

The Darter

Nov-Dec

2009



JOLLY OLD ST. CICHLIDUS

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St. Louis, Missouri

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

Join the MASIFishHeads Yahoo Group. See web page for instructions.

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Places to Be / Things to See

SUNDAY November 22, 2009
Auction, 12:00 Start, Gardenville Masonic Hall

SATURDAY December 5, 2009
Executive Council, hosted by Charles and Sue Harrison

THURSDAY December 17, 2009
General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church
MASI Christmas Party

THURSDAY January 21, 2010
General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

SATURDAY Jan 23, 2010
Executive Council, hosted by Gary McIlvaine

THURSDAY February 18, 2010
General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

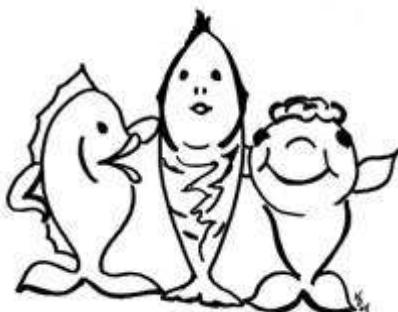
SUNDAY February 21, 2010
Auction, 12:00 Start, Gardenville Masonic Hall

SATURDAY March 6, 2010
Executive Council, hosted by Steve Edie

THURSDAY March 18, 2010
General Meeting, 7:30 PM @ Dorsett Village Baptist Church

April 30 – May 2 2010
MASI Annual Show

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.

Presidential Preamble

By Mike Hellweg

By the time you read this, it will be nearly Christmas. Wow, another year has flown by. I hope everyone makes time for family and friends in among the time you spend rushing around to get holiday shopping completed and keep up with work, etc. Don't forget your fish in all of the hustle and bustle. They still need water changes, filters cleaned, feeding and, of course, watching. After all, that's what drew us all to the hobby in the first place. Watching fish is cool! Maybe this is the year to ask Santa for a special recliner for the fishroom so you can just sit back and watch your fish. It's much better than the drivel on the TV anyway. A reality show playing itself out right in front of your eyes.

We will again be hosting our annual Christmas party at the meeting on December 17th. All are welcome, including the kids. I haven't heard back from him yet, but we might just have a visitor from the North Pole come by the party. We'll have games, presents and food for all. We ask everyone to bring a side dish or dessert, a fishy or non fishy gift for the gift exchange, and food for the church's food pantry. For the past few years, everyone has been very generous with these donations. I hope you can once again be generous and bring at least one non-perishable item each. But if circumstances this year won't allow you to bring anything but yourself, please come anyway and share the joy of the Season with all of your fishy friends.

Our 50th Annual Spring Weekend planning is now well underway. We've got speakers lined up, a big change in the awards, and more coming, so watch Gary McIlvaine's Show Chairman's message for more information.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, and a Happy and Prosperous New Year to All of you!

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

Editor's Notes

We have Articles from 5 different club members in this issue, including two from Tony McMillan. I believe these are the first I've printed from Tony; it is always great to add to the voices here. All articles printed this year are automatically entered for the Ralph Wihelm Publication Award, which is a \$100 cash prize awarded at the annual auction. Since this year's publications are complete, now is your chance to be second in line for next year's award. Second because Gary McIlvaine sent me two articles and I only had room for one in this issue, so we already have a start on next year. The deadlines for next year's issues will be December 15, February 15, April 15, June 15, August 15, and October 15. But you can beat the rush and send your article now.

As always, this is a group effort and everyone's contribution is appreciated. Other major contributors are Charles Harrison, our printer, Gary McIlvaine, our mailman, all of the people who help assemble the Darter at the meetings, all of the committee chairs who submit the reports, and most of all all of the club members who send in the articles that make the Darter what it is. Thank-you to each of you for your efforts this year.

Spawning *Thorichthys ellioti*

by Gary McIlvaine

The one thing I have learned about spawning any fish is to get a group of at least 8 of them as juveniles. This alone is the single easiest rule to follow if you want to successfully spawn a fish. (and be a BAP slut) I also don't mean that you will personally spawn the fish, it is all about providing the correct conditions and making them feel comfortable. This alone makes the fish say to themselves, Yeah, I want to reproduce for you. I purchased a bag of 12 of them at the ACA convention in Atlanta in 2008. The bag met my personal criteria of fish I want to purchase. I had heard a speaker discuss the family. (*Thorichthys*) I understood during his speech at the convention when he said "Easy to Breed" The speaker is famous, and knows what he is talking about. (*Juan Miguel Artigas Azas*).

The fish made it successfully home on the trip from Atlanta. I put the group in a 55 gallon standard tank, along with a Emperor 400 Biowheel. There were about 7 pieces of Malaysian drift wood. Malaysian drift wood is my favorite, it sinks right from the get go, and gives your water a tea look. I believe the fish love it too. I took special care of these fish right from the start. They were small fry, just barely big enough to be sold in my opinion. (This again is what I like about getting fish like this.) I knew they had not had time to be tainted by bad conditions, or it clearly would have shown.

I feed live baby brine shrimp in my fish room at least once a day. There are times when they might go 36 hours without it, but at least once a day is about average. I started them on my community flake I feed my entire fish room, in addition to the baby brine. I always feed the flake food first. I have not met a fish yet that will not eat live baby brine even after it is full from flake food. I continued this feeding program for about a month, then the fish were too big to feed live baby brine. This is where feeding gets complicated in my fish room. I order frozen foods in bulk. (I have a lot of mouths to feed.) I have a freezer in my fish room. It contains Brine Shrimp, Blood Worms, Mysis shrimp. It actually has more foods than that, but this is what I fed to the *Thorichthys ellioti*.

This feeding program went on for the next 7 months, which by the way is when the action started happening. I think it is important to mention water changes at this point. We people are pretty clean, We use toilets. I just went to the bathroom in a national park, that is basically a hole in the ground, the poopoo and peepee drop about 10 feet down into a gross tub. It smells really bad in that toilet, and it gives me rotten thoughts. Your fish are doing that very same thing and then breathing it. They have no choice. Basically I change at least 30% of my water at least 2 times a week. This actually is not an exact formula in my fish room. Sometimes I lose track of what I am doing and really drain a tank down. Then I am careful to fill it up slowly, again slow and steady. I rely a great deal on how the tank looks, the color of the water and how the fish look. I can't really explain this, it's just a 6th sense I have developed from keeping fish/ and observing fish and their behavior for years.

