

DELTA TALK

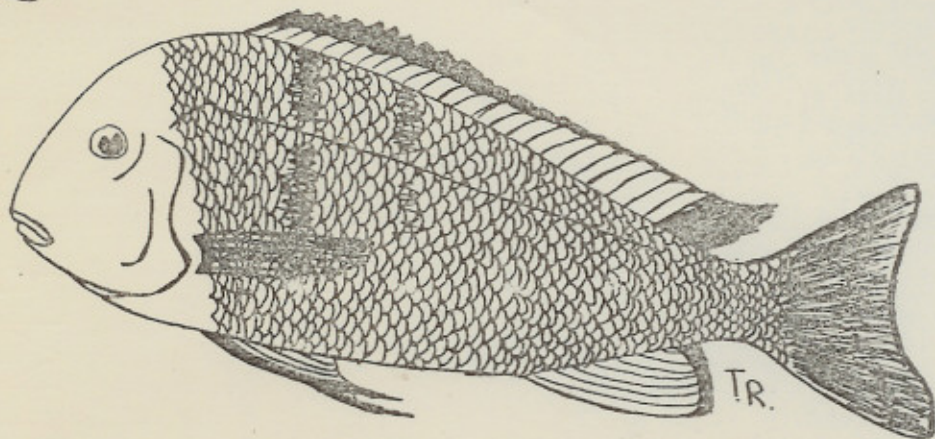
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AUGUST 1975

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Volume 6

Issue 8



Tropheus moorii

DELTA TALE is published for the benefit of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society (formerly the Potomac Valley Guppy Club), a non-profit organization, established in 1960 for the purpose of furthering the aquarium hobby by disseminating information, encouraging friendly competition, soliciting participation in its show, and promoting good fellowship. Correspondence should be addressed to Secretary, P.V.A.S., P.O. Box 6219, Shirlington Station, Arlington, Virginia, 22206. Original articles and drawings may be reprinted if credit is given the author and DELTA TALE. Two copies of the publication in which the reprint appears should be sent to DELTA TALE which will forward one copy to the author. All materials for inclusion in the DELTA TALE must reach the editor no later than the Saturday after the monthly Monday meeting.

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 Staff Writers Ruth Brewer, Jerry Meola

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This month's cover is of a *Tropheus moorii*. It is drawn by my friend Tony Rizzuto of York, Pa.

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

The Board met at the Hardy residence on July 3 with eight members present. The Treasurer reported that, with all bills paid, we had a bank balance of \$556.89, plus about \$30 in change reserved for the July mini-auction. At the suggestion of the President, the Board went on record as expressing approval of the appearance of the Delta Tale as prepared by the new printer. The Ways & Means Co-Chairmen asked for an appropriation to purchase prizes for the monthly raffles and were authorized \$10 per month until further notice for this purpose. The BAP Chairman reported that copies of the BAP had been delivered or mailed to all members and that he was waiting for written suggestions for changes. Meanwhile, he has been making some changes for clarification of the rules. The representative from the Salt Water group announced a one-day collecting trip for July 12. Final plans were discussed for the July mini-auction and the Board confirmed that entries would be limited to three items per membership. There is to be no program at the July membership meeting. The Board meeting adjourned at 9:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Brewer, Recording Secretary

BREEDERS AWARD PROGRAM

By: Gene Aldridge
BAP Chairman

By now all PVAS members within the local area should have received their BAP packages -- if not, please see me at the next meeting. Briefly, this program was established to breed and to share with others the knowledge you have gained. This is not a competition as each member progresses through the various steps to the Grand Master Breeder level at his/her own pace without outside pressure. Later on in the year some of you, I hope, will become part of our program and relay your experiences during a meeting. Remember, any 15 and above pointed fish requires either a verbal or written report. Do whatever suits you best.

The current point totals are:

Name	Points	
	Firm	In Process
Susan and Mike Sprague	35	10
Ruth Brewer	10	20
Gene Aldridge		50

Good luck to all of you.

ETA

BOWL SHOW RESULTS AND STANDINGS
July 14, 1975

<u>GUPPY</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>
a. W/B AOC	---	---	---
b. Female	Walsh	Walsh	---
c. AOC	Walsh	Walsh	Walsh
 <u>CICHLID</u>			
a. Cent./S. Am.med.	R. Gaines	---	---
b. Rift Lake br.pr.	Aldridge	---	---
c. Open	R. Gaines	---	---
 <u>EGGLAYER/LIVEBEARER</u>			
a. Barbs	B. Hardy	---	---
b. Anabantoids	B. Hardy	J. Gaines	---
c. Open	J. Gaines	B. Hardy	J. Gaines

POINT STATUS

<u>Guppy</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Ann'l</u>	<u>Egglayer/Livebearer</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Ann'l</u>
Walsh	16	25	Hardy, B.	13	51
Sergeant	-	13	Gaines, J.	11	46
			Gaines, H.	1	11
			Aldridge	-	9
 <u>Cichlid</u>					
Jessup	-	58			
Aldridge	4	22			
Sprague	-	13			
Gaines, J.	-	12			
Gaines, R.	8	8			

BOWL SHOW AUGUST 11, 1975

Guppy: Red, 5 matched males, AOC
Cichlid: Cent/S.am. dwarf br.pr., Tilapia, Open
Other: Livebearers-not guppies, Killifish, Open

