ebrardtii*), 2nd place with a *Hemichromis stellifer*, and 3rd place Dwarf Egyptian mouthbrooder (*Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor* "Victoriae"). Also Entered: Female convict cichlid (*Archocentrus nigrofasciatus*) John Van Asch; Orange molly (*Poecilia* sp) Gary McIlvaine; Betta splendens John Van Asch; Red delta guppy (*Poecilia reticulata*) Gary McIlvaine.

In February the specialty class was Sharks, Loaches, Eels, and Oddballs. Marlon Felman won with a Rainbow shark. In the open class, Jim Miller took 1st, 2nd and 3rd with a spectacular Male *Arnoldichthys spilurus*, Male Pineapple Swordtail and a Female *Arnoldichthys spilurus*.

In March the specialty class was Cichlids, with abundant entries again. A *Copadichromis mloto* from Jim Miller won, and Dwayne Peters took 2nd and 3rd with a Black Angelfish (*Pterophyllum scalare*) and a *Neolamprologus brichardi* (sp) "daffodil". Also entered: *Pelvicachromis taeniatus* "moliwe" Harold Walker; *Neolamprologus* (sp) "daffodil" Jim Miller; *Pseudotropheus chameleo* (valid species name *Maylandia crabro*?) Jim Miller; Koi Angelfish (*Pterophyllum scalare*) Dwayne Peters; Black Marble Angelfish (*Pterophyllum scalare*) Dwayne Peters and there was one more cichlid that got away without my getting the owner's name. In the Open Class, an *Ameca splendens* won for Jim Miller, his *Nomorhamphus ebrardtii* (halfbeak) came 2nd, his *Buenos Aires Tetra* (*Hypessobrycon anisitsi*) was 3rd. Also entered: *Aphyosemion australe* "gold" Harold Walker (a still young but truly splendid fish).

In April our specialty class was Killies, and we had another excellent show. The winner was a male *Rivulus iridescentes* from Marlon Felman, 2nd an *Aphyosemion wachteri* from Jack Heller and 3rd an *Epiplatys lamottei* also from Jack. Also entered: Male *Aphyosemion ogoense* Ogoense Jack Heller; Male *Epiplatys huberi* Jack Heller; Male *Rivulus iridescentes* Charles Harrison; Male & female *Aphyosemion bivittatum* Funge Charles Harrison; Male *Aphyosemion zygaima* Jack Heller; Male *Aphyosemion* sp "Lobaye" Jack Heller; Male *Pachypanchax playfairi* Philip Newell; Male *Aphyosemion australe* gold Charles Harrison; Male *Epiplatys annulatus* Monroviae (clown killie) Charles Harrison; Male *Aphyosemion elberti* N'tui Charles Harrison; Male & female *Fundulopanchax gardneri* aquarium strain Dwayne Peters. Jim Miller took 1st in the open class with a big silver tetra, Klaus Bertich took 2nd with a female swordtail from his hi-fin black tail line (*Xiphophorus* sp), and Jim took third with a female red tail platy (*Xiphophorus variatus*). Also entered were a Male Pearl Gourami (*Trichogaster leerii*) from Dwayne Peters, another pair of the hi-fin swords from Klaus, and a female red tailed goodeid (*Xenotoca eiseni*) from Jim Miller.

1/3rd of the way through the year, shows through April have Jim Miller in 1st place with 51 points, Marlon Felman in 2nd with 14, And Dwayne Peters in 3rd with 10 points. Regular entries are the key—if there is a month when you enter the only three fish in the open class, you'll get first, second and third. Upcoming specialty classes are Characins in May, Catfish in June, Livebearers in July, Anabantids in August, Rainbows in September, Aquatic plants in October, and Other aquatic critters in November. So look over your fish, grab a net and critter keeper or drum bowl, and join the show!

The South American Molly *Poecilia caucana*

By Mike Hellweg

The area of the Darien region in southern Panama just north of the border of Columbia has been likened to the American “Wild West” by a couple of collectors who visited in the late 1990’s. It is also the home to an interesting small Molly, *Poecilia caucana*.

