

# modern AQUARIUM



May 2018  
volume XXV  
number 3

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*Greater City Aquarium Society - New York*

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# modern AQUARIUM

Series III Vol. XXV, No. 3 May, 2018

## ON THE COVER

This month's cover photo is a spectacular shot of a huge brain coral that has become a focal point for schooling grunts. Large undersea structures, whether natural or man made, such as a shipwreck, always attract sea life. A green moray eel used to reside at the base of this coral. See Steve Sica's article, on page 17.

Photo by Stephen Sica

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# From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

I believe you will enjoy this issue of **Modern Aquarium**. We have articles from many of our regular contributors—Joe Ferdenzi, Jules Birnbaum, Steve Sica, The Undergravel Reporter—all have chipped in with their usual outstanding contributions. And then we have Jerry O’Farrell, who is also a regular contributor. The surprise here is that I had not realized just *how* regular. It seems that in addition to being a contributing author, Jerry could also be described as a columnist, but sort of in slow motion. You’ll understand what I mean very soon.

Recently, I was doing some research relating to a reader who called, asking me about an article. I was unable to find the article in question, but the query (and the fruitless search) prompted me to pick up an idea that Al Priest had presented me with some time back, namely that we should create an index of articles going all the way back to the first issue of the present incarnation of **Modern Aquarium**.

While I was assembling the materials for this task, I was struck by two articles back in March and April of 2003. I thought to myself, “Hmmm! This looks familiar.” Here, for your consideration, is the title of an article by Jerry from March 2003:

## So You Want A *BIGGER* Tank?

by JERRY O’FARRELL

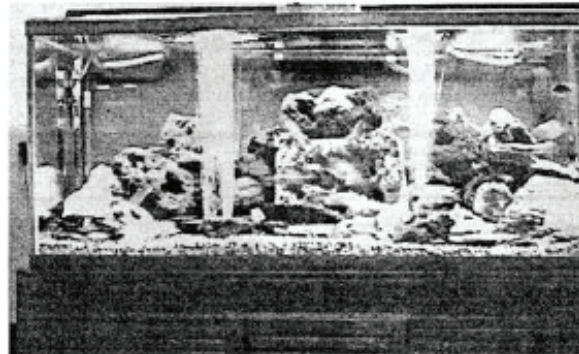


The author with two of his bigger tanks.



## In Search Of A *BIG* Stand

by JERRY O’FARRELL



Then check out this image (above) from the April 2003 issue. Finally, take a look at Jerry’s article on page 13 in *this* issue. My Editor senses tell me that Jerry is either a born Upgrade Columnist or, perhaps more seriously, a serial upgrader. Either way, I am told that these days there are treatments that can offer hope.

Hang in there, Jerry—we’re with you all the way!





# GCAS Programs

## 2018

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 7     | <b>Tom Keegan</b><br><i>Fish Bio 101</i>                                                     |
| April 4     | <b>Judith Weinberg</b><br><i>Starry, Starry Night Cichlids: An inter-species love affair</i> |
| May 2       | <b>Tom Keegan</b><br><i>Fish Bio 101 - Part 2</i>                                            |
| June 6      | <b>Ask The Experts</b><br><i>Joseph Ferdenzi, Moderator</i>                                  |
| July 11     | <b>Salvatore Silvestri</b><br><i>Apistogramma and other dwarf cichlids</i>                   |
| August 1    | <b>A Night at the Auction</b>                                                                |
| September 5 | <b>Kevin Kelly</b><br><i>Lighting</i>                                                        |
| October 3   | <b>Gary Hater</b><br><i>Goldfish</i>                                                         |
| November 7  | <b>Rusty Wessel</b><br><i>TBA</i>                                                            |
| December 5  | <b>Holiday Party!</b>                                                                        |

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 2018 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 [gcas@earthlink.net](mailto:gcas@earthlink.net). 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 or by email. 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 Horst Gerber

Well, we made it through the wild and unusual winter of 2017-18, not to mention the political roller coaster we are still on. According to the UN's World Happiness Report, the US currently ranks at #18 when it comes to being happy. It seems that Finland, with a much colder climate and much less daylight, is the happiest country in the world, if this report is to be believed. They do make pretty good vodka there. Maybe the Finns get more sleep; being warm is their key to happiness, not to mention much less turmoil and a whole lot of fish eating. I of course don't mean tropical catfish—more like wild salmon with crabmeat stuffing.

Human beings are social creatures, and fish people are no exception. Much of our happiness derives from connecting with friends and fellow hobbyists. Our shared interest in this hobby gives us an edge that many others don't have, and makes us the happiest people in the world! (If you believe that I have a great deal for you on a nearby bridge.)

Of course fish will never replace man's best friend (his wife). Like his children, most of the time they bring happiness, but it can be a pain training them (the fish, that is). Many hobbyists become very attached to their fish, especially the large cichlids with big personalities and interesting behavior. They'll follow you around in their wet environment, like dogs waiting to be fed.

Our meeting last month was well attended, with over seventy members showing up, and two new members signing up. We must be doing something right! I would like to thank everyone for your customary great participation, and for your generous donations to our auction. It really enhanced the enjoyment of the evening. There were bargains galore, and our raffle contained quite a few high-priced items. Many thanks to Pete for schlepping it all to our meetings month after month. At least he doesn't have to take it all home with him afterward (unless he's a successful bidder, of course).

Some of you have noticed that our Web site hasn't been functioning lately. Without going into the gruesome details, we are working on this, and expect a rebuilt site to be up and functioning soon.

