

modern AQUARIUM



April 2020
volume XXVII
number 2

Greater City Aquarium Society - New York

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Series III Vol. XXVII, No. 2 April, 2020

ON THE COVER

Our cover photo this month features *Betta splendens*, long a favorite in our hobby. Over the years we've seen an almost inconceivable increase in the number of "models" available in this species. Well, get ready for more! The Undergravel Reporter is on the case! See page 31 for the latest 'improvement' to this wonderful little fish.

Photo by Stephen Sica

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From the Editor

by Dan Radebaugh

Well, here we all are once again (NOT!). Our meeting this month is alas a casualty of COVID-19, but this issue of **Modern Aquarium** will be going to all of you via email. Maybe not quite the same as having a magazine that you can comfortably read wherever you are without having to sit in front of a computer screen of some sort, but still, better than not having it at all. Once this current plague has run its course and we can attend meetings again, the magazine itself will be available.

In this issue, Jules Birnbaum starts us off by explaining the importance of developing useful habits, whether in fishkeeping or in any other endeavor. Good food for thought.

Our MA CLASSICS article this month is by Chuck Davis, who points out that some of the foods that we enjoy can also be nutritious treats for our fish. I've done a fair amount of 'repurposing' food for my own fish, and I've found that when done with care it at least does no harm. Just pay attention to Chuck's cautions if you decide to try this. Following Chuck's article is an always welcome entry from Sue Priest entitled "My Three Tetras," and no, this is *not* an episode from a 1950s sitcom.

In "Standing Tall," Steve Sica, who also provides this month's cover photo, gives us an update on an article he wrote last May about an unconventional aquarium stand. You may also notice that Steve throws in a comment that somewhat foreshadows the subject of this month's Undergravel Reporter. I love it when a plan comes together! (Apologies to George Peppard!)



The first of our two exchange articles this month is "Follow the Worms," by Brian Cush of the Bucks County Aquarium Society, and no, Harry Potter receives no mention. Our second exchange article is "The Black Trigger," by Kevin Thurston, from the Colorado Aquarium Society by way of Aquaarticles.com and the Durham Regional Aquarium Society's publication, **Tank Talk**.

Coincidentally with Steve Sica's remarks about the green swordtails in his article that I mentioned above, GloFish® are the target of The Undergravel Reporter's ire this month. This 'artificial fish' phenomenon is in fact already probably a lost cause. Even in our auctions I regularly see many hybridized fish—cichlids in particular, but certainly not exclusively. Does anyone here have strong views on the subject? If so, how about writing me something telling us how you feel about it? If we get a few responses maybe we could publish a pro versus con discussion. Or is it too late to bother?

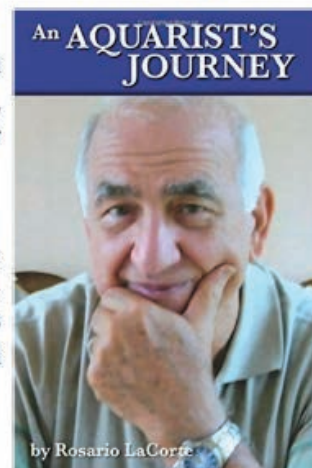


An Aquarist's Journey

Rosario La Corte is one of the world's leading authorities on breeding fish and he has written numerous articles and books, contributing greatly to our understanding of fish and their habits.

Now, for the first time, here is a compilation of his travels, adventures, successes (and, very occasional failures) all relating to collecting, keeping, and breeding fish, and in his own words (and edited by **Modern Aquarium**'s Editor, Dan Radebaugh).

Available in softcover at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)





GCAS Programs

2020

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 4	Joseph Ferdenzi <i>Aquascaping</i>
April 1	Meeting Cancelled <i>Covid-19</i>
May 6	Lawrence Kent <i>Holy Grail Cichlids, Friends, and Other Fish: Two West African Stories</i>
June 3	Mike Tuccinardi <i>TBA</i>
July 1	Peter Izzo <i>Getting to Know the Genus <i>Gymnogeophagus</i></i>
August 5	A Night at the Auction
September 2	<i>TBA</i>
October 7	Larry Johnson <i>TBA</i>
November 4	<i>TBA</i>
December 2	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 2020 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. 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 at (718) 458-8437, email gcas@earthlink.net, or fax at (877) 299-0522. For more information about our club or to see previous issues of *Modern Aquarium*, you can also go to our Internet Home Page at <http://www.greatercity.net>, <http://www.greatercity.org>, or <http://www.greatercity.com>.

President's Message

by Horst Gerber

Many years ago our (GCAS) forebears decided to do away with our meetings in January and February due to the harsh winters and resulting poor attendance. Had they been experiencing winters like we had this year that would never have happened! This winter of 2019-2020 has really been exceptionally mild!

Let's talk about what's on everybody's mind, and what we are bombarded with every day, the Coronavirus (COVID-19). With a little luck (and a better response from our government than we've seen so far), this new virus should be gone by the normal end of the flu season, though as I write this the outlook in the meantime is seeming more and more grim. I'm also worried that we might have a recurrence of this nightmare *next* flu season. There does seem to be a possible treatment in the offing, but too much thinking about all this is probably not healthy for any of us.

At our March meeting there were rumors of a bad flu season to come, but I don't think anybody was prepared for how it has actually turned out. I had been worried that our March meeting would have poor attendance, but I have to say that GCAS has a bunch of tough members, and attendance was great! Joe Ferdenzi gave a wonderful presentation on aquascaping the natural way, and this was right in my area of interest! I hope he whetted your appetites to see more tanks set up the natural way.

As it stands now, our April meeting has been canceled for sure, and May is on shaky ground. Who would have thought that after such an amazingly mild winter, we'd be so uncertain of being able to meet during the springtime? **Modern Aquarium** will still be published on schedule, and will be posted online for you to see and read. As the season develops we'll keep you posted regarding when we can resume our regular meeting schedule. We'll keep you updated as we gain more insight. Watch for emails, check our Facebook page (GCAS Fishy Friends), and check our web site (GreaterCity.net). I'm looking forward to seeing all of you again as soon as it once again becomes safe to hold our meetings!

See you next meeting!?

