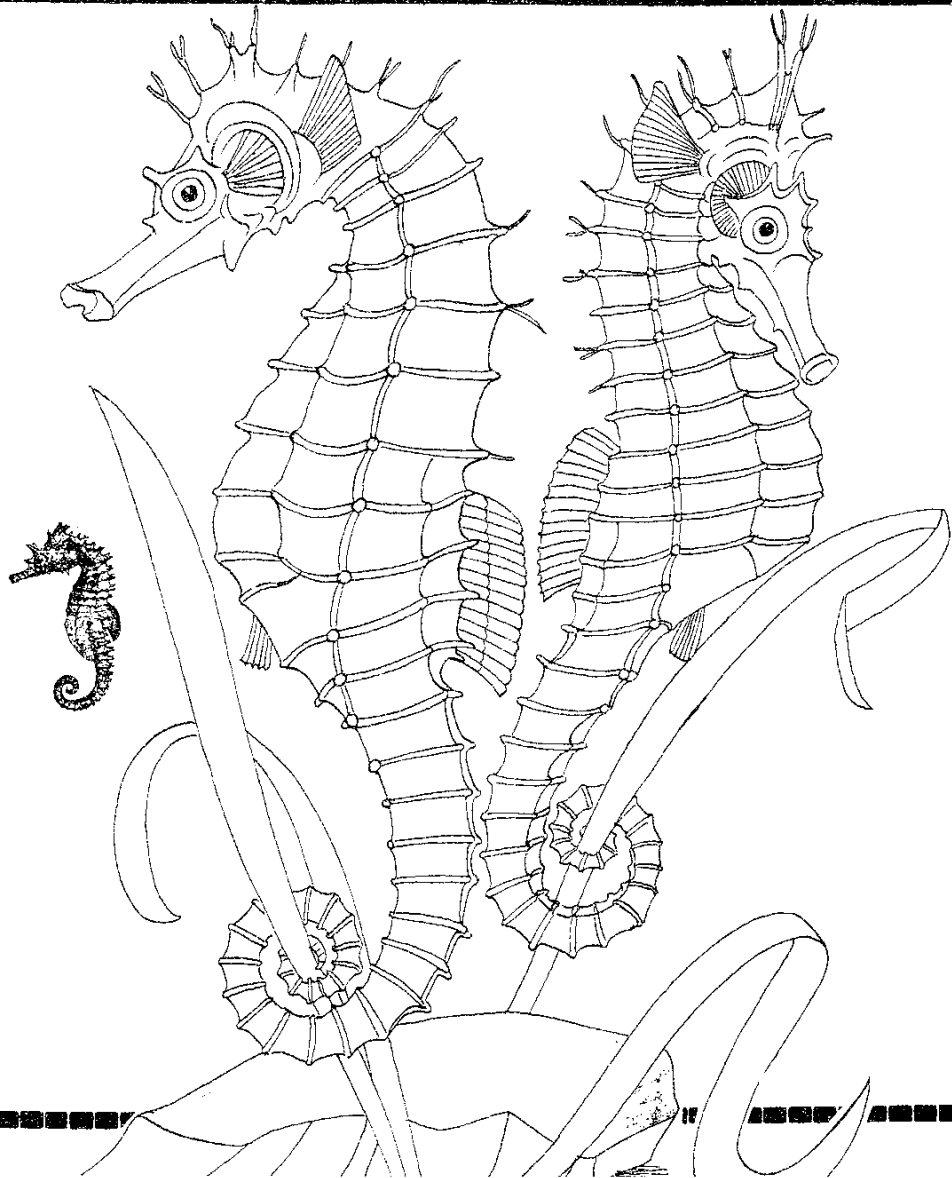


* DELTA TALE *

March/April
1998
Vol. 29, #2

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

potomac valley aquarium society



The *Delta Tale* is published bimonthly for the benefit of the membership of the POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY INC. , a non-profit educational and social organization . The society was founded in 1960 for the purposes of furthering the aquarium hobby by the dissemination of information and advice, and the promotion of good fellowship among the membership by organized activities and competitions.

All correspondence to the society and to *Delta Tale* should be directed to P.O. Box 664, Merrifield, VA 22116.

