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### **Ramblings from Rick**

(a message from the president)



This is the last column I'll be writing as President of the PVAS as my 1-year term is about to expire. It's been a fun year for me and hopefully for you too! Beverle Sweitzer will be taking over as President next year and I know she will do a great job. Please join me in wishing her well.

Looking back over the past year, there are several things that stand out in my mind. Some are good and some are not so good.

On the good side, the club gained many new members this year, which is evident by the new faces seen each month at our meetings at the Wood Facility. The attendance at our meetings has been great. We have had many excellent programs presented by speakers who are experts in their areas of interest. Entries in the bowl show seem to be increasing each month as well, a trend which I hope continues into the years ahead.

We also worked at getting the club's name out to the public so more people will know we exist. This is something we will continue to pursue.

We brought back the annual spring show after a year's hiatus. It was well publicized and several hundred people stopped by to see all of the excellent specimens on display. Unfortunately, for whatever reasons, most club members did not bother to enter any fish in the show. The display racks were less than one-half full. I think this made us look bad in the eyes of the public.

On a similar note, the attendance at the fall workshop was also embarrassingly low. We organized a very good workshop program with a variety of fine speakers, but still, club members did not participate. Why not?

Although attendance at these two events was low, the interest in the two auctions was extremely high. They both drew big crowds. (The spring auction in Virginia was about one-third larger than the fall auction in Maryland.)

The new PVAS board members for 1992 will have to look things over and decide how to approach these events next year. There are many alternatives open to us and changes may be in order. Your opinions on the direction of future club events is encouraged. I would hope that everyone feels comfortable enough to approach any board member with suggestions.

Last, I would like to thank all of the board members I worked with this year. I truly appreciate your dedication to the club. Although I won't be leading the club next year, I still plan on being active on the board and will continue to work for the betterment of the club.

Here it is, the final issue of the year. It's turned out to be more of a December issue than a Nov/Dec. issue for a number of reasons. The first is that I've run out of original material, except for stuff from George, and I didn't really want to print an all George White issue. No sense giving him a swelled head. I've also been waiting so I could include some info on the upcoming Christmas dinner and election results. Not to mention feeling kind of burned out after wasting my time on the oct. special edition which sure didn't do

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much to encourage many of you to atend the workshop. But I'll get off of that subject right now since I don't want to end the year with a lecturing editorial. This should be a time for us to look optimisticly (is it just me, or is that word spelled kinda wrong? oh well, you should be used to my creative spelling by now and know what I mean.) to the future. We have a new President and some new board members who should bring some fresh ideas and views into things. We are already starting to plan something brand new for PVAS- a winter auction. Hopefully I will have details on this elsewhere in this issue. I'm kicking around ideas for next years issues of Delta Tale and you can see one change already with my new column heading art. Of course these ideas all assume our new President doesn't fire me and give the job to someone who isn't iliterate. Although considering the sizeable contribution I made to her campaign fund my job is probably secure. Now that I think about it, why settle for just being editor. How about being appointed PVAS ambassador to Tahaiti? How about it Beverle? If you buy me a computer, modem, and fax machine, I could even do BOTH jobs.

To get serious for a moment- I'd like to thank everyone that contributed to making this a good year for Delta Tale. We had a very good percentage of original PVAS material this year and I hope I can count on you all to make next year just as good if not better. Special thanks to George White, who has contributed a great deal of material, in spite of all of the things I say about him. Also on behalf of everyone in PVAS I would like to give a big thank you to outgoing President Rick Mckay and Vice President Ray Hughes for all that they have done for PVAS this past year. The average member only sees a fraction of what these two have done for the club. They both have given us a lot of their time and effort and we wouldn't have gotten through the year so well without them. I'll conclude for this issue with one final thank you- to all of you who have helped out with all of the thankless little (and not so little) jobs at the auctions, show, workshop, monthly meetings, etc.

Until next time (unless I'm in Tahaiti)... a

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#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Dec 9: PVAS Christmas Dinner. This event will take the place of our regular activities for this month. There will be no speaker, bowl show or auction. If you've been to one of these before you should know how it works and how much fun you'll have. If not it works like this- everyone is asked to bring some type of dish to contribute to the dinner, you should be contacted by Julie Spall about this. The club will provide a main dish, usually turkey and/or ham. All PVAS members are encouraged to come and to bring their families. This is a chance for everyone to get to know each other. Everyone is also asked to bring a small, wrapped, fish related gift (nothing live please!). After dinner these gifts will be exchanged.