Lets get to the action part. These guys happily coexisted with one another for the 8 months I am speaking about. Then all of sudden one night after work, I went into the fish room and there was a very obvious smell. You can't mistake it, something died. I looked in all the tanks, and then WHOLLY Cow!! My normally drab grey fish with a few blue and red spots had a couple very unmistakeable, beautiful fish with them. They looked nothing like the fish I had been keeping. Floating at the top was the biggest male I had in the group. I have to admit at this point I did not see this coming. I immediately removed the dead male and did about a 20% water change. The tank had just had a water change, and one thing I have learned, and this is just my own personal opinion, because I have listened to many talks about water changes and many promote drastic huge water changes, but I don't like to do too much too fast in my fish room, it's slow and steady for me.

Two days later I was blessed to find a large group of fry at least 200 being carefully taken care of by the parents. *T. ellioti* make excellent parents. They display all the parental care that makes cichlids so

famous. I netted out 4 of the group and put them in another tank right away. These guys also display some behaviors that make them frustrating, try catching specific fish sometime!! I was trying to make sure to remove all the fish except the parents, It is an excercise in frustration to do something like this. I went and finished the getting the rest of the group out a couple hours later after they had time to settle down. At this point the fish did all the work for me. They were excellent parents and cared for their young with Gusto!! The adults killed one another regularly. I moved all the fish but the parents out into a seperate tank (65 gallon) a bigger tank by the way, I had 4 more deatthes, and two more pairs!! Thorichthys elitoi is an easy fish to breed. They do all the hard work of rearing their young for you. They display all the behavior that makes cichlids famous. In my experience if you are going to keep a large group of them you need to provide plenty of cover. I have also noted that when I had more fish together it tends to spread the aggression out and you don't get as many deaths. It may be something I did wrong, but they do like to beat one another up. This is a fantastic looking fish when in spawning coloration. I have no doubt it could win best in show if you could get it to display it's spawning colors at show time.

Fish Stories...

*How much is that Channel Cat (or *Synodontis haugi*) in the window?*
By Tony McMillan

After more than 20 years of involvement in the tropical fish hobby (Geez... its been that long?) it is often fun to reminisce and reflect on our most memorable and best loved tropical fish. The ones that stood out from the rest of the denizens of your fish tanks. Maybe that particular fish had a certain personality or temperament that set it apart from all the others. Maybe that fish won an award at one of the past shows, or there was something unusual about the way you acquired it, or it was particularly long-lived. When I remember all the past fish I've kept, none stands out like my *Synodontis haugi*.

Which is ironic considering the fact that *Synodontis haugi* is a drab colored fish from central Africa. It usually a uniform dull light brown or light gray in color. No spots, stripes, polka-dots, fancy finnage or other bells and whistles that marks so many other species of the genus. No cuckoo, mouth-brooding cichlid egg-eating fancy breeding behavior. It rarely even swims upside down like the other namesakes of the genus. But after you hear the story of how I acquired it, you will appreciate just how much my favorite catfish stood out.

The story begins in late 1989 or early 1990. I was stuck in a dead-end minimum wage job at the local Wal-Mart. The store had just completed an expansion and was receiving its first live pets department. Management was having beginners problems with the fish tanks so I was asked to take over. I had begun to right the ship and was even allowed to order the livestock.

One particular Tuesday (that's when we received our pet shipments) the Petco rep, who knew of my involvement in the hobby, pulled me aside to show me a "special" list of rare and unusual fish his company just received. A half-dozen or so *Synodontis* species jumped out at me from the list. Stuff that rarer and harder to get than usual. Some of the names on the list were *angelicus*, *decorous*, *flavintenatus*, *multipunctatus*, *petricola*, and *schoutedeni*. Eagerly I checked off orders for all the above. I even checked off the one I never heard of, *Synodontis haugi*.

Next Tuesday the shipment came. Much to my dismay, the Petco rep explained there had been problems with the shipments. I would only be receiving one of the special order *Synodontis* cats I asked for. And that would consist of two 2-inch long specimens the Haugi. As a hobbyist, I could appreciate

the subtle beauty of the species. As a retail pet dept manager I knew they would never sell. Especially at a retail price of \$14.99 each.

I placed the fish in one of the larger display tanks. But as they battled relentlessly for dominance I could see they were way too aggressive for the average community fish. So I moved them to a display tank containing more aggressive rift lake cichlids and Buffalo-head cichlids, *Steatocranus casuarius*. It was there one of them achieved dominance and quickly grew to a length of 6 inches while the other stayed relatively small.

To understand the problem I had moving these two catfish one has to understand the clientele of a rural, small town Wal-Mart. I don't mean to offend anyone who shops at Wal-Mart, but the phrase "uneducated redneck hoosier" comes to mind. A typical conversation would ensue like this:

Upon seeing the size of the dominant one, the customer would exclaim "Wow!!!! Look at that size of that Channel Cat! He's gonna outgrow that tank! How much Ya want for 'em."

To which I would reply "That's not a Channel catfish. It is a species of catfish from Africa called *Synodontis haugi*. It's kind of rare."

At which point the customer sees the \$14.99 price label and exclaim "\$14.99!?! I ain't paying fifteen bucks for no catfish I can catch down at the farm pond. Phooey!"

Okay, so no one actually said "phooey". But now you understand how the conversation generally went. If it wasn't a Channel cat it was a Bullhead, mad tom, or mudcat of some sort. Nonetheless I would stand my ground and refused to mark down such a gem of a creature. It was utterly futile to get into a debate about taxonomy or catfish anatomy. Sure, I could've said "The Channel catfish, *Ictalurus punctatus*, has 24 rays on its anal fin. That fish there has 10 at the most. And the adipose fin on that *Synodontis* is *huge*, where-as the Channel cat only has the suggestion of an adipose fin. And don't even get me started on those maxillary barbels!" Instead I kept my peace.

And so that's how the conversations went for almost a year and a half. I would love to have him, but the fifteen buck price tag was too much for my minimum wage salary. Besides, being stuck at home with Mom and Dad I just didn't have room. I had 2 ten gallon community tanks in my bedroom, and that was all mom said I could have. Then I got busted hiding my 29 gal community tank in my walk in closet! Phooey!

And then in Sept of '91, for reasons to be discussed in another article, I had had enough of Wal-Mart and put in my two weeks notice. Unbeknownst to me, a going away party was being planned by my fellow Wal-Mart associates. That's when Sue, the dept manager directly over me, came to me one day while I was working.

"Tony," she asked, "if there was one fish in any of these tanks that you would buy, which would it be?"

"I don't really know" I replied. "I guess that fifteen dollar *Synodontis*. Since He's been here for over a year, I feel like I already own him."

"Hmm. Okay." Sue replied, and away she walked. I was oblivious to what was being planned.