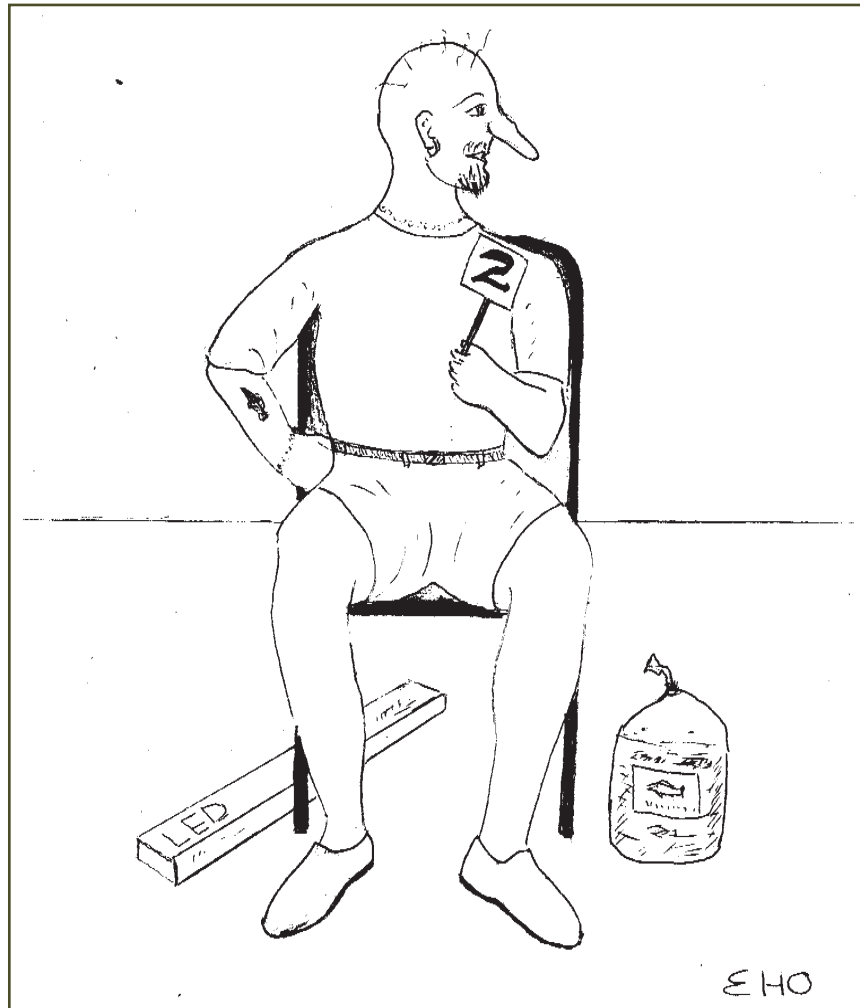
Until next month...

*Horst*

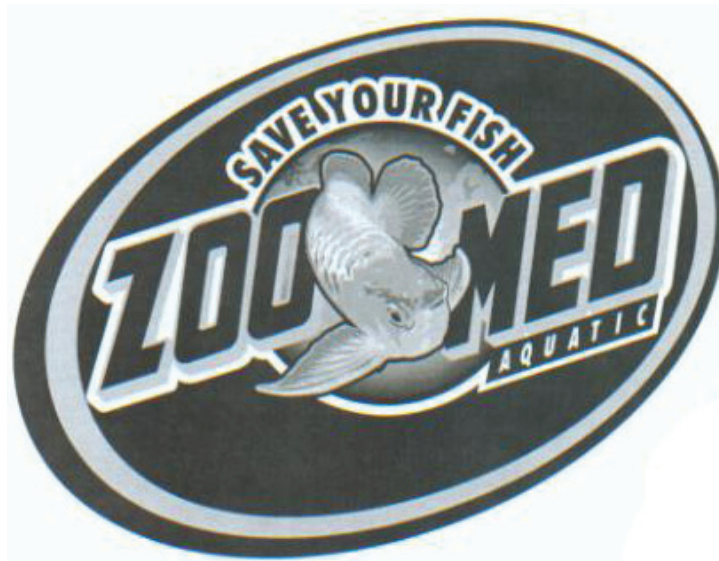


# April's Caption Winner:

## Bill Amely



*Got my light! Got my fish! Now if I can just get a ride home!*





# GCAS Thanks You!

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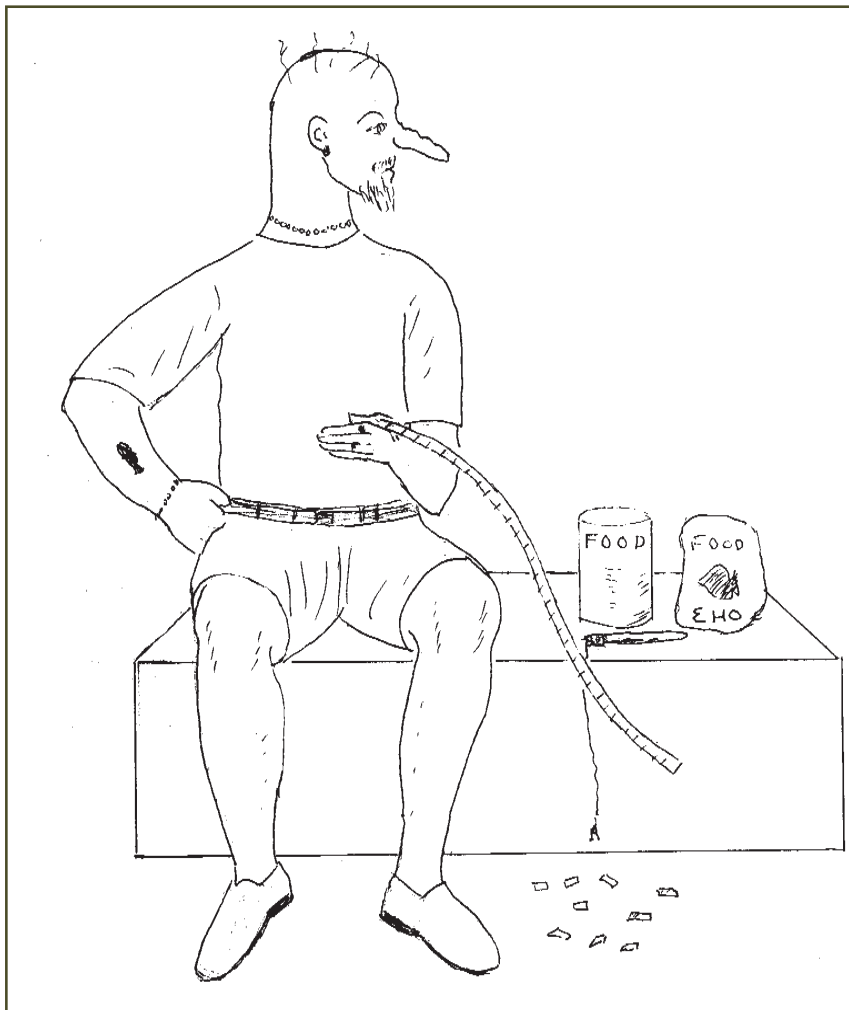
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# The Modern Aquarium Cartoon Caption Contest

*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](mailto: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:

# Pictures From

Photos by Al Priest



**The evening's speaker:  
Judith Weinberg**



**Judith with her  
beloved "Bo"**

---

## Recipients of NEC 2017 Article Awards



**Steve Sica**



**Joe Ferdenzi**



**Don and Doug Curtin**



**No one could argue with that!**

# Our Last Meeting

**We warmly welcome our newest members:**



**David Best**



**Rennie Ramnanan and son Aiden**

---

## Bowl Show Winners:



**1st Place: Rich Waizman**



**2nd & 3rd Place: Bill Amely**



**Get your wallets out!**

# Freshwater Fish Foods

by Joseph Ferdenzi

**N**ext to good water quality, good nutrition is the most important thing you can provide for the well-being of your fish. Aside from live foods, such as blackworms and brine shrimp, fish relish well-made prepared foods, and these are the focus of this short article.