NOTE: We will try to get everything started at 7:00 PM instead of our usual time.



Lewis and Clark meet Sylvia and Rhonda.

photo taken at last ; years Christmas Dinner

Jan. 13- first PVAS meeting of 1992. Back to the usual stuff: program, raffle, door prize, mini auction, bowl show, etc.

#### FOUND!

1 tan jacket that was left behind at the auction in Gaithersburg. Call Rick McKay at 703-281-1647.





#### T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

-- Reprint, Linda & Roy Miller Berkshire Museum Aquarium Club, 12/76

T'was the night before Christmas, and Santa was humming, The fish were excited, one even was humming; The fry were all snuggled in their watery beds... While visions of brine shrimp swam in their heads; The Cabomba was trimmed and sparkled just right; Of course the Neons you know, provided the light; The colorful ornaments -- green, red, and gold Green Swordtails, red platys, and goldfish we're told; A big Silver Angel graced the top of the tree, It was the prettiest "Fishmas" tree even could be. And then on the tank top there arose such a clatter... The fish swam 'round to see what was the matter. Someone was coming, they could tell by the sound -Then down the filter tube came Santa with a bound! The stump of a snorkel he held tight in his teeth, And the bubbles encircled his head like a wreath. In his furry red wet suit he swam to the tree, And opened his pack for the fishes to see; A new hollowed log for the fry to play tag, Was the very first gift he pulled from his bag; Cans of flake food were next, brine shrimp and squid, And a bubbling treasure chest, with fluttering lid; New colored gravel, a large piece of slate, It was obvious now that the Angels would mate. Santa hadn't forgotten them....he'd filled every wish, He'd remember each item they'd put on their list. Then laying a finger aside his air hose.... And giving a nod, up the tube he arose; But they heard him exclaim as he hopped in his sled...

Maybe next year I'll bring them a 55-gallon instead!







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#### Chasing Fish Across the Sahara Desert

by George White, PVAS

Some years ago our plane crossed the magnificent blue Mediterranean Sea on towards Cairo, Egypt site of one of mankind's earliest civilized societies. We had long thought of the adventures of serving several years in one of the Middle East's crossroads at what was possibly a turning point in history—the time of Sadat and Camp David. There would also be unique opportunities to view the pyramids of Giza, ancient afterlife temples as well as the Valleys of the Kings, Queens, Nobles and Monkeys. The Pharoanic culture of so long ago had always fascinated us. This was also the land of the legendary Egyptian "mouth-brooder."

As the plane flew along the mystic Nile headed south towards Cairo, my thoughts floated back to the ancient Egyptians. Those people of several millennia ago, whose science and life-after-death theology still mystify modern man, must surely have had a special relationship with water and fish. Afterall, this was a nation based on a single powerful and spectacular river. Over 96 per cent of the Egyptians live on a narrow band of green stretching along both banks of the Nile, and the Nile Delta at the Mediterranean Sea. To either side of the Nile "valley" lie the burning sands of the Sahara Desert.

Before the construction of the Aswan High Dam, the Nile inundated the flat valley with annual spring floods marking a renewal of the agricultural life. Predictable and gradual, the floods brought blessings (fresh soil from central Africa), not disaster. They also created numbers of temporary ponds which burst forth with all varieties of life including some Killiefish. For a few weeks everything seemed fresher and newer. This spectacular annual event ranked high on the calendar of ancient Egyptians.

The Nile floods no longer come each spring. Have some spectacular Killiefish species vanished from the face of the earth in the aftermath of the construction of the Aswan Dam? These species had not yet been systematically studied and mapped, so it is not known whether they were the same species or related to Killiefish species found in Egypt's oases or elsewhere in Africa.

Scientists visiting Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century received the shock of their lives when a recently captured black chinned Egyptian mouth-brooder spewed out several dozen live minature replicas of the adult. For a moment, it surely seemed as though one of the mysterious ancient Egyptian resurrection rites had actually taken place. No known fish in Europe or elsewhere had been observed to carry fry in its mouth. Startling news of the Egyptian mouth-brooder, a species of Cichlid, spread among fish fans in Europe. Newspaper journalists, no doubt, concocted some truly fishy stories. Scientists quickly deduced, however, that an ancient miracle had not occurred, but rather that the Egyptian mouth-brooder had evolved a highly specialized procreation strategy.