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PVAS Web site: <http://www.erols.com/dsnell/pvas.htm>

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Printed by TOP CAT PRINTING, Manassas Park, Va.

Frum the editor's desk

Our March Auction wasn't the longest we've ever had, believe it or not, but it sure came close. Only one that any of us can remember was longer. If you weren't there you missed a chance to get all kinds of great stuff. There was a real good mix of fish offered which included lots of rare and unusual stuff. The next one will be June 28, same location. Watch for more info in the next issue.

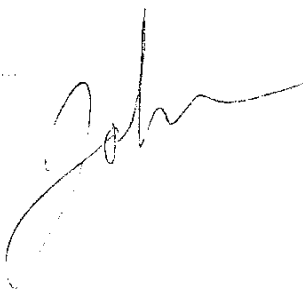
Thanks to Jim Karanikas and Tropical Fish World for hosting our March meeting. Jim gave a very interesting and informative talk on fish diseases. Jim, and other local shop owners, do a lot to help our organization and our hobby. They work long, hard hours just to make a living. Just because they charge a little more for some things than the mail order catalog or superstore doesn't mean they're getting rich off of you. They're not, trust me, I know only too well. Our hobby couldn't continue to exist without them, at least in a form we'd want to be involved with. Give them your support, and your business.

Thanks to Dave Snell for hosting our first 1998 fishroom tour. Dave has a very interesting collection of fishes and everyone seemed to have a good time. If you are interested in hosting a tour of your fishroom sometime please contact Dave, or any other current PVAS officer.


Dave, and Don Kinyon, are trying to set up a "Breeder's Registry" on the PVAS web site. Please give Dave or Don a list of fish, plants, live foods, other hobby interests, that can be added to the registry. People can then use the information to find others with similar interests or someone that can give them advice on how to keep or breed a certain fish, etc. Bring your list to a meeting or e-mail: Dave - dsnell@erols.com


Don - dkinyon@shentel.net

Until next time...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", written in a cursive style.

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

 For up to the minute information on what's happening call the free PVAS hotline anytime. (703) 352-3365.

 Check out the PVAS Web site at <http://www.crols.com/dsnell/pvas.htm>

April 13: PVAS Monthly Meeting. Program, bowl show, raffle, door prize, refreshments, mini-auction, and lots more. Everyone is welcome, even if your secretly taping our conversations (I haven't gotten a subpoena to appear before the grand jury and I'm feeling left out). Doors open at 7:30pm meeting starts at 8:00. Extra parking available in the school parking lot next door.

April 24 - 26: American Livebearer Association Convention, Akron, Ohio. Speakers (Derek Lambert, Shane Webb, Ray Lucas, Rusty Wessel, Rich Serva, more tba), banquet, auction, etc. See John Mangan for more info or contact Rich Serva, 5407 S. Celeste View Dr., Stow, OH 44224 for registration packet.

May 11: PVAS Monthly Meeting

June 8: PVAS monthly meeting.

June 28: PVAS Summer Auction. Quality Suites Hotel, Rockville, MD.

July 13: PVAS Monthly Meeting

Aug. 10: PVAS Monthly Meeting

Sept. 14: PVAS Monthly Meeting

Oct. 19: PVAS Monthly Meeting

Nov. 7 - 8: PVAS Fall Auction & Workshop

Nov. 9(?): PVAS Monthly Meeting

Dec. 8: PVAS Holiday Dinner & Party.

If you know of any "fishy" happenings let me know and they can be included here.

J.M.

Breeding the Pygmy Corydoras *Corydoras pygmaeus*

by Don Kinyon, PVAS

I have a group of six of these little catfish that I bought at the fall auction. They were housed in a five gallon tank right next to a tank of *Corydoras habrosus* that I was trying to get to breed. While checking temperature, barometric pressure, and doing water changes to one, I treated the other the same way; and the *C. pygmaeus* responded better, or at least first.

The fish all ate well, and soon it was apparent that there were three males and three females in the group. With a diet of chopped earthworms, white worms, beefheart, and dry foods, the females were rounded out very quickly. Micro worms seem to be a particular favorite of all of them, in the bare bottom tank they would clean a good number of the worms up in a few seconds.