There are many brands of prepared or semi-prepared foods on the market. The brands available change over time, as some companies go out of business and others come into the market. What does not change is that food manufacturers are required to list the ingredients that go into their products. These ingredients are listed in order of quantity, i.e. the primary ingredient is listed first, the secondary ingredient is listed second, and so on.

What do I look for in this list of ingredients? Mind you, I am not a professional scientist. What I believe is derived merely from my years of experience as an amateur naturalist who has read much literature and spoken with many respected hobbyists. So, what I look for are foods in which the first two or three listed ingredients are made up of certain kinds of animal protein.

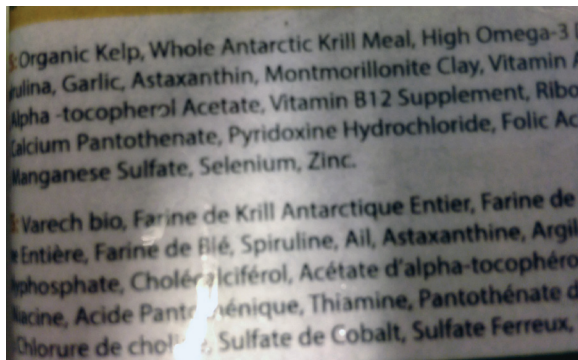
In nature, most of our freshwater fish (there are exceptions) feed primarily on other fish, insects, and aquatic invertebrates such as shrimp and worms. For the most part, they do not eat mammals, or wheat, or rice. Therefore, the primary ingredients in good fish foods should be things like whole fish or shrimp. This

is not to say that other ingredients are bad for the fish, but they should not be the primary ingredients. That rule does not, of course, apply to fish that are herbivores.

I have made it a practice to never buy prepared foods (this includes what I call semi-prepared or gelatin foods that must be mixed with water and allowed to set before feeding) unless I have read the ingredients list on the label. By doing so, I have discovered a wide variety of fish food formulas. For example, I recall being offered a product labeled as shrimp pellets (made by a well-known company), and discovering that there was no shrimp whatsoever listed in the ingredients! And these were not shrimp pellets intended for eating by shrimp, but by the various kinds of fish depicted on the label. On the other hand, I have purchased shrimp pellets where the first or second ingredient listed was indeed shrimp. These striking differences in ingredients can also be seen in foods intended for herbivorous fish—some so-called algae wafers, for example, turn out to have very little green vegetable matter in them.

For purposes of illustration, I have provided photos of the ingredients of two brands of algae wafers, and then two brands of shrimp pellets. See for yourself, and decide which would be better for your fish. If fish could read, I think I could predict which they would choose.

## Two Brands of Algae Wafers:

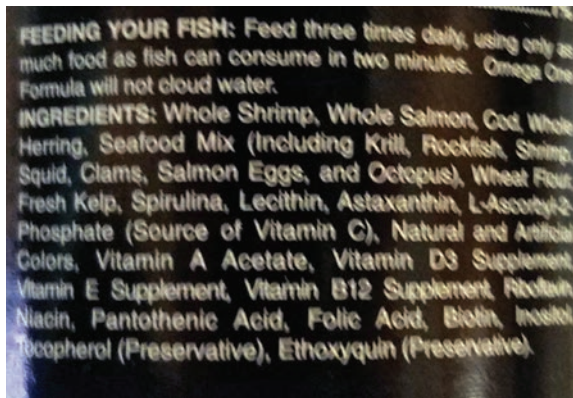


**1st two ingredients:  
organic kelp and whole antarctic krill meal**



**1st three ingredients:  
various wheat products**

## Two Brands of Shrimp Pellets:



1st four ingredients:  
whole shrimp, whole salmon, cod,  
whole herring



1st four ingredients:  
Shrimp meal and wheat flour are the  
first two ingredients, followed by  
fish meal and soybean protein.



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# 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!*



# SO YOU WANT A BIGGER TANK?

by Jerry O'Farrell

**W**ell, I finally got the bigger tank I wanted. It took almost three months from start to finish. All I can say is that I'm very happy with the outcome, and with the customer service from Custom Aquariums ([lifetimeaquariums.com](http://lifetimeaquariums.com)). I would use them again if I ever wanted another tank. For the few dollars more it cost compared to an off-the-shelf tank it was well worth it. The craftsmanship that it was made with is amazing. All top of the line sealants and glass, plus the hardwood for the stand and canopy, which also show top of the line craftsmanship.

Let's get down to the nitty gritty. I wanted an 8 by 2 by 2 foot tank with sump and U.V. sterilization, but as fate would have it I would not be able to get it into the room I wanted to put it in. It was too tall to be turned on its end. It had to go down the hallway, and the room that I had to turn into was in the middle of the hall. This was the only room I could use, so I had to get inventive, since the wife wouldn't let me take out the sheet rock to get it in the room.

I went to Home Depot and brought eight lengths of half-inch by 8-foot P.V.C. pipes and four three-way corner connectors, and mocked up my new tank's measurements, so that I had the outline of the tank I wanted. Then I proceeded to try and figure how to get it into the room. There was no way it was going to fit with the measurements I wanted. So I started to cut the P.V.C. shorter until I found the size that would fit. I finally settled on 7 1/2 feet x 2 feet x 2 feet. I called Custom Aquariums and explained that my ceiling height was 8 feet and I wouldn't be able to turn the tank on end to get it into the room. I asked if I could change the measurements of the tank, stand and canopy after I already placed the order they said it was not a problem. I also had them put low iron glass in the front panel (what they call HD glass) for better clarity. I also had them paint the back panel blue with their acrylic paint.

So the specs on the tank are as follows: the glass is half-inch thick, length is 7 1/2 feet, height is 2 feet, and width is likewise 2 feet. I had three holes cut into the back panel—one output and two returns. This allowed me to minimize equipment inside the tank such as heaters, canister filter intake, and return hoses.

The bracing on the tank is made from aluminum rather than plastic, and the three center braces can be removed to allow for larger decorations to be inserted into the tank and then screwed back in. So the tank

holds 210 gallons of water—less water than I had before, but it's a foot and a half longer. The sump came in four parts: a sock tank, an overflow tank, an evaporation tank, and a plant refugium tank which can also be used as a quarantine tank, or left as another evaporation tank. All sump tanks came with glass covers to decrease evaporation.