Two of our articles were reviewed this month---

Ruth Brewer's "The Delta Tale Visits Gene Aldridge" in the July 1975 The Pisces Press from Portland, Maine

Jerry Meola's "Spawning Haplochromis compressiceps" in the July 1975 The Blue Grass Aquarama from Lexington, Kentucky

MEMBERSHIP AND THINGS

By: Chuck Story FVAS

We have a number of new members who joined during July that I would like to welcome to P.V.A.S. and introduce them to the rest of the membership. Richard and Nancy Sisk of Arlington maintain 5 community tanks with angels, discus, swordtails and loaches being the main residents. They are both commercial artists and have generously volunteered to help with the Delta Tale and advertising for the Delta Tale. Bill Trout is another cichlidophile who maintains 10 tanks of African cichlids at his home in Vienna. Ben Gradick of Alexandria maintains 9 tanks of a wide variety of fishes in addition to being the owner of Ben's Tropical Fish shop in Falls Church (formerly South Seas Aquarium). Larry Peak of Bladensburg lists a special interest in cichlids but has also spawned and raised numerous livebearers including guppies in the 30 tanks he presently operates. Twenty-five tanks of African cichlids keep Kenny Warren busy in his spare time. Margret Dawson of Arlington is another cichlid fan and she has acquired 10 tanks of them. Robert Coleman and Jean Parkes of Waldorf have specialized in Angelfish and currently operate 10 tanks.

During the Story family's vacation to Atlanta, Ga. in July, we managed to visit several aquarium shops along the way.

We found Atlanta, Ga. to be an area that has gone for salt water fish in a big way. They had the largest selection of salt water fish I have seen yet. One of the outstanding shops in this respect is Tropi-Quarium. They specialize in salt water fish and custom tanks for homes and businesses. The tanks are all maintained in immaculate condition. They are an old established shop with lots of repeat customers and can afford to carry the odd-balls as well as the less expensive varieties. Atlanta shops were not well supplied with cichlids (my own special interest) and there was a complete absence of Tanganyikans. Some of the types of fish presently being spawned regularly in the Washington area such as the Julidochromis species, L. brichardi, cobalt Zebras, red Zebras and others are rarely seen there according to the shop owners and command high prices when available. We did locate one new shop named Just Fish owned and managed by Hugh Miller that encouraged spawning of the African cichlids and was interested in obtaining juvenile fish from breeders for sale to his customers. At this shop we purchased 9 small Cichlasoma synspilum since it was a fish we had not seen in the Washington area shops (see Goldstein's Cichlids of the World, pg. 220).

As we passed through Petersburg, we stopped at A and K Aquarium which is owned and managed by John and Shirley Suber who incidentally are corresponding members of P.V.A.S. John is a hob-

byist turned shop owner who you may remember from his visit during our Spring Show. They carry a wide assortment of fishes and cater to the general aquarium trade rather than specializing.

In Richmond we located a shop that specializes in cichlids, particularly African cichlids. The Raven Aquarium shop which is located in Sandstron out near the Richmond airport has floor to ceiling tanks all well stocked with cichlids of every size and description. He spawns a great many of the fish he sells in the shop as evidenced by the many tanks of fry and brooding females. We counted some 13 varieties of Synodontis including a large specimen of S. angelicus which you read about but don't find in a shop. The shop is owned and managed by Ed André and I would definitely recommend a stop here for cichlid enthusiasts if you are in the area.

The Fairhaven Pet Center of Richmond, owned and managed by Calvin B. Williams, is deceiving from the outside. It is located in a converted house on the west side of Richmond. After entering the shop, we found three rooms full of tanks; all clean and well lighted. One wall of tanks was devoted to fancy guppies which seemed to be in very good condition and exhibiting very good finnage and body size for shop fish. The rest of the shop was taken up with a full variety of egglayers and livebearers including some excellent gold sailfin mollies.

Most of the shops we visited were located with the help of the yellow pages in the phone directory and time permitted visiting only a few of them. The ones I have written about may not be the only good ones in the cities mentioned but represent those we had time to visit.

MEETING DATES

Board of Governors
August 5
The location will
be decided later.

Cichlid group
August 20 8:00pm
Gene Aldridge
3045 S. Buchanan St.
Arlington, Va.
931-7426

Saltwater group
August 17 4:00pm
Pat & Sherrill Tobin
3140 Wisconsin NW
Washington, D.C.
244-2960

*
* DISCOUNTS *
*
* Belleview South Seas is now giving 10-20% discounts *
* to PVAS members. See Carl Hardy for details. *
*

BROWSING THRU

By: Peter Tietjen PVAS

This is my first exchange column, so you'll have to bear with me. Its been several months since the last exchange report in the Delta Tale and they have really piled up. Hopefully from this accumulation of magazines will be something that everybody will find useful. So, here goes...