Then the last day had finally arrived. After four years of my life I was through with Wal-Mart and moving on with the next chapter of my life. Filled with apprehension and with butterflies in my stomach, I arrived at work two hours before the store opened. I noticed all the employees sneaking in back to the break room. I had been there long enough that I knew the drill. They were preparing my going away party. I was then paged over the intercom go to the break room.

"Surprise!" everyone shouted as I entered the break room. Surprise it wasn't, because I had witnessed this many times before. The surprise was that I was handed not one, but two going-away cards. The first was filled with approximately 150 signatures of everyone who worked at the store. I opened the second and it contained \$15 with the note "here's some money so you can buy that catfish!" They had taken a collection so I could purchase the catfish!

It was such an emotionally charged moment. I fought back tears as I told them how in the four years we all worked together they had given me more than Sam Walton, who was at the time the

wealthiest man in the world, could ever possibly give me. I threw in a comparison to the old widow in the gospels who tithes her last shekel at the temple, and how Christ exclaims she was actually giving more than everyone else. A few more heartfelt goodbyes and it was time to go to work. At the end of my shift I took the \$15 tithed to me, bagged up the *Synodontis haugi*, paid for it and home I went.

Like I said earlier, I didn't really have room for him at home. But I wouldn't let a small detail like that stop me. I placed him in the 29 gal in my walk in closet. To no ones surprise the juvenile Silver Mollies (*Poecilia latipinna*) I had been raising started to disappear. I moved the survivors to one of my 10 gal tanks. None of the fish left in the 29 gal was small enough for him to eat. Or so I thought.

Besides the Haugi, to my recollection the tank was overstocked with two Bristlenose plecos (*Ancistrus* sp.), two clown plecos (*Peckolita vittata*), A lace cat *Synodontis leopardinus*, A *Synodontis nigrita*, two Australian rainbows *Melanotaenia splendida*, and a couple of swordtails, *Xiphophorus helleri*. To round out the collection in my 29 gal were a trio of quarter-size Von Rio or Flame Tetras, *Hyphessobrycon flameus*, I was keeping for the 1991 fish raising contest. Like I said, the tank was overstocked, so don't try this at home. How the filtration didn't crash from such a heavy bioload I'll never know.

Late one night I came home from a night of carousing and debauchery and turned on the lights to my aquariums. To my horror I discovered the Haugi had one of the quarter- sized Von Rio Tetras in his mouth. He had it by the abdomen, and since it was too big to swallow, he was just squeezing and applying pressure. This, in turn, caused several inches of the Tetras intestine to protrude from its own anus. Oh well, I guess I won't be winning the fish-raising contest this year.

The only alternative to discovering new ways he could kill every fish in the tank was to buy a tank divider, which is exactly what I did. I put the divider in the tank, giving the haugi approximately a third, or roughly 10 to 11 gallons of the tank to call his own. He eventually topped out under my care at about 8 inches. Then it was time for Masi's 27th annual show.

I had been a member of Masi for three or four years, but I had never entered the annual show. So even though technically I was not a novice, it was still a very new experience for me. I must admit it was a somewhat intimidating experience at that. Many Masi members have fish rooms in their homes that contain anywhere from 20, 30 or even to as many as 80 aquariums. Some of these are show tanks, which means the fish are raised into magnificent specimens with plenty of space and feeding. I had only three overstocked aquariums in my room and even then I was way over my quota.

The 27th annual show was held on the weekend of April 25th, 1992 at the Holiday Inn Westport. I would have three entries in the show. In the category of Barbs, Danios, and Rasboras I entered my male Cherry Barb, *Copeta titteya*. I housed a female in the tank with him to keep him company and so he would display his breeding colors. In the category of Catfish under 3½ inches I entered my peppered catfish, *Corydoras paleatus*. And my final entry, in the category of Catfish over 3½ inches, I entered my *Synodontis haugi*. He would be housed in a spare 10 gallon tank I had at home.

I didn't have the time or money for any fancy decorations, nor did I have any extra rocks or driftwood at home. With only three aquariums my selection of plants was quite limited. The substrate I used in the display tanks was a very loud neon blue and green left over from when I first entered the hobby to make my aquariums look like they would if I was a kid again. For decoration I had one piece of slate and some Java moss, *Taxiphyllum barbieri*. In other words, my show tanks would not be very showy and attractive at all. I packed all of this equipment in my '88 Ford Escort and off to the show I went.

When I arrived at the Holiday Inn I started to unload my car and made my way through the lobby to the showroom. I found the spaces allotted for me, put down my stuff and returned to my car for more equipment. Apparently the hotel staff was unhappy with some of us tracking water through the lobby. We were then told to park in the back and use the back entrance. So I parked in back and grabbed some more stuff.

I took several steps through the back entrance of the showroom and was in for the surprise of

my life. The aquariums and the fish show had disappeared. Instead I was surrounded by a bunch canine enthusiasts and their dogs. And not just any dog. It was the breed of *Canis familiaris* that had a face only a mother could love, the Sharpei. Realizing I was not in an episode of *The Twilight Zone* and I had simply used the wrong door, I exited and soon found the right showroom.

As I began to set up my tanks I was making good progress when a large man muscled his way next to my Synodontis display. I don't remember his name but I remembered he was muttering under his breath about my "junk" being in his way. I do remember he was in law enforcement, a deputy sheriff or something akin to that. Like I said, your first Masi show can be intimidating.

Anyhow, his tank display had beautiful Java fern, *Microsorium pteropus*, anchored by a large piece of driftwood over natural looking creek gravel. I could only identify his fish as some sort of native catfish species- either a Stonecat or some sort of mad tom about 10 inches long. How could I even compete with a display like this? I just hoped the judges were smarter than the average Wal-Mart customer and would be able to tell our two fish apart!

The show setup was on Thursday or Friday and the actual judging took place on Saturday morning. There was a banquet Saturday night where the awards would be handed out which I was unable to attend as I couldn't afford the \$25 price tag. You see, even though I had left Wal-Mart I was stuck in another dead-end minimum wage job, this time at Dollar General.

I stopped by the show site to check on my fish that Saturday afternoon. I was in the process of being amazed at all the other displays, and how inadequate mine appeared next to them, when I was interrupted by the club president. All I remember is his first name was Bob and he owned a lingerie store. For some reason he was trying to persuade me to go to the banquet. Like I should *really, really, really* attend. I had already made other plans and told him I couldn't make it.

I then pulled out my camera and proceeded to take some pictures of the amazing displays. I was then told by a very nice gentlemen named Gary that because of the flash reflecting off the glass, I was only taking pictures of myself. He suggested I stand at a 45° angle to each aquarium as I photographed. The suggestion worked and the pictures actually turned out pretty good.