Horst

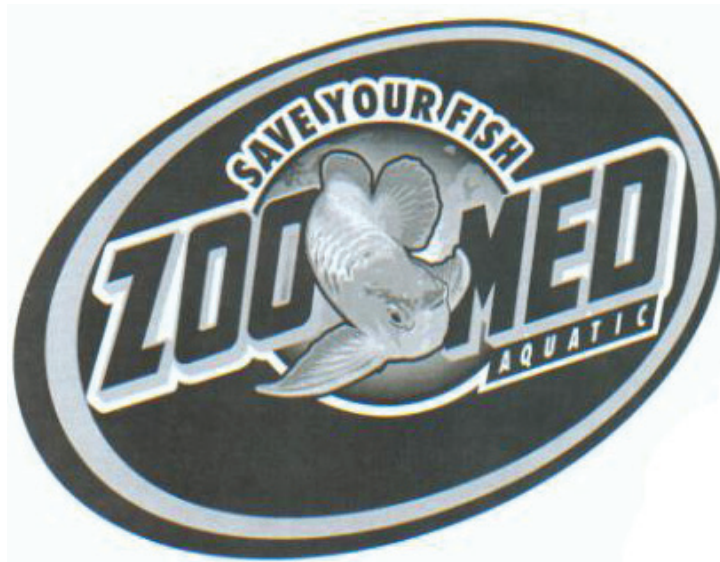


March's Caption Winner:

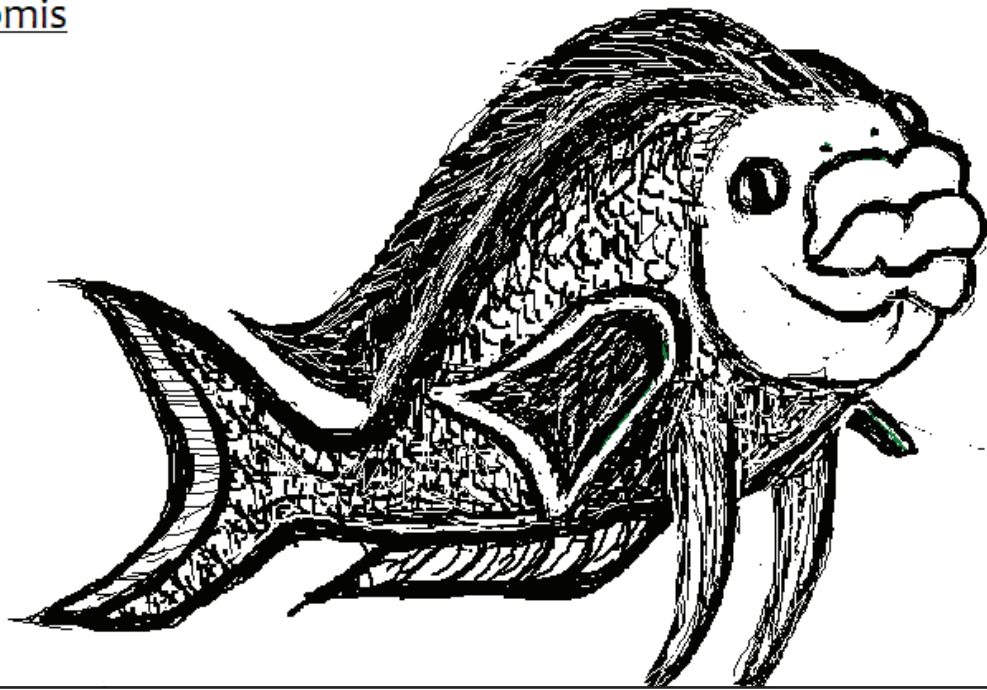
Ron Webb



The second option when your fish outgrows its tank.



petrochromis



Drawing by Denver Lettman

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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

The Common Denominator of Success In Fishkeeping

by Jules Birnbaum

In this article I'm not going to be writing much about tropical fish. The title of this article refers to the secret of success of every good fishroom keeper. The secret lies in the fact that he or she formed the habit of doing things that those who fail don't like to do. I used this secret to form a successful insurance career, and now use it as an aquarist. I've seen many highly qualified people fail in the insurance business because they did not form the good habits needed for success. Likewise, many golfers I've played with were not very good at the game because they did not form the habit of regular lessons and practice. Those that had low handicaps (as I had) all took the time to practice regularly and take lessons. I find good habits are also the key to success in the gym where my wife and I train three days a week. So many join the gym and then just don't show up.

What is success in fishkeeping? I believe it is over a long period having a tank or tanks that look like a piece of nature where fish and plants thrive. Something you can look at with pride.

Let's take this secret and apply it to fit you as an aquarist. We all come into this hobby as beginners. We buy a tank or a bowl, a filter, a heater, some fish and plants. The things that make the beginner fail are the very same things that successful aquarists also naturally don't like to do. In other words, we've got to realize that success in the hobby is achieved by very few of those who start with that first fish tank or bowl.

What are the things that over the long haul we aquarists don't like to do? First and foremost is the weekly water change of your tank, or in my case 30 tanks of all sizes. They seem time consuming for most of us, and we would much rather play with our computers or watch TV. Many of us aquarists sometimes get into a slump and just lose interest in all the work (I never think of it as work) needed to keep our animals alive and well. There are many ways to get out of a slump, but if you have formed good fish keeping habits it will be easier to break out. Most baseball players get into slumps, and break out by going back to their basic good habits.

The successful aquarist reads magazines and books regularly. He or she attends aquarium society

meetings regularly to learn from experts. The successful aquarist attends conventions. These are all good habits. There are always fish in the auctions that will rekindle the interest of any aquarist. Look around and you will see many of these successful men and women at our Greater City Aquarium Society meetings. I also look at our Greater City Aquarium Society website and our Facebook page on a daily basis. It's a good habit.

Those that fail to continue in the hobby generally just quit and get rid of their tanks and fish. They have not formed the habits needed to be a successful aquarist. What do we need to make us want to become a successful aquarist? Well, we are all creatures of habit. Every single qualification for success

is acquired through habit. If you don't deliberately form good habits you will form bad ones. Good habits make life in general less stressful. Think of a person in your life who is always late. No doubt that person is stressed. My father always taught us the habit of being on time. It certainly has made life less stressful for me and for others.