P. caucana stays pretty small, with large males barely topping an inch and a quarter, and females reaching barely a half inch or so larger. The most striking feature, shared even by newborns, is a black spot on the lower third of the dorsal fin. This black spot is edged by a golden orange to yellow colored band, which is further edged in black. The other unpaired fins are slightly amber to yellowish in both males and females. The body of both the male and the female are yellow-brown with a blue metallic sheen. Many specimens sport several narrow bands down their flanks, and many males have a canary yellow belly.

They prefer warm water, and seem to do best in the low to mid-80’s, Fahrenheit. In my fishroom, their tank needs a heater. I don’t add any salt to the water, though several writers have mentioned that they seem to do better with it.

I keep them in a 55 which is planted with several large *Aponogetons* whose leaves fill the top third of the tank, while providing an open area for swimming below. The tank is filtered with a large sponge filter, and 50% of the water is changed every week. Water parameters are pretty much the same as for most of my other tanks – pH 7.2 and a total hardness of about 125 ppm, mostly from carbonates.

They are fed veggie based flakes, zucchini slices, and a daily feed of newly hatched brine shrimp for the youngsters. They are also observed picking on the leaves and stems of the *Aponogetons*, and nibbling on algae growing on the glass. They ignore the *Corydoras* that share their tank.

The average brood of fry is about a dozen, and the adults pretty much ignore them. The fry stay near the surface hiding among the folds of the *Aponogeton* leaves. As they grow, they gradually spend more and more time with the adults in the lower third of the tank among the stems of the *Aponogetons*.

Sadly there doesn’t appear to be much of a market for these interesting fish. They don’t show much color when in “fright mode” as when they are in a bag at an auction, and most hobbyists seem to be attracted to color. There doesn’t seem to be much demand online either. I’ve listed them for up to a year on Aquabid, and only had a few inquiries. One buyer even complained that I sent him too many fish! I’ve passed out many, but have at some times had so many and no one wanting them that I’ve had to go to extreme measures to keep the colony from overpopulating. I’ve even resorted to using them as food for larger fish and the *Pipa parva* I was working with a few years ago.

While the South American Molly is a uniquely marked fish, for some reason it doesn’t share the interest in the hobby that its more northerly cousins enjoy. That’s too bad, as it is an attractive fish when kept in a warm, large planted tank. If you get a chance to keep them, give them a try. I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised.

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)

Fear Factor *Tropheus*

by Pam Chin

reprinted from Jan/Feb 04 *Cichlidae Communique* of the Pacific Coast Cichlid Association

I don't know what it is about the genus *Tropheus*, but they are definitely one of the most fascinating and fun fish to come out of Lake Tanganyika. Fun you say? Or could that just be a sick definition, especially after killing off a tank, or as in my case a tank or two!

Sometimes I think I am the only person that has ever killed *Tropheus*, in reality I am the only person that will admit it! There is nothing more embarrassing than getting the same type of *Tropheus* with a friend and then you are the first one to kill them off. But, that hasn't seemed to stop me, from wanting more. I am truly a *Tropheus* glutton. I have learned from my mistakes, and I have gotten better with time, but just when I think I know it all, these darn *Tropheus* will pull a new one.

It doesn't matter which species you want to work with, as they are all basically the same when it comes to maintenance, diet and spawning. Pick the one you like the best, whether you go for outstanding color or just a plain brown you will not regret it. There isn't one better than other, it really depends on your personal preferences. I love them all, I have a group of *Tropheus duboisi* "Kalambe" coming up, and they have been so much fun. They have a nice contrast in color with their black body, and the extra wide yellow band. And I am going through a *Tropheus moorii* phase right now too, after seeing them in the wild, I wanted to bring them all home especially the "red rainbow." And what would be my all time favorite? Well that would have to be my group of *Tropheus brichardi* "Kipili"; talk about a tight knit pack, they are more entertaining than anything on TV, I can watch them for hours.