A good place to start is with the April 1975 issue of Colorado Aquarist from the Colorado Aquarium Society. These "mile high" folks put out a consistently fine magazine on why we breed fishes and how cooperation, not competition should be the base to build on. Mike also has a good bit on the killie Rol-offia guineensis. A good book to look at . . . Interested in Angelfish? George Barnes, III, contributing editor to the Aquacons (February 1975), publication of the CCI Aquarium Society, sure is. This contains one of the best genetics articles this side of freshman Bio 101, with emphasis on the blushing angel. A must for angel fans, or even a devil or two. George also has a companion article in the December 1974 issue that explains the basics of genetics. The genetic concepts in the December issue are adaptable to any fish. Read 'em both . . . For the builders and fixers of the club, don't miss Tony Rizzuto's notes on making a 10 gallon power filter out of a 10 gallon tank, an Aqua-King power unit and an undergravel filter. Its in the Greater York Aquarium Society's January 1975 issue of Aquarist Journal. Two more do-it-yourself articles are in the January Bits & Pieces. The first describes building an air pump from a junked auto smog blower, and the other concerns using PVC for airlines. These are two of the best equipment articles I've seen.

Guppy raisers have several articles to choose from, Bob Maxell in Brooklyn Aquarium Society Journal of January 1975 on how to raise show quality guppies offers a key word, "Patience." We all could use that. Two issues of Guppy Roundtable by Pan Pacific Guppy Association are simply so full of guppy info that they must just be read cover to cover. We have March and June 1975. . . With a show coming up before we know it (October 17 & 18) the May 1975 issue of Aquarian from Tacoma Aquarium Society has an article on what judges look for in a show fish. Its more than just fins and color. The June issue of the same magazine has a reprint about how to prepare for a vacation that all persons (like me) going away should read . . . Another reflecting article that all members should read is in the May GHAS Lighter of Grays Harbor, Washington. This is What the Aquarium Club Means to Me. It is worth your time. The June issue has an article for Salt Water fans on Sea Anemones and their symbiotic relationship with certain fish . . . The June Driftwood of the Aquarists of Omaha has a good reprint on Native Americans that

anyone considering this area should read. And in May an article on spawning Aplochromis polystigma.

It might be a little late for this year, but an outdoor pool is a good way to provide a vacation for your fish. Susan Cass of the Arlington Aquarium Society of Arlington, Texas has an article about this subject in their Aquatic Topics. But since this society doesn't put a date on their newsletters, it is hard to tell which one the article is in . . . Another good article for killie fans is the Native Killies of Kentucky in the Blue Grass Aquarama, published by the Central Kentucky Aquarium Society. Its in the May 1975 issue . . . In the latest issue of the Super Fish al Notes of the Madison Aquarium Club is a good piece on the use and misuse of penicillin in the fish tank, . . . One of the few cichlid articles in the group is about the Aplochromis burtoni. Its in the May 1975 issue of the Kitsap Aquarian put out by the Bremerton Aquarium Society.

There are many other interesting articles in these exchanges that would warrant some attention. Many are well written and well thought out. Also, reading about the troubles that others in other areas have had with a certain type of fish makes your trouble easier to take, as well as maybe giving you a hint of how to avoid the same trouble. I would recommend to everyone to take some time and read an exchange bulletin. They are really worthwhile. So good reading for the rest of the summer.

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WAVES FROM THE CORAL REEFS

By Ann Carnar, PVAS

"Rain, rain, go away" -- it didn't work, but we tried, as we made our first trip to Chincoteague for collecting. Arriving at the designated meeting spot, the parking lot at the Beach, the bottom literally fell out of the sky. Seeing no one else of our party, unable to escape from the confines of the car, the only solution was to raid the ice chests and eat. The sea gulls put on an interesting display as they beg from car to car. They work cheap! A crust of bread will be rewarded by aerobatics, combat and drill marching on the ground.

After an uneventful wait, and having found none of the rest of our caravan, we decided to begin backtracking to the mainland. The beauty of the marshlands is really indescribable -- it has to be seen. We started our slow return and got as far as the Oyster Museum before stopping (maybe a mile). For 50¢, you not only can view the life of an oyster, but also see exhibits made by local craftsmen (and women). It is also possible to pick up a souvenir or two at reasonable prices. Our souvenirs were the large conch shells at 10¢ each. Our octopus will now have a new home. The attendant is an extremely friendly, knowledgeable and interesting person with whom to talk. She readily gave us clues on areas to go for collecting and an idea of what we might find in our nets. She has four display tanks of local specimens -- one about which I recently read is rarely found, she informed us was not being found locally in schools. She also advised that on occasion they have found an octopus in their traps "out back" behind the museum, but had to date not had too much success in keeping them alive in their tanks. If you are down there, do stop and talk with her. It is well worth the 50¢ and the time taken.

We found part of our entourage and headed back for one more trip around the beach and then back to the parking lot at the bridge onto the Island. The rain had finally started to cooperate and quit. A hasty unloading of gear and onto the small beach at the foot of the bridge.

With our fifteen foot seine, a myriad of styrofoam boxes, plastic pails, hand nets and a lot of enthusiasm, we finally began to "collect" -- the purpose of our outing.

The first swipe of the seine through a small waist-deep area brought oodles of grass shrimp, crabs of assorted sizes, silversides, killifish and a few we were unable to identify. Our seiners -- (is that what they are called?) then moved out into the main stream and with each turn of the net, our excitement mounted. Two small needlenose gars (1 - 3 inches in length), hermit crabs, swimming crabs, blennies (two species, we think), several small flounder (tank size -- 2 - 3 inches), and a myriad of presently (to us) unidentified specimens of fish. We also now house two large spider crabs.