This historical tidbit tickled my fancy and I began to wonder if people attributed special powers to fish in Pharoanic Egypt. The black chinned mouth brooder could easily have led early mankind to afford it special status. And, were there also fish fanatics in 20th Century Egypt?

Many of the ancient Pharoanic gods and goddesses were thought to sometimes assume animal forms. (See sketches on the next page of some of the ancient dieties.) These gods and goddesses were often depicted with the head of certain animals symbolizing special powers. This pantheon dealt with both the present life and the afterlife—the time of the "grateful dead." What powers to please or aggravate people would a fish god or fish goddess have had?

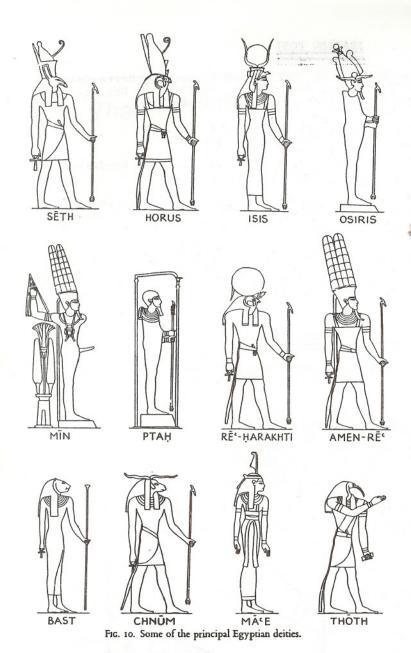
Alas, much to my disappointment, neither the temples nor the surviving papyrii indicated that the ancient priests had elevated fish to God-status. Nevertheless, Egypt may have developed the fish keeping hobby before the Chinese, another of mankind's early societies of geniuses. The earliest Egyptian fish dams date from 3,500 B.C. and the first picture of a fish from 2,300 B.C. The subterranean burial chambers at Giza in the shadow of the great pyramids (not far from the most famous of spinxes), contain hieroglyphs and symbols of fish known today, e.g. Clarius, Synadontis, Teradon, Tilapia, and Mormyus ("Elephant noses"). Several of these fish symbols, wonderfully carved bas reliefs, rival the artistic creations of more modern masters.

The extant archeological evidence indicates that the Pharoanic civilization developed the fish hobby by at least 2700 years B.C. Evidence of this aspect of ancient Egyptians' cultural achievements can be viewed at a handful of sites, e.g. the ancient city of Memphis (a long way from Tennessee) and Heliopolis (city of the sun). The remaining artifacts are scant, so it is difficult to tell if fish keeping was a widespread hobby, or only the pleasure of a limited number of nobles and royalty. Probably, fish keeping was either a noble hobby or a royal pain.

Artifacts from the golden artistic age of Pharoah Akhenaten (XVII Dynasty, New Kingdom) at El Amarna show scenes of hobbyist fish ponds and special fish containers. El Amarna is now a ghost city whose ruins rest in the shadows of a long low "mountain" ridge in an area that has once again become desert. Pharoah Akhenaten—married to Queen Nefertiti, rumored to be the most beautiful woman of ancient times— led an artistic revolution in which natural beauty was stressed. Art became more fluid and people were depicted in more natural poses. Although fish became decorator objects, there was no thought of giving fish spiritual statue.

Some scholars credit this pharoah, an intellectual rebel, with being the first to develop a monotheistic religion in which a great God above us exercises power over all things. In papyrii from the time God's power is referred to as being manifest in the sun rays and other natural developments, but He is not referred to as a sun god or in any other specific form. In other words, God was viewed as controlling all things, not being incarnated in any one aspect of nature as previous Egyptian dieties had been.

This "modern" spiritual vision was too far ahead of its time. After the enlightened pharoah's death, the leaders of the old sects reimposed their pantheism. The fish hobby apparently also did not gain widespread popularity. In any case, I was not able to locate any fish mummies in the cavernous Egyptian Museum in Cairo or elsewhere.



NO FISH GODS?