At first, the fish were kept in straight tap water, 7.4 pH and hardness of about 8 degrees on the German scale, but as a low pressure area moved in, I started doing water changes with rain water. I changed about 20% every day as long as the barometric pressure stayed fairly low. Neither the tank water nor rain water was temperature regulated. The rain water drum in my fish room is on an outside wall, so it was naturally a few degrees cooler; about 70 degrees.

After a week of this, the fish started to spawn. They laid a few eggs each day for five or six days, then stopped. I pulled the parents out at this time to take away any temptation to eat the eggs, even though they paid no attention to them.

In five more days under the same conditions, the eggs hatched, and in one more day, the young fish started to swim around the tank. I've read that the young need to surface soon after they hatch, but was unable to witness this. They started to feed almost immediately on micro worms and newly hatched brine shrimp. It had been hard to count the eggs, spread all over the tank as they were, but I ended up with about thirty-five fry. I had no place to put them for a few weeks, so they got a water change about every second day for the first month, then they were large enough to share a larger tank with some other *Corydoras*. They continue to grow well, and the parents have since spawned again.

Totally Fish
and the National Geographic Society

Totally Fish, Silver Spring, MD

On March 6th, the National Geographic Society came to our store, Totally Fish, to film one of their Explorer TV programs. The title of the program is "Urban Piranha". The program is about captive piranha and their owners.

National Geographic wanted to know all about the piranha's behavior and habits in a captive environment as compared to the wild environment of South America. They also wanted to know about the people keeping piranha and their reasoning for owning such fish.

While in our store, they filmed baby Red Bellies, adult Red Bellies, and an adult Black piranha. They did the program in a format that showed the Host as a customer who came in, asked all kinds of questions, and finally purchased a piranha. Our fish room manager, Matt Portland, was the person filmed with the host. They actually did buy a Red Belly piranha to take back to New England to show the fish in the gentleman's home. They also contacted a few of our customers to get a feel of "who" would want such "nasty" fish as pets. The program should prove interesting.

The program is scheduled to air on Sunday, April 19, on cable channel TBS, National Geographic Explorer.

Corydoras Catfishes

by Dr. Warren E. Burgess
TFH Publications WW-046
ISBN 0-7938-212-1

A Review by
Gene Moy, PVAS

With the increasing interest in specialty fishes and populations, recent book and magazines have begun to focus on these specialty areas. Popular topics are African cichlids, Discus, and catfishes. African cichlids of East Africa, to include Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika, and Lake Victoria, are very popular. As are discus, which continue to have their following. Catfishes that are popular belong to the Loricariidae, and *Corydoras*.

I first saw a reference to this book in the Winter 1998 catalog from That Fish Place. I had an opportunity to stop by their retail outlet and decided to look for this new book. Unfortunately, the book was not in stock. So when I was at the Aquarium Center a week later, and saw the book, I was delighted. Upon closer inspection, this book was found to be identical to the quarterly published by TFH, titled *Corydoras and Related Catfishes*. I decided to buy the book anyway because the store had discounted the book to \$7.99 from the publisher's suggested retail of \$12.95.

The book is organized to cover the family *Callichthyidae*, to which *Corydoras* belong. An introduction starts on page 4 to the *Callichthyidae*, armored fresh-water catfishes. Information on identification and features of the family are provided. The first part of the book presents the subfamily *Callichthyinae*, while the second part discusses the subfamily *Corydorandinae*. About 1/2 of the book discusses the genus *Corydoras*. Many photographs of fishes, a few on their habitat and miscellany are included in the book.

The subfamily *Callichthyinae* is said to contain three genera: *Catphractops*, *Dianema*, and *Callichthyis*. These fish are sometimes available in stores, and include flag tail cats and hoplo cats. From the pictures in the book, all three genera look similar in shape.

The subfamily *Corydorandinae* include three genera: *Aspidoras*, *Brochis*, *Corydoras*. The book devotes a couple of pages to *Aspidoras*, smallish Cory look-alikes; and a few pages to *Brochis*, the giants among this subfamily. The remaining 29 pages discusses *Corydoras*, providing the Nijseen (1980) grouping. These pages describe details for several species including: their natural range; water requirement and breeding.