Time now interfered with our enthusiasm and collecting, and the sky was once again threatening, so regretfully, we prepared to leave.

Larry Wilson had prepared the trunk of his car to hold a couple of styro-foam boxes, lined with plastic to protect the car and the fish, as holding tanks. By using an inverter hooked into the car's taillights, he was able to run two Silent Giants which furnished enough air for both of the "holding tanks". We each made our tentative selections among the fish and into the "tanks" they went, to return to Larry's isolation tanks at home, where he had agreed to "babysit". We only kept the specimens we wanted for our tanks and which appeared strong enough to make the trip. Everything else was returned to its original home.

The invertebrates were "bagged" for the trip home. We are pleased to inform you that all made the trip in good form except for a few of the grass shrimp, who did not survive, but fear not, they did not die in vain, the crabs loved them for dinner. All invertebrates, after the trip, acclimation and adjustment to their new home in our 55, are doing very well. Three a.m. found both of us sitting in front of the tank watching our new arrivals. They are eating the freeze-dried clams, flake food and anything else that gets in the way. The hermits are great performers, and while maybe not too intelligent, are extremely interesting. With great caution (and shaky fingers) I have been handfeeding the spider crabs.

It was a long, long day, but one which I will long remember. This has only whetted the appetite and next time, we will return with more specimens and greater knowledge. The mistakes and/or omissions are now known and can be corrected on our future trip. We hope that many others will be able to join us. Anyone with suggestions on anything, equipment or knowledge of places to go will be more than welcome.

The omission of the condition of the fish is not an oversight, but I have not had the opportunity to talk with Larry Wilson. However, there is no doubt that soon we will be able to get a report on the fish and his system of transportation for inclusion in the Delta Tale.



The members of Coral Reefs Saltwater Club would like to take this opportunity to thank Nancy Kaufman of the National Aquarium for all of her assistance in the planning of the recent collecting trip to Chincoteague. Had it not been for her help, there is doubt that there would have been a trip at all. Thank you, Nancy, for caring enough about this, our hobby, to lend your assistance to us.

SHOP AROUND

By: Susan P. Sprague PVAS

After hearing many good things about Hilltop Aquarium, located in Bowie, Md., I decided to go and have a look for myself. Hilltop is not a large store but it is packed with quality.

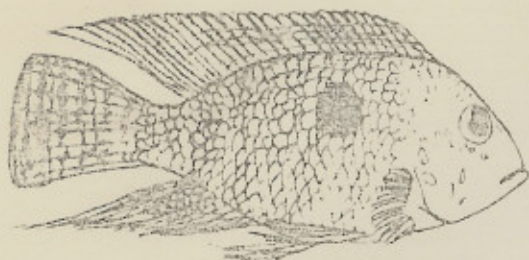
The store has been there for approximately 6 years and under the management of Edwin J. Lehan for 5 years. It has both fresh water and saltwater fish but I would hazard to guess that "salt" is their specialty.

Upon introducing myself to Mr. Lehan, we had a long conversation. We discussed his philosophy on filtration for saltwater tanks. He uses no undergravel filtration. The outside power filter is his system. He also sets up new tanks much differently than I've heard about. First he puts the tap water in his tank and adjusts the heater to approximately 74^o. The next day he adds his salt mixture until the hydrometer reads the specific gravity he wants. On a tank of 30 gallons or more he puts an Aqua King with charcoal and fluff on top. For his bottom medium he uses only silica sand at the rate of a lb./gal. of water. Mr. Lehan feels that the gravel packs so tightly that little debris can collect in or on it.

Now that everything is set up and running in the new tank, he puts in two fish. He watches the nitrogen cycle until it has gone through a normal curve and waits a week after the tests show safe levels; then he adds another fish. He does this same procedure until he has all the fish he wants in the tank. Mr. Lehan starts with less expensive fish because all these procedures are going to be hard on the first inhabitants of the tank. After the tank has been set up three or four months, he starts putting in the more delicate fish. At this time the chemical reactions in the water should have become less violent.

That is Mr. Lehan's basic philosophy on setting up a marine tank. He feels you must add fish at the beginning in order to get your biological system functioning. Bacteria can not live and grow when there are no wastes in the tank.

To attest to the effectiveness of his filtration system, Mr. Lehan has a Lion fish that is 4 years old and 12" SL (not measuring the tail) that he raised from a 1½" baby.



MY FISH, "DOG"

By: Mike Sprague, PVAS

One may become emotionally involved with a cat, bird, horse, dog, etc. However, no one becomes emotionally attached to a fish. Right? WRONG!! I am emotionally involved with my fish, "Dog."

Dog! Dog. Dog? Why name a fish Dog? Dog has the amiable traits of his four footed namesake. He takes anything I dish out without complaining. When any other self-respecting fish would justifiably die out of sheer contempt for abuses and neglect, Dog spawns -- prolifically. Bless you, Dog.

Dog, a six and a half inch *Geophagus brasiliensis*, lived in a 20-gallon long aquarium with his four inch female. This tank sat on the floor of my basement for over a year. Dog and company were usually the last to be fed and the last to receive water changes or filter changes. My time was directed to newer, flashier or more expensive fish. Dog never complained. He just spawned and stood by uncomplaining as his young prodigy were netted out and used as food fish for Dog's neighbors, the red discus. Dog and his female simply continued to share the parental duties for their reduced brood. Although their pair bond is strong, their behavior as parents borders on sainthood.