Sunday, the day of the auction and show tear down, was upon me. And since I was unable to attend the banquet it would be the day I would discover the results of the show. Would I win anything at all? Would I even place in any category? Would my fish even survive the weekend? Nervously I packed some items I wanted to sell at the auction and headed to the show site.

As I entered the showroom I was greeted with congratulations from the occasional passerby. I checked my three displays and was startled to discover each had a red ribbon taped to them! My Peppered Cory, my Cherry Barb, and my Synodontis had all placed second in their respective categories! Bob came up to congratulate me on my success and handed me three impressive looking plaques. Another of the judges told me how impressed he was with the *Synodontis haugi*.

Now I know what some of you are thinking. They used to make Tee shirts that said "Second place is First place Loser." Not as far as I was concerned that day. I might as well have won the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes©. In a fitting conclusion to the weekends events I noticed the native stonecat in the display next to my Synodontis was floating upside down. As the Monty Python troupe would say, it "was no more" and "ceased to be". Take that Wal-Mart shoppers!

Not much eventful happened with the Haugi after that. In '95 I finally got a real job at Chrysler and a place of my own. I was working so much overtime I lost touch with Masi. When I moved he inherited half of a 29 gallon aquarium I had purchased. On the other side of the tank divider was a Striped Raphael Catfish, *Platydoras costatus*, I was given by a friend who had moved. In '99 my Haugi started to get bloated from some intestinal ailment. I increased the vegetables in its diet which seemed to help, but the bloat would always return. In late '99 or early 2000 he passed on. I gave him a burial fit for a beloved pet I had spent the entire decade with. Besides, if had tried to flush him he would have clogged up the toilet.

Now some of you are probably thinking to yourself: "Why didn't Tony ever name this large, personable, pet catfish that he kept for ten years?" If I would have ever named it, its name would have probably been Hawg, short for Haugi. Because he did have the temperament of a Harley-riding Hells Angel. That's one of the secrets of the tropical fish hobby though. Its said to be bad luck to name your pet charges, because if you do, they usually die within 90 days.

Aqualight Digital Power Center

by Tony McMillan

I was going out town recently to attend a wedding when I was presented with the dilemma all of us as hobbyists face when we travel: What to do about feeding the fish and lighting for the plants? It was only a couple of days so the feeding I could skip. But keeping my plants in the dark for three or four days was not an option. I could have someone look after my tanks while I was gone, but I am either too untrusting or too embarrassed to let people see the shape my house is in. So for a solution to this quandary I turned to the Corallife® Aqualight™ Digital Power Center™.

The Power Center is a power strip with eight outlets beneath a digital clock, four outlets on both the left and the right. Only six of these outlets supply power at any one time. Above the clock is a red on/off switch that looks similar to a surge protector on standard power strips. I found nothing in the instructions to indicate this acts as a surge protector, so I assume it does not act as one.

Upon installation, one must locate the "AG13" mercury battery and break its seal. This battery keeps power in case the power goes out. Beneath the digital clock there two rows of three buttons. The top buttons are labeled left to right "day", "hour", and "min" for minute. The bottom row is labeled left to right "clk" for clock, "mode" and "prg" for program. After plugging in to a grounded, three prong outlet, press the clock button once to set the clock, press day to set current day, hour and minute like you would any standard digital clock.

The four outlets on the right are colored white and supply constant power. The two on the upper left are colored yellow for daytime and the two lower are colored blue for night. The yellow and blue outlets do not supply constant power. When you set the programs, "on" means the yellow outlets will supply power and the blue outlets will be off, and "off" means the yellow will be off and the blue outlets will have power. On the Corallife presumably the yellow are for standard aquarium lights and blue are for moonlighting for reef tanks, and on the Zilla the yellow serve the same purpose and the blue presumably are for heat rocks to keep your cold-blooded charges warm at night. Since I am a night person, I set the "on" for 9:00p.m. to 6:00 a.m. and found it unnecessary to use the blue outlets.

Which brings me to the problem I've been having. During the Masi auction on 8/16 severe storms rocked the area. I returned home later that night and all of the lights on my aquariums were turned off. The fact that the clock on my stove was blinking but had the current time meant the power had simply gone off for a couple of seconds and then come right back on. I checked the clocks on all my units and they all read 6:30 a.m.. This meant that six hours and thirty minutes earlier, when the power went off, the clocks for some reason reset themselves to 12:00 a.m..

In addition to this, the programs I had programmed into the clocks had been completely erased. What is dismaying about this is the batteries are supposed to prevent this from happening. Since the batteries are not in use while the electricity works, I cannot fathom that they were already low on power after only two months. I hurriedly reset the clocks to the current time and reentered the programs. I turned the clock to Auto and the lights turned off instead of staying on.

Getting no response, I switched to "on" manually and the lights would stay on. I reprogrammed

and the lights turned off again even though they should stay on when I switch to the “auto” mode. Becoming flustered, in desperation I plugged my lights into the blue outlets and then they switched on. This is not supposed to happen as according to the programs I reset, the blue outlets should be off instead of on. Maybe somehow during the storm, I thought, they became reversed. I found this to be false, as when 6:00 a.m. came the lights stayed on and I had to switch them off manually.

The following Monday a new round of storms came through and once again I came home to find my stove light blinking with the current time. I reset the clocks on my four units and once again reentered the programs I desired. Once again, when I switched to auto, I had no light. Frustrated, I manually switched them on, turning back to “auto” when I went to bed.

Much to my surprise, when I came home Tuesday night, the aquarium lights were already on as I desired. They automatically shut off at 6:00 a.m.. Apparently my program was back in place. The only thing I can conclude from these events is that if the power goes off and you have to reset your program, you have to wait 24 hours, or the next day of your program, before your program takes effect. After figuring this out for myself I went back to the instructions and found under “troubleshooting” the phrase “if present time is past the desired daytime cycle, let the power center cycle for 24 hours.”

The troubleshooting section also addresses failure of the LCD screen when unplugged (or when the power fails). It advises to make sure the battery seal is completely removed, to make sure the battery is “oriented in the correct position” and to double check and see that it has not “become dislodged and must be repositioned”. I checked the batteries and found that two were installed backwards, the other had part of the seal still lodged in it and the other I’m still not sure what went wrong.