What did I do to form the habits that make me do the things I don't really like to do? First, I put maintenance of my fishroom on my iPhone schedule in a time slot that will give me three hours per week. This scheduling of time was most important in my insurance career. If you look at a monthly calendar, it is just amazing how much time is available to schedule three hours a week. Second, I have a TV and my iPhone handy. The three hours are intense, with water changes of all my thirty tanks, cleaning sponge filters and box filters when needed, syphoning tank bottoms, repairing equipment, and mopping the fishroom floor. I do this every week. I also formed the good habit of feeding all my fish at least once a day at the same time with flake, pellet and live foods. I have a regular reorder from Brine Shrimp Direct.

There was a saying during my insurance career, and I think it applies here: "you will never succeed beyond the purpose to which you are willing to surrender." I hope this article will help make you more of a success as a fishkeeper and, who knows, maybe even a better person.



Table Food For Tropicals

CHUCK DAVIS

It has been many years since I first started feeding some of my tropical fish "people food." Oh, I didn't stop there, dog and cat food often found its way on the piscine dinner menu. Many of my big cichlids (Red Devils, Black Belts, *dovii* and Jaguars) and big catfish (Red Tails, Marble and Sailfin catfish) were raised on the semi-moist fare sold as "Tender Vittles" cat food and "Moist and Meaty" dog food.

The first time I ever saw "people food" fed to a pet fish was when a local pet shop fed their over-grown Pacu a regular diet of peas. When I had a Pacu, I also tried peas and had great success. I would suspect that peas have the perfect size and shape for feeding large piscine vegetarians. One gulp, and the greenies (as we called them as kids) were gone. I never fed fresh, out-of-the-pod peas; I always used canned or frozen — it was more convenient.

Spinach was often a favorite for feeding algae eating tropical fish. A dear friend, George Cole, raised mollies and plecos almost exclusively. He would cook up two packs of frozen spinach, chopped into small pieces. Drained, he would then fill about six ice-cube trays with the veggies and re-freeze them. Then he would just pop a "green cube" into each of his tanks every other day. He said one of the reasons he chopped the spinach was so the outside power filters could suck up the uneaten leftovers.

Spinach was also a main ingredient in many of the specially prepared foods made by guppy, *Betta* and *Corydoras* breeders. They would blend things like spinach, shrimp, tuna, clams, beef heart, squid and gelatin into a soupy mixture and then freeze it. Many often used the Cole ice cube tray idea. One of the best kept secrets in those days was the secret ingredient added to this concoction — Geritol! It had that added punch of vitamins and iron in liquid form, without a prescription. Many of the great champion breeders — like Bob Larsen, Warren and Libby Young and Louie Rexford — all used this formula. I would like to point out that, in recent years, many advanced hobbyists have

down-played the value of spinach.

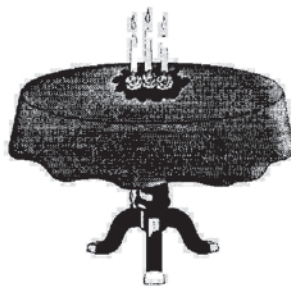
Ginny Eckstein was the first to introduce zucchini as a tropical fish food. She had tried it out on a large pleco she was raising for tropical fish shows. When he devoured the first slice, it was the beginning of a nickname for that magnificent animal — "the zucchini cat." [Editor's note: This fish is *Isorhinoloricaria festae*] Blanched or boiled "al dente," sliced zucchini has been used in feeding many plecos, as well as other fish that like a little vegetable in their diet. Since then, all sorts of squash, gourds and rinds have been tried with varied success. Some fish that find fruits in the natural waterways will pick at some melon rinds. But, zucchini still seems to be the food of choice for most tropical fishes.

Potatoes have always been a favorite of mine. I simply take a regular Idaho russet and slice it into discs about ¼ inch thick. I run the slices under hot water for about two minutes to clean and blanch them. They are then just dropped into tanks that contain plecos and cichlids. Sometimes more than one piece needs to be dropped into a tank because a more aggressive pleco or cichlid will "hog" the delicacy if it is singular in nature.

Piscivorous tropicals can also dine from the common fare. Frank Dowling was one of the great "fish eat fish" aquarists. He would get shrimp, clams or codfish and cut it into small pieces and feed it to his Oscars, Jack Dempseys, Red Devils, and a varied group of predatory cat fish.

It should also be noted that whenever you feed any of the above mentioned foods, all uneaten scraps should be removed from the tank before they foul the water. This is very easy in bare-bottom tanks, but decorated aquaria require a special vigilance. You should keep a close eye on the whereabouts of any uneaten morsels.

Frankly, you should not be confined to the list of foods presented here when searching for a diet for tropicals. Use common sense and be sure that the fish are at least trying the new foods.



My Three Tetras

by Susan Priest

Let me make myself clear right from the start. The **three** in the title refers to three different species of tetras, and not three individual fish. The three species under brief discussion will be the black neon tetra (*Hyphessobrycon herbertaxelrodi*), the red eyed tetra, also known as the yellow banded tetra (*Moenkhausia sanctaefilomenae*), and the neon tetra (*Paracheirodon innesi*).

All of these fish are currently housed in our 90 gallon community aquarium. This aquarium has been in continuous service for nearly three decades. It has been home to a very wide variety of fish over these very many years. Among our favorites have been small schooling fish. These most often have included a variety of danios. Why? Because other varieties of small schoolers, including tetras, have always been difficult to locate and purchase.

When we introduced our newest acquisitions, the black neon tetras, it came to my attention that there were presently three different species of tetras residing in our tank (and only one species of danio). I am reasonably confident in saying that over all these many years of fishkeeping this is a first time occurrence. Each of them came from a different source. In chronological order they were: 1) The red eyed tetras. We bought the entire bag of twelve as they floated in a tank in a chain pet store. 2) The neon tetras. We bought them at a GCAS auction. 3) The black neon tetras. We bought these from a reasonably healthy looking aquarium in a different chain pet store.



Neon Tetra

Courtesy of Wikipedia

In the interest of full disclosure on your behalf, I started to make two lists, one headed “similarities,” and the other headed “differences.” It probably comes as no surprise to you that the similarities far outnumber the differences, so I will describe them in no particular order.

- These are all peaceful schooling fish. They are good choices for community aquariums which are home to similarly sized fish.

- All three of them are native to the South American rivers and their tributaries, of Paraguay and Brazil.