The glass covers for the tank and the sump are polished and rounded, with no sharp edges; the same for the tank edges. I also have four Finnex LED lights on it. Custom Aquarium calls it the seamless sump, because it can be made as long as you need it to be. All together between the sump and

tank I have 300 gallons of water.

**The stand and canopy:** The stand is 7 feet 8.5 inches long by 30.5 inches high by 26.5 inches wide, a major problem, as it was too big to fit down the hall and into the room. So Irish ingenuity came into play. I sawed it in half and put it back together again (no, just kidding, but what I did do was a little crazy. The tank is on the second floor of the house and I had to figure out how to get the stand into the room. So I went next door to my neighbor Sonny and borrowed his extension ladder. When I told the wife what I wanted to do she almost fainted. What you don't know is we just had all new Anderson windows installed in the house. You probably know now where this is going. After a little persuading (begging on



Unboxing the stand and canopy

my knees) she let me move ahead. So I took the two window panels and the screen out and put a folded up moving blanket on the sill. Next, in the back yard with the stand I open the extension ladder and lean it on the sill of the second floor window, with the base as far away as was safe from the house. With the help of my



**Unboxing the tank**

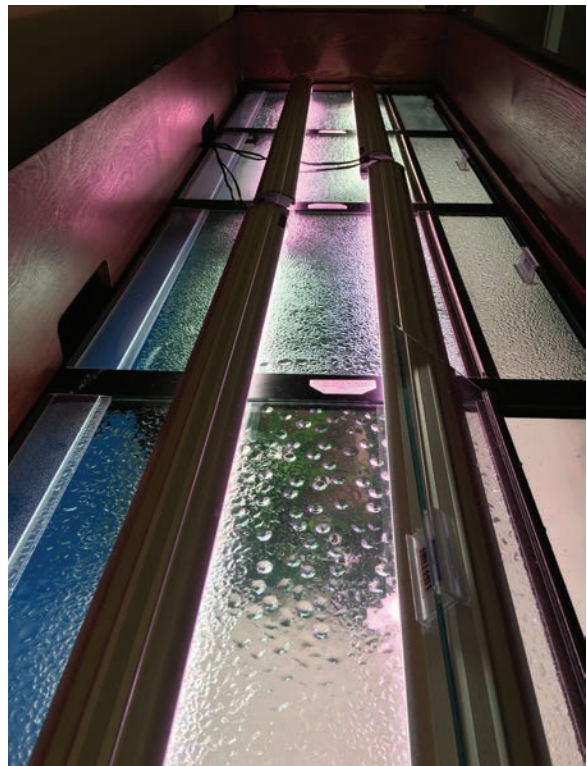
wife and my two grown grandsons we got to work. I took a rope and tied it lengthwise around the stand, and sent the other end through the window. Then I had my wife get behind the stand and push it up the ladder (hahaha, just kidding). With her and my two grandsons on the second floor pulling the rope, and



**Gino checking out the wood that held the tank and stand**



**Tank in final resting place**



**Glass covers on top—all with rounded edges**



**Seamless sump filtration**

me on the ladder, I had them pull while I pushed from behind, and balanced the stand on the ladder. Well, it worked, with no damage and no bodily injuries. Best of all we had a great laugh making fun of me on the ladder. I'd do it again in a heartbeat just because of the laughing and bonding. The stand is solid wood, put together with screws and heavy silicon in the joints and seams; amazing craftsmanship for a tank stand. It's just as strong as a welded metal stand—very neat and clean lines.

The canopy was the only thing that was easy. What I didn't mention is how we got the tank upstairs after strapping it to my wife's back and balancing it as she carried it up the stairs (LMAO—now god is going to punish me, LOL). All kidding aside, Custom Aquarium rents industrial suction cups with which to carry the aquarium. Between my son Frank and two grandsons, we carried it up the stairs and into the room. A moving company wanted \$500 to bring it up. You have to leave a deposit for the cups, but its 100% refundable and works like a charm.

Another thing I didn't mention was that the shipping was free. It arrived in two giant wooden crates made with plywood, braced with 2x4's and 2x6's, not with styrofoam on the corners and cellophane wrapped around it like you would get if you brought it off of the shelf. It was unbelievable the amount of screws and wood that were on the crates—you could build a house with all the wood and screws and blocks of styrofoam they used to protect the tank and stand.



**Refugium filter tank being used for quarantine of 4 Albino Discus**



**Low tech plant island in tank**

The only things I added to the tank and stand were an extra UV light and two circulation pumps inside the tank, as well as low-tech plants and a shop light over the sump. In August it will be one year that I've had it, and I couldn't be happier. Neither can the 20 discus (more to come), 10 Congo tetras (albino and green), 20 *sterbai* cories, 10 green laser cories, 6 albino cories, and 3 albino *heckelii*. I have two recliners, a mini-fridge, music, and a TV in my new peace-and-serenity man cave. I only have two tanks now—not 18 like I used to have, but I'm happy and have less work now. The other one is in the living room and it's 90 gallons. But that's another story!



# WANT BETTA BETTAS?

by William Amely

**A**re you thinking about buying a betta? Several of them, perhaps? Consider the following strategy: First you will need a home for it. I suggest you purchase a bowl or tank that's within your budget. A one-quart bowl or jar, up to a 2 1/2 gallon aquarium would be suitable. Next, decide on what kind of aeration/filtration you want to use (airstone, box filter, sponge filter, small power filter, etc.). Regardless of what filtration system you choose (if any), regular water changes are a must to maintain your betta's health. The smaller its home, the more frequent your water changes need to be. An unfiltered home will require more frequent water changes than one with filtration.

The more you feed your betta (amount as well as frequency), the more frequently you should perform your water changes. I recommend feeding your betta only once or twice a day, though fry (babies) can be fed more often. Even so, do not overfeed. Give them what they will consume within two to three minutes. Nothing fouls the water more dependably than uneaten food. As to the size of the food particles, a good rule of thumb is that your betta's stomach is roughly the same size as its eye.

Keep your betta's water temperature in the range of 70 to 76 degrees Fahrenheit. Use a compact heater in its tank, or be sure your room temperature stays in that range.

