

# modern AQUARIUM



April 2016  
volume XXIII  
number 2

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*Greater City Aquarium Society - New York*

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# modern AQUARIUM

Series III Vol. XXIII, No. 2 April, 2016

## ON THE COVER

Our cover photo this month is once again from one of our Facebook Fishy Friends. You could almost call it a study in reds and greens. The Fishy Friends page is a great place to see what our members are up to with their tanks. Please take a look at some of the other recent photos, on page 8.

Photo by Gilberto Soriano

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# From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

Many of our members here at Greater City are also members of other aquarist organizations. Some of these are more specialized, such as the American Killifish Association, the American Cichlid Association, the American Livebearer Association, etc., while others belong to multiple general aquarist clubs, such as the clubs out on Long Island or in New Jersey, or even further afield. Many of these clubs also have some form of official publication, be it newsletter, online “magazine” or what have you. Naturally, if you’re a member of one or more of these other groups, and an author or aspiring author, you are perhaps at a loss as to which of your club publications to support.

Well, you needn’t be. We (club publication Editors) recycle! We have both formal and informal means of sharing articles with other clubs. This not only helps us Editors to find and present good articles to our members, it also helps spread knowledge among more aquarists. After all, not many people have the time to travel to all the available clubs in a given area, much less keep on top of what’s happening all around the country and the world.

**Modern Aquarium** has always participated in this article exchange. Sometimes members of other clubs write articles expressly for us! If you look at our Index of Articles in last month’s issue you will see that we published several of these exchange articles during the course of the year. Likewise, other clubs either reprint articles from **Modern Aquarium** or invite members to download the online issues that we make available. This is how clubs have gotten useful knowledge to their members over the past several decades. The medium has changed; we now mail very few actual printed copies, but the principle of exchanging information remains.

Last month we published an article by Joe Ferdenzi that had previously appeared (in slightly different form) in the American Killifish Association’s journal. This month we showcase an article, by Greater City member Barbara Romeo, that previously appeared in the Danbury Area Aquarium Society’s **Gills ‘N Gossip**. I recommend it to you.

I must confess that, as Editor of **Modern Aquarium**, I would naturally prefer to publish our members’ articles first in *our* club’s magazine, though I also confess to reprinting in **Modern Aquarium** an article of my own that had first appeared in the ACA’s **Buntbarshe Bulletin**, so I’m not going to throw too



many stones at others for doing the same. One way or another, I want the article!

Elsewhere in this issue, Jules Birnbaum reviews sponge filters, Sue Priest tells us a “Tale of Two Tanks,” and I talk about some new Oscars that I’ve acquired. Al Priest treats us to some “Pictures from Our Last Meeting.” Elliot Oshins gives us another cartoon caption to wrack our brains over, The Undergravel Reporter talks about “...Your Fish on Drugs,” we get to see more wonderful photos from our Facebook Fishy friends, and the issue wraps up with a new Fin Fun puzzle, “From the Bookshelf.” I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have.

One thing you *won’t* see this month is the next installment of Rosario LaCorte’s **An Aquarist’s Journey**. Rosario ran into some computer problems, and we plan on resuming his autobiography next month..

Remember, we need articles! We *always* need articles! **Modern Aquarium** is produced by and for the members of Greater City Aquarium Society. Our members are our authors, and with ten issues per year, we need a lot of articles.

Share your experience with us. Write about your successes! Maybe even mention some of your failures—sometimes those are more instructive than the successes. If you’re a little unsure about the state of your writing technique, don’t worry—that’s why editors exist.

If *you* have an article, photo, or drawing that you’d like to submit for inclusion in **Modern Aquarium**, it’s easy to do! Email it to [gcas@earthlink.net](mailto:gcas@earthlink.net), fax it to me at (877) 299-0522, or just hand it to me at a meeting. However you get it to me I’ll be delighted to receive it! So will our members!





# GCAS Programs 2016

It is our great fortune to have another admirable cast of speakers who have so graciously accepted our invitation to join us throughout the coming season, bringing us their extensive knowledge and experiences. You certainly won't wish to miss a moment of our prominent guests, not to mention the friends, fish, warmth, and camaraderie that accompanies each meeting.

|             |                                                                     |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March 2     | Matthew Wickey from Tetra/ Spectrum Brands<br><i>Fish Nutrition</i> |
| April 6     | Thomas Keegan<br><i>Ponds</i>                                       |
| May 4       | Tom Allison<br><i>Zoo Med Laboratories, Inc.</i>                    |
| June 1      | Rusty Wessel<br><i>TBA</i>                                          |
| July 6      | TBA<br><i>TBA</i>                                                   |
| August 3    | Silent Auction                                                      |
| September 7 | TBA<br><i>TBA</i>                                                   |
| October 5   | Mark Duffill<br><i>Loaches</i>                                      |
| November 2  | TBA<br><i>TBA</i>                                                   |
| December 7  | Holiday Party!                                                      |

Articles submitted for consideration in *Modern Aquarium* (ISSN 2150-0940) must be received no later than the 10th day of the month prior to the month of publication. Please email submissions to [gcas@earthlink.net](mailto:gcas@earthlink.net), or fax to (877) 299-0522. Copyright 2016 by the Greater City Aquarium Society Inc., a not-for-profit New York State corporation. All rights reserved. Not-for-profit aquarium societies are hereby granted permission to reproduce articles and illustrations from this publication, **unless the article indicates that the copyrights have been retained by the author**, and provided reprints indicate source, and that two copies of the publication are sent to the Exchange Editor of this magazine. For online-only publications, copies may be sent via email to [donnste@aol.com](mailto:donnste@aol.com). Any other reproduction or commercial use of the material in this publication is prohibited without prior express written permission.