#### TRADING POST

Ads for the next issues Trading Post should be sent to Delta Tale c/o John Mangan, 9770 Oleander Ave, Vienna, VA 22181 by Dec. 9. Ads to buy,sell, trade, are free to all PVAS members.

For Sale: Low Boy Stand for 50/65 gallon aquarium \$25. Scott LeMessurier (301) 977-6455 after 8:00.

Want: female Jack Dempsey, Mature. Willing to trade for hardware or purchase. Daren Magness (703) 435-4104.

For Sale: Backissue aquarium magazines, many different titles, send SASE for catalog. John Mangan, 9770 Oleander Ave, Vienna VA 22181.

For Sale: 50 gallon (36x18x18) tank with full glass canopy, strip light w/ full spectrum bulb, Wood stand, undergravel filter, 50lb gravel, 2 visitherm power heads, visitherm submersible heater. \$160. Pete Thrift (703) 971- 0594.

#### PVAS ELECTION RESULTS

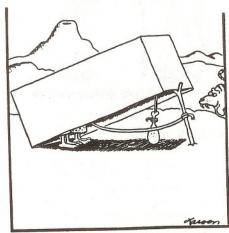
With 100% of the votes now counted the Delta Tale team of political analysts predict that the following persons will be the PVAS officers for 1992:

President- Beverle Sweitzer
Vice President- John Oliva
Treasurer- Kenny Warren
Corresponding Secretary- Julie Spall
Recording Secretary- Pete Thrift
Board of Governors- Tony Fitz
Alex Townsend

Congragulations to the winners, and good luck (you'll need it).

Walter Concrete, Delta Tale Political Correspondent.

The new PVAS board in action, recruiting new members.



"Shihhh, Zogi... Here come one now!"

The PVAS is pleased to announce the 1st

# WINTER AUCTION!

Since Sunday football will be over (and the Redskins will have won the Superbowl) we have a great way for you to spend your first football-less Sunday!

That's right, the PVAS is going to sponsor a winter Tropical Fish & Equipment auction. Final arrangements are being worked out, but it will probably be held Sunday, February 2nd. We are still negotiating a location for this one-day event. A flyer with final details will be mailed to all PVAS members and all those who have registered to buy or sell at past auctions. Also, watch the Sunday Washington Post classified ads, section 315 - "Fish and Aquariums." We will run an ad the weekend before the auction. For further information, after January 15th, call Rick McKay at 703-281-1647.

Idealy, aquarium water should be clear and colorless, which are not, by the way, the same thing. It should also be free of suspended solids. There are a number of things which can prevent this ideal from being met, and/or cause its' deterioration.

The first, and easiest to remedy if done right, is "new tank cloudiness". This is a milky cloudiness that occurs within a few days of setting up a new tank. This is caused by a bacterial bloom in the water. If you read back a few lines you'll notice I said that this is the easiest type of cloudiness to remedy IF done right. The right thing to do is something that many people find very difficult to do and that is absolutely nothing. The bacteria will bloom, use up all of the nutrients in the water, and then die back. Usually this cycle will only take a few days, but sometimes it takes a little longer. Once this bloom is over an"acceptable" number of bacteria will be left in the tank, mostly in the substrate, leaving the water clear and everything fine. Unfortunately most people can't sit back and do nothing. They have to mess around with their tank and in the process create more work, and will be less succesful than if they'd just kept their hands off of the darn thing. As the saying goes "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". The solution most people try, especially first time aquarists, is to drain out the cloudy water and start all over. This of course starts the bacterial cycle all over by giving them a fresh supply of food. In theory you could go around in circles like this forever. Fortunately new tank cloudiness does not happen to every new tank so if you change all the water a couple of times eventually the law of averages turns in your favor and the tank stays clear. Most people then think that all their hard work has paid off.