I think what is most fascinating to me is the social structure of the group itself. I like to buy them young, and unsexable, around 24 or more, and place them in an 80 - 100 gallon tank, and just walk a way from them. What that means is let them be, don't move them around, don't add any tank mates; make this a species only tank. Along with frequent water changes and veggie only foods, you will be amazed at how fast they will grow. Let their pecking order be defined, and before you know it you literally have a social community, which consists of a tightly bonded group. Everybody knows everybody, and everyone has their own position. Jaw locking and chasing is still going to happen, but larger tanks provide a place for everyone to call their own, and larger groups prevent one fish from getting singled out. You can do it with smaller groups and smaller tanks, but it is going to be harder.

The type of filtration you use is really not an issue as long as you have plenty of it. I just happen to be using an under gravel filters with powerheads, because that is what I have on most of my large tanks. My husband is a cheapskate, but he is right, it probably is the most economic way to go. You may think this type of a set up is primitive, and old fashion but you can't beat a UG filter with powerheads, it is a proven method. You could always spend more money on a fancy smancy filter, or buy more *Tropheus*.

Some people prefer outside filters and a sandy substrate scattered on the bottom, this will work too. You can put rocks all across the tank or you can split your rocks in piles to the sides of the aquarium. It is not how you decorate your tank or what method of filtration you use that is the secret to keeping *Tropheus*. The key to the game is what I call "preventative maintenance." If you stay ahead of your water changes, and provide the right foods, you will be successful. It is time to take some of the *Tropheus* budget and buy a Python water changer, or make your own. Get over it; water changes are part of fish keeping and an important factor when keeping *Tropheus*.

In addition to immaculate water conditions, the pH should be in the high 8's or low 9's. I am not saying they won't survive in a lower pH, or even breed, but with the optimum conditions they will be more active, have better color and larger healthier spawns. Temperature can also be a factor; I think it is

best to keep them around 76 - 78 degrees F. I must admit that I was very surprised at the temperature in Lake Tanganyika as it was much warmer than I had imagined. However, I think that higher temperatures make them more aggressive, shorten their life span, and it can also compromise your water conditions. A steady temperature is also important, the up and down fluctuation is not good for them.

Their diet is easy, a spirulina based flake or pellet with a vegetable filler like soy, or wheat germ. I don't like any warm animal parts in the foods that I feed to any of my fish. Don't let them guilt you into feeding them foods that they don't need. If you want to give them a treat, I suggest feeding them lettuce, frozen green peas, or seaweed paper. Occasionally I will feed homemade food made from peas and shrimp. It might take them a couple of times before they catch on, but then it will be a feeding frenzy. Think of food for *Tropheus* as one factor that you have total control over providing you can control yourself.

It is easy to overfeed your *Tropheus*; it is best to only feed once or twice a day, and no more than they can eat in a couple minutes. If any of the food makes it to the bottom of the tank, then you have fed way too much. This is the biggest mistake that hobbyists make; it is much better to underfeed this species than overfeed. It was evident in the lake that they are constantly grazing on the rocks; this is all they do, all day long. Encourage the algae to grow on the back of your tank and rocks, so they have something to graze on. I really think this keeps them busy and cuts down on the chasing. As long as it is green it is good for your fish.

Grow your own spirulina algae by adding spirulina spores to your tank that you can buy at the health food store. Leave your light on all the time for a couple of weeks, and it is possible to get a good growth of super green algae growing on the rocks and the back of your tank. If you add light bulbs like ZooMed Florasun, hopefully you can keep the algae growing faster than the fish can eat it. The fish might eat some of this spirulina powder, when you add it to your tank but it doesn't hurt them. If you have rocks with algae in other tanks that is not being eaten, then for heaven sakes rotate the rocks around; your *Tropheus* will love you for it.

Tropheus bring with them two death cards: aggression and bloat. These are the two main reasons for *Tropheus* deaths in our tanks, both of which are totally controllable. Aggression among these fish can be unbelievable, they have a mouth full of teeth, that are the rasping type and they can descale another fish in moments. If you ever see individuals up in the corners of your tank, you better get them out, because they usually don't last long after that. Higher temperatures and poor water conditions can contribute to aggression, just another reason to keep your water changes frequent and massive. If you keep them in large enough tank and a large group, you don't need dither fish, which can sometimes cause more problems. Raising up a young group rather than buying adults is another key to less aggression, when they grow up together they learn to tolerate each other better.