The Greater City Aquarium Society meets every month, except January and February. Members receive notice of meetings in the mail. For more information, contact: Dan Radebaugh (718) 458-8437 or email [gcas@earthlink.net](mailto:gcas@earthlink.net). Find out more, see previous issues, or leave us a message at our Internet Home Page: <http://www.greatercity.org> or <http://www.greatercity.com>.

# President's Message

by Dan Radebaugh

**A**s all of you know by now, we are gathered this evening in the Meeting Room of the Queens Botanical Garden, rather than in our usual room downstairs, which is being used today for a composting event, or some such. We'll return to our regular quarters next month.

As most of you know by now, our parking situation has changed from last year. We may no longer use the small lot right outside our meeting space – that lot is now reserved for construction vehicles and equipment. It may now be used only for pick-up/drop-off. On the plus side, we now have access, for the first time in several years, to the large lot just down the street from that one.

As has been mentioned a few times, we do need to make sure we can wind up our meetings by about 10 PM. With our auctions seemingly getting bigger each month, that means we'll have to make some time adjustments elsewhere. For one, we'll need to begin the meetings more promptly (7:30 is the scheduled time) than we have been. We've also mentioned that side conversations during the meeting (while announcements are being made, during the auctions, etc.) need to be more under control. No one is saying you can't have a conversation. But if you must, please take it outside the area where the meeting is going on. You may think that you're only one person talking to one other person, but if five or ten people (or more) are carrying on separate conversations, the result is that none of us can hear what's going on in the meeting.

At last month's meeting, Joe Ferdenzi gave a frank and impassioned plea for volunteers to help out with the some of the tasks that need to be covered in order for us to function effectively as a club. Thanks to Joe for his clear and direct explanation. Thanks as well go to Sandy Sorowitz and Joe Gurrado, who picked up the gauntlet! Sandy will be our new A/V Coordinator, and Joe will pick up handling the monthly Bowl Show, in addition to his current responsibilities as Greater City's NEC Delegate. Thanks, guys! All of the things that go into having a successful organization – be it a club or anything else – don't just happen by themselves. People make them happen. Thanks tonight to Sandy and Joe, and thanks again and again to all the members whose names are on the masthead of your **Modern Aquarium**, without whose efforts we couldn't even hold monthly meetings, let alone do all the things our members have come to expect of us!

**Dan**



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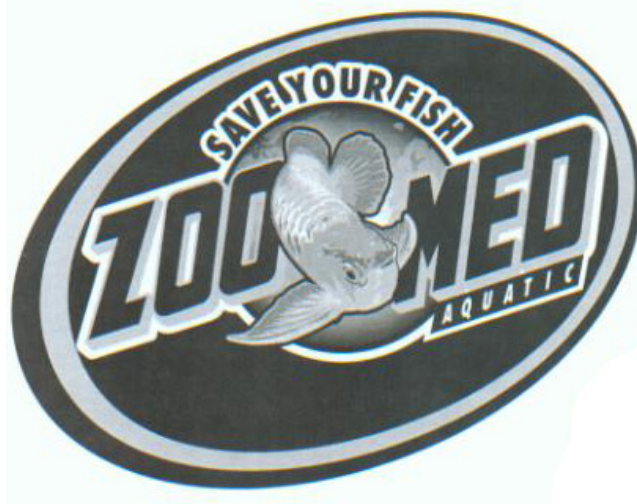
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# March's Caption Winner: Linda Gerber