I guess the mistake I made on my own part was not going back immediately and double checking the instructions when the initial power outage took place. The reason I overlooked the troubleshooting section in the first place was I had no problem (or so I thought) installing the units in the first place. So the lesson here appears to be that when you purchase the Aqualight Power Center, after breaking the battery seal make sure the batteries are still installed properly, and you’ll save yourself the grief I went through. Despite all these problems, the Aqualight Power Center still cycled the lights as I wished while I was out of town. And it has saved me the daily hassle of turning my lights on and off.

There is an old adage in the Automobile business that the more bells and whistles an auto has, the more there is that can go wrong with it. The same seems to be true for the Digital Power Center. At the same time the combination of a digital timer with a power strip is long, long overdue in the aquarium hobby. And for that reason I’m giving the Coralife and Zilla Digital Power Centers a thumbs up for taking the first leap integrating these technologies. The moral of this story is read and reread your troubleshooting section and figure out what they are talking about!



MASI Logo merchandise is now available from Café Press. Thanks to Bart Kraeger for creating the site and Michelle Berhorst for creating a high-resolution digital version of the logo, you can now purchase logo merchandise on-line. Pick from T-shirts, jerseys, caps, tote bags, coffee cups, and more.

Go to www.cafepress.com/MOAQS to view and order the merchandise.

BAP Report

Steve Edie

Member	Species	Common	Pts	Total
Sept 2009				
Jack Heller	<i>Betta Splendens</i>	Betta	10	130
Errin Henry	<i>Mikrogeophagus ramirezi</i>	German Blue Ram	15	15
Errin Henry	<i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>	Red Wagtail Platy	5	20
Jerry Jost	<i>Nomorhamphus liemi</i>	Celebes Halfbeak	10	665
Jerry Jost	<i>Xenotoca eiseni</i> @	Red Tailed Goodeid	30	695
Tony McMillan	<i>Pelvicachromis pulcher</i>	Kribensis	10	72
Tony McMillan	<i>Poecilia latipinna</i>	Dalmation Molly	1	73
Jim Miller	<i>Nannostomus beckfordi</i>	Golden Pencilfish	20	2166
Jim Miller	<i>Xenotoca variata</i> "Jesus Maria"		15	2181
Pat Tosie	<i>Poecilia reticulata</i> ^	Blue Guppy	1	2965
Pat Tosie	<i>Poecilia reticulata</i> ^	Orange Flame Guppy	1	2966
Pat Tosie	<i>Xiphophorus malinche</i> "Rio Clare"		10	2976
Kurt Zahringer	<i>Limia vittata</i>	Cuban Limia	5	30
Oct 2009				
Charles Harrison	<i>Corydoras pygmaeus</i>	Pygmy Cory	10	2180
Charles Harrison	<i>Rivulus ornatus</i> "Rio Tigre" *		20	2200
Charles Harrison	<i>Xenotoca variata</i> "Jesus Maria, Aquascalientes"		15	2215
Errin Henry	<i>Poecilia wingei</i>	Endler's Livebearer	5	25
Gary McIlvaine	<i>Girardinus metallicus</i>	Black Chin Livebearer	5	855
Jim Miller	<i>Belontia signata jonklaasi</i> @		30	2211
Jim Miller	<i>Betta ocellata</i>	Eye Spot Betta	15	2226
Pat Tosie	<i>Chrosomus erythrogaster</i> **	Southern Red Belly Dace	25	3001

* = 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)

@ = C.A.R.E.S Species at Risk (Double base points)

= Species previously submitted = 0 points, except for C.A.R.E.S. = base point bonus

^ = Species previously submitted, limited points for additional color varieties

HAP Report September - October 2009

Mike Hellweg

Member	Species	Common	Rep	Pts	Total
Charles Harrison	Sagittaria subulata pusilla	Dwarf Sag	S	5	730
Philip Newell	Ceratophyllumdemersum	Hornwort	V	5	115
Philip Newell	Ceratophyllumsubmersum	Narrow leaf Hornwort	V	5	120
Tony McMillan	Microsorum sp. narrow leaf	Narrow Leaf Java fern	V	10	330
Tony McMillan	Sagittaria graminea graminea	Common Sag	V	5	335
Tony McMillan	Saururus cernuus	Lizard's Tail	V	5	340
Scott Bush	Eichhornia crassipes	Water Hyacinth	V	5	5
Scott Bush	Lemna minor	Dwarf Duckweed	V	5	10
Gary McIlvaine	Echinodoras sp. Ozelot	Ozelot Sword	V	15	50

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

Member Classifieds

Wanted: 1 Female Red-Tailed Goodeid *Xenotaca eiseni* and 1 juvenile Male Yucatan Sailfin Molly *Poecilia velifera*. Contact Tony McMillan at (618) 509-3985.

Charles Harrison (314) 894-9761, csharrison@inkmaker.net -

Thiosulfate crystals (Chlorine Remover)	\$3.00 a half pound
OTO double strength Chlorine/Chloroamine test kits - 4 ounce -	\$12.50
Flubendazole, 5% powder 10 grams	\$5.00, 25 grams - \$20.00
Lavamisole HCl Powder - 5 grams treats 100 gallons	\$10.00
Methylene Blue 5% solution (2 ounces)	\$12.75
Acriflavine Concentrate (4%) solution, 2 ounces	\$12.70
Bromthymol Blue pH test solution, 4 ounces	\$7

Wanted: Small Styro shipping boxes - 12 x 12 x 12 or a little bit smaller. If your company uses them and throws them away, save them! Bring to the meeting or I'll come pick them up. Mike 636-240-2443

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 it, in which case it will run as requested.

2010 Annual Show Report

By Gary McIlvaine

The show is in full force for 2010. Some important dates to keep in mind.

The Show weekend is April 30th-May 2nd.

- Friday April 30th is show set up @ 8 am at the Gardenville Masonic lodge
- Saturday May 1st Show speakers, And Banquet. (Sam's Steakhouse \$30)
- Sunday May 2nd Show tear down and huge all species auction.

The show committee has decided to make some changes this year. Instead of Plaques a certificate will be provided for each winner. There are going to be CASH prizes to go along with the certificate.

Each show class will have the following breakdown for awards

First Place--\$10.00
Second Place \$5.00
Third Place (certificate only)

Best of Show \$100

Judges Award \$50

Best junior entry \$25

Reet Thomas Award for most outstanding livebearer \$25

Ralph Wilhelm outstanding catfish award \$25

Best Egglayer \$25

Best cichlid \$25

Best Discus \$25

Please check the website for the official rules.

