

modern AQUARIUM



October 2017
volume XXIV
number 8

Greater City Aquarium Society - New York

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modern AQUARIUM

Series III Vol. XXIV, No. 8 October, 2017

ON THE COVER

Our cover photo this month features three sidthimunki loaches (*Ambastaia sidthimunki*) eating a Hikari Sinking Wafer. For more loach lovers' delight, see Tom Warns' article, "Living With Loaches," on page 16.

Photo by Nipun Marwaha

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From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

Back in July I presented some statistics from the service (Issuu.com) showing our (**Modern Aquarium's**) online readership statistics. As I mentioned then, our original purpose was to put all our back issues on a stable, easy-to-use platform that wasn't technically dependent on any one server (or person—such as this editor) to safely store this rich, ongoing legacy of our club.

As it turns out, the storage is really a by-product of this service. It also allows access to **Modern Aquarium** by almost anyone on the planet with access to the Internet. Other services show us how our magazine is being received by people who otherwise wouldn't necessarily even know of our club. Since we're not a commercial, paying customer, these services are somewhat limited (nor do we really need them), but even such as they are, I find them interesting, and hope you do as well. Below is a more recent set of data.

You may access our back issues a couple of ways. The simplest is to go to our website, greatercity.org, where you'll see a tab for **Modern Aquarium** that contains a link for each issue of **Modern Aquarium** (Series III) going back to 1996. You can also go directly to Issuu.com, and do a search for **Modern Aquarium**, though if you're trying to get to a specific issue, I find using our site to be much simpler and quicker. There's even an app available if you'd like to open the issues on your phone. You will need to establish an account, which will require you to choose a username and password.

As you peruse the data below, you'll notice that, like the chart in July, there are a couple of real spikes. I have no idea why, other than possibly when the issues first go up there may be more activity for a short time. That's just a guess though, and I might be a little bit too lazy to hunt down a definitive explanation.

This time I've included some categories additional to what I showed you in July. Hope you find it an interesting read.



P.S. A very warm welcome to new **Modern Aquarium** author Tom Warns!

13,131

Reads

427,770

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10

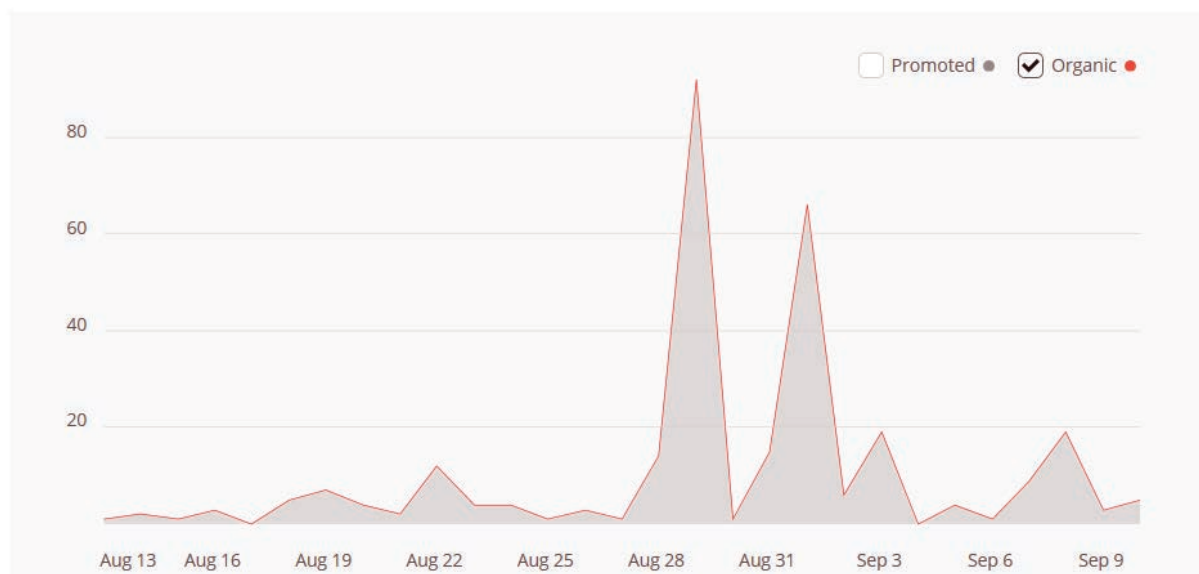
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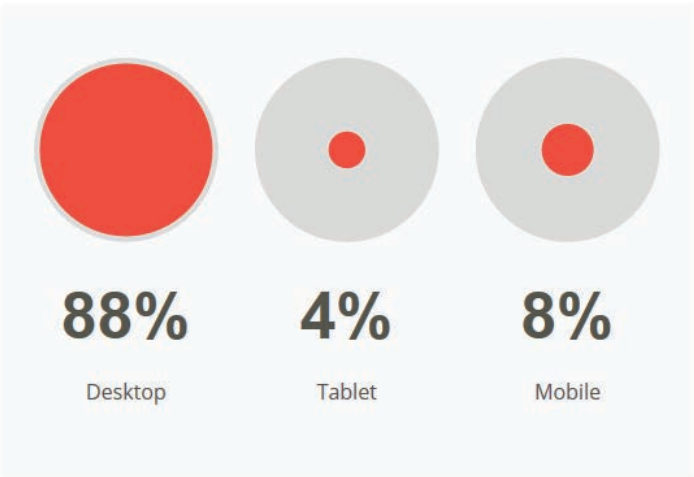
Reads Read Time Average Time Spent Impressions



From Who to Where

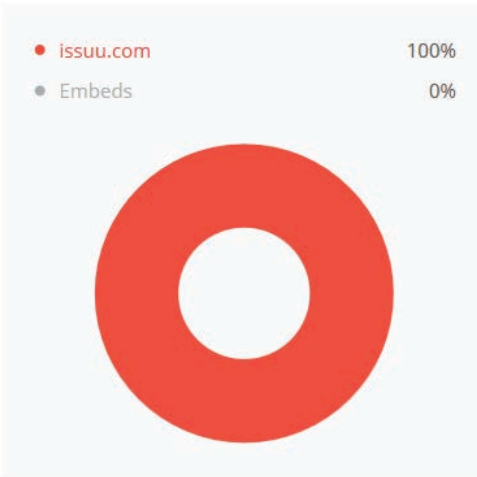
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See which kind of devices your readers are using.