*I can't think of a more fitting toast. This one's for you, Bill Adams!*





# GCAS Thanks You!

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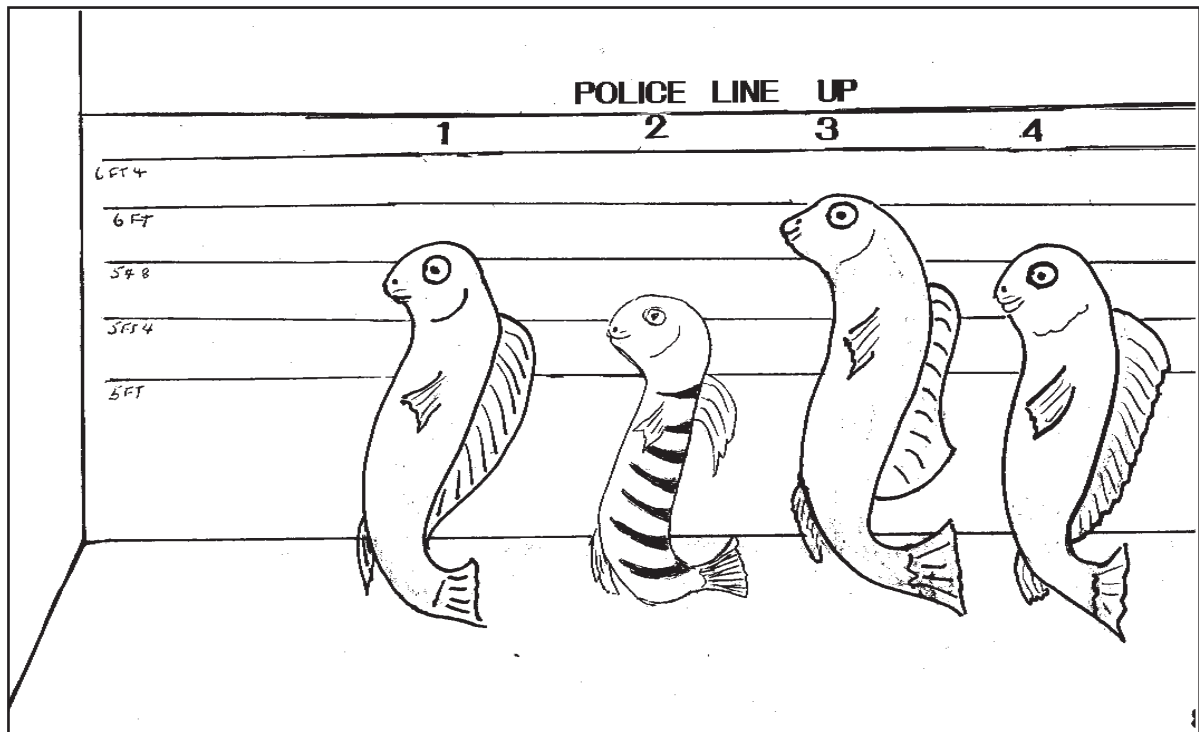
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# The Modern Aquarium Cartoon Caption Contest

*Modern Aquarium has featured cartoons before. This time though, you, the members of Greater City get to choose the caption! Just think of a good caption, then mail, email, or phone the Editor with your caption (phone: 347-866-1107, fax: 877-299-0522, email: gcas@earthlink.net. Your caption needs to reach the Editor by the third Wednesday of this month. We'll also hand out copies of this page at the meeting, which you can turn in to Marsha before leaving. Winning captions will earn ten points in our Author Awards program, qualifying you for participation in our special "Authors Only" raffle at our Holiday Party and Banquet. Put on your thinking caps!*



Your Caption:

Your Name:

# Fishy Friends' Photos

by Greater City Aquarium Society Fishy Friends

***B**elow are photo submissions to our “Fishy Friends” Facebook group. I’ve left the subjects unnamed, but not the photographer. If you see a shot you like, and want more info, ask the photographer about it! I’m sure he or she will be delighted to tell you!*



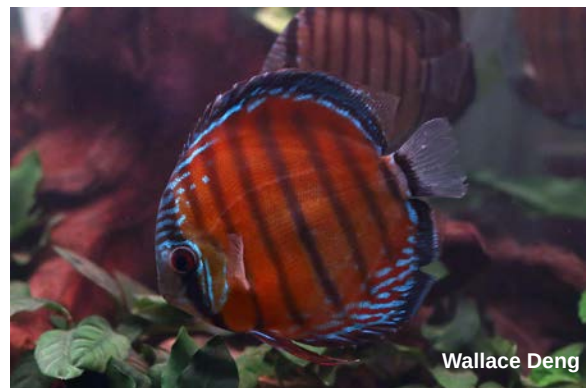
Ruben Lugo



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Joe Gurrado



Wallace Deng



# AND THE PRIZE FOR THE BEST SPONGE FILTER GOES TO?

by Jules Birnbaum

As the years go by I want to do less and less time-consuming maintenance. I can never forget Joe Ferdenzi's caution that if something has more than three moving parts he does not use it in his fish room. I do like to try new things though, so I've discarded lots of equipment. I've found one type of filter that best meets my needs. The sponge filter requires the least maintenance of any filter, and has the fewest moving parts. It is also very inexpensive to purchase, and just requires a simple air pump. Whether you have a few tanks, or a fish room with 30 tanks, as I do, sponge filters offer strong advantages over any other kind of filter.

I often repeat that I am not a scientist, and that what I write about here is from my personal experience. However, I've tried a wide variety of sponge filters sold commercially. With proper size and airflow they all work well. Much of the equipment made for our hobby is made cheaply, so that an entry-level hobbyist can afford it. Thus some of these filters don't hold up well over time.

PPI is a term used with sponge filters, and stands for pores per inch. Thus a fine sponge will have more pores to catch wastes and harbor nitrifying bacteria. PPI-50 would be very fine and a PPI-10 is very coarse. I take the middle ground and use a PPI-25 sponge. I feel a finer PPI will have a tendency to clog more quickly. Most of the simple sponge filters on the market don't give much detail about their PPI.

Sponge filters have to be aged, and unlike a box filter you can't take aged materials from other box filters to jump-start a new one. Nitrifying bacteria need time to build up. I age my sponge filters 4 to 6 weeks in a tank containing fish. I usually just place it alongside the filter already in the tank, with an air hose attached.

The first sponge filter I tried some years ago was by Hikari. This is a sponge on a stand. The sponge is replaceable if need be. The price is about eight dollars per filter, and it has just a couple of parts. The air hose attaches at the top through a lift tube. The manufacturer gives instructions as to what size to buy based on the size of your tank, but what with varying bio loads, these are not very accurate. I have also used the Hydro, which has a pro line with a little better sponge quality. JEMHCO even sells a Hydro sponge filter with its own water pump built in, which sells for approximately twenty-three dollars, and is very quiet and efficient. If you have one tank you might consider using one of these.