Club Hopping 2009

Steve Edie

Nov 20-22 – Cleveland: Ohio Cichlid Association – Cichlid Extravaganza

Nov 22 - St Louis: Missouri Aquarium Society – Auction

Mar xx, 2010 – Hartford, CT: NEC Annual Convention

May 28-30, 2010 – Chicago: Greater Chicago Cichlid Association – Cichlid Classic

Aug xx, 2010 – Milwaukee: American Cichlid Association – Annual Convention

Oct xx, 2010 – Baltimore: All Aquarium Catfish Convention

Benitochromis batesi “Pouma”

Patrick A. Tosie, Sr.

Found in coastal rivers of French Congo and West Cameroon and Sanaga basin, *Benitochromis batesi* “Pouma” is a welcomed addition to a West African tank. Males get about four inches long, females just slightly smaller. Both the male and female get some extensions on their dorsal and anal fins, which make them hard to sex except when spawning. They prefer water temperatures between 75°F - 80°F and a pH from 6.5 to 8. They do well in a planted tank with numerous caves and hiding places. They do like to dig; however, my spawning setup for them was a bare bottom thirty-gallon tank.

Once known as *Pelmatolochromis batesi* and then *Chromidotilapia batesi* they have been included in a new genus assigned to them in 2001 along with five other species; *Benitochromis conjunctus*, *finleyi*, *nigrodorsalis*, *riomuniensis*, and *ufermanni*. *Benitochromis* are all mouth brooding cichlids. Of these six species, *Benitochromis batesii* differs from the rest of the *Benitochromis* in that they lay their eggs and do not pick them up, instead they wait until the eggs hatch, then the female picks up the fry while the male guards the territory. All the other *Benitochromis* carry the eggs as well as the fry.

Benitochromis batesi “Pouma” are a heavy-bodied fish that, in normal colors, is a greenish-tan with five to six dark vertical bars that just about wrap around their body. The head is large for the size fish it is. The top of the gill plate has a black dot and when breeding the black dot is outlined with a green iridescent area on three sides, slightly extending down the gill plate. The top of the dorsal fin is lined in red, and, edging the remaining majority of the dorsal fin is an iridescent pinkish-purple color. During breeding both the male and female turn dark grey and their vertical bars blacken. The female’s belly becomes a faded rose color and the tail fin turns a yellowish-orange shade.

I purchased my fish at the American Cichlid Association 2009 Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio during the B.I.T.C.H.S. (Babes In The Cichlid Hobby) auction. They were donated by Old World Exotic Fish Farms to the ACA and the B.I.T.C.H.S. auction. The money the B.I.T.C.H.S. raised at their auction is going to one of the ACA’s research funds for cichlids. (Note: Ask John Van Asch about the auction. It was his 55th birthday and he received a few special Lap dances, one from one of our own members Laura, one from Carolyn Estes, one from both Laura and Carolyn and the last one from John’s favorite Lap dancer – Joe Middleton!) I fought long and hard at the auction, and finally had the winning bid so that I was able to purchase the bag of six adults. I understood that these were wild fish that Old World had shipped in from Cameroon, West Africa. I took the fish home and set them up in a bare thirty-gallon tank. They were very skittish at first, so I added numerous flower pots, a piece of driftwood, and some anacharis. I started feeding them a combination of flake foods, pellet foods, and live foods (mosquito larvae and other critters I found in my pond, as well as the black worms that our club orders most months). They ate most everything offered, and especially seemed to enjoy the live foods when given the opportunity.

After several weeks, most of the *batesi* started hiding toward the top of the tank in the plants, and two stayed in a large flower pot that was turned on its side with the bottom broke out. With closer observation, I discovered that the *batesi* had laid a small patch of about fifty opaque colored eggs on the inside of the flower pot. The female was fanning the eggs and the male was making sure that he protected the area and kept the rest of the fish away. The next day, the eggs were gone. About seven days later the female was sitting in the flower pot with a school of fry under her! As soon as I saw them, I grabbed a siphon hose, siphoned out the majority of the fry, and moved them into a 10-gallon tank. Then I caught the other *batesi* and moved them into a 29-gallon tank, and leaving the parents with the remaining half-dozen or so remaining fry.

The fry were moved into a bare-bottomed ten-gallon tank with a Hydro sponge filter in it. The fry were about an eighth of an inch in length and opaque in color. They looked a little lost in the bare tank so I put some anacharis in with the fry to make them feel a little more at ease. I began by feeding the fry banana worms for about a week and a half, then switched to daphnia and then brine shrimp. The fry eagerly chased the worms, daphnia, and shrimp. When the fry are not chasing the live foods, they are picking on the anacharis and Hydro sponge. At a quarter of an inch the fry are developing brownish vertical bars and are actively swimming all around the tank.

It looks like most all the fry are surviving without any incidents, and I anticipate having these in some of our future auctions. I plan to try and keep some going to keep them available for some time.

I have only kept my *Benitochromis batesi* in a “species only” tank, and even though the pair would chase the other fish to the top of the tank and make them stay there, none seemed to have any injuries. I would expect that they would do well in a community type setup with other breeds of fish as long as they were not too small. I have always enjoyed the West African cichlids and try to incorporate the many different types into my collection whenever they become available. Most are normally peaceful, colorful, and show interesting habits. If you get a chance, they are a great species to try and breed. If you are interested in more information on *Benitochromis batesi*, drop me a note at PatTosie@yahoo.com

Vice-President's Program Report

by Kathy Deutsch

Thank you to everyone for all the input I have received about speakers you would like to hear. Please keep letting me know what you like and don't like. This is your club so I want to bring programs you will enjoy. And, if you have an idea for a program, I will help you put it together.

I am looking for help putting together programs on these topics:

- killifish
- guppies
- show bettas
- African cichlid habitat and tank set up

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

December 2009 Christmas Party

- Please bring a canned good for the church's food bank
- If you want to participate in the gift exchange, please bring a wrapped gift, marked “fishy” or “non-fishy” (depending on if the gift is fish-related)
- Please bring a side dish, dessert, or chips, dip, etc. Contact Dave or Laura Wagner (314-471-6491) or Kathy Deutsch (314-741-0474) for suggestions

January 2010 TBA

February 2010 TBA

March 2010 (tentatively) David Boruchowitz, Editor, “Tropical Fish Hobbyist” magazine

Why M.C.A.?

By Ed Millinger

Because it was there in Kansas City, Missouri only four hours from St. Louis. Because my brother-in-law in nearby Independence was having a birthday and I was on vacation.