The problem with bloat is that there really isn't a black and white definition of it. When a hobbyist starts losing fish and they don't know what the cause is, they usually say it was bloat. What we do know is that stress appears to be the common denominator. The stress can be caused from poor water conditions, wrong diet, aggressive tank mates, undersized tank, wrong pH, wrong temperature, etc., and when you have a couple of these problems it seems to be a recipe for trouble. *Tropheus* are worry warts, and any change in their normal routine can trigger stress, like changes in their diet, deteriorating water conditions, moving a long established group to a new tank, or the introduction of other fish whether they are the same species or not.

Is it a parasite, a bacteria or a blockage? Actually it might be one or all. What seems to happen is when the fish is under some type of stress, it causes a break down in the immunity system and this can cause all sorts of problems.

For example:

1. Parasites already in the fishes system can bloom, and multiply extremely fast, and since the fish is stressed, it can't fight this off, like they normally would.
2. Sometimes it starts with the slime coat breaking down, which could be caused by a bacterial infection.

3. Overfeeding is a big factor along with feeding the wrong foods, which can cause digestive problems and/or blockages in the intestinal track.
4. Other times fish can get what I call reverse bloat, where they actually look like their stomachs are sucked in, and they appear to be starving to death.

Recognizing the early signs of bloat is a big factor in being able to diagnose it. I have only been able to cure it at the earliest stages with Clout. Why Clout works is a debate, as it is a parasitic medicine, but this is the only medication that I have found that works for me. If your first round with Clout doesn't seem to work, there are many who have been known to double the dosage and treat again. At this point what do you have to lose?

Observing your fish, so that you can get a jump on it, is critical. Not eating seems to be the first symptom to bloat, but so are stringy white feces, along with vent inflammation, fins clamped tight to the body, and not swimming. Usually once the fish has actually bloated, with the scales sticking out, not just a swollen belly, it is usually too late, they're dead. I have killed quite a few *Tropheus* before I was able to figure this out, now I can see it a mile away.

Once your group matures, it will only be a matter of time before nature takes its course. It may take the young females a few times before they hold to term, which is usually about 21- 28 days. Give them a chance and they will figure it out. Once I have the group established and spawning, then once a month or so, when I am doing a weekly water change to the tank, I will check each female to see if they are holding. Then it depends on how hard you want to work at it whether you want to tumble the eggs, or only strip the fry that is further along and don't require tumbling. I am a lazy aquarist and tumbling can be hard work. I usually take them if the heads and tails have popped out, at this stage around 14 days post spawn, you don't have to use a tumbler. You can even let the females spit in the tank, and then periodically remove these fry. I have never seen adult *Tropheus* attempt to eat the fry, if not removed eventually they will merge into the group. I like to feed the fry freshly hatched baby brine shrimp until they are at least a 1 to 1-1/2". After that it is green foods only.

Since *Tropheus* are maternal mouth brooders, and spawns are small there never seems to be too many of them on the market, and with a good size group, you can easily help support your habit. Most hobbyists will gladly trade anything they have for any kind of *Tropheus*.

Remember that you have nothing to fear, you are the one who is in control, with a regular schedule for water changes, the proper foods and a little common sense, there shouldn't be any fear factor with *Tropheus*. Dedicate a tank to your favorite species, and regularly observe your group. By getting to know them, you can keep up with what is going on in your *Tropheus* community.

The facts are that *Tropheus* may be a bit more difficult than other Rift Lake Cichlids, and it is true that they are not as forgiving. But, don't let that stop you from giving them a try, as they really are a fun and fascinating group of cichlids to work with!

The Lace Brachy *Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora*

By Mike Hellweg

Brachys in general are few and far between, even among livebearer enthusiasts. Perhaps it is their reputation for being somewhat aggressive and unsuitable for community tanks. I don't know. But the only Brachy I can speak for is the Lace Brachy, and I was very pleased with both their behavior and their coloration.