The next type of cloudiness is caused by decaying organic matter (and doesn't that sound lovely?). This can be broken down into three main subgroups. The most common is excess food. This will usually cause a greyish or brownish cloud and foul smell (this parts getting better and better). Most fish will act like they are starving every time they see "the fool that feeds them" (this is the fishes term for the aquarist not mine, I would never want to offend anyone) come near the tank. Novice aquarists always fall for this, as do many advanced aquarists who should know better. This type of cloudiness isn't as easy to get rid of as the first. You really do need to do a little bit of work here. First cut back on your fedding, both the number of feedings and the amount of food being given, you want to keep this from happening again. It is very rare for a fish to starve to death so don't fall for their begging, just remember the kinds of names they're calling you behind your back, that should help you get tough with the ungrateful little buggers. If the water is in real bad shape and cutting back on food isn't enough to clear it then next try making a 1/4 to 1/3 water change and clean the filter. Be sure to properly treat the new water to remove chlorine or chloramine. The best thing to use to make your water change is a siphon hose with a gravel cleaning atachment. You need to get all of the uneaten food out of the gravel. You should be using one of these on a

regular basis anyway and making 10-20% water changes every week or two to prevent problems. If the tank is in really bad shape you may have to break the whole thing down and clean everything. This is a last resort however. A complete breakdown, besides being a lot of work and mess, causes a LOT of stress on your fishes. You'll probably end up losing some, if not all, of them. Which leads us very nicely into the next paragraph—

The second subgroup of "decaying organic matter" is dead fish, or snails, or crabs, etc. When you notice your water getting cloudy do a quick inventory of your fishes etc. If someone is missing start searching for the body. (First decaying organic matter, then foul smells, now decaying bodies. I'm afraid to look at the next paragraph). It probably won't be in plain sight or you would have, or at least should have, noticed it before the water began to cloud. You've probably heard of the "elephants graveyard", where all of the elephants go to die, well there's a fishes graveyard too. It's hidden in the most inaccesable part of your tank. Often when a fish is very sick or weak it will find some very hidden spot to wedge itself into so that the other fishes don't pick on it. This is where it will end up dying. To get rid of this cloudiness the first thing to do is to remove the body, or what's left of it. Put it in the trash, don't flush it. There's always a chance that you will be releasing some exotic disease or parasite into the local environment. Next change the filter, especially the carbon. This is also important with the other types of cloudiness in this group. Use a good grade of carbon. You can usually, but not always, tell this by the price. If you've been using the cheap stuff you'll be amazed at the difference switching will make. If simply changing the filter isn't enough try a small water change. Extra acration will also help.

The third subgroup is dead plants. These are usually more obvious than dead fish and if you use a little common sense they will be removed long before they cause a problem. If not, the solution is the same as for dead fish. Give your plants plenty of good light (try full spectrum bulbs) and you shouldn't have a problem. Also be sure what you are buying is a true aquatic plant and not a house or bog plant being passed off as aquatic. (Wait a minute! What a let down. There was nothing gross and disgusting in that paragraph at all.)

The final type of cloudiness is greenish cloudiness. This is due to algae in the water, all of the previous types where caused by bacteria. This type is caused by either too much light or an excess of organic matter in the water. The two together can give you some real pea soup. Changing part of the water or adding algicides are only temporary solutions to this problem. To solve it for good you must get to the root of the problem. Try adding more live plants

to your tank. Live plants DO NOT cause algae. I don't know where people get this idea but it is a very common one. Live plants will reduce the algae by competing with it for nutrients and creating shade. If adding plants doesn't help the next thing to do is cut back on feeding to reduce the excess nutrients that the algae is feeding on. (Reread paragraph number three, remember what those fish think of you?). If you are still having problems try reducing the amount of light that the tank is getting. Is it getting a lot of direct sunlight from a window? Remember that sunlight shifts with the changing seasons. A tank that is fine during one season can suddenly develop problems when the light shifts. If the tank is too near a window close the curtains during the day if you can or move the tank. Direct sunlight can also cause a small tank to overheat easily and then cool rapidly when the sungoes down. This will quite often lead to "decaying organic matter" subgroup II (ie. dead fish). If the tank is not getting too much sunlight is it getting too much artificial light? How long are you leaving your light on? DO NOT leave your light on 24 hours a day! Think!, does the sun shine on the Amazon, or any place else that aquarium fish come from, 24 hours a day? The fishes and plants need a dark period every day. I know what a lot of you are saying right now- "but I need the light for heat". DO NOT USE THE LIGHT AS A HEATER!!! Besides causing an algae problem you can't regulate the temperature. When the lights on the temperature rises, when you turn it off it drops. Glance back a few lines to see what this causes if you've forgotten. Don't be such a cheapskate, buy yourself a heater. They aren't all that expensive and they certainly use a lot less electricity that a light left on all of the time.