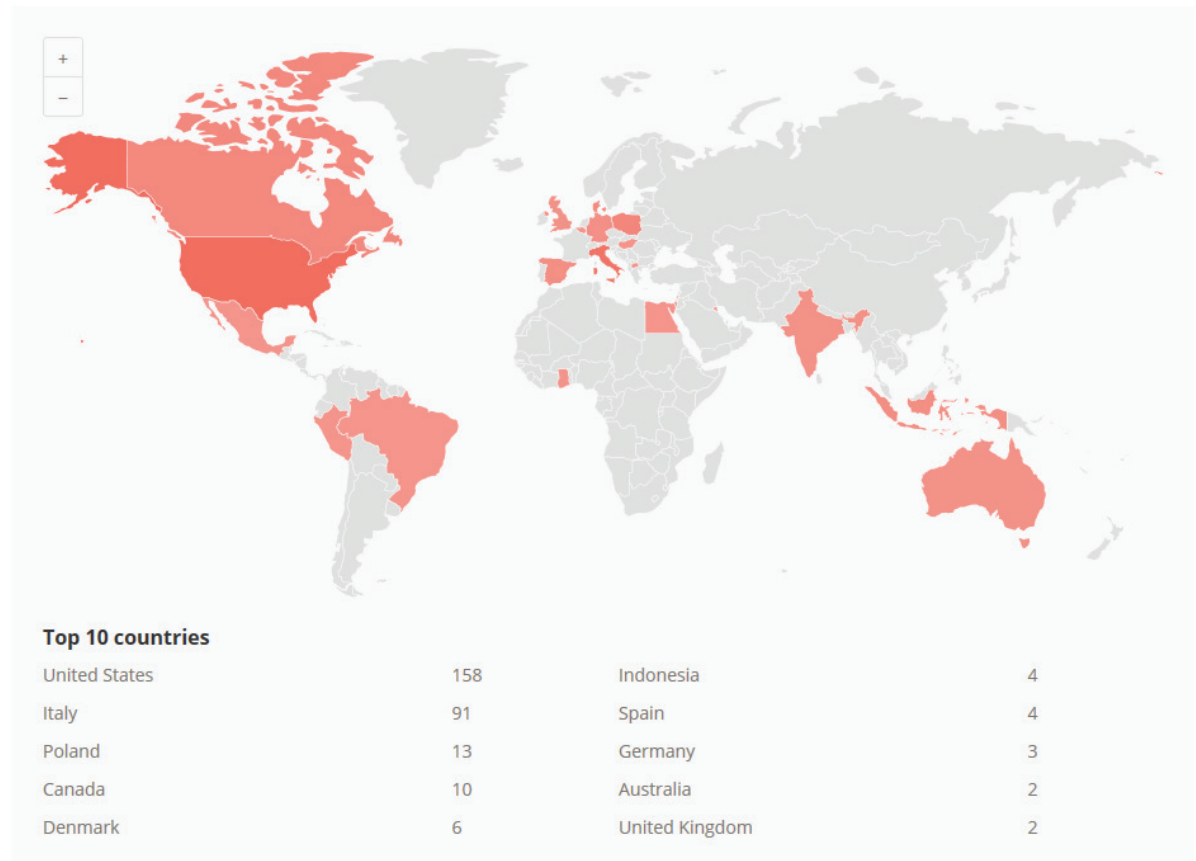


Source

See where your reads are occurring.



Readers Around the World



President's Message

by Horst Gerber

I am writing this the day after our September 6th meeting, while that meeting is still fresh in my short-term memory. Sue Priest, sometimes I wonder how you do it—find the time, read the book, and write your Wet Leaves column (and all the other things you write). My President's Message becomes a chore, and that is only one page! I try to give it to Dan two weeks after the meeting, but I'm not always successful in this endeavor. I read your Wet Leaves book review on **The Dragon Behind the Glass** without first reading the book. It was better and more concise than cliff notes! My signed book by the author is still in my car.

When Emily started her journey I supposed it to be like an article in a magazine on the illegal pet trade in New York City. Little did she realize what she was getting into, or that it would take her to the far reaches of the world for three years! The dangers she would face following barefooted Heiko Bleher through the jungle! You would have to be as dedicated as some of our aquarists (Ha-Ha!). Many of us dream of finding that elusive or unidentified fish out there. When I was younger (five years ago or so) my dream was to find that fish in Madagascar. Paul Loiselle beat me to that with multiple species of rainbows. Borneo, that vast and largely unexplored island sounds better and better. The island of the Red Dragon and the green-blooded lizard—what else is out there? So far that lizard is the only animal known to have green blood!

At 7:30 our meeting settled into our normal level of noise, if you can call it that. People checking out our auction table, talking profusely about auction items. Then I noticed a flurry of activity around a woman with blond hair, so I assumed our distinguished speaker had arrived. There was also a bearded man named Jeff next to her who turned out to be her husband (and no, Jeff did not go with her on her excursions). I introduced myself and left Emily to the crowd. Our members were anxious to speak with her and express their appreciation for her coming to speak at our meeting.

At 8:00 PM our program commenced and everyone settled down, but not before I had to use some crowd control tactics, which is part of the President's job. I need to achieve that without using a loud teacher's voice, as I am not a teacher. There is a lawyer in our group who has the technique down pat. When I approached him on the subject, his reply was, "I had to learn *something* in law school." I have to use an air horn to achieve reasonable silence within a short time. I have used it before, and it still startles people. Even Emily, our world traveler, when I blew it too close to her ear. (Sorry, I did not mean to do that!) It was indeed a privilege to hear Emily speak, and allow us to be part of her extremely informative and fascinating adventures.