The Midwest Cichlid Association's Expo 2009 was held September 18-20 at the Roadway Inn, Grandview Missouri. It was presented by The Heart Of America Aquarium Society (founded September 14, 1954). This was the fourth expo to be held and the first outside of Iowa. The previous shows had a who's who of experts in the aquarium hobby and this year was no exception. Ron Nielson presented two talks on old world cichlids, Steve Thornton talked about selling and shipping fish on Aquabid, Steve Lundblad had two talks on old world cichlids, Dean Hougen spoke on new world cichlids, Glenn Minor demonstrated how to make aquarium backgrounds which was very interesting. Ian Fuller (from England) talked about live foods and his specialty corydoras catfish, and the shy and reserved Ray "Kingfish" Lucas provided the banquet talk on the history of the hobby which included a picture of Gary McIlvane's fish room.

MASI members in attendance included Harold and Derek Walker (Pat- Derek is the taller of the two), Scott Bush, Gary Lange, Gary McIlvane, John Van Asch, Kurt Zahringer and myself.

The show consisted of four divisions and 23 classes. New world cichlids formed the first five classes, old world cichlids classes six through sixteen, catfish seventeen through twenty one and the last two were photography. There were about a dozen discus in the show including some from "Kingfish" who said it was the first time in over twenty years that he had entered fish in a show. All entries were displayed in a bare bottomed tanks. You had until noon on Saturday to place your fish in their show tanks.

I brought two fish to show and transported them in coolers using a battery operated air pump to keep the water moving. By the way after twelve hours the four "D" batteries were still pumping air, I'm not sure how much more life they had in them but that's something to keep in mind if you ever need to use them during a power outage. We arrived around three o'clock and I went about getting the fish into their tanks. Once this was done I talked fish with other attendees and checked out the vendor tables. Pleco caves.com, and glass cages had large displays as well as Ray Lucas and some folks with fish for sale displayed in tupperware. Around five o'clock Derek, Harold and I went to dinner and came back to catch the first talk of the show. The last talk was still going on around eleven when I had to hit the sack.

Saturday's first talk was on live foods by Ian Fuller. Gary Lange mentioned Mike Hellwegs excellent new book and suggested that Ian include it in his list of recommended readings. Dean Hougen had an interesting talk on cichlid reproduction that followed Ian. After lunch Glenn Minor of nearby Lawrence, Kansas demonstrated how to make backgrounds using styrofoam. I know it sounds crazy but Glenn makes it look incredible. My favorite was a terrarium with a brown rock background and waterfall. Glenn auctioned off both twenty gallon tanks with the backgrounds in them on Sunday. I have a copy of the HAAS newsletter in which he gives you the list of tools and supplies needed and instructions. If you are interested let me know.

Following Glenn, Steve Lundblad gave a very interesting talk on the Aulonocara of Lake Malawi. We had dinner consisting of some great Kansas City bar-b-que, followed by the shy and retiring Ray Lucas's talk and then the awards presentations. A large auction on Sunday capped off the weekend and HAAS deserves a lot of credit for putting on such a great show. Be on the lookout for next years show, I'm sure it will something you won't want to miss.

Organize Your Wire Clutter

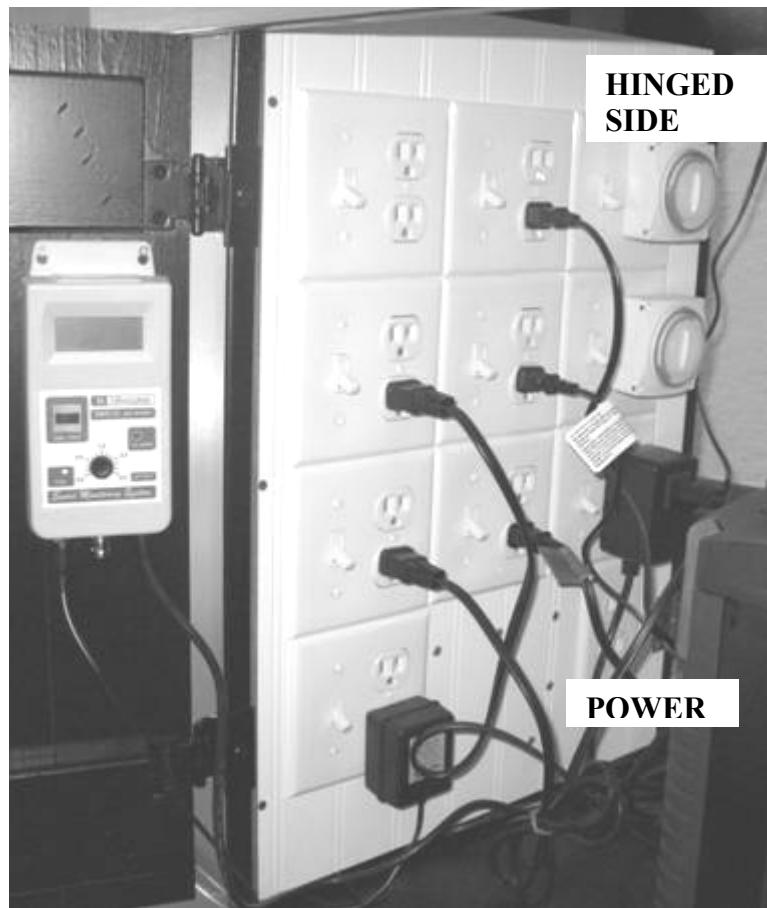
By Andy Walker

The basic 10-gallon stand-alone aquarium needs three electrical outlets: to power a filter or air pump, a light and a heater. Plug-in adapters with three outlets may be all that is needed in this instance. However, larger aquariums and high tech setups demand more outlets. My aquascaped 75-gallon aquarium needs a minimum of ten outlets: two outlets for the lights, two outlets for the canister filters, three outlets for the CO2 controller, diffuser and solenoid valve, two for the heater and UV sterilizer and one for the moonlight. Since the lights run on a timer and three of the items above rely on an AC-DC adapters, two to three surge protecting power outlets are needed. Although these are under the aquarium in a cabinet, there is great deal of clutter that is not only unsightly but is an annoyance to manage when you want to turn off only the heater and the canister filters during a water change. I have designed a better way to manage this.

First and foremost, if you are not using a ground fault outlet or the breaker is not ground fault protected, something must be done about that situation now. DO NOT WAIT! Unplugging and plugging cords when hands are wet or damp during a water change can be very dangerous. I know this to be a fact since the son of one of my best friends while away at college ended up in the emergency room after being nearly electrocuted. He is fortunate to be alive. Make no mistake. This is dead-serious business.

Due to the location of my aquarium and other factors, the only viable option available to me was to install a single floor-mounted brass outlet behind my aquarium. Since this is a standard outlet I installed a ground fault 15-amp breaker in the electrical box to power all of my electrical needs for the aquarium. Twelve-gauge wire was used to connect the outlet to the breaker. Once completed, I began work on a switch panel that enclosed the left side of my aquarium stand.