- The majority of these fish which are available to hobbyists have been captive-bred, most often in Asia.

- Their preferred temperature range is from 68° to 81° F.

- The preferred pH levels are between 5.5 and 8.5, with 7.0 being optimal.

- Both the neons and the black neons will sometimes “stand” on the substrate. (I have never seen this.) In our aquarium the neons occupy the lower third of the tank, and the red eyes occupy the upper third of the tank.

- The black neons do not tend to school, and can be seen throughout the tank.

- These tetras are all egg layers. (I have never observed a spawning.) They should be separated out into a small breeding tank. It is recommended that the adults be removed as soon as spawning is completed because they will eat the eggs if given the opportunity.

Most notably and of particular interest, neon tetras can live for more than ten years! Also, Mr. Baensch describes them as “easily the most popular of all aquarium fishes.” What is your opinion?

At this point I seem to have run out of things to tell you about my three tetras. It is time for me to turn on the light over their tank, feed one and all, and enjoy watching the show.

(Perhaps you have noticed that the scientific names of two of these three fish also contain the names of historically well known ichthyologists/authors. My first instinct was to capitalize their names as well, but I resisted, and followed in the footsteps of this author.)

Reference:

Aquarium Atlas, Vol.1, Baensch, Hans A. and Riehl, Dr. Rudiger, pages 288, 302, and 307, published by Tetra Press, 1991.



Standing Tall

Story and Photos by Stephen Sica

Last May I wrote in **Modern Aquarium** about my search for a heavy duty aquarium stand for my thirty gallon tank. If I may refresh your recollection, the tank had been sitting on a table in my back yard for several months. I ultimately purchased a four foot long heavy duty workbench that was made in China and imported by a company named Seville Classics of Torrance, California. Being completely enamored with this product, while endeavoring to find a use for my garage-bound twenty gallon long tank, I again set out in search of another stand. You may recall that I had donated an identical twenty gallon tank to a friend to house one of her three male turtles. My plans for the remaining tank were to house green swordtails, *Xiphophorus hellerii*. I have been captivated with this fish since childhood. If I might say, it's one of my favorites!



The 1 & 1/2 inch solid wood surface is the primary reason that this work table is able to support a 500 pound load. I use Duck brand Easy Liner Solid Grip to cover the entire surface of the work table to provide a thin cushion for the bottom of the tank and a waterproof cover for the wooden surface. The wood table top appears to be oak.

Being somewhat of a purist from “the good old days,” I do not favor new and exotic strains of fish. I believe that green swordtails should be green. Well, you know what I mean. When browsing a pet store, I never dare to peek at the fish that either glow in the light or the dark. A neighbor who lives on the corner of my street has two hairless cats regularly



Seville Classics UltraHD Mobile Work Table, Model No. 20283, supports my 20 gallon long tank. The table measures 36 x 24 inches and the height to the table surface is 37.5 inches.

sitting in her window. They always remind me of albino fish. I think that her cats and albino fish are identical in color. Does that even make sense, if you have **no** color? Is albino a color? All of this stuff is just too hard on my brain. It's like the old television commercial, or should I say very old television commercial, in which a child asks why the sky is blue? This question is sufficient to motivate her parents to purchase a twenty volume encyclopedia. What is an encyclopedia?

As I recall, lack of pigment in one's skin is a genetic condition. This causes a person, and I assume an animal too, to be albino. I would think that albino is a shade of light pink or off-white, or something along those lines. Now pink happens to be my favorite color, but I still have little interest in owning a pink fish.

A few years ago we replaced our beige vertical window blinds. How would it appear if I asked the vendor, “Can you show us something in the albino family?” It might sound a little silly if you are an albino fish, but I guess that fish either don't care or don't know. People may be another story. Oh well, it seems that I am digressing again. I'm afraid that this happens in many of my stories when I get carried away and full of nonsense. Let me end this one-way discussion with the following: please give me a cat with hair and a fish with color. Even all white will do.



The bottom shelf comes in handy for electrical accessories and other stuff. Donna had been storing paper towels on the bottom. I relocated these items for the photos. I have a power strip connecting a timer for a LED fixture and an air pump.

Where is all this leading? Now I remember. I need a stand for my twenty gallon long tank to house green swordtails. A GCAS member had donated green swordtails to the club auction on a regular basis last year. This helped to whet my appetite for this fish since our club auction can be a source of this fish, and I have a soon-to-be home for them. Now I need a place to put the home. My basement is ready and willing, so I only need that stand to put it on. I had one caveat for the new stand. It had to be mobile while it held



Two brackets are attached to the bottom of the work bench by four screws per bracket. On the other side of the leg, hidden from view, is an identical bracket. Eight screws attach each leg to the bottom of the bench top. All four legs use a total of thirty-two screws.

a tank full of water and fish. I wanted to be able to either relocate the tank, or move it out of the way for cleaning purposes.

I went back online to the Seville Classics website. My prior stand was from their heavy duty product line called UltraHD, so I began studying these products again. It wasn't long before I found what I wanted: a mobile work table. It has a one and one-half inch wooden surface which provides most of the support for heavy loads.

Like most aquarium stands, this mobile workbench requires assembly. Working slowly and carefully to avoid mistakes, it took almost two hours to unpackage all the components and assemble the stand.



The legs on each side are attached to each other by the lower cross-member just above the wheels. This forms a U-like set of two legs, adding extra support.



Each wheel is 5 inches in diameter, with a mechanism to lock the work table stationary. Note the ball bearings just below the light gray leg. Each set encircles the entire wheel strut and provides good mobility.

plastic container that powers a simple sponge filter. Lots of live plants will supplement the sponge filter. While the pump is stable, it is possible that some sort of a mechanical device might cause vibrations and "walk" off the shelf.

There are a couple of reasons why I really like this stand. The oak surface is thirty-six inches long by twenty-four inches deep, and it is rated for a five hundred pound load capacity. I am sure that it will provide sufficient support for any standard size tank that will fit its surface. My twenty gallon is thirty inches in length, so it fits with a three inch border on each end. At twelve inches wide, you also have another twelve inches for a narrow work area in front of or behind the tank. I centered my tank so the six inches in front (and back) provides a sufficient area to place food, tools, etc. when servicing the tank or feeding the fish. Mobility for this work bench/aquarium stand is provided by a heavy duty set of four wheels. Each wheel is five inches in diameter with a locking mechanism that you can secure with your toe without bending over. I don't know the composition of the wheels, but they seem to be a plastic and rubber composite. They are extremely heavy duty. These wheels and the oak wood surface are the reason why the bench/stand can support five hundred pounds. As I mentioned earlier, being able to move the aquarium intact was the primary reason for its purchase.