At spawning time, they move all the gravel away from a large rock and meticulously clean it. The female lays a row of small light beige eggs on the rock and Dog follows along to fertilize them. This procedure continues until most of the chosen surface is covered with closely spaced eggs. Both parents take turns fanning the eggs with their pectoral fins and removing bad eggs. Although Dog allows me to watch the spawning itself, after the spawning is completed, he tries to position himself between me and the eggs.

The eggs hatch in three to four days. At this point, the wiggling fry are cleaned, by parental mouthing, and moved from place to place around the tank. Within a week the fry are free swimming and as they grow they are gradually given the freedom of the tank. Although the pair is fed four kinds of Tetra-min, a high vegetable paste, frozen brine, squid flakes, tubifex, and beef heart, I made no effort to provide special food for the fry. Dog usually grinds up his food and passes it out under his gill covers for his fry.

Nothing I have done so far, which includes moving the pair with fry to a show and separating the pair from the fry for as long as two days, has induced the parents to harm their fry. However, the parental bond shifts at the time of a new spawning. Some time between the preparation of a new spawning site and the wiggling stage of the new fry, Dog will systematically kill, but not eat, all fry remaining from the prior spawn. I always leave some fry in the

tank from the prior spawn because under normal conditions Dog will not bother his female while there are fry in the tank.

Dog's last spawn was at 70-75° with a pH of 6.2 and a hardness of 280 ppm. As soon as appropriate, inspections were made for the PVAS Breeder's Award Program, and Dog and his family were rewarded with a new 20-gallon tank on a real stand and with lights. Dog was so pleased he tried to convince the female that it was time to look for a rock. Her reply of, "Go stick your head in the filter" was so out of character that Dog removed many of her scales, half her caudal and dubbed her "The Virgin Queen." I managed to remove her before she was killed.

The Virgin Queen is now recovering in exile and fungicide. Dog is sulking in the corner of his new home surrounded by 150 fry and wondering how it all happened.

SPAWNING A. GARDNERI

By: Marc Lenzen FVAS
Age 12

It all started when I first got interested in killifish and bought a trio from a fellow clubmember.

I prepared a 2½ gal. tank with fine sand and a lot of floating plants like java moss and water sprite. I tried to provide the best conditions possible for breeding: aged, soft water with a "pinch" of salt. I used spawning mops which dated back to the days when my father was keeping killies. My A. gardneri were fed the fish foods available at my house: Tetramin, beefheart, newly hatched shrimp and, occasionally, some tubifex worms.

I checked the mops for eggs one week after the breeding tank had been set up and found 8 eggs. I placed them into a jar with water and a few drops of methylene blue dye. After a few days, on the advice of an experienced killifish breeder, I transferred the eggs into a jar with plain water.

It took close to one month before the eggs hatched. I fed the fry baby brine shrimp and a liquid egg-yolk mixture out of a tube. After they grew up to about 3/8" in size, I started to feed them pulverized Tetramin and continued with the baby brine shrimp.

The fry are growing very well and should be of spawning size by the end of the summer.

THE IVORY PEACOCK IS NOT A PEACOCK AT ALL

By: Jerry Meola, PVAS

The Peacock, *Aulonocara nyassae*, has established itself as a regular in any African system. The iridescent blue coloration and the lowering of prices have made it an attractive purchase for any tank.

The Peacock was often imported with another variety mixed in the same catches. It had the same bright blue coloration and an ivory colored streak down its head. Importers promptly dubbed the newcomer the Ivory Peacock. While the Peacock breeds easily and fry are readily available in stores or the ACA Trading Post, Ivorys have only been available as adults. The unavailability of fry should have tipped us off that the fish is not a color morph of *A. nyassae*. The fish did not appear interested in Peacock females.

If we look closely at the fish we can begin to see some external differences in the mouth and jaw structure. It was not long before speculation began to place the fish in the *Haplochromis* family.

I had the good fortune to get six specimens last month, three males and three females. They were all young and the males when frightened lost the blue coloration and displayed the juvenile markings. With this information it was easy to identify the correct female. Out of color the male does not resemble a Peacock at all. He is typical *Haplochromis* silver to brown in color. He has three distinct black spots on each side of his body, the first in the middle of his body, the last at the base of the tail, and the third midway between the other two. The females have the exact same dot pattern and a silver gray coloration. Sexing was verified by genital examination rather than by coloration.

It is not surprising that fry have not been available. *Haplochromis* cross *Aulonocara* would not be an easy breeding and this is the pairing most people probably have. Females have been imported only in small numbers. Many species of *Haplochromis* are imported without females. It is likely that this results from misidentification of the species or many females may be thrown back by collectors as undesirable fish.

The German magazines have identified the fish as *Haplochromis chrysonotus*. The female dot pattern and general body shape is similar. *H. chrysonotus* is generally a much larger fish. Ivory Peacocks do not appear to exceed five inches in the lake although they can be grown to six or seven inches in the aquaria. *H. chrysonotus* is normally identified by one dot in the middle of its body rather than three. Adult male *chrysonotus* that I have seen did not have the white blaze on their foreheads in the seven inch specimens I observed. Color morphism is not generally recognized in *Haplochromis*. It may be possible but, unlikely. The problem is further complicated by the fact that I have seen at least one distinct strain of Ivory Peacocks that were not the same fish. The fish had a different mouth structure although it had the exact same color pattern. I would think there are two distinct species involved.