The sponge filters I installed in my tanks last year (Angels Plus) were three-tier sponge filters (see

first photo), with each tier having a different PPI. The coarse sponge is at the bottom, medium in the middle, and fine at the top. This filter has weights built in and no



base, thus you are getting water flow from 6 sides. The sponges are glued together, and only time will tell if they will stay together. They were not expensive, costing under \$10 per filter. Although these worked well, I was looking for something even better in terms of quality. Remember, I like trying new things.

The sponge filter I am now slowly switching to is the Cubefilter™ from Swiss Tropicals. The material is the best available, and should last a lifetime. The bottom of the lift tube has many small holes that diffuse the air as it passes through the tube to the surface. You can add a "Jetlifter™" (see second photo), which is simply a good way to direct the water circulation in your tank. Swiss Tropicals recommends not cleaning their filter unless the air flow diminishes. If you do clean the sponge periodically it could shorten its longevity. I never squeeze a sponge as that can damage the sponge. We see this with our kitchen sponges, which have to be replaced periodically.



There is in fact a never-ending argument as to when and if you should clean your sponge filters. Some of our expert members never clean them. Others can't stand the look of the dirt that builds up, and rinse them in aged water a couple of times a year. Ted Judy cleans the sponge filters in his large fish room periodically, and even has a video on how to clean them in a slop sink. Dr. Steve Tanner of Swiss Tropicals, who sells the Cubefilter™, JetLifter™, and the Mattenfilter, only recommends cleaning them when they are so clogged as to cut the water flow through the filter. I am going to try not cleaning my new filters unless completely necessary. Stay tuned for who wins the prize, and for my next very unscientific experiment.





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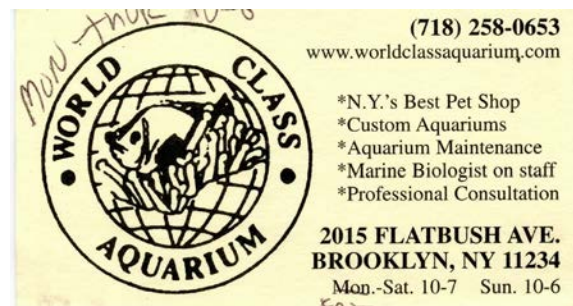
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# Breeding the Red Lizard Whiptail Catfish (*Rineloricaria* Sp. L10A)

- or -

## Why I Travel Far and Wide For A Tropical Fish Auction

Story and Photos by Barbara Romeo



Some of you may know that I will travel far and wide for a tropical fish auction. I attended the Central New York Aquarium Society (CNYAS) auction in East Syracuse, New York in the spring of 2014. The auction typically is held on a Saturday, which is very fortuitous for me, since I can then drive up very early on the day of the auction, and rent a hotel room if I stay until auction's end. If I stay the night, I go to dinner with friends from the auction, and also go on a shop hop before the drive back home on Sunday. So it's a whole weekend of tropical fish and friends!

Besides the auction itself, CNYAS in recent years has also held rare/expensive fish raffles (such as L-numbered catfish) on the auction day, and one year even allowed sellers to submit for auction "mystery boxes" of fish and/or plants, which the crowd seemed to really enjoy. For example, the auctioneer might tell the crowd that the mystery box contains a group of eight African cichlids, what lake they are from, and who the seller is. Then the bidding starts. If you use how high the bidding went as an indicator of enjoyment, then the crowd loved it!

I actually took a chance and won the bid on one of the aquatic plant mystery boxes, and was very happy I did so. Along with a nice group of various aquatic plants, I also received a group of livebearers as one of the surprises in the box.

With regard to the types of fish at the auction, I never know what will be there, and there are usually a couple of fish that I try to obtain. Besides tropical fish sellers from the area and the local fish stores that give very nice donations of fish and equipment, CNYAS attracts sellers from north and west of Syracuse. I have often seen many folks from Buffalo at this auction.

It was my lucky day when I noticed five bags of four red lizard whiptail catfish among the auction bags scattered throughout the various tables. I had never seen this fish before, and was quite intrigued. Some were very red, while others were rusty brown, and they were all odd but beautiful looking fish. I knew nothing about them, so I conducted a quick Google search on my iPhone before they were auctioned to see if I could maintain them in my soft water.

The origin of the species is controversial. Some believe they are collected from the wild, while others believe they were created in the hobby. They

- favor soft water with a pH range of 6.0-7.5
- favor well-planted tanks
- are very peaceful fish
- are paternal cave spawners

Quickly realizing that I could easily maintain these fish, I wanted to try to breed them. So I set out to obtain two bags, to increase the chances getting at least one pair. I had a bidding war with some other hobbyists at the auction, but since I knew there were five bags, I was victorious, and won two bags for a total of eight fish. I then had to figure out where to keep them, and quickly decided to dedicate one of my very well-planted 55-gallon tanks to these fish and only these fish. Therefore I had to move quite a few fish into other tanks when I got home.