But back to our normal President's Message (if there is such a thing). Autumn is my favorite time of the year. The northeast has the monopoly on fall foliage. I'm considered a leaf peeper, trekking almost every year for the past thirty years from New York to New Hampshire to make use of my timeshare, marvel at nature's change in seasons, and view the breathtaking landscapes: treetops bursting with hues of yellow, orange, and red. There is something magical about cruising or hiking through a swirl of colors, with a mild autumn breeze in your face. One of those vacation times prompted me to decorate a ten gallon tank with the vibrant colors of autumn—red petrified wood with a touch of yellow in it. The article on that tank is in the working stage. Wait! A light bulb just came on! Why not decorate *four* tanks, depicting each season with natural-colored petrified wood, my favorite rocks of all time. Sounds intriguing—springtime with lush green plants, summer with lots of green river rocks that I've accumulated over the years. Green petrified wood is the rarest and hardest to come by (and expensive, even for my tastes, or I should just say out of my reach). I have seen it once, an emerald green specimen in a glass showcase at a gem and mineral show in Springfield, Massachusetts. A chunk not much larger than my fist, weighing about five pounds, carrying a hefty price tag of \$2,000. That comes to about \$400 a pound, surpassing Godiva chocolate at \$40 a pound, or nova lox (smoked salmon) at \$42 a pound. Maybe it's the 65 million years of aging that makes the difference. However, I have heard of a 55gallon tank setup with a \$3,000 price tag. The store did not specify what was in the tank. Elusive and zip were the answers.

After fall with its beautiful autumn colors, wintertime could be a bare tank, but that wouldn't be my style. Perhaps I could use black and white petrified wood. I'll let that idea simmer in my head a bit longer. To be continued...

Horst





GCAS Programs

2017

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 accompany each meeting.

March 1	Joseph Ferdenzi <i>Killifish Demystified</i>
April 5	Michael Marcotrigiano <i>Breeding Show Guppies</i>
May 3	Michael Lucas <i>Butterflies in the Water: Discovering Hydrophlox Shiners</i>
June 7	Joseph Graffagnino <i>My New Fishroom</i>
July 5	Horst Gerber <i>Decorating Your Fish Tank</i>
August 2	A Night at the Auction
September 6	Emily Voigt <i>The Dragon Behind The Glass</i>
October 4	James Perrenod <i>Discus</i>
November 1	Karen Pattist <i>Koi Appreciation – Kohaku</i>
December 6	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, or fax to (877) 299-0522. Copyright 2017 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. 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. 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>.



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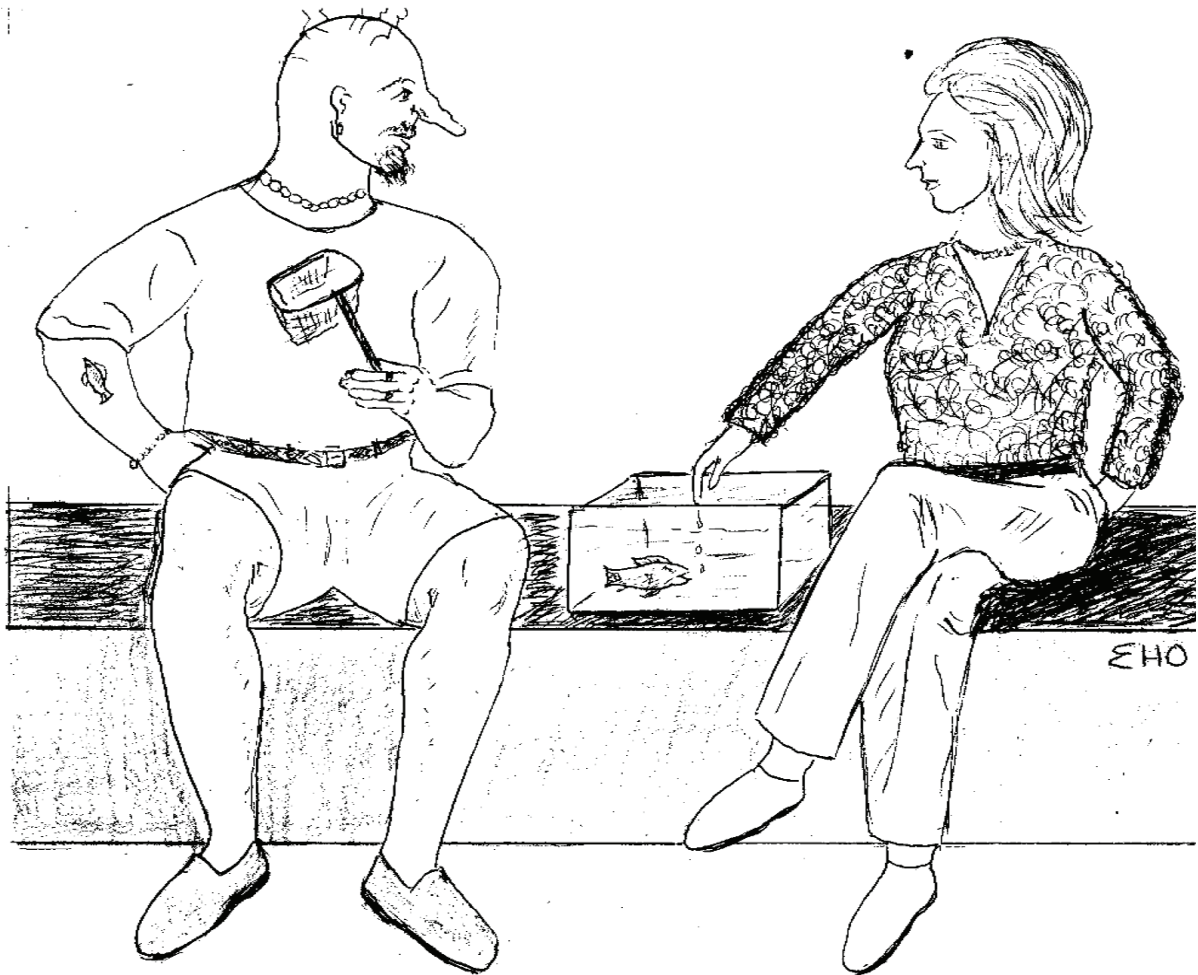
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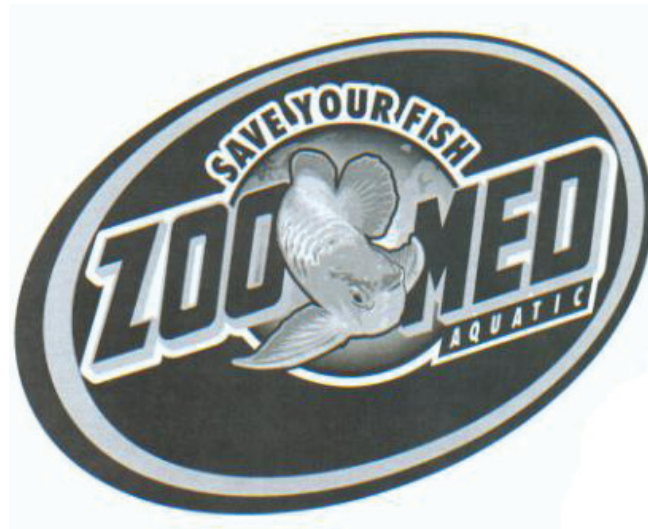
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September's Caption Winner: Jeff Bollbach