The photographs of the *H. chrysonotus* and *H. nitidus* in African Cichlids of Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika by Dr. Herbert Axelrod are accurate examples of the different mouth structures although there are not enough details to identify the fish accurately. The pictures unfortunately do not show adult breeding coloration hence complete teeth and bone structure examination would be necessary for identification.

Regardless of the identification, it is a beautiful medium sized Haplochromis and a good addition to any aquarium.

HOW NOT TO BREED ANGELS
A BAP Report

By Ruth Brewer, PVAS

Somebody said "Fish breed in spite of us, not because of us". He must have had me in mind -- seems as if everything that happens with my fish is by accident -- not planning. My first breeding pair of angels were a male that came with my first set-up and a female that I picked up one day just because I liked her. I had four other angels at the time and no idea of the sex of any of them. They were all getting along well together in a 20-gallon tank with a couple of coxys for cleanups when one day I noticed two of them mouth wrestling. I immediately jumped to the conclusion that I had a breeding pair and rushed to move the others out so they could get on with things in a quiet and undisturbed atmosphere. All the others went into a 20-gallon community tank which looked a little crowded, but I was too excited about my breeding pair to care. After a week or so of anxious waiting, a pair spawned -- in the community tank. (The two I had set up in the honeymoon tank turned out to be males. Apparently they just liked to fight. They kept up the mouth wrestling to the end of their days.) The pair in the community tank just couldn't defend the spawn which was eaten in short order by the rest of their tankmates. But when I set them up alone, they promptly spawned. These two were never good parents. Either they ate the eggs, or let them fungus, or ate the fry as soon as the fry were free swimming. After a few tries, I gave up and removed the eggs as soon as the pair finished spawning. With the aid of acriflavin and an air stone, I finally got my first angel fry. The male was a silver veil tail and the female was a common silver, but all the fish from this pair turned out to be veil tails. The parents of my "points" fish were from two different spawns by this pair.

I kept eight fish from the original pair and had high hopes of getting a breeding pair from them. I put them all together in a nicely planted 20-gallon tank and waited. And waited. For months, in spite of water changes and lots of high protein food, nothing happened. Then, for no reason I could see, two pairs spawned within three days of each other. I put one pair in a separate tank and sold the second pair. I had eggs again within the week. These two were wonderful parents. They guarded the eggs with tender, loving care and looked proud as punch when the fry were free swimming. At last I was going to see a pair raising the spawn and the whole family bit that I had read so much about. After two weeks, and with a beautiful brood swarming around them, the pair spawned again! I called everyone I could think of to ask what to do. Some said take out the parents -- some said take out the fry -- and some said take out the eggs. I couldn't make up my mind, so I did nothing and the parents solved the problem for me. They ate the eggs one day and the fry the next. But in another week, here were eggs again and the same tender, loving care. Again the eggs developed into free swimming fry and again the parents gobbled them up. I finally concluded that they thought they were raising their own conditioning food.

Since this was not what I had in mind for them, I waited only long enough for the next batch of fry to get to the free swimming stage and then I removed the parents. Even though I accidentally removed quite a few of the fry along with the parents, I still managed to get 23 of this spawn up to the 60-day mark. For the record, pH in the breeding tank was 6.8, the temperature was 78^o, plants were plastic, tank bottom was covered with gravel, a bubble-up filter was used and the tank was lighted until the eggs were laid. At that time I turned off the lights because I was afraid too much light might be harmful to the eyes of the developing fry. The fry had only dim light from the window during the day and the room lights during the evening until they were about six weeks old. I also cut down the air flow in the bubble-up as the time for free swimming approached. The fry were fed on baby brine shrimp and such algae as the tank had developed for the first week or two, then I began adding small amounts of Tetramin E to their rations.

Meanwhile, back at the office, a project I had on the back burner was suddenly moved up to the front and I was coming home late and too tired to care much about raising fish. Hatching baby brine and making water changes took more effort than I could cope with most evenings and so the fry had to get along most of the time with Tetramin E and dirty water. It was my intention to move the parents into separate tanks or at least put a divider into their tank until I had a little more time. But before I got around to doing anything, they spawned again. This time I only removed the female and left papa to take care of the babies. Owing to our combined neglect, I lost most of this batch. They, and their older siblings, are about the scroungiest bunch of fish you ever want to see. It does take time to feed them properly and do the water changes and all the things that make for good fish and I didn't have time -- just overtime. For those of you interested in genetics, these fry from two silver veil tail parents, but with one common silver grandparent, came out about half veil tail and half common. However, we had just instituted the BAP and I was determined to get my points for angels even though I was not at all satisfied with their looks. After everything else that had gone wrong, I fully expected to see these fish get up to 59 days and die off just to spite me, but they didn't. I have my signed forms and now I can leave angels to somebody else while I try to collect the killie eggs before the parents get to them! The moral of this story is that, if you want to prove you're smarter than your fish, be sure you have enough time to watch what they're doing. They're in that tank plotting against you all the time.