What should you pay for them? You can usually purchase bettas from around \$2.99 to \$19.99. It really depends on how much you're comfortable paying. Where can you find them? Well, there are a few choices:

1) Your local mom & pop pet store

2) Chains (Petland Discount, PetSmart, Petco, etc.)  
3) Aquarium club/Society auctions  
4) Online, from places such as Aquabid or Ebay

Be aware that if you purchase your fish from breeders in foreign countries (Thailand, Malaysia, etc.) there will be costs involved beyond the purchase price of the fish itself. Things like export fees for the seller, which vary from country to country. The seller

will most likely send your fish to a transshipper of your choice who is close to you. Expect a nominal fee of \$5 to \$9 per fish, plus the actual shipping cost via FedEx, USPS, or other carrier. So a \$10 fish could end up costing you from \$40 to \$60 after all is said and done.

So decide on what you want—a male, a female, or multiple fish (adults, juveniles, fry). Each male needs to have its own separate quarters.

Two or more females can be housed together, but be sure and provide hiding places in case one of the females becomes a bully. Do you want a short-finned plakat male? A regular veiltail, or one of the fancy-finned varieties? What color? A Solid color (red, blue, etc.)? A marbled variety?

There are so many choices these days! These are just some of the considerations you'll need to address as you make your choice. Just plan ahead, so you'll be prepared to buy your fish, house your fish, care for your fish, and enjoy your fish!



Photo by Gilberto Soriano

# School's Out!

Story and Photos by Stephen Sica

In the March **Modern Aquarium** I wrote about a mini bait ball based upon my recollection of a photo in a magazine that Sue Priest had given me. The photograph depicted a large bait ball of sardines. Fast forward a few weeks. I was reading my monthly North East Council of Aquarium Societies' calendar of events e-mail. I clicked under the Greater City Aquarium Society and began scanning back issue cover photos. I saw one of my photos, so I perused the issue and re-discovered the "sardine" article in the November 2011 issue. I actually wrote about schooling fish while briefly alluding to Sue's bait ball. This article is more of the same—schooling fish, but no bait ball. By the way, it turned out that the sardines were only in my imagination, because they really were akule, *Selar crumenophthalmus*. Other common names are bigeye scad and goggle-eyed scad. These fish are members of the mackerel family. Akule are tropical; they seem to be the most popular reef fish in Hawaii. They grow to between twelve and fifteen inches, so they are really not sardine size. You can find them on coral reefs and in the open ocean. My article in the March **Modern Aquarium** was about a mini bait ball that I saw in Grand Turk. Let's expand

from a few fish to schools of fish; thus, the title of this article.

I understand that all of this may be confusing and cause you to lose interest. But like a good soldier, I try to write a few articles for this magazine, so I may occasionally repeat some of my experiences. Also, I have become forgetful, even thoroughly confused at times, but don't tell anyone.

The GCAS has many members. Although quite a few members have been writing articles during the past few years, more of us should give it a try. I read every article out of respect for the author, and I have enjoyed all of them! You always learn something. Just write about whatever interests you. It has to be of general interest to the membership, because we all enjoy fish and all their related subjects. Plus, it is what you truly know and enjoy. You have a waiting audience, and it is us!

This story began last November, when we were in Key Largo swimming along the top deck of the *Benwood* wreck resting in about fifty feet of water. From a historical perspective, the SS *Benwood* was a Norwegian freighter sailing to Norfolk, Virginia on the night of April 9, 1942. With rumors of U-boats



A school of Bermuda chub, *Kyphosus sectatrix*, cruises over a reef. There is another closely related species, the Yellow chub, *Kyphosus incisor*, that is virtually identical. They all look the same underwater—A chub is a chub.

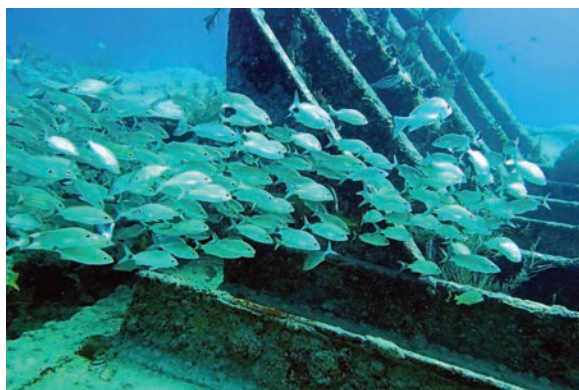
in the area, most ships were sailing blacked out, using the Florida coast as a guide. The Benwood and another ship, the Robert C. Tuttle, collided; both eventually sank. I wonder how many ships were sunk by the Germans during World War II and didn't even know it? The superstructure was destroyed after the sinking since it was a navigation hazard, but the hull is relatively intact. With a 360 foot length and 51 foot beam, this wreck offers an impressive home to the local fish. Considered a historical wreck, the ship is now a part of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

The primary reason that I enjoy diving this wreck is for the great amount of sea life that it has attracted since its sinking. In an area that is close to the size of a

football field plus end zones (360 feet x 160 feet), you will easily observe two or three thousand fish.

Grunts are very common in the Keys, and most wrecks and reefs in Key Largo abound with these fish. Seeing a large school of grunts or other schooling fish from various angles while you are actually swimming underwater is a breathtaking sight. I hope my photos inspire you to use your own imagination and write something. At least take a few photos of your fish. It's so easy with digital. I can't wait to read about them, and see them too!

Meanwhile, what should I write about next? Is there duckweed in your future? I have to go and see if there are any new plants growing in my aquarium. Good luck—to me!



A school of grunts. I think these are mostly striped grunts, *Haemulon striatum*. These fish have yellow to brown stripes on their upper body and no stripes on the belly. They have a short snout, and the eyes are close to the mouth. There are three smallmouth grunts, *Haemulon chrysargyreum* in this school. Most grunt schools are made up of the same species.



This small school of medium sized Bar jacks, *Caranx ruber*, has been swirling round the Benwood's deck for as long as I can recall. My personal opinion is that if fish find a suitable habitat, they won't leave it. I believe that most small reef fish have a limited range; perhaps it's a comfort zone.



Another school of striped grunts swims just off the side of the Benwood wreck. Even though these grunts belong to the same genus and species, I noticed that they did not merge into one larger school. It seems that each school has its own distinct identity.



A porkfish, *Anisotremus album*, also a member of the grunt family, supervises its lesser brethren swimming around the shipwreck. Porkfish are common in the Florida Keys and often drift in large schools over reefs, though many are solitary or swim in small groups.



While most fish on the Benwood like to school on or above the main deck, many enjoy the protection that the sides of the hull offer. You can find grunts and snappers congregating singly and in small groups. Some of the fish in this photo are yellowtail snappers, *Ocyurus chrysurus*, a highly prized food fish.



This Florida Keys reef is home to many different grunt species. Some schools boast hundreds of fish!