Males are smaller and a bit more colorful, with a gray brown body where every scale is outlined in black. There is a series of 10 or so thin brown bands along their flanks and that is finished off with a

bluish metallic sheen over all. The gonopodium is black, and the dorsal and caudal are orange and black. The larger females have a bit less color in the fins, and have an orange and black anal fin.

In the wild they are found along the coast of Costa Rica, where they can inhabit some fresh and some brackish water. I kept my group in a 10-gallon tank with hard, alkaline water. The pH was kept fairly constant at about 7.8 and the total hardness was about 250 ppm. I did not add salt to the water. I added crushed coral to the substrate to help buffer the water. The sponge filter was washed every other week, and I did a 50% water change on the tank every week. It was heavily planted with Java Moss on the substrate, Java Ferns attached to a piece of driftwood, and a thick growth of Najas floating in the water.

I fed my group newly hatched brine shrimp, mosquito larvae, Daphnia, white worms, black worms, and frozen bloodworms. I occasionally fed them carnivore flake and veggie flakes just to round out their diet, but I've read they are primarily carnivores and their food preferences certainly seemed to back that up. They would pick at the veggie flake, but unlike most meaty foods they didn't attack it.

I bought a group of 5 young fish, each about 1" long. I wound up with 3 males and a female. The males sparred a bit with one another, but never really did any visible damage. I have no idea what happened to the fifth fish. They grew quickly and reached their adult size of about one and a quarter inches in the males and just over two inches in the female about 3 months after I got them. At that point I spotted their first group of fry. The fry were about a quarter inch long, and unlike most livebearer fry, they were near the bottom of the tank hiding under the Java Moss, not at the surface. I only noticed them as they darted out at feeding time. I quickly removed them as I had heard they readily eat their young. I had 18 fry. Not bad for a first drop!

I missed 5 more fry that I decided to leave with the adults and see what happened. Over the next month or so they kept coming out for food and then disappearing back into the Java Moss. By the time they reached a half inch, they were up with the adults all the time and there didn't seem to be any torn fins or anything else. Interestingly, the ones left with the adults grew more quickly than the ones I moved to a separate tank. In just two months, they were nearly an inch long, while the ones on their own were about a quarter inch smaller. In the meantime, the female dropped two more batches of fry, and I was quickly running out of room! I left the 3rd drop in with the colony, and moved the entire group from the ten to a 30 gallon tank set up the same way as before. They continued to reproduce, and soon I had a colony with fish of all ages. The subsequent groups of fry spent most of their time at the bottom, under the Java Moss until they reached about a half inch or so. There was constant sparring among the males, and even some among the larger females, but I never noticed any damaged fins or anything else showing any serious injury was being done.

The Lace Brachy is an interesting and colorful fish. I can't say from my experience but from what I've read they are probably not for a community tank, but if you can provide them with a tank of their own, they will reward you with some beautiful coloration and interesting behavior. Don't let their reputation scare you away!

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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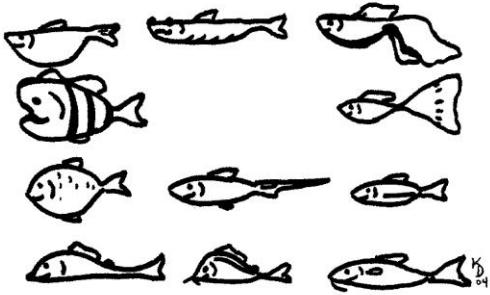
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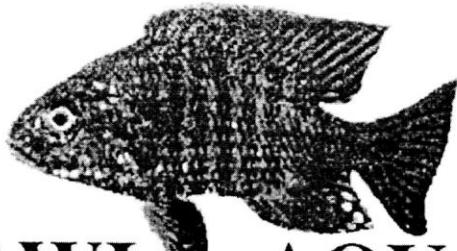
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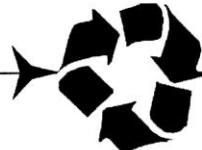
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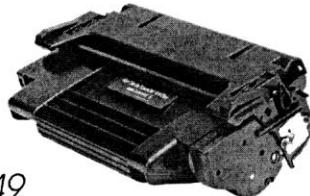
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