The switch panel is made from a scrap of white hardboard paneling that was left over from another project. Any paneling would work but I believe this was a particularly good choice since it is easy to work with, bright, durable and strong enough for the intended application. The right-hand side of the panel is hinged and is secured shut by three screws on the left-hand side. The hinge allows access in the event that I need to get behind the panel for any reason in the future. A short extension cord with a plug on each end is used to power the panel. One end plugs into the outlet that is protected by a ground fault breaker and the other into the power in



outlet shown in the lower right-hand corner of the finished switch panel.

From the back of the switch panel the power in outlet is seen at the lower left-hand corner. 12-gauge wire was used to connect this outlet to the ground bus, the neutral (white wire) bus above that and the hot (black wire) bus at the top. All wiring to and from the switches and outlets was done using 14-gauge multi-strand wire. Spade terminals were crimped on the ends of each wire to facilitate secure attachment to the outlets and the switches.

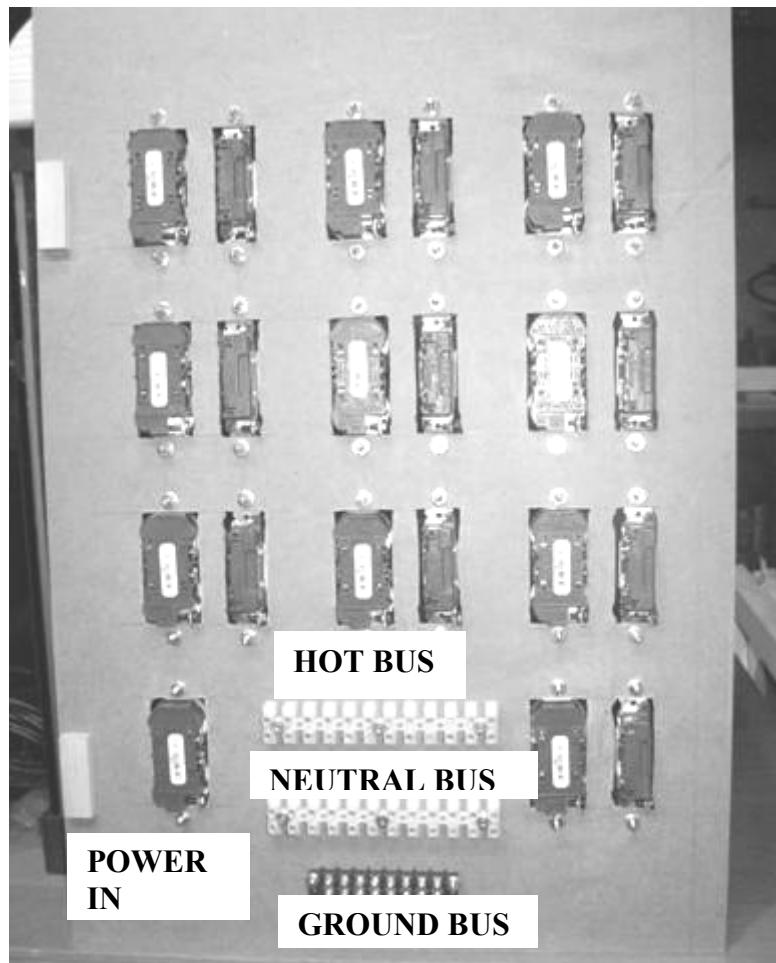
All of the electrical hardware for the aquarium draws nearly 5 amps. The heater is the most power hungry component and it draws 300 watts (2.5 amps). Since I have no intention of running a hair dryer, microwave oven, table saw or any other current hungry appliance or tool on this circuit, the 14-gauge wire should be sufficient and safe and is much easier to manage.

There are ten pairs of electrical outlets and switches mounted on the panel that can turn off the power independently.

Note that the hot (black) wire is connected to the outlet through the switch. The neutral wire from the outlet is returned directly to the bus. Care was taken to assure that the wide slot of the outlet was wired to the neutral bus. All outlets and switches were wired to the ground bus to prevent electric shock due to an internal short of the switch or the electrical hardware.

Note that you can buy switched single outlets that have indicator lights on them. You would need half the number of slots cut in the panel to mount them. Although more attractive and easier to install, they are significantly more expensive and may not provide the room needed to plug in a timer or an AC-DC adapter. The choice is yours. I opted for the more time consuming, lower cost approach that gives me the most working room.

This is not a project I would recommend for everyone. Working knowledge of household wiring and experience is a must. If you have any doubts or concerns, do not attempt this project. An alternative would be to mount a series of surge protecting outlets on the hardboard to get the electrical outlet off the floor or bottom of the cabinet. This would allow you to turn off groups of four to six items at a time and is a safer alternative in a potentially wet environment. The most important point that bears repeating again is that you need to power your aquarium through a ground fault outlet or a ground fault breaker. This is something you need to do now and a project I would recommend for everyone.



2009 MASI Membership Roster

Ron Huck

Membership list removed from electronic publication.

The Computer Page

Steve Deutsch

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

MASI's email group: MASIFishHeads Yahoo Group - see web site for joining instructions

Addresses are only printed with permission of the owner. If you would yours added, please email me at steve@skdeu.com. If you would like yours removed, or if it needs correction, also please email me.

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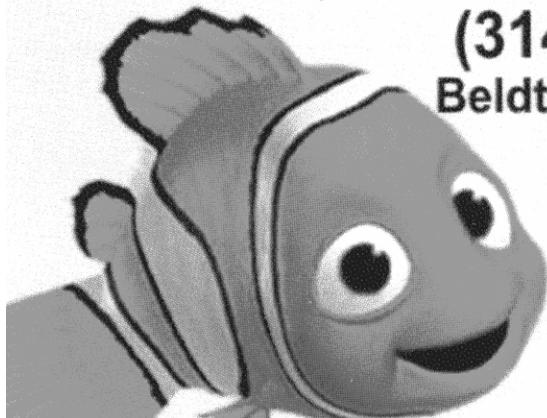
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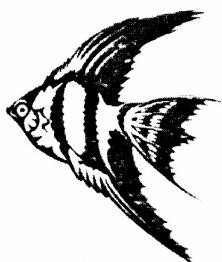
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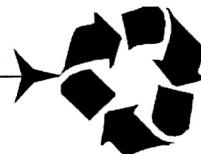
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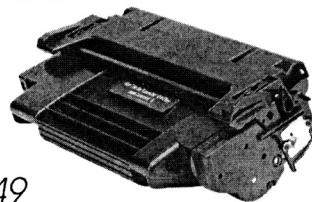
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