While coral reefs seem to be dying off at an alarming rate in the Florida Keys and elsewhere, the fish themselves are holding steady. Further down the Keys, in Marathon, the reefs were destroyed fifteen years ago by rising water temperatures.



This school of Striped grunts preferred to hover above the sand and edge of the hull on the other side of the ship. Do fish have preferred locations? Shipwrecks are like small towns or cities. The fish are their inhabitants.



One of my favorite methods of amusement is to swim through a large school of parting fish. On the Benwood, the fish move away to avoid me, so I try to nonchalantly swim next to the school and suddenly dart through it. Ironically, I have to admit that all those tiny fish minds put together are smarter than I!



When a shipwreck is unavailable, search the reef for "hide holes." You can be sure to find solitary, as well as schooling fish, among caves, crevices, overhangs of the typical coral reef.



Some fish follow the contour of the reef so closely that they school inverted, sideways, or in whatever orientation that gives them a feeling of security. The fish on the left is a Bluestriped grunt, *Haemulon sciurus*, and the one on the right is a French grunt, *Haemulon flavolineatum*. Below the dangling soft coral in the center is a fully developed yet tiny queen angelfish, *Holacanthus ciliaris*, which was the real subject of this photo.



The inhabitants of any city are very diverse. While I was off photographing schools of grunt, Donna discovered a green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, lounging on the Benwood's deck. Donna knows not to touch an animal in the wild, so she patiently waited for me to find her posing for a photo. Turtles are her favorite sea life.



I even got Donna chasing fish! Well at least she's looking in their direction. Do you remember that old saying, "So many fish...so little time?" Let's hope there always is another fish around the next corner, or better yet, the next coral reef!



# TERRORS OF THE PLANTED AQUARIUM

by John Todaro

***Metynnis argenteus***, better known as the Silver Dollar fish is often seen in tropical fish stores with a note on the tank that this fish is not compatible with live plants. I know this is true, since years ago I had a 30 gallon tank in my bedroom with a school of about eight of



these spectacular fish. I used these fish to dispose of over-grown plants from my other tanks. These fish sure did a good job. This is a great fish to keep if you have other aquariums that need constant plant pruning or if you're plagued by duckweed.

If this is a problem you have, or if you just want to have a tank full of these herbivorous sparkling fish, here is a short background on keeping this beautiful plant-destroying Amazon fish.

The silver dollar is a common name given to a number of species of fishes, (see inset) mostly in the genus *Metynnis*, tropical fish belonging to the Characidae family which are closely related to piranha and pacu. Native to South America, these round-shaped silver fish are popular with many hobbyists. The Silver dollar is a peaceful, schooling species that spends most of its time in the mid to upper level of the water. Its lifespan, if well cared for, can be up to and more than ten years.

Silver dollars natively live in a tropical climate in the sides of weedy rivers. They prefer water with a pH of 5-7, a water hardness of up to 15 dGH, and an ideal temperature range of 75°-82°F. Their diet is almost exclusively vegetarian, and in captivity they will often eat all the plants in a tank.

## SILVER DOLLAR SPECIES

- Metynnis altidorsalis*
- Metynnis argenteus*
- Silver dollar
- Metynnis fasciatus*
- Striped silver dollar
- Metynnis guaporensis*
- Metynnis hypsauchen*
- Schreitmüller's silver dollar
- Spotted silver dollar
- Metynnis lippincottianus*
- Striped silver dollar
- Metynnis luna*
- Red-spot silver dollar
- Metynnis maculatus*
- Speckled silver dollar
- Metynnis mola*
- Metynnis otuquensis*
- Myloplus schomburgki*
- Black-barred silver dollar
- Myloplus rubripinnis*
- Red hook silver dollar
- Mylossoma duriventre*
- Silver mylossoma
- Hard-bellied silver dollar\*

\*Hard Bellies are silvery and somewhat transparent; they are the most commonly encountered species.



If you have an infestation of duckweed, *M. argenteus* or any of the other *Metynnis* species will end your duckweed nightmares. They will also eat worms and small insects, but plants are their main dietary interest. Silver dollars will eat all sorts of greens once they have demolished all your aquatic plants, including lettuce, spinach, kale, greens, zucchini, peas, and even broccoli.

Silver dollars should be provided with a variety of foods other than just veggies to be completely healthy. They can't get all the nutrition they need by just eating your aquarium plants, lettuce and spinach, etc. They should be provided live foods such as brine shrimp, black or bloodworms, or chopped earthworms or frozen foods. They will also accept flake or pellet foods, and of course algae wafers.

In short, silver dollars are primarily, though not exclusively, vegetarian. A large part of their diet must include some kind of vegetable matter, such as wilted greens, dandelion greens, spinach, or Romaine

Reprinted from *Aquatica* – Volume 28, Number 3 Jan/Feb 2015; Brooklyn Aquarium Society.

lettuce (fresh, non-wilted greens are harder for them to eat), or cooked vegetables such as peas, green beans, or squash.

Despite being terrors of aquatic plants, they are fairly shy and need tankmates that are also peaceful. Silver dollars do great with medium to large tetras such as serpaes, black skirt tetras, Buenos Aires, and phantom tetras. Given enough space, they also do well with giant danios, and occasionally with smaller types such as zebra danios.

Because silver dollars are mid-dwelling fish, they generally go very well with top-dwelling and bottom-dwelling fish. *Corydoras*, bristlenose plecostomus, botia loaches, and other medium-large bottom-dwellers will all get along well in a silver dollar aquarium. Use caution when combining silver dollars with the common *Plecostomus* often sold in pet stores, as it is a well-known "slime sucker" that loves to eat the slime coat of larger, slower-moving fish.

As I have always said, you should read about the needs of any

type of fish before buying them and adding them to your aquarium.

It's also important to keep in mind what the adult sizes of the fishes will be when shopping for them. Most silver dollars are sold very small—generally around 1.5 inches in length. Don't be put off by this small size; they'll grow quickly if fed well, so make sure your tank can handle fish that can grow to six inches.

As mentioned before, silver dollars are a peaceful, active, schooling fish, so to keep them happy you should buy six or more fish of equal size if you can afford it. A 30 gallon, or even better, a 55 gallon tank, would be a good size for these fish.

Filtration for a properly stocked tank of silver dollars should be about a 6X turnover per hour. For example, in a 55 gallon tank you'll want a filter rated for 330 gallons per hour. Silver dollars like a very light current as opposed to heavy current, so make sure you keep the filter discharge water flow aimed towards the side or bottom of the tank.