THE GENUS LABIDOCROMIS

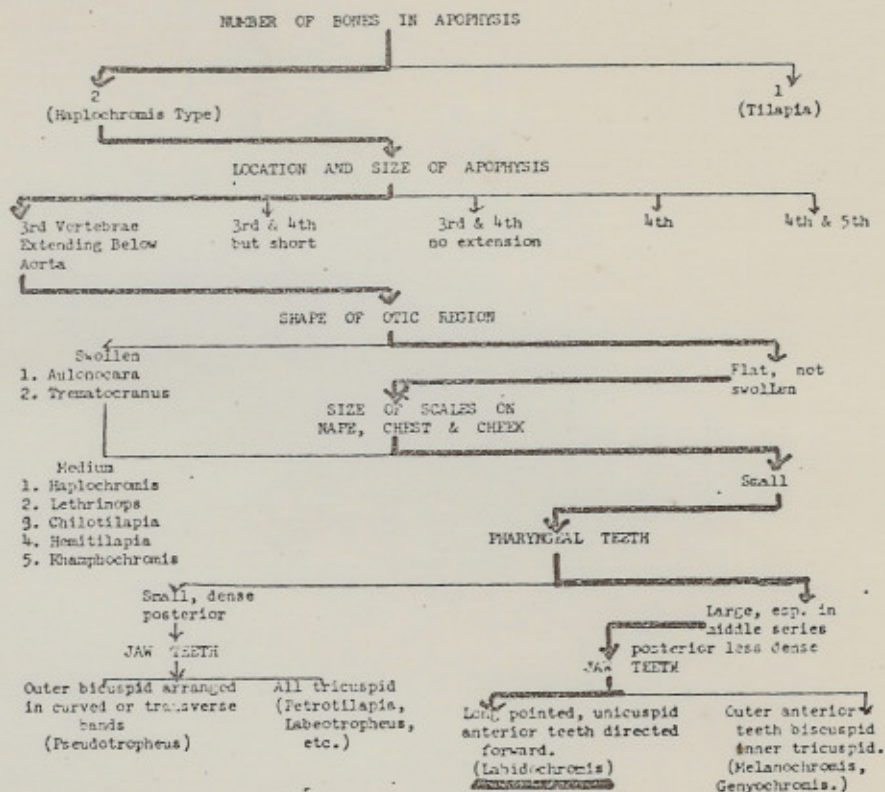
By: Dr. Charles Mendenhall
(Reprinted from Cichlidae)

As genera go, the genus *Labidochromis* is of relatively recent origin, being defined in 1935 by E. Trewavas (1). At the time, she believed this to be a monotypic genus of Lake Malawi Mbuna closely related to the genus *Melanochromis*, but with very specialized jaw teeth designed to snatch insects and invertebrates from algae and rocky crevices.

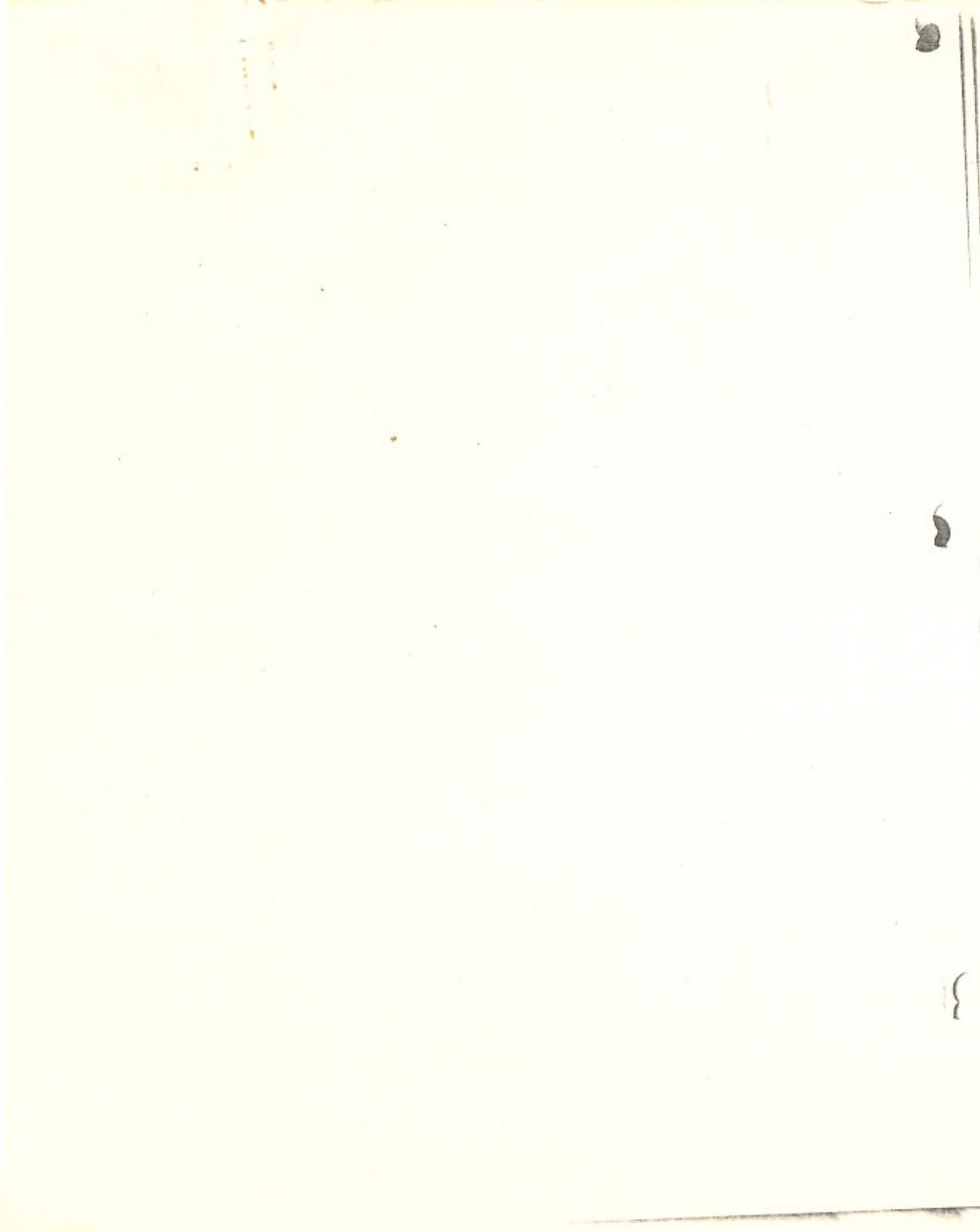
The synopsis of anatomic features which characterize the cichlids of Lake Malawi are listed in Figure 1. The heavy black line traces the features seen in *Labidochromis*.