I discovered that the L10A whiptail is a very peaceful and docile fish most of the time, so I am grateful that I removed the other fish from the tank. The L10A usually hangs on the Amazon Sword plants or one of the taller varieties of *Anubias* in the tank. They are omnivores, and do “nibble” on the plants, but this tank was

so packed with mature specimens that the nibbling did not cause detriment to the plants. I suspect these fish might harm new growth, so that daughter Amazon Swords (offshoots from the mother plant) should be moved into another tank to give them a chance to establish themselves.

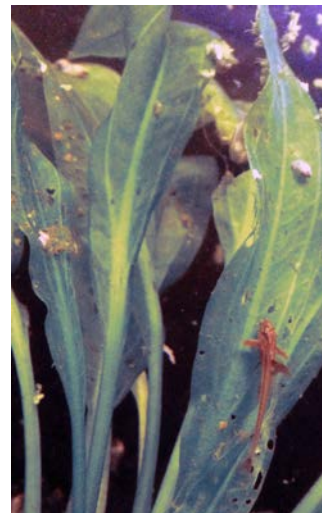
I mainly fed them a lot of flake food. I made a mixture of different varieties of Ken’s flake foods, adding them all together to create a variety of foods at each feeding. I add the food near the bubbles of the sponge filter or near the power filter, so that it gets into the current and makes its way throughout the tank. I



have observed that these fish need this type of food movement or they will allow the food to sink to the tank floor and fungus on the substrate. When they see the flakes swirling around the tank, they get excited and begin to feed.

I have tried to feed them live blackworms a couple of times, but be prepared to “lose” some of the blackworm to the substrate. The whiptails feed so slowly that they allowed some of the blackworms to bury themselves in the Eco-Complete™ substrate. The worms began to thrive, and have become part of the habitat in the tank. I figured this was fine, since the adults can feast on them as they come across them in the tank.

When I purchased these whiptails I expected to have to wait at least a year for them to get accustomed to their environment, and to more fully mature before I would see mating behavior. I was quite wrong. They did not want to wait, and in four months I saw fry. There were a variety of caves in the tank, but the male chose to make his den under a piece of driftwood which had a large *Anubias* tied to it. This driftwood was located in the back of the tank, so I could not see the male when he was laying on eggs. I realized after the second spawn that the only time I could tell he was on eggs is when I did not see him at feeding time.



Also, we had a very stormy couple of days at the end of July/early August, and along with a 50% water change, I surmise one of these may have triggered the very first spawn.

The fry vary in color from beautiful red to rusty brown, along with a couple of greyish-browns. I assume one will get more reds by breeding two very red L10A, but I have not attempted this. The fry, in





my opinion, are “stupid.” They hung on the tank glass and seemed not to realize that they needed to feed. I counted at least 20 fry, but only eight survived after seven weeks. The ones that survived learned to move around the tank, hang on the plants, and look for food.

I did try to move the second spawn of ~ 25, and intended to place them in a small enclosure so that they could not miss the food, but I was having great difficulty catching them, and gave up. I ultimately decided to let them be with the adults, as I did with the first spawn. The strongest will and did survive, but it was a small group.

After the second spawn I entered a group of five in the DAAS Breeders Award Program, but kept the rest to grow out. If you would like to learn more about whiptails, I recommend Norman Behr’s articles in the Jan/Feb 2015 issue of **Amazonas** magazine.

2014 ended up being one of my best years for finding novel fish at local fish auctions. I hope 2016 will be even better!



*This article previously appeared in the Fourth Quarter, 2015 issue of **Gills 'N Gossip**, the quarterly publication of the Danbury Area Aquarium Society.*



# Meeting Reminders



**A**lmost every month at least one meeting reminder postcard is returned undelivered. Sometimes the member moved and just forgot to update his or her contact information with Greater City. Other times, well it's a mystery—the address was correct, but the Post Office marked it as “undeliverable.”

Unlike some aquarium societies, at Greater City there is never a charge for non-members to attend, there is no “bidder card fee” to bid on items in our monthly auctions, the refreshments are free to everyone at the meeting, and anyone can purchase raffle tickets. But membership does have its privileges, including this award winning magazine, door prize chances, the ability to participate in our bowl shows, and advance reminders of our meetings. If you have an e-mail account, please consider getting your meeting reminders by e-mail, instead of by postcard. You will be getting two notices (one a week in advance, the other a day in advance) instead of only one, and the chances of non-delivery are virtually none (unless you change your e-mail address). While it's a very small thing, you'll even help the environment by using less paper. An e-mail sign-up sheet is at the membership/Modern Aquarium table, or send an e-mail to [gcas-webmaster@usa.net](mailto:gcas-webmaster@usa.net).

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# MY TALE OF TWO TANKS

by Susan Priest

There are two aquariums side by side in my kitchen which are less than one foot apart. They have many similarities, as well as many differences. Let's start with the two main similarities. They are both ten gallon tanks. Also, they are both home to a similar number of the same species of fish, *Goodea atripinnis atripinnis*, which are livebearers on the C.A.R.E.S. list.

I'm guessing that the question immediately nagging at your brain is "why do you have two tanks with the same fish?" The answer is that these fish are very prolific. In order to keep either aquarium from becoming overcrowded, an occasional "thinning out" is called for. Sometimes this means transferring some of the fish from one tank to the other, and sometimes this calls for distributing some of them to other fishkeepers.