## SPECIES PROFILE

**Scientific Name:** *Metynnis argenteus*.

**Family:** Characidae.

**Common Name:** Silver Dollar.

**Distribution:** South America, Guyana.

**pH Range:** 5.0 - 7.0.

**Temperature Range:** 75° - 82°F.

**Water Hardness:** Up to 15 dGH

**Breeding Temperature:** Around 82°F.

**Life Span:** 10+ years.

**Size:** 2 to 6 inches.

**Temperament:** Peaceful.

**Diet:** Herbivore: Loves to eat greens, so almost all aquarium plants in the tank with them will be eaten.

**Sexing:** Very hard to sex. Check out the anal fin. Females anal fin is straight, males anal fin has a "bump" 3/4 the way down.

**Breeding:** Egglayers. Much like Angelfish, the best way to acquire a breeding pair is to purchase a half dozen juvenile silver dollars and raise them together. Although the parents will not usually consume the eggs or fry, other fish will, so, when spawning them place them in a separate tank.

To facilitate spawning, make sure the water is soft (8 dGH or below) and warm (80 to 82 F), keep the lighting dim, and provide fine leafed plants (which will be eaten if they are live rather than plastic plants).

When they're getting ready to spawn,

you will see some of the following changes in the fish - 2 black blotches behind the gills (mainly in the males), black/ red fin edges and overall more colorful bodies (Red/ Black). The males chase the females, swim next to them and wrap their anal fin under the female. Female releases around 20+ eggs; the male fertilizes them; they shake, then separate quickly, which scatters the eggs. They'll do this for hours at a time until the female has released all her eggs, which may be thousands! The eggs are clear and tiny. You won't see them unless you look very closely.

**Care of Fry:** When a pair spawns, the female will lay up to 2000 eggs. The eggs will fall to the bottom of the tank, and they will hatch in three days. After approximately a week, the fry will be free swimming and able to eat freshly hatched brine shrimp or fine foods such as commercially prepared fry food, finely crushed spirulina. I would recommend removing the adults from the tank after spawning. 🐟

### Reference:

- [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailfin\\_molly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailfin_molly)
- [www.fishchannel.com](http://www.fishchannel.com)
- [freshwateraquarium.about.com/od/silverdollars](http://freshwateraquarium.about.com/od/silverdollars)

Silver dollars are voracious plant eaters. Live plants should not be put in a silver dollar tank unless you want them to become food for your charges, with the possible exception of hardy broad-leafed plants like Java fern, but there are no guarantees. You can use driftwood and rocks to decorate the aquarium, but leave lots of open space for the fish to school.

Keep the tank tightly covered, as silver dollars are known to be jumpers, but with sufficient space and clean water they usually don't do it often. But to be on the safe side, have a good, tight-fitting lid on your tank.

Partial water changes should be done to keep the nitrate levels in the water under 40 ppm. The fish will appreciate a goal of not over 20 ppm.

Regular gravel vacuumings will keep excess waste and uneaten food out of the system and help control your nitrate levels.

If the water tests with ANY ammonia or nitrite, the tank has either not been cycled properly or was populated too quickly, causing an ammonia spike. This condition is extremely hazardous to the fish, and partial water changes will need to be done every couple of days until it is under control.

Breeding these fish is not easy. First, it is tough to tell the sexes from one another (though the fish know the difference). The question is how many fish should you put in a breeding tank? I would try to identify a pair. Below are some tips that may help with sexing them.

Check out the anal fins. The female's anal fin is straight, while the male's has a reddish hue and a "bump" 3/4 of the way down. Some hobbyists say males have a faint black spot shape just behind the gill

plate.

Another way is to look at them from the top. The female should have a "fuller" body. Males may also have more vibrant color in their anal and dorsal fins, but not always. Some hobbyists feel that you cannot accurately sex these fish until they are at least 6 inches in size. That is fully adult!



*Metynnis* species often spawn in schools among floating plants such as Java Moss. This is a perfect plant to keep in a silver dollar tank. The fish will pull it apart as they eat it and thereby spread it around the tank.

When spawning, the released eggs fall to the bottom of the tank or are trapped in the Java moss. Some sort of netting should be placed toward the bottom

of the tank to allow the eggs to fall through, but small enough not to allow the parents to get at them. Remember, the parents will eat the eggs if they can find them.

The fry will hatch in approximately three days, depending on the temperature. The fry are very tiny, and should be fed infusoria at first, then other live foods, such as such as microworms and, when larger, brine shrimp nauplii.

Silver dollars are one of the hardiest and easiest fish to care for. A good understanding of their basic needs is essential for allowing them to live a full and healthy life.

A tank with a large school of these brilliantly flashing fish is a sight to behold!



References: Wikipedia  
[Yahoo.com/fish-silver-dollars-4529491.hblu](http://Yahoo.com/fish-silver-dollars-4529491.hblu)

# The 2018 NEC Annual Convention

by Jules Birnbaum



The Greater City Aquarium Society is a member of the North East Council of Aquarium Societies, composed of 31 member clubs in the Northeast. The Northeast Council was established in 1956 to assist and strengthen member societies, to act as a clearing house for materials relating to the aquarium hobby, to assist local societies in publicizing their events, and to promote the aquarium hobby in general.

Each year about this time they hold an annual convention. This year's convention was held on March 16-18 at the Sheraton in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. It is our chance to attend a three day event ending with a huge all-day auction. I got the chance to meet and socialize with some of the top aquarium experts in the country. There were ten expert speakers, specialists in many areas of the hobby. You can pick which of the presentations you wish to attend. There was a guppy symposium

and auction with over 100 small tanks, each with a magnificent pair of guppies. There was also a cichlid competition, with many tanks—each containing one outstanding fish. A special killifish auction was held late Friday night, where a vendor room gave us a chance to view and purchase all kinds of equipment, plants, fish food and fish, usually at discounted prices. The hotel was first class and made every effort to make us feel at home.

The convention was only a two hour drive from New York City. This was my third NEC convention, and was a wonderful mini vacation. I counted six members of GCAS who attended for the first two days, and a number more who attended the all day Sunday auction. Two of our members also helped out: Joe Ferdenzi was one of the Sunday auctioneers, and Warren Feuer helped keep the electronics running smoothly.



I must say that the people who organized and ran this big undertaking did a great job. Special thanks go to Richard Pierce, the President of the NEC, and his many helpers from the 31 member clubs, all volunteers, who do so much to make this convention a success. I highly recommend attending this event next year! You won't be disappointed.