When I researched the Seville Classics website for this article, I noticed that their prices fluctuate on some items. Also, sometimes they charge for shipping, while at other times it's free. I paid one hundred and fifty dollars, which included shipping from California. Considering what aquarium stands cost, especially the ones that are sold as furniture, I think that the price is reasonable. Since my stand is located in the basement of my house, it is fancy enough for my purposes. I like its clean, square lines. Its industrial look may not be sufficiently decorative and appealing for your living room, but it looks right at home in a basement. Anyone who owns a home with a basement probably uses it to house some or all of their aquaria.

Most of us are proud of our endeavors in this hobby and want our fish and other aquatic creatures to have a comfortable and attractive home. Would it be asking too much to go all the way to support our fish? Stand up and stand tall!



Follow the Worms!

Vermiculturing in the Fish Room

by Brian Cush



Reprinted from *The Buckette* – October 2017 - Bucks County Aquarium Society

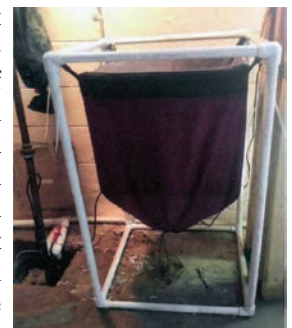
This year I dug a vegetable garden and collected a good number of earthworms. I also set up a few tanks with pairs of *Thorichthys maculipinnis* (spot cheeks cichlid), *Pelvicachromis pulcher* (kribensis), and *Cryptoheros panamensis* (Panamanian cichlid). I fed my pairs earthworms, daphnia and flake foods. Four pairs spawned, I eventually used all the worms and was digging through a spot where I had transplanted grass from the garden to collect more. Mosquitos are wearing gang colors in my yard this year thanks to all the rain. I finally got the idea to setup a worm bin in my fishroom that I could harvest worms from. I had made one before out of a styrofoam shipping container. I filled the container with wet peat moss and dumped in a blue container of trout worms I purchased from a bait store. I kept a layer of wet newspaper on top and fed the worms underneath it. The worms produced a few babies, and I harvested fish food from time to time, but the container was heavy and out of place, and the food I added always went moldy before worms could eat it.

An advantage to keeping a worm bin is vermicomposting—a term that refers to the use of earthworms to break down organic household waste into nutrient-rich fertilizer. Food scraps, paper and cardboard can all be consumed by worms, reducing the amount of waste to be put out curbside. Picking the right bin and species of worm is very important. One of the most significant qualities of a good worm

bin is airflow. Airflow is important to a healthy, non-smelling sustainable bin. Plastic bins tend to retain moisture, and some commercial bins have spouts for releasing moisture. Note that moisture should never need to be released from any bin except at initial setup.

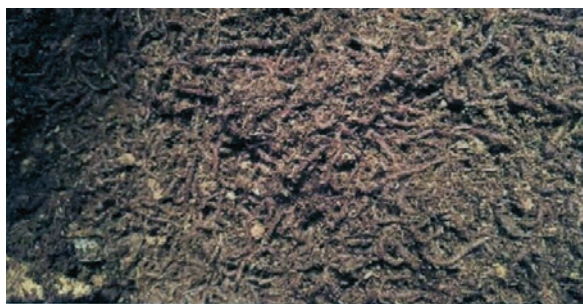
Size and mobility are other qualities to consider. You don't want something that will be too large, heavy, or difficult to move if need be. Other qualities to consider are accessibility to add food and harvest castings. You want a bin that can easily be fed, has airflow, can deter pests, and from which your worms can be easily harvested. Even if worm castings (black gold, as they are commonly referred to) isn't your priority, they can be used as a soil supplement, made into worm tea, sold, or even given away.

There are many styles of bins on the market, as well as do-it-yourself bin instructions online. Plastic tubs can be drilled for airflow. Stackable commercial plastic worm bins can be bought on Amazon. One style of container that works well is a flow-through. In this kind of bin, worms are kept in a container, food is added from the top, and worm castings are harvested from the bottom. One of the best of these is a flow-through style and is affordable. The



Worm Inn Mega is a breathable bag made of Cordura material that hangs on a stand and holds up to 4 cubic feet of composting material, capable of sustaining up to 6,000 worms. It's also compact, and can be kept in a minimal space of 2'x2' and a height of 3'. Worm castings are harvested at the bottom by opening a drawstring. Mega also comes with a screen zipper top to allow maximum airflow with easy accessibility.

I placed my Mega next to a rack against the wall with a clip light attached over top of it. I was advised to get my bin ready for the worms by mixing shredded paper and cardboard sufficient to fill a 5-gallon bucket. Fill the bucket with water, soak for a minute or two, drain, then add mix to bin. I did so, and the next day I checked the mix in the bin and it was a lump of stuck-together shredded newspaper and cardboard. I didn't think it would suffice, so I went to the shed and found some peat moss and coir. I mixed some together with water to dampen, then mixed it in with my newspaper mix. You don't need much peat mix; half a bucket or less just to loosen up the wad and give the worms something to dig through. Peat also adds microbes. Newspaper and cardboard add aeration and food. Make sure to use peat with no additives. A clip lamp was added to help acclimate the worms into the soil mix. At first the light should run for a couple days, and then used only when working in the bin. The best medium to use is composted or aged horse manure, but not everyone has access to it.



Picking your worm is very important. There are several worms that can adapt to an indoor compost. A worm that tolerates wide parameters, stays small, and has a voracious appetite is *Eisenia fetida*, also known as the red worm, red wriggler, trout worm, or panfish worm. Red wigglers range in size from less than an inch as juveniles to 3 inches as adults, making them perfect food for all size fish. Red wigglers in the wild live in the ground's top 20 inches, but spend most of their time above soil in rotting piles of organic waste. Red wigglers can eat three times their own body weight a week, and 2,000 worms can produce seven pounds of castings per month. It takes about two and half weeks for a red worm to reach sexual maturity from pupal stage.