Tank A (on the left) has a layer of *Riccia fluitans* floating at the surface, with lighting on it for ten to twelve hours a day. Tank B (on the right) has a few sprigs of plastic plants. (I don't remember why I set it up this way, so if you are wondering about that too, I can't give you an answer.) There is no lighting over Tank B because without live plants to absorb any extra nutrients, the light would surely contribute to an algae problem.

Hmmm! At this rate I will be putting you people to sleep, so let's speed things up a little.

**YES:** the fish in both tanks eat the same varied diet.

**NO:** there are no other species of fish in either tank, only the *G. atripinnis*.

**YES:** both tanks have a box filter.

**YES:** tank B also has a sponge filter which was left over from when it was being used as a quarantine tank.

**NO:** there is no substrate in either tank.

**YES:** both tanks get a weekly water change.

**NO:** neither tank has a heater.

**YES:** tank A has a thermometer.

**NO:** tank B has no thermometer (how different could the temperature be?)

**YES:** both tanks have some dolomite,

which hardens the water and raises the pH, both of which are to the liking of these (and most) livebearers.

**YES:** there are some snails in tank A. (They hitched a ride on the *Riccia*.)

**NO:** there are no snails in tank B.

**YES:** the fish in both tanks are active and healthy. Now that I think about it, I have never found a dead one.



Tank "A"

BUT . . .

**NO:** none of them have grown to be as large as the literature has suggested that they might.

These two tanks are situated such that whenever I sit down to a meal I find myself glancing up at them. I think that I am probably eating a little more slowly than I might because of the pleasure I take from watching them.

So, this brings us to the end of my tale. I have tried to stay true to my title by writing about the tanks rather than the fish. However, if you are interested in keeping some frisky, easy-to-care-for livebearers whose habitat in nature can no longer support them, these fish won't ask for much; just a small tank, (or maybe two!).



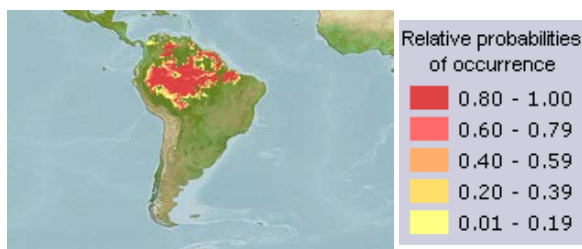
# Oscar Wild... Maybe Fat?

by Dan Radebaugh

Some months ago—I don’t recall now what brought it to mind—I decided that I’d been without an Oscar (*Astronotus ocellatus*) for long enough, and remembering from years back an online friend’s quest for “the other Oscar” (*Astronotus crassipinnis*), I decided make some effort short of obsession (going to South America, for instance) to locate a pair of that species. As it turns out, *A. crassipinnis* still isn’t an easy fish to find!

These days, most people in the hobby, as well as many who are not, have at least heard of the Oscar. This has not necessarily been an altogether good thing, at least for the fish itself. It’s almost impossible to go into any tropical fish shop and not find at least one tank full of juvenile Oscars. In fact, I happened to be in one of the well known chain stores while the new store manager was receiving stocking instructions from a corporate representative, and so learned that this chain *requires* that there be at least one tank of young Oscars in each of their stores.

Why? In a word—sales. These are very cute, even beautiful, little fish, and their puppy-dog “Take me home and love me!” demeanor sells a lot of them to people who probably shouldn’t be buying them. They don’t stay little very long, they eat anything that will fit into their mouths, and grow quite rapidly. Once out of the overcrowded sales tanks they also become quite territorial. Ask yourself how many first-time aquarists are likely to have at least a four-foot tank, and it starts to become clear why so many of these fish end up dead of ammonia poisoning or HITH, returned to the pet shop (if they’ll take it back), or dumped in the nearest body of water, where (outside of southern Florida) they won’t survive the first cold snap. But I digress.



Distribution of *Astronotus*

According to Heiko Bleher<sup>1</sup>, *A. ocellatus* entered the hobby in 1929 (in Germany) and were first captive bred in the USA in 1933. It is unclear when it began to be called the Oscar. Another common name in the USA has been the velvet cichlid. The Oscar

exists throughout the Amazon drainage (see map), with apparently several local variants that are considered synonymous, though Bleher believes that eventually there will be found to be several species. At present however, there are two recognized *Astronotus*

species, *A. ocellatus* and *A. crassipinnis*.

We don’t really know much about *A. crassipinnis* (translates to “fat fish”). Specimens found so far have been smaller than typical of *A. ocellatus*, but how meaningful this is remains questionable. Like *A. astronotus*, it is a popular food fish in the regions where it is found. It has not been evaluated by the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species. Quite rare in the hobby, it is seldom exported from South America.<sup>3</sup>

I found a listing for them on Jeff Rapps’ Tangled Up In Cichlids web site, and purchased a couple of pairs, though he cautioned that since he was not 100% certain that they are in fact *crassipinnis*, it would be more prudent to refer to them as wild Rio Araguaia *Astronotus*.



*Astronotus* cf. *ocellatus* 'Rio Araguaia'  
Photo by the author





So far these fish are acting like typical Oscars, eating like there's no tomorrow and growing like mad. I put one pair in a 75 gallon and the other in a 125, both tanks already occupied by other fish. So far there have been no major conflicts with the other inhabitants, though the male in the 125 has beaten up the female a couple of times, seriously enough that I had to remove her and treat her for a resulting *Columnaris* infection.