I like a girl who's willing to get her hands wet!



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!



EHO

Your Caption:

Your Name:

Oscar Wild

The Sequel

by Dan Radebaugh

In our April issue last year I presented an article, “Oscar Wild...Maybe Fat?” about my attempt to procure a pair of the semi-mythical “*Astronotus crassipinnis*,” including an explanation of why I’m not calling these fish by that name. Well, after losing one to an infection after a severe beating by an unknown culprit(s?), a pair develop from the group, and in due course one morning I discovered eggs on a piece of slate—the base of a piece of driftwood.

While I did have other fish in the tank (125g), namely a gold severum, a silver dollar, and a large gibbiceps pleco (*Pterygoplichthys gibbiceps*), it quickly became apparent that at least two of the three were in danger and knew it. I found other quarters for the first

two, but was reluctant to move the pleco, as he’d been pretty much the landlord of that tank for years. The ever-watchful parents kept him away from the eggs, so I thought things might work out. Wrong! Once there were wrigglers, the pleco made some forays to the pit,

and total war ensued, so now he’s residing in the 240 with a similarly sized common pleco (*Hypostomus plecostomus*) and some other large fish. Peace is restored, though the parents remain watchful and assertive when anyone approaches the tank.

It’s now been about a month, and the fry are coming along well, so who knows? Maybe later this year or early next, a few of these fry may

turn up at one of our auctions.



Astronotus cf. ocellatus ‘Rio Araguaia’ parents with newly free-swimming fry.



The eggs



Parents guarding the wriggler pit. *P. gibbiceps* is just visible in the shadow at the far left.



About three weeks later. The fry are a little larger now, and follow the parents around the tank (hoping for scraps?).



New eggs appeared, so moved the first spawn into another tank where no one is likely to eat them. As in the original tank, they divide into two groups; one high, one low.



BOWL SHOW RULES

There is a Bowl Show at every GCAS meeting, except our Night at the Auction meeting (August) and our Holiday Party and Awards Banquet meeting (December). These shows are open to all members of GCAS. Rules are as follows:

- Only current GCAS members may enter fish in the Bowl Show.
- There is a limit of 2 entries per member per meeting.
- Unlike some other clubs, every month is an “open” Bowl Show at the GCAS (i.e., there is no “theme,” such that one month cichlids are judged, the next livebearers, the next anabantoids, etc.).
- Any fish that wins any prize (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) may not be entered again in the same meeting year.
- The current Bowl Show Coordinator is Leonard Ramroop, who usually also serves as judge (although guest speakers are often asked to do the judging honors).
- 2.5 gallon containers are available for use (brought to the meetings by the Bowl Show Coordinator), but entrants are responsible for providing enough (and suitable) water for their fish.
- For a fish too large (or too small) for those containers, entrants must supply a suitable container, which must be clear on at least three sides.
- Only one fish per container (i.e., no “pairs”).
- No plants, ornaments, or equipment (filters, airstone, etc.) are allowed in the judging tank (an external mirror, or opaque cards between containers is acceptable, as is a cover that does not obstruct side viewing).
- Points are awarded: 5 points for 1st Place, 3 for 2nd Place, and 1 for 3rd Place.
- Ribbons are awarded: blue for 1st Place, red for 2nd Place, and green for 3rd Place.
- The person with the most points at the end of the meeting season receives the Walter Hubel “Bowl Show Champion” trophy at the Awards Banquet.
- The decision of the judge(s) is final.
- A running UNOFFICIAL total of the points awarded is printed in **Modern Aquarium**. Only the tally of points maintained by the Bowl Show Coordinator is official.
- **In case of ties:**
 - 1st Tiebreaker – most 1st Places
 - 2nd Tiebreaker – most 2nd Places
 - 3rd Tiebreaker – most entries

Hogfish Heaven

Story and Photos by Stephen Sica



A typical adult male hogfish, *Lachnolaimus maximus*. This specimen was photographed on a Grand Cayman reef. It's length is 16 to 18 inches, which is the average size of this fish.

Last month I wrote about my encounters with the Spanish hogfish, *Bodianus rufus*. If I may refresh your memory and mine, this hogfish, a cleaner fish when juvenile, is a rather colorful and attractive purple and gold.