Start out feeding your worms with half your worm weight or less in garbage. It's better to feed lightly at first, rather than to overload the bin. Citrus,

oils, and candies are all foods to avoid. Peels and stalks such as from potatoes and broccoli take longer to break down, so be careful of how much you add.

Examples of worm food:

- Fruits: apples, pears, banana peels, strawberries, peaches and melons
- Vegetables: beans, cabbage, celery, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, all greens, corn, corncobs and squash
- Cereals and grains: oatmeal, pasta, rice, corn meal, non-sugared breakfast cereals, pancakes
- coffee filter paper, tea bags, eggshells, dead flowers

Food/bedding:

- newspaper (no shiny or coated paper), cardboard, paperboard, paper egg cartons, brown leaves

Use Caution When Adding These:

- Breads (can attract red mites)
- Potato skins, onions, garlic, ginger: get consumed slowly and can cause odors
- Coffee grounds: too many will make the bin acidic

Do Not Feed/Put in bin:

- Meat, poultry, fish, dairy - protein attracts rodents
- Potato chips, candy, oils - worms do not like junk food, and these attract ants
- Oranges, lemons, limes: citrus has a chemical substance (limonene) that is toxic to worms
- Non-biodegradable materials including plastic, rubber bands, sponges, aluminum foil, glass, and dog or cat feces

Because worms have no teeth, they need to take in grit with their food. Pulverized eggshells are an excellent source of grit. Eggshells should be dried out, then pulverized by a coffee grinder or a food processor. I keep them on a dry layer of shredded paper. This keeps the smell down and makes the bin less attractive to bugs. I usually wait to feed my bin until all the food from previous feeding is gone. At that point I throw more garbage away than I can feed my worms. Once my population increases, larger food amounts will be added. Eventually my bin should consume most of our household organic garbage.

Worms and other live foods are essential to keep healthy, vibrant fish. Live foods provide proteins and amino acids for egg and sperm production. Feeding live foods to your fish will condition them for breeding. Worms can be cut with a razor for smaller size pieces to feed different size fish. After the initial setup cost, a worm bin could be a sustainable, zero cost source of live food for your fishroom, while also consuming most of your organic garbage. And don't forget about worm poop for your plants!



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!



The Black Trigger

By Kevin Thurston
from CAS Newsletter and Aquarist, Colorado
Aquarium Society
Aquarticles.com

The black trigger sounds like some sort of cloak and dagger villain, but of course I am referring to **Odonus niger**, also known as the Niger trigger and red-toothed trigger. The triggers are a group of marine fish that are named for their ability to lock themselves into an opening of rock or coral with a trigger-like mechanism of the fins.

I've always had a mild interest in the triggers but I was always put off by their reputation as very aggressive fish. I'd even experienced it first hand when a clown trigger demolished a lionfish at a store I was working in. I had asked a local retailer once, "What can you put in with triggers?" "Nothing," was his immediate reply. However, about the same

time, I noticed in a large marine display aquarium at the office I was working in, a few new fish including a black trigger. I knew the black trigger had a reputation for being a little more sedate than the others, so I kept my eye on this situation to see how it would develop. This group seemed to work out fairly well, even though there were fish in there that were somewhat smaller than the trigger. I left that job, as well as my home, and moved to a larger house where I was able to set up a marine tank that was a little larger than what I had been maintaining. I started this tank with a small lionfish (**Pterois volitans**) that quickly grew significantly larger than the purchase size. I had in my mind that I

would try a black trigger with it. A few weeks later I found one that was smaller than the lionfish (about 2½ inches total length), but large enough that it was not at risk of being eaten by the lionfish. A few weeks later I added a moon wrasse, **Thalassoma lunare**. As those three fish grew, they continued to live together in reasonable peacefulness. At the start, the wrasse was the most aggressive fish in the tank, but as they grew the black trigger has become the more aggressive. It has been about two and a half years since I started those three fish together. The lionfish is about ten inches long (there's a photo of it on page 96 of the November 2002 issue of Tropical Fish Hobbyist magazine, if you want to see what it looks like). The wrasse is about seven inches long and the black trigger is about three and a half inches long from tip of the nose to the caudal peduncle.



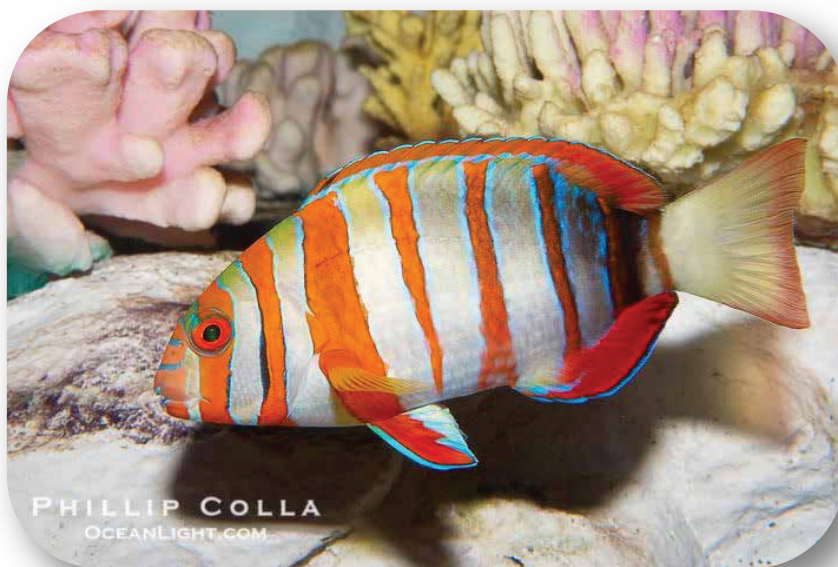
Odonus niger



Pterois volitans



Thalassoma lunare



Choerodon fasciatus

aggressive as the other triggers.

Despite my experiences, there is another consideration that I have to keep in mind and that is that the bigger a trigger gets, the more aggressive it gets. The black trigger can be expected to grow to ten inches in an aquarium, so my trigger still has some growing to do. The nice thing is that the triggers are very hardy and mine has been no exception. My black trigger has eaten just about anything including some of the larger foods that I use to feed my lionfish such as cichlid sticks and freeze dried krill. When I offer the lionfish some feeder fish, the black trigger shows some interest in them, but the lionfish usually has them eaten before the trigger has decided to do anything about it. The moon wrasse on the other hand has bitten the heads off of some of the feeder fish.