Some day there may be an opportunity to genetically compare the familiar Oscar to the semi-mythical *A. crassipinnis* and learn whether or not they are in fact different species, or just regional variants. Meanwhile, I've been caring for them as though they were normal Oscars, giving them some space and a lot of food (as youngsters, these fish have huge appetites, so you'll need to develop a feel for when they've had enough). Primarily carnivorous, they'll go after anything that will fit into their mouths. While they have the relatively short gut of carnivores, they do eat some vegetable matter in the wild, so keep that in mind as you plan their diet.

Probably the chief driver of the Oscar's popularity as pets is their personality. They recognize their

owners, and have been known to show preferences for different members of their adoptive family, sometimes even developing relationships with other pets, such as a dog or cat.

Given enough space, they are fairly tolerant of tankmates, though this is not always predictable, so

### Species Profile

**Scientific name:** *Astronotus* cf. *ocellatus* 'Rio Araguaia'

**Common Names:** Oscar, Velvet Cichlid, Marble Cichlid

**Region:** Amazon Basin.

**Maximum Size:** 12-14 inches

**pH Range and Hardness:** 6.0 - 7.6

**Spawning:** Substrate spawners

**Temperature Range:** tropical; 72 - 82 degrees F.

**Diet:** Primarily carnivorous: small fish, crayfish, worms, insects, etc.

when introducing new fish to their tank, be watchful for a while. Oscars are not fond of plants in their domain, and in fact may have strong opinions about other aspects of the design of their quarters as well. This can be amusing, but trust me, it can be annoying as well. For long-term harmony I suggest honoring their preferences to the extent that you can.

Oscars are large, heavy-bodied fish, which should be a hint that water conditions can be a concern. They eat a lot and produce a lot of waste, so for long-term health they need a large tank (These days I consider a 55 gallon to be the largest of the "small" tank category) with more than just adequate filtration, and a serious and consistent water change regimen.

With these conditions met and a decent diet, you should expect your Oscar to live and be a source of joy for around eight to ten years.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.practicalfishkeeping.co.uk/content.php?sid=4819>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www2.nrm.se/ve/pisces/acara/as\\_crass.shtml](http://www2.nrm.se/ve/pisces/acara/as_crass.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oscarfishlover.com/astronotus-crassipinnis>



# Pictures From



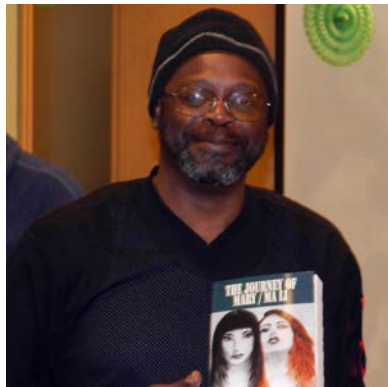
**Our speaker, Matt Wickey, shows off his GCAS pin**



**Sue Priest presents Matt with a copy of Modern Aquarium**



**Joe Ferdenzi presents Artie Platt with breeder awards**



**Larry Whitfield receives his prize for the "Authors Only" raffle**



**Roger Brewster with his lovely daughter Summerliya**



**Have you bought your raffle tickets?**

# Our Last Meeting

Photos by Al Priest

**A warm welcome to our newest members:**



**Rudolph "Rudy" Palermo**



**Harold Llewelyn**

**Bowl Show Winners:**



**2nd Place: Bill Amely**



**1st Place: Ed Vukich**



**3rd Place: Bill Amely**

**Door Prize Winner:**



**Gilberto Soriano**





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ALA Convention website  
[www.alaconvention2016.com](http://www.alaconvention2016.com)



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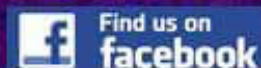


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# GCAS Happenings

## April

### March Bowl Show Winners:

- |              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1 Ed VUKICH  | ALPHA LYRETAIL       |
| 2 BILL AMELY | RED DOUBLETAIL BETTA |
| 3 BILL AMELY | BLACK PLAKAT         |

A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBERS WILLIAM AMELY, JEFF BOLLBACH, ROGER BREWSTER, LAMONT BROWN, STEVE CHEN, JACOB COLEMAN, MARGUERITE & DIANE DANIELS, CARLOTTI DE JAGER, PETE D'ORIO, WALLACE DENG, ROD DU CASSE, HARRY FAUSTMANN, JOSEPH FERDENZI, WARREN FEUER, MICHAEL GALLO, WALTER GALLO, HORST GERBER, JOSEPH GRAFFAGNINO, AL GRUSELL, JOSEPH GURRADO, VICTOR HRITZ, JASON IRIZARRY, ANDREW & JILLIAN JOUAN, MICHAEL MACHT, ARTIE MAYER, DONITA MAYNARD, DICK MOORE, JERRY O'FARRELL, ELLIOT OSHINS, DAN & MARSHA RADEBAUGH, VINNIE RITCHIE, DONNA & STEVE SICA, MARK SOBERMAN, GILBERTO SORIANO, SANDY SOROWITZ, STEVEN SPITZER, JR., ED VUKICH, HERB WALGREN, RON WEBB, LARRY D. WHITFIELD, AND RON WIESENFELD!