If you are a “down and dirty” hogfish lover, or at least a passing admirer, you rightly know that the only “true” hogfish is the hogfish, *Lachnolaimus maximus*. I hope this makes sense. If you are a true hogfish lover, I think that you know what I mean, right? I also hope that I’m not beginning to repeat myself, so let me begin at the beginning. It all began not very long ago, on June 1, 2017. We were swimming along a reef about thirty feet beneath the surface after a deep wall dive. During the wall dive we had encountered, without exaggeration, a beautiful adult hawksbill turtle. Now I know that this is a magazine about fish, but if a striking sea creature, such as a mermaid, catches my attention, you can bet that I’ll try to photograph it. It is my opinion that this publication is justified in publishing a great turtle photo. Am I repeating myself again?

Let’s see. Where was I? It all began on June 1, 2017. We swam back up and over a deep wall to the shallow reef above to finish our dive. Standard procedure is to start with the deeper portion of your dive where you need more air, and finish in the shallows closer to the boat. I was lagging behind the group, carefully inspecting the rocks and corals



I swam down the wall next to the hawksbill turtle, taking many photos. In less than a minute I had descended to 94 feet. I decided to swim back up to Donna and the other divers.



Face to face with an adult hawksbill turtle, *Eretmochelys imbricate*, hovering over a deep wall at 75 feet on New Providence Island, Bahamas.



I joined the hawksbill turtle in formation, at my maximum 94 foot depth, to take one last photo, a close-up head shot, before swimming back up the wall to my companions. Blue water descends behind the turtle to fathomless depths, beyond the one hundred feet of visibility on this day.

in search of photo subjects. Soon I looked ahead to see my companions swimming toward a billowing cloud of sand. It arose and gently floated away in the water column. Swimming closer, I saw the reason for the swirling sand. It was the largest “true” hogfish that I have ever seen! It was at least three feet long. They don’t grow any larger! I have seen numerous specimens in the twelve to eighteen inch size, but critically staring at the left of its body, it was plain to see that this hogfish was much larger. I have been

diving more than half a century, and have never seen a hogfish this enormous!

I started taking photos as I swam toward the fish. Hogfish often change their coloration. This fish was showing its normal but bland off-white color, with beige and brown markings on the upper body. I swam within ten feet and took several photos. It appeared that this hogfish was munching on select living coral among large sections of bleached-out coral. As a result, a sandstorm of particles billowed into the water



This hogfish was so intent on eating that I was able to take a few close-up photos. This fish's eating style stirs up the sand and water around it. This specimen is an adult male. Large males develop a pig-like snout.



Huge hogfish takes a lunch break from eating live, as well as dead and dying bleached coral. The fish ignored divers to concentrate on eating. Three trailing dorsal fin spines are a distinctive feature.



After swimming up the wall to, and along, the reef, I came upon a section of bleached, dead coral. The largest hogfish, *Lachnolaimus maximus*, that I have ever seen was chewing up the coral and stirring up the sand around it. I took this photo from a distance of about thirty feet to avoid disturbing the fish.



I finally swam close enough to the hogfish to see what it found so delicious. There did not appear to be anything to eat other than bleached coral fragments.



A yellowtail snapper, *Ocyurus chrysurus*, joins me and intently watches the hungry hogfish go to work on this bleached out section of the reef. This is an example of nature at work, as the hogfish makes sand from coral.



Yellowtail snappers hope to snare food morsels as the hogfish dives in head first to literally eat a reef.



I tried to take a profile photo, but the hogfish was not cooperating, intent upon munching coral. I was hesitant to get too close and disturb it, fearing that it might swim away. Note the distinctive dorsal and tail fins.

surrounding the fish. Even though a dozen divers were staring at the fish, it did not deviate from its goal to eat the specific coral where it hovered, ignoring better quality coral a few yards away. It seemed to really enjoy eating hard coral. Contemplating the hogfish's actions while composing this story two months later, I conjecture that perhaps the fish was cleaning or sharpening its teeth. It didn't have the beak-like mouth of a parrotfish. I do know that smaller hogfish often dig into the bottom in search of food.

After two or three minutes we left the fish to continue its enterprise, while we continued on our way

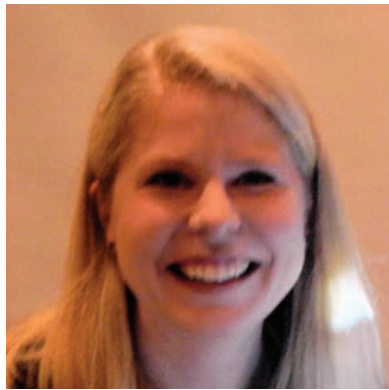
back to our boat. I noticed by the bouncing of the boat that the surface waves above us were becoming agitated. On days like this, I have great animosity toward this part of a dive. Some divers were having a difficult time climbing up the ladder while the boat was bobbing up and down in four foot waves. Try taking off swim fins with one hand while hanging onto a bucking ladder with the other hand and all that gear on your back! Now hand your fins to a crew member stationed at the stern to assist you as you go up and down, tossed about by the sea. My primary goal is to hand my camera up to a crew member without dropping or damaging it. Sometimes little things become quite difficult.

After settling in on our boat for the ride back, I told Donna that serendipity had struck us. She asked if it was the hogfish sighting. I answered that was a part of it. Before the dive, our divemaster asked each person what he or she wanted to see underwater on this dive. I wasn't thinking too quickly, so I answered that I would like to see a shark, but without hesitation Donna said that she wanted to see a turtle. She always says that she wants to see a turtle. In fact, we saw two hawksbill turtles. The second was much smaller than the first. We saw it a minute or two after we left the hogfish, as we swam along the reef back to the boat, but that's another story, for another day.

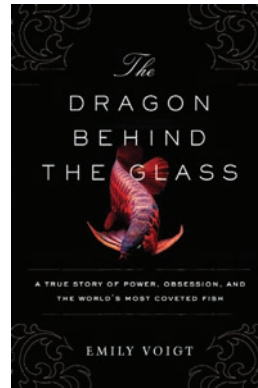


Pictures From

Photos by Sue Priest



**Author, Journalist, and
enthralling speaker, Emily Voigt**



**She shares details
from her book with us**



Joe Ferdenzi introduces Emily



**Door Prize Winner:
Florence Gomes**



Sandy and Lorelee Sorowitz



Rita Dunne and friend Hendrick

Our Last Meeting

Bowl Show Winners:



1st Place: Bill Amely



2nd Place: Rich Waizman



3rd Place: Bill Amely



Let the bidding begin!