#### Photos:

Opposite page: Auction action

Clockwise above:

Banquet

Banquet entertainment: Irish dancing for St Patty's Day

Speakers being honored



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# GCAS Happenings

May

## Last Month's Bowl Show Winners:

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 RICHARD WAIZMAN | GIANT MALE BETTA               |
| 2 WILLAM AMELY    | CHOCOLATE DUMBO EAR MALE BETTA |
| 3 WILLIAM AMELY   | RED MALE PLAKAT BETTA          |

## UNOFFICIAL 2018 BOWL SHOW TOTALS:

|               |   |                 |   |                  |   |
|---------------|---|-----------------|---|------------------|---|
| WILLIAM AMELY | 9 | RICHARD WAIZMAN | 8 | CARLOTTI DEJAGER | 1 |
|---------------|---|-----------------|---|------------------|---|

A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBERS ROGER BREWSTER, LAMONT BROWN, MARGUERITE DANIELS, PETE D'ORIO, MICHAEL GALLO, PETER GOLDFIEN, ORLANDO GONZALEZ, AL GRUSELL, ROBERT HAMJE, ROBERT KAHN, ROBERT KOLSKY, MARIE & RAY LoPINTO, JERRY O'FARRELL, ELLIOT OSHINS, DAN & MARSHA RADEBAUGH, LEONARD RAMROOP, VINNY RITCHIE, GILBERTO SORIANO, SANDY SOROWITZ, HERB WALGREN, AND RON WIESENFELD!

A SPECIAL WELCOME TO NEW GCAS MEMBERS DAVID BEST AND RENNIE RAMNANAN!

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

### GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

**Next Meeting:** June 6, 2018

**Speaker:** Ask the Experts

**Moderator:** Joseph Ferdenzi

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

Queens Botanical Garden

43-50 Main Street - Flushing, NY

**Contact:** Horst Gerber (718) 885-3071

**Email:** pilotcove43@gmail.com

**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:** May 11, 2018

**Speaker:** None

**Event:** Giant 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:** May 18, 2018

**Speaker:** TBA

**Topic:** TBA

**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](http://olivegarden.com/locations/ny/centereach/centereach-mall/1507).

**Email:** Margaret Peterson - [president@lisonline.org](mailto: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:** May 8, 2018

**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:** May 19 2018

**Speaker:** Ted Coletti

**Topic:** "Summer Tubbin': Breeding Tropical Fishes Nature's Way"

**Meets:** 12:30 PM - 3rd Saturday of the month, at Clark Public Library in Union County, just off the Parkway at exit 135

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

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

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

### NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY

**Next Meeting:** May 17, 2018

**Speaker:** TBA

**Topic:** TBA

**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/>

# Killer Corals

**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.**

*A series by "The Undergravel Reporter"*

Once upon a time, ordinary folks did not have access to the Internet, or to "chat rooms" or Wikipedia. But, there were BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems)--think of a one-way chat room (you leave a message and later someone might reply). Well, "back in the day," on one BBS devoted to fishkeeping, a woman reported that in trying to clean her 300 gallon tank, she fell in and needed help to get out.

I've created minor floods while tank cleaning (by not paying attention), and once was electrically shocked (when a heater's glass cover broke while the heater was still "live"). But tank cleaning was never, for me at least, considered to be a hazardous activity.

Now I read an article in the UK's Daily Mail<sup>1</sup> that, in at least one instance, cleaning a tank could be fatal!

A tropical fish enthusiast accidentally poisoned himself and his family while cleaning a fish tank after a coral released deadly fumes as he scraped off the grime. Chris Matthews, 27, was hospitalized along with his girlfriend, mother, father, sister and her boyfriend, and four firefighters after they breathed in toxic fumes.



He accidentally poisoned himself and his family in the process of tank cleaning. He took out a rock covered in coral and scraped it clean, inadvertently releasing the deadly substance palytoxin into the atmosphere, and then he closed the door and went to sleep.

"We woke up the next morning feeling groggy but initially put it down to flu. It was when we noticed our two dogs had similar symptoms that we knew something wasn't right." He added: "If we had spent another night in that bedroom our lives would have been in danger."

Chris said: "I knew about palytoxin, which can kill you if ingested, and that coral can cause things like rashes if you don't handle it carefully but I had no idea taking the

pulsing xenia out of the water could make the toxin airborne."

Chris noted that "The information is not readily available online in a way people can easily understand, and more needs to be done when people are buying these corals. I want to use this

experience to educate people about the risks and the measures people need to take." He added: "I've seen the coral described as 'exotic' but it is actually one of the most common around."

Chris has kept tropical fish for 12 years and said the experience would not put him off. He said: "We've put more safety precautions in place, making sure we properly ventilate the room, but I love having fish and it's something that both sides of my family have always done. I'll be a lot more cautious in the future though."

So, before my next tank cleaning (at least twice a year, whether they need it or not), I'm going to Ebay and see if I can pick up a haz-mat suit!



## Reference

<sup>1</sup><http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5583081/Tropical-fish-owner-killed-family-cleaning-tank-CORAL-released-deadly-fumes.html>



# Fin Fun

## 2017-REDO

This month's challenge is for all members, except those who just "signed on" this season. Below are the titles of several programs presented at our 2017 meetings. See if you can match them with the speakers who gave those talks. (If you're a "newbie" just peek at your neighbor's answers!)

| Title of Program            | Speaker               |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Killifish Demystified       | James Perrenod        |
| Breeding Show Guppies       | Emily Voigt           |
| Butterflies in the Water    | Karen Pattist         |
| My New Fishroom             | Horst Gerber          |
| Decorating Your Fish Tank   | Joseph Ferdenzi       |
| The Dragon Behind The Glass | Joseph Graffagnino    |
| Discus                      | Michael Marcotrigiano |
| Koi Appreciation — Kohaku   | Michael Lucas         |

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Solution to our last Puzzle:

### *Trivial Pursuit*

|                                                                                           |                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Who authored the column "Spotlight on Plants?"                                            | Charley Sabatino  |
| Who authored the column "Mermaid Tales?"                                                  | Sharon Barnett    |
| Who is The Roll of Honor named after?                                                     | Joe Ferdenzi      |
| Who is the C.A.R.E.S. coordinator of G.C.A.S.?                                            | Claudia Dickinson |
| Who wrote the first Wet Leaves book review?                                               | Al Priest         |
| Who wrote the second Wet Leaves book review?                                              | Sue Priest        |
| What luminary of the hobby brought us a preview copy of his book "An Aquarist's Journey?" | Rosario LaCorte   |
| Who authored the column "Aquarian Minds Want to Know?"                                    | Jannette Ramirez  |
| Who brought color to the inside pages of M.A. in 2008?                                    | Dan Radebaugh     |



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**Subway Directions:** Either the Q or F trains to West 8th St., NY Aquarium Station.



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