FIGURE 1

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE GENERA OF LAKE MALAWI



As can be seen, these are all Haplochromis type fish, but with small scales, a pharyngeal apparatus containing somewhat fewer and blunter teeth compared to most Mbuna and very elongate curved jaw teeth. Figure 2 compares the pharyngeal apparatus of the Labidochromis and Melanochromis with its close relative, the Pseudotropheus. It is believed the broad blunt crowns on the back teeth are specialized for crushing and grinding their invertebrate food. The jaw teeth (Figure 3) represents their most specialized adaptation designed to grasping their prey from rocks and algae. It should be pointed out that this degree of specialization is not unique to Lake Malawi and the genus, Labidochromis. Lake Victoria has the genus Paralabidochromis, and Lake Tanganyika has Spathodus and Tanganicodus which have similarly adapted teeth for insects and invertebrate



I want to mention several other Labidochromis which are around, but which have not yet been named. One of these is a small beige colored fish with prominent black vertical bars and black rays on the caudal. The alternating black and beige gives a lacy appearance to the fins. The mature males lose the lacy appearance and appear as an almost solid black fish. This fish has been uncorrectly sold as *L. vellicans* and as *Ps. minutus*. An official will soon appear (I hope). Propriety prevents me from giving you the new name now, but I will tell you the name means "lacy finned" Labidochromis. There is yet another Labidochromis that is identical to the "lacy fin" but which is blue and gray rather than black and gray. Of course, they are unnamed also.

I am sure there are many others as yet unnamed, not imported, and perhaps as yet uncollected. Indeed, this genus may one day become one of the largest genera in Lake Malawi. Only time will tell.

FIGURE 2

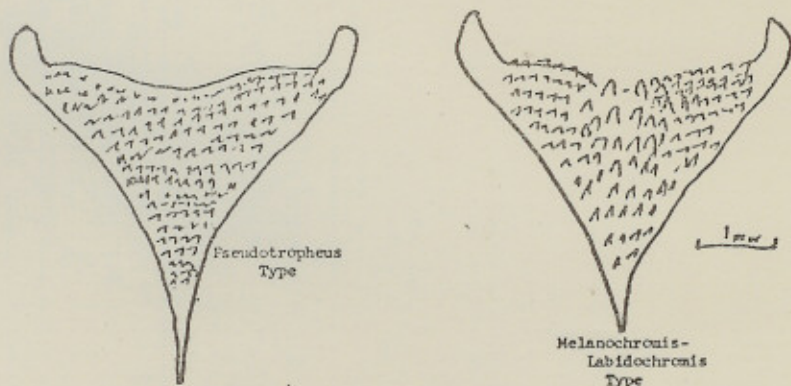


FIGURE 3

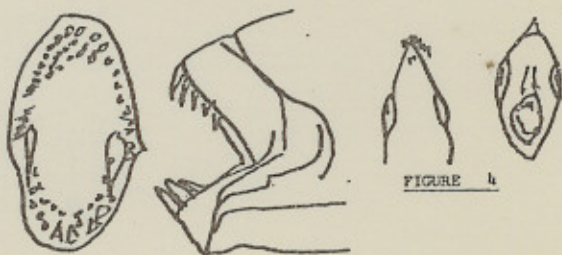


FIGURE 4

References:

1. E. Trewavas; A Synopsis of the Cichlid Fishes of Lake Nyasa. *Am. Mag Nat Hist*, 16: 65-113, 1935
2. G. Fryer and Iles, T. D. *The Cichlid Fishes of the Great Lakes of Africa*, 1972; TFM Publications, pp 514-517.
3. G. Fryer; New Species of Cichlid Fishes from Lake Nyasa. *Rev. Zool. Bot. Afr.* 53: 81-91, 1956.