Living With Loaches

by Tom Warns



Clown loach (*Botia macracantha*), Sidthimunki loach (*Ambastaia sidthimunki*), 3 Angelicus botia loaches (*Botia kubotai*)

When I was much younger, I kept fish at my parents' house. Like most young fishkeepers, I made some mistakes that I now regret as an older and more experienced fishkeeper, but I always enjoyed the hobby, which I picked up in 7th grade when I happened to join an aquarium club organized by my middle school science teacher. What eventually got me back into the hobby full-time, however, and what ultimately drove me to join this club, was one particular type of fish – loaches.

Anyone who has kept loaches understands their allure. They're smart, inquisitive, playful, funny, shy, and beautiful all at the same time. For anyone who hasn't kept them, I promise you there is more to the

loach family than just clown loaches (though I have plenty of those, too).

In my 75-gallon community tank right now I have six clown loaches (*Botia macracantha*), five Yo-Yo loaches (*Botia lohachata*), five angelicus botia loaches (*Botia kubotai*), and six sidthimunki loaches (*Ambastaia sidthimunki*). All are still juveniles, though the sidthimunki loaches are probably at or near their maximum size at 1.5". Most of them are from either liveaquaria.com, Pacific Aquarium in Manhattan, Absolutely Fish in New Jersey, and even from PetSmart, where I managed to snag my first two clown loaches almost three years ago. The sidthimunki loaches are from Mark Denaro, who delivered them to me at the NEC in March.

Mixed in with the loaches are six giant danios, a dither fish of my wife's choosing. They are perhaps more energetic than most danios, but they are surprisingly striking fish. They also share space with an adult snowball pleco (*Hypancistrus inspector*) from Pacific Aquarium, nicknamed "Elsa" by my wife, another six juvenile snowball plecos obtained via the silent auction at the NEC in March, and a very docile rainbow shark (*Epalzeorhynchus frenatum*).

Loaches are, with few exceptions, a friendly community species, and these specimens are examples of that. The key to keeping loaches is plenty of hiding places, which I provide with multiple artificial and



4 Giant danios (*Devario aequipinnatus*), Sidthimunki loach (*Ambastaia sidthimunki*), 2 Angelicus botia loaches (*Botia kubotai*)



Clown loach (*Botia macracantha*) eating a cucumber slice

natural caves, ornaments, and stacks of driftwood. Most of the loaches tend to intermingle with one another in a variety of the artificial hiding spots, while the sidhimunki loaches have found their own home under the driftwood in a spot that none of the other fish seem able to squeeze into. These numerous hiding places encourage the fish to become more active and playful during the day and early evening, since they know that safety is close by. While some loaches are shy, I find the snowball plecos to be by far the most reclusive species in that tank.

The tank is also filled with a variety of plants—Amazon swords, *anubias*, Java ferns, and *Vallisneria spiralis*. I have not had any trouble from using small doses of Flourish Comprehensive twice a week, along

with Flourish Excel, though others claim that too much copper can be more stressful to loaches than to other types of fish. The tank is well-planted, so the loaches' tendency to munch lightly on plants isn't usually enough to damage any single plant, but I keep that in check by putting large cuts of cucumber in the tank every other day. On a daily basis, I will feed API Tropical Mini Pellets (mainly for the danios), frozen bloodworms and brine shrimp, and a rotating variety of sinking pellets. My favorite are Hikari Sinking Wafers (they even have loaches on the packaging!), but I will also mix in Hikari Algae Wafers and Hikari Sinking Carnivore Pellets on occasion.

The 75G community tank has one Fluval 304 canister filter and one Aqueon 75 power filter. The only chemical filtration I tend to use is activated carbon. I prefer relatively small water changes on a relatively frequent basis. I tend to change 10-15% of the water once per week. I keep the water around 76-78° F with two heaters on each side of the tank, though that room in my apartment is generally warm enough that they don't come on that often.

Loaches are a welcome addition to a community tank, or they can be kept by themselves in a species or genus-only tank. I find them particularly satisfying fish to keep because of their vibrant colors and interesting personalities. In short, they're great fish for many more reasons than clearing out your pesky snail problem!



Photos by Nipun Marwaha



Giant Danios (*Devario aequipinnatus*), Sidhimunki loach (*Ambastaia sidhimunki*), Yo-Yo loach (*Botia lohachata*)

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Almost a Fishkeeper

by Sue Priest

She is the kind of neighbor that everyone would love to have. Whatever the project, she is always eager to pitch in. Her name is Evelyn, and she is ready to become a fishkeeper.

It all started when she dropped by and saw Al and I trying to take control of a very large pile of miscellaneous stuff on a table top we were working to clean up. She said "I'll be glad to help you with that," and she rolled up her sleeves. We had a trash can, a bag for recyclables, a box for household items, and, of course, a large box for fish stuff.

She started picking things up and making her own decisions as to where they should go. Right away we realized that she needed some supervision. She was putting filter materials into the trash, and air pumps into the household box. She is a fast worker, and she was picking things up, one in each hand, waiting for us to tell her where they should go. We had a hard time keeping up with her.



The conversation went something like this: (E) "This goes in the trash, right?" It was airline tubing. (S) "No, that goes in the fish box. (E) "This must get recycled." It was a small plastic filter cartridge from a Fluval power filter. (A) "No, that goes in the fish box. When she picked up an aquarium thermometer she aimed it towards the household box. I shook my head no, and she smiled as she said "fish box?" Before long she started asking questions. "What do you use this for?" she asked, as she held up an airstone, and we explained it to her. Then she picked up a heater, and didn't dare make a guess as to what we did with it. When we explained that as well, she said "Oh, good!"