Based on my experiences, I can recommend the black trigger for anyone who has ever wanted to try a trigger, but was worried about how aggressive they are. The black trigger is hardy and not quite as aggressive as the other triggers. Some might think that the black trigger is not as colorful as they want a marine fish to be, but the name is not entirely accurate. The color of the black trigger can vary from purple to blue to green depending on different factors that I'm not sure if anyone has pinned down definitively. These colors are usually not shown very effectively in photographs, probably due to the lighting conditions and other factors involved in a photo shoot, so they are more colorful in life than they are in photographs. Another positive about the black trigger is that just like many other "aggressive" fish, it has some personality. Taking all these factors into consideration, I'm very happy that I decided to try the black trigger. Maybe now you'll be motivated to give them a try too

After this trio lived together for over two years, I took a risk and added a harlequin tusk (**Choerodon fasciatus**). If you've ever priced a harlequin tusk, you know what I mean by risk. The risk was compounded by the fact that the harlequin tusk would be the smallest fish in the tank at about three inches total length. In fact the lionfish attacked the bag that the harlequin tusk came in while it was floating to be acclimated. The lionfish continued to look at the harlequin tusk as if it might be food for several days. The moon wrasse chases after the harlequin tusk occasionally and the black trigger pretty much ignores the harlequin tusk. After all this time, I feel I can confirm that the black trigger is not nearly as



Odonus niger



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Meeting Reminders

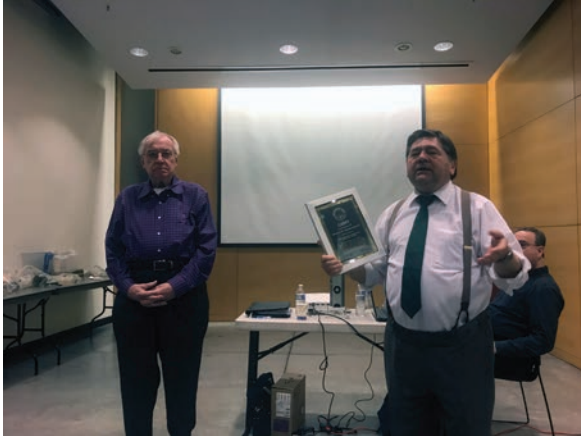


Almost every month at least one meeting reminder postcard is returned undelivered. Sometimes the member moved and just forgot to update his or her contact information with Greater City. Other times, well it's a mystery—the address was correct, but the Post Office marked it as “undeliverable.”

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.

Pictures From Our Last Meeting

Photos by Joseph Gurrado



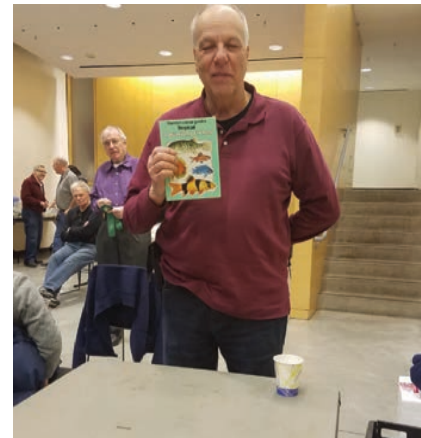
Joe Ferdenzi with GCAS President Horst Gerber (Jason Kerner is in the background), giving us all a look at, and an explanation of the plaque GCAS received from the CARES organization (www.caresforfish.org).



Horst presents John Buzzetti with the Second Place ribbon in this evening's bowl show!



Jason Kerner and Richard Waizman were both out of town during our awards banquet back in December, so here Jason receives his plaque (above left) for being added to the Joe Ferdenzi Roll of Honor, and Richard receives his award as Walter Hubel Bowl Show champion.



Joe Gurrado wins this evening's Door Prize!



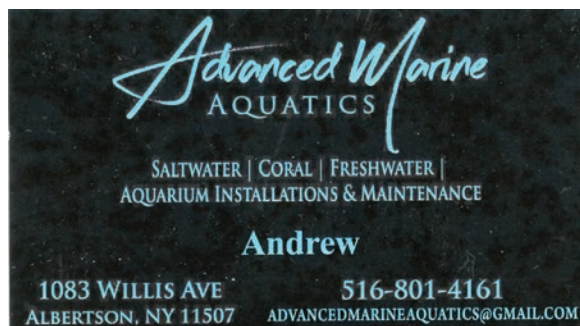
Bill Amely takes home the Third Place ribbon for the bowl show!



Some of the items for the evening's very large auction!



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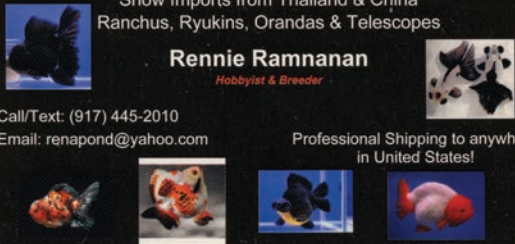
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GCAS Happenings

April

Last Meeting's Bowl Show Winners:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 HARRY FAUSTMANN | <i>NOTHOBRANCHIUS RACHOVII</i> |
| 2 JOHN BUZZETTI | <i>FUNDULOPANCHAX GARDNERI</i> |
| 3 WILLIAM AMELY | MALE BLUE DOUBLETAIL <i>BETTA</i> |

OFFICIAL 2020 BOWL SHOW TOTALS:

HARRY FAUSTMANN	5	WILLIAM AMELY	1	JOHN BUZZETTI	3
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A WARM WELCOME BACK TO RENEWING GCAS MEMBERS WILLIAM AMELY, NICHOLAS CAPUTO, JOHN BUZZETTI, STEVE CHEN, CARLOTTI DE JAEGER, GERRY DOMINGO, HARRY FAUSTMANN, MIKE GALLO, WALTER GALLO, JASON GOLD, JOE GURRADO, ROBERT HAMJE, VIC HRITZ, JASON IRIZARRY, TOM KEEGAN, MICHAEL MACHT, JOSHUA MODESTE, SCOTT PETERS, AL AND SUE PRIEST, DAN AND MARSHA RADEBAUGH, DAVID RAMIREZ, VINNY RITCHIE, TONY SIANO, STEVE AND DONNA SICA, GILBERTO SORIANO, AL TURRISI, ED VUKICH, RON WEBB, PETER WOLTJEN, AND RICHARD WONG!