A SPECIAL WELCOME TO NEW GCAS MEMBERS HAROLD LLEWELLYN, RUDOLPH PALERMO, AND ROBERTO COMISSIONG.

### *Meeting times and locations of some of the aquarium societies in the Metropolitan New York City area:*

#### **GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** May 4, 2016

**Speaker:** Tom Allison

**Topic:** *Zoo Med Laboratories*

**Meets:** The first Wednesday of the month (except January & February) at 7:30pm:

Queens Botanical Garden

43-50 Main Street - Flushing, NY

**Contact:** Dan Radebaugh (347) 866-1107

**Email:** [gcas@earthlink.net](mailto:gcas@earthlink.net)

**Website:** <http://www.greatercity.org>

#### **BIG APPLE GUPPY CLUB**

**Meets:** Last Tuesday each month (except Jan, Feb, July, and August) at 7:30-10:00pm.

Alley Pond Environmental Ctr.: 228-06 Northern Blvd.

**Contact:** Donald Curtin (718) 631-0538

#### **BROOKLYN AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** April 8, 2016

**Speaker:** Rich Pierce

**Topic:** *Seahorses, Pipefish, and Sea Dragons*

**Meets:** 2nd Friday of the month (except July and August) at 7:30pm:

NY Aquarium - Education Hall, Brooklyn, NY

**Call:** BAS Events Hotline: (718) 837-4455

**Website:** <http://www.brooklynaquariumsociety.org>

#### **LONG ISLAND AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** April 15, 2016

**Speaker:** TBA

**Topic:** TBA

**Meets:** 3rd Fridays (except July and August) 8:00pm.

Room 120 in Endeavor Hall on the State University at Stony Brook Campus, Stony Brook, NY

**Email:** Margaret Peterson - [president@liasonline.org](mailto:president@liasonline.org)

**Website:** <http://liasonline.org/>

#### **EAST COAST GUPPY ASSOCIATION**

**Meets:** 2nd Tuesday of each month at 8:00 pm.

Alley Pond Environmental Ctr.: 228-06 Northern Blvd.

**Contact:** Gene Baudier (631) 345-6399

#### **NASSAU COUNTY AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** April 12, 2016

**Speaker:** TBA

**Topic:** TBA

**Meets:** 2nd Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM

Molloy College - Kellenberg Hall ~1000 Hempstead Ave - Rockville Centre, NY

**Contact:** Mike Foran (516) 798-6766

**Website:** <http://www.ncasweb.org>

#### **NORTH JERSEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** April 21, 2016

**Speaker:** Ted Coletti

**Topic:** *Montezumae Swordtails: 3 Centuries of Scams & Strains*

**Meets at:** Don Pepe's Restaurant

**Contact:** NJAS Hotline at (732) 332-1392

**Email:** [tcoletti@obius.nj.com](mailto:tcoletti@obius.nj.com)

**Website:** <http://www.njas.net/>

#### **NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY**

**Next Meeting:** April 21, 2016

**Speaker:** Michael Liu

**Topic:** *Cental American Cichlids*

**Meets:** 8:00 P.M. - 3rd Thursday of each month except for July & December at: Earthplace - the Nature Discovery Center - Westport, CT

**Contact:** Sal Silvestri

Call our toll free number (866) 219-4NAS

**Email:** [salsilv44@yahoo.com](mailto:salsilv44@yahoo.com)

**Website:** <http://norwalkas.org/>



# This is Your Fish on Drugs

A series by "The Undergravel Reporter"

In spite of popular demand to the contrary, this humor and information column continues. As usual, it does NOT necessarily represent the opinions of the Editor, or of the Greater City Aquarium Society.

Prozac (AKA fluoxetine) is a prescription drug commonly used to treat, among many other things, depression. It is so widely prescribed that it has been detected in aquatic ecosystems worldwide.

The researchers compared the behavior of fish exposed to various amounts of fluoxetine to those that had no exposure to the drug.

The scientists wrote that "males exposed to fluoxetine were less bold and less consistent in their behavioral responses, and the correlations between boldness over time and across assays were weaker than those for unexposed males."

This might at first sound like a good thing. After all, Prozac for humans has been hailed as a wonder drug since the mid 1980s. It is used to treat human psychiatric disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. For Siamese fighting fish, however, the drug-induced timidity could hurt the fish's chances for survival in the wild.



Researchers say that many products, including fluoxetine, "are still in their active form when they enter sewage treatment systems, where they have limited removal because of their water solubility and resistance to biodegradation."<sup>1</sup>

Since fluoxetine is common in some rivers where Siamese fighting fish (*Betta splendens*) live, Teresa Dziewczynski of the University of New England and her colleagues Brennah Campbell and Jessica Kane investigated how the drug can affect these fish, known for both their beauty and boldness.<sup>1</sup>

This may result in decreased ability to forage, avoid predators, and attract mates. The researchers discovered that the effects lasted even after fluoxetine was removed.

These researchers are calling for additional studies on the chronic effects of the drug, not only to determine how best to protect wildlife from exposure, and to find out the the long term effect on humans.

Oh well, I was hoping Prozac might keep bettas from jumping out of their tanks!



## References

<sup>1</sup><http://news.discovery.com/animals/prozac-makes-siamese-fighting-fish-timid-160316.htm>





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