After a while the pile of stuff was dwindling, and the tablecloth was starting to peek through in a few spots. The box of fish stuff was overflowing by now. That's when she held up a foam hair curler. "This doesn't go in any of these containers. It belongs in the bedroom or the bathroom." (A&S) "Wrong! Put that on top of the fish box." Well, she thought for sure that we were teasing her. Even after we explained how we used it, I'm not sure she believed us.



By the time there was nothing left on the table but dust, Evelyn had amassed a large



amount of fishkeeping knowledge. She hadn't yet realized it, but without even trying, she was almost a fishkeeper!

One day in the future I might be writing another article about Evelyn, after she has read a few copies of **Modern Aquarium**, and visited a few pet stores. I think she already knows more than Al and I did when we started out. I don't even know if she has any interest in becoming a fishkeeper, but if she does, she is off to a brilliant start!



My Deadly Pet Fish

How cleaning the aquarium left this retired bus driver with a killer infection



Alex Cunnison has a rare disease that was caused by inhaling the water from his tropical fish tank over a period of years

Alex Cunnison would place one end of a hose in the tank and suck on the other. Although he never swallowed water, he inhaled deadly bacteria. He feared he had cancer when he started losing weight and developed a constant cough. The case is just the third of its kind that has ever been reported.

An enthusiastic fish-keeper, Alex Cunnison liked nothing better than watching his colourful pets dart around the tank in his living room. But little did he know that—however relaxing they were to look at—his tropical fish were making him seriously unwell. In fact, the 70-year-old had contracted an incredibly rare disease that baffled doctors and left him struggling to breathe.

Last night the retired bus driver—whose illness was so unusual that it was written up in a medical journal—told the Scottish Mail on Sunday how cleaning his aquarium nearly cost him his life.

As part of his fish-keeping routine, Mr Cunnison would place one end of a hose in the tank then suck on the other end to start siphoning out the dirty water into a bucket. Although he never swallowed the water, he inhaled bacteria which then infected his lung.

He became sicker and sicker, but at first had no idea that his aquarium was to blame. Instead, he feared he had cancer when he started losing weight and developed a persistent cough which left him struggling to breathe. He was forced to cancel a sunshine holiday as mystified doctors struggled to find the cause of his symptoms.

After months of tests, medics revealed the astonishing truth—that bacteria inhaled as he siphoned water from the fish tank had caused a potentially fatal ‘fish tank granuloma’ (a type of lesion) in his lung. Such an infection is so rare the case has now been detailed in a medical journal as only the third of its kind ever reported.

Last night Mr. Cunnison spoke of the life-threatening ordeal caused by his shoal of small tropical fish. He said: ‘I could have died. It was taking over my whole lung. I enjoyed looking after the fish. They were really nice to look at, pretty bright colours and quite relaxing. I enjoyed looking at them—at the time. If I’d only known.’

The father of four kept 20 tropical fish in a large tank measuring about four by three feet. To clean it,



he would start siphoning water with his mouth using a rubber pipe, then let it run out into a bucket.

After about six years, he and partner Kathline Bellard, 65, decided to redecorate, and gave the fish to his granddaughter Millie, now 12.

But months later, Mr. Cunnison developed a cough which left him struggling to breathe. He said: 'I put it off for a good couple of months, but eventually I made an appointment with the doctor when my partner put the pressure on. I had trouble breathing; I was struggling to catch my breath, and was light-headed and dizzy. It's frightening. I'd lost a wee bit of weight too, and I'm only eight stone two as it is.

'I went to the doctor, who sent me straight up to the hospital for an x-ray. He phoned back that same evening to make an appointment for the following morning. I assumed it must be cancer. We had a sleepless night. They said it wasn't cancer, but it might be TB. I cancelled the holiday to Tenerife.'

Over the coming months further tests eliminated TB and identified the bacterium which was slowly destroying Mr. Cunnison's lung as *Mycobacterium marinum*.

Found in water, it typically causes lesions on the skin through a cut or scratch, although this is rare. To find it in the lungs is rarer still.

'The consultant at the hospital was baffled. Eventually they said it was an infection fishermen get. That was the first thing they asked me: did I go fishing? I said no. Then we mentioned that I used to siphon the fish tank with my mouth. But I hadn't had them for a year and a half—the lesions must have just been there growing all that time.

'I really appreciate the NHS for all they did. 'We'd been doing it every month, cleaning the tank out, never thinking anything would happen. Now I wish I'd got a pump to clean the tank—but people have siphoned fish tanks like that for years.'

Mr Cunnison, of Livingston, West Lothian, is now free of infection after a year of treatment with a cocktail of antibiotics. He no longer keeps fish, and neither do Millie and her mum Nicola, Mr Cunnison's 46-year-old daughter.

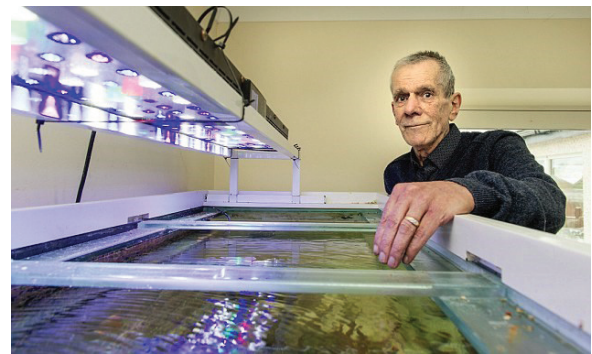
Dr. Donald Noble, consultant physician at St. John's Hospital, Livingston, said, '*Mycobacterium marinum* is an environmental bacteria which can

cause chronic skin infections in aquarium workers. However, infection in the lungs is highly unusual. This is the only reported case of lung infection due to *M. marinum* in Scotland, and there are only a few case reports reported in the medical literature worldwide. In this case the likely route of infection was from siphoning water from a fish tank after initiating the siphon by mouth.

'These infections cause progressive destruction of lung tissue and are often difficult to treat.'