A SPECIAL WELCOME TO NEW GCAS MEMBERS MARTIN BURKE, PETER MCENANEY, AND IGOR VERTILETSKY!

Meeting times and locations of some of the aquarium societies in the Metropolitan New York City area (COVID-19 could cause cancellations! Check before you go!)



GREATER CITY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 6, 2020

Speaker: Lawrence Kent

Topic: *Holy Grail Cichlids, Friends, and Other Fish: Two West African Stories*

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.net>

BIG APPLE GUPPY CLUB

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

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

Contact: Donald Curtin (718) 631-0538



BROOKLYN AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: April 10, 2020

Speaker: Bob Stark

Topic: TBA

Meets: 2nd Friday of the month (except July

and August) at 7:30pm:

NY Aquarium - Education Hall, Brooklyn, NY

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

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



LONG ISLAND AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: April 17, 2020

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

Meets: 3rd Friday of each month (except July and August) at 8:00 PM.

LIAS Meetings are held at SUNY Stony Brook's Maritime Science area. Room 120 in

Endeavor Hall on the State University at Stony Brook

Campus, Stony Brook, NY 11790

Email: president@liasonline.org

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



EAST COAST GUPPY ASSOCIATION

Meets: 2nd Tuesday of each month at 8:00 pm at Alley Pond

Environmental Ctr.: 228-06 Northern Blvd.

Contact: Gene Baudier (631) 345-6399



NASSAU COUNTY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: April 7, 2020

Event: TBA

Topic: TBA

Meets: 2nd Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM. Molloy College, at 1000 Hempstead Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY, in the Hagan Center for Nursing building, in the lower level, classroom #H006. See website for directions.

Contact: Harry W. Faustmann, (516) 804-4752.

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



NORTH JERSEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: April 18, 2020

Speaker: Eric Bodrock, Regina Spotti

Topic: *Catfish, Characins*

Meets: 12:30 PM - 3rd Saturday of the month,

Clark Public Library in Union County, just off the Parkway at exit 135

Contact: NJAS Hotline at (732) 332-1392

Email: tcoletti@obius.nj.com

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



NORWALK AQUARIUM SOCIETY

Next Meeting: May 21, 2019

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

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

GloFish® are NO Fish

A series by “The Undergravel Reporter”

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

It had to happen. Combtail, elephant eared, half or full moon, veil tail, doubletail—think of a way to grotesquely transmogrify the *Betta splendens*, and someone has done it, or is working on doing it. So, it should really come as no surprise that we now have **GloFish® bettas**.

The press release announcing this reads, in part:



Electric Green® GloFish® Image from 5-D Tropicals

Over the last several years, we have seen the popularity of GloFish grow, and we are thrilled to add to our livestock portfolio and introduce GloFish Bettas to the market, bringing the brand to an entirely new audience,” said Eric Kenney, Vice President, Marketing & Product Development at Spectrum Brands Global Pet Care Division. “Aside from offering eye-catching color hues, with more to come down the road, GloFish Bettas are easy to care for and fascinating to watch, making them an exciting addition to our portfolio. ... GloFish fluorescent fish are born brilliant! They get their natural, vibrant color from their parents and are not injected, painted or dyed.¹

The International Betta Congress (IBC) has issued a policy position on GloFish® bettas. That policy states that GloFish® are the subject of various intellectual property rights owned or controlled by GloFish LLC and that intentional breeding and/or any sale, barter, or trade, of any offspring of GloFish® fluorescent ornamental fish is prohibited.

Therefore, the IBC’s policy is that:

- GloFish® Bettas are only allowed to be shown in the purchased fish category
- GloFish® Bettas shown in any other class will be automatically disqualified as it is a violation of the user agreement on reproducing the Glo Betta

- GloFish® Bettas are not to be auctioned off at any IBC event so that the IBC does not unintentionally violate the sales policy on Glo Bettas.

- The agreements with the GloFish® Betta manufactures will be honored, and no classes will ever be constructed for GloFish® Bettas unless that class is constructed under the Purchased fish Category at the discretion of the IBC Judging Board.²

It is my hope that all aquarium societies and all fish hobbyist associations would adopt a similar, but even stricter policy and disqualify any “species” (if one could call them that) of GloFish® from bowl shows, auctions, displays, and/or any judging events (e.g., an “aquarium beautiful” or “theme tank” competition).

Sorry, folks, no big laugh to end this month’s column. Your Undergravel Reporter is NOT in a very good mood over this.



References:

¹<https://aquaticmediapress.us19.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b821af357ffaac0ba435b3fec&id=6e0da1b585&e=66dd06fddf>

²<https://www.reef2rainforest.com/2020/02/06/international-betta-congress-issues-glofish-betta-policy/>



Fin Fun



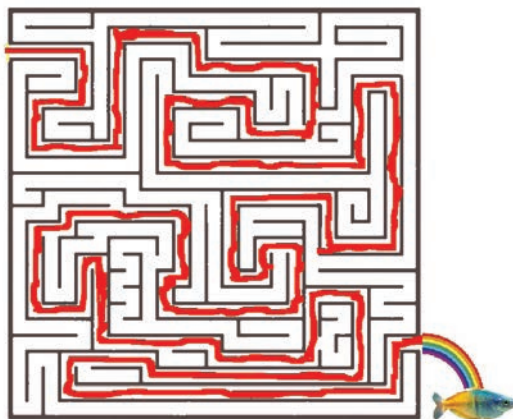
*Collecting
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Are you ready for the next GCAS fish collection trip (and I don't mean to the local fish store)? See if you can find the equipment you'll need in the puzzle below:



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WADERS

Solution to our last puzzle: Under the Rainbow





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Q: What if there was a source right in your home, available 24/7/365, that could provide the information you want and need about Koi keeping? Wouldn't that be nice, not to mention convenient?

A: Good News! There is just such a source and it's only a click away on your own computer. Water Quality course suitable for ALL fish keepers! Learn something new today!

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www.KoiOrganisationInternational.org