In conclusion- there are two basic rules that will make aquarium keeping much easier for you:

1. as mentioned at the begining, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

2. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". ie. don't overfeed, look at your tank often enough to notice if there is a fish misssing, and make regular partial water changes (small changes more often are better than big irregular changes.)etc.

Follow these rules and you'll be much more successful, AND have clear water.



CONTACT: GINA M. SHAW (202) 377-2826

THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM ANNOUNCES RECORD VISITATION FOR SUMMER '91

WASHINGTON, D.C. ------Visitation at The National Aquarium, America's first aquarium, hit a record high this summer, topping last summer's visitation by over 9 percent. From May through August, 141,397 eager fish lovers packed The Aquarium, compared to 130,399 visitors last summer.

"We're very excited to see such a rapid increase of interest in The Aquarium especially at a time when tourism in general and Washington tourist attractions in particular have been facing a downturn," said Gina Shaw, Director of Programs for The Aquarium. "The National Aquarium is a unique place among Washington's tourist attractions. It's truly a community and national treasure."

David Gross, Director of The Aquarium, attributes increased crowds at The Aquarium to audience-pleasing special events such as Shark Day '91, and to improved exhibit quality and fascinating new specimens and tanks. "We recently unveiled a special exhibit on the Great Lakes, sponsored by the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association." Gross commented. "Also, since we had just released our popular loggerhead sea turtles, George and Barbara, we've brought in three new baby loggerhead turtles." The new baby sea turtles have already become favorites among visitors, and The Aquarium plans a "Name the Baby Sea Turtles" event for later this fall.

The National Aquarium displays more than 1,200 specimens representing 250 fresh- and salt-water species from around the world in 70 naturalistic habitat tanks ranging in size from 50 to 6,000 gallons. While the "jaws"-type predators attract the most gasps, visitors are also fascinated by moray and electric eels, lung fish that can survive up to two years out of water, sea horses, colorful anemones, venomous lionfish and the tripletail, the aquarium's best camouflage artist.

More than 300,000 people, 100,000 of them children, visit The National Aquarium each year. Low admission fees (\$2.00 for adults, 75 cents for children and senior citizens) are charged to cover operational expenses and keep the Aquarium swimming. This small cost allows many visitors the opportunity to see and learn about aquatic life for the first time. The National Aquarium encourages contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals to help expand educational programs, sponsor exhibit tanks and underwrite free admission for D.C. public school children.

The National Aquarium is open seven days a week 9-5 (closed December 25). For general information, phone (202) 377-2825; for group tours, rental or membership information, phone (202) 377-2826.

(End)

## DOTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY



POST OFFICE BOX 6219 SHIRLINGTON STATION ARLINGTON VIRGINIA 22206

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Date:	19	
Name:		
Street:		Apartment:
City:	State:	ZIP:
Telephone H:	W:	
Occupation:		and the same of th
Where did you hear about I		
Number of tanks:		
What can this club do for		
What do you want to do for		

Membership dues for the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society are:

Family/Individual: \$12/yr Corresponding: \$ 9/yr Junior (under 18): \$ 5/yr

Please send application and check for dues to the address above.

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PETS-N-THINGS Pan American Center 3081 Nutley Street Fairfax, VA 22031 573-4400

SUNSHINE PETS 7395-H Lee Highway Falls Church, VA 22042 573-6946

TANKS-A-LOT Lee Center 6635 Backlick Road Springfield, VA 22150 703-866-1057

WILSON'S PARROTS & MARINE Shirley-Edsall Industrial Park 5605-G General Washington Dr Alexandria, VA 22312 922-7358

#### POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY P.O. Box 6219, Shirlington Station Arlington, Virginia 22206-0219

#### THE SOCIETY WILL MEET ON THESE MONDAYS IN 1991:

14 JAN	8 APR	8 JUL	21 OCT
11 FEB	13 MAY	12 AUG	11 NOV
11 MAR	10 JUN	9 SEP	9 DEC

Meetings are held at the John J. Wood Facility, Room 7, 3730 Old Lee Highway (Rt 237), Fairfax City, VA. Doors open at 7:30, and the meeting starts at 8PM. ALL ARE WELCOME!