Mr. Cunnison's case was reported in the Scottish Medical Journal in November. The paper said, 'We report only the third documented case of pulmonary infection with *M. marinum* in an immunocompetent individual.'

Colin Pannell, of the Federation of British Aquatic Societies, said, 'I've been keeping fish for 45 years and I've never heard of anything like this. The chances of anything like that happening have got to be millions to one. Don't swallow the water—and if it goes in, spit it out and use a mouthwash. But if you want to be absolutely safe, use a pump.'



Read more:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4121094/My-deadly-pet-fish-cleaning-aquarium-left-retired-bus-driver-killer-infection.html#ixzz4pJ7Twihb>

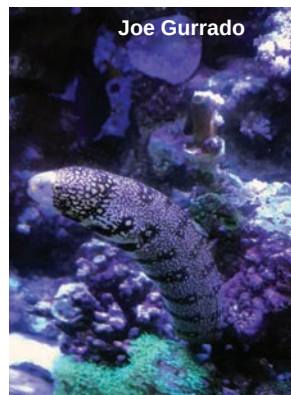
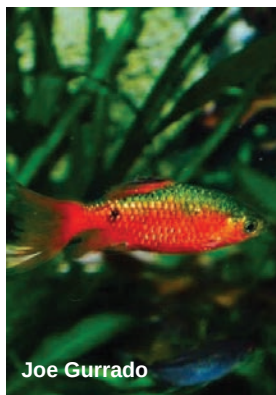
Editor's note: Also see:

"Fish Tuberculosis: What is the Threat to Aquarists?" by Dan Radebaugh. **Modern Aquarium** Series III Volume XVIII No. 7, September, 2011, pp 19-21.

Fishy Friends' Photos

by Greater City Aquarium Society Fishy Friends

Below 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!





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Meeting Reminders



Almost 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.

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GCAS Happenings

October

Last Month's Bowl Show Winners:

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|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1 WILLIAM AMELY | RED DOUBLETAIL BETTA |
| 2 WILLIAM AMELY | YELLOW DT BETTA |
| 3 RICHARD WAIZMAN | BLUE HALFMOON BETTA |

UNOFFICIAL 2017 BOWL SHOW TOTALS:

WILLIAM AMELY	23	RICHARD WAIZMAN	14	CARLOTTI DEJAGER	8
JEFF BOLLBACH	5	ED VUKICH	4		

A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBER LESLIE DICK!

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

GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: November 1, 2017

Speaker: Karen Pattist

Topic: *Koi Appreciation - Kohaku*

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

43-50 Main Street - Flushing, NY

Contact: Horst Gerber (718) 885-3071

Email: 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: October 13, 2017

Speaker: None

Event: *Giant Fall Auction*

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: October 20, 2017

Speaker: Tom Allison from ZooMed

Topic: *Zoomed Products*

Meets: Olive Garden Restaurant

257 Centereach Mall,

Centereach, NY 11720

Phone: (631) 585-4027

For map directions, go to olivegarden.com/locations/ny/centereach/centereach-mall/1507.

Email: Margaret Peterson - president@lisonline.org

Website: <http://lisonline.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: October 10, 2017

Event: Bag Sale

Topic: *N/A*

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: October 19, 2017

Speaker: Bob Larsen

Topic: *TBA*

Meets at: Days Hotel, East Brunswick NJ

Contact: NJAS Hotline at (732) 332-1392

Email: tcoletti@obius.jnj.com

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

NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: October 19, 2017

Speaker: Jeff Michel

Topic: *West African 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

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

Peddling Fish

A series by "The Undergravel Reporter"

The Hudson River is a 315-mile (507 km) river that flows from north to south primarily through eastern New York in the United States. The river originates in the Adirondack Mountains of Upstate New York, flows through the Hudson Valley, and eventually drains into the Atlantic Ocean, between New York City and Jersey City.¹

The Hudson River is rolling along — literally, on wheels as scientists introduce a new way to teach park visitors about ecology.

The Hudson River Park Trust² introduces its Roving River bicycle, featuring a built-in fish tank.

Armed with facts about wildlife, marine biologists are pedaling around educating the public about thriving ecosystems in the Hudson River.

Experts say despite what many believe, the river is cleaner than ever.

"Water quality has improved, especially since the Clean Water Act back in the 1970s," said Tina Walsh director of education outreach for the Hudson River Park Trust. "And really an MVP we're seeing start to make a comeback is the oyster in the Hudson River. We're part of efforts to restore oysters, and we're taking oysters and wrapping them around piles and supports of piers in the park to see if that helps oysters find a place to live."³

I wonder if we could borrow or rent that bicycle/fish tank to have a "Rolling Bowl Show?"



References

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River

² <https://www.hudsonriverpark.org>

³ <http://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2017/09/5/rolling-marine-biology-lab-aims-to-educate-new-yorkers-about-aquatic-life-in-the-hudson.html>



Fin Fun

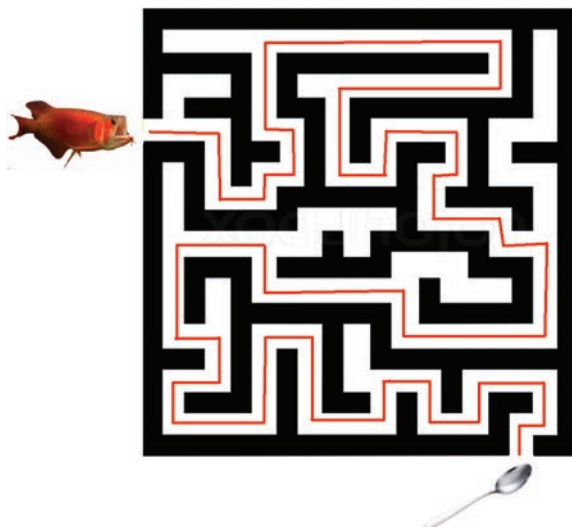


Discus QUEST

Most Discus fish already look as though they have a maze printed on their bodies. The one below actually does. Can you navigate it?



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