Corydoras Catfishes is a large format (8" x 11") hard bound book version of the magazine (soft-bound) *Corydoras & Related Catfishes*. The last page number of 64 is slightly misleading as the text of the introduction does not start until page 4, after a preface, unit conversions, and the table of contents. The covers of the book as well as the photographs of the book are coated with a glossy finish. Although I like pictures, several of the book's pages are taken up by full page or even 2 page photographs. The title of the book a bit misleading, whereas the title of the magazine quarterly is more accurate. The book does not have the TFH advertising inserts found in the magazine.

I find that this book is a bit on the thin side, but a good introduction to *Corydoras* and their kin. If you do not have any other reference on Corys, and can pick up the book at a discount, by all means buy this book. But the words "A Complete Authoritative Guide" is stretching it.



← Dave Snell's house
after the fishroom
tour.

"Well, that's the last of 'em... But
just look at this place!"

Heros appendiculatus
Turquoise Severum

by Gene Moy, PVAS

Severums have been favorites of mine for quite a while. I've kept *Heros severus*, both the green and the aquarium developed gold strain. A recent introduction is the turquoise severum, *Heros appendiculatus*, from Peru.

A friend gave me the custody of three adult turquoise severums, two males and a female, as he started to run out of room in his tanks. The larger male was about 6", the smaller was about 5", and the female was only 4". My friend had previously bred the larger male with the female and raised the fry artificially.

I placed the pair into a 29 gallon tank with 3mm gravel and a clay flower pot. The female soon laid eggs. Before the eggs could hatch, the pair ate them. The adults were rather young, so I gave them another chance. A month later the eggs did hatch, but the parents ate the fry.

At this point I decided to switch males. This seemed to have helped some, but I only managed to raise a few fry.

The second attempt with the smaller male finally succeeded. I guess I have this hang-up about cichlids raising their young. A number of the eggs proved infertile. I soon had 50 or more swimming fry.

As I was running out of tank space, I spoke to my friend and we agreed to sell the adults at the fall auction.

Of the 50 or so fry, I did manage to raise ten. I don't know that turquoise severums are any less hardy, but more to my routine care.

Corydoras paleatus

by Don Kinyon, PVAS

This has got to be one of the easiest catfish to raise and spawn. When I traded for three young ones at a local pet shop, I had no idea how soon they would multiply into so many tiny catfish.

A few weeks after I got the new catfish home, I found that I had two males and a female. I thought they were much too small for breeding purposes, so I put them in their own tank and fed them on a diet of earthworms, bloodworms, white worms, brine shrimp, and various prepared foods. The water I used was mostly collected rain water with a pH of 6.2 and room temperature, which varied from 73 to 80 degrees F. In just a few weeks of this diet, along with a twice weekly fifty percent water change, the fish started to spawn, though they had grown very little.

The first and second spawnings were not successful, but the third time they laid about sixty eggs, half of which didn't fungus, and about twenty hatched. The parents didn't seem too interested in eating the eggs, but I removed them when all the eggs were laid. Hatching took place in ten days and the young seemed to swim almost immediately.

The babies grew slowly, but seemed active and healthy feeding on newly hatched brine shrimp, micro worms, and almost everything the parents ate, finely chopped. By one month they were on quarter inch in length, and by two months most were nearly a half an inch.

The parents have since spawned many more times, and I have baby catfish of various sizes in most of my tanks.

Fish Store Customers: "Be All That You Can Be"

by Barry Nab

As the owner of a fish store that caters to all hobbyists from beginner to advanced fishkeepers, I have pretty much seen it all or heard it all at one time or another. The purpose of this article is to give you a few pointers on how to be a good fish store customer, the kind of customer that the store employees will be happy to see walk through the door. Since many of you are experienced hobbyists, you are probably already doing most or maybe all of these things.

1) Get your advice where you spend your money and spend your money where you get your advice.

As a former fish store patron, I am quite amazed at the number of people who want to spend their money at one store but get most or all of their free advice at another. Many phone calls start something like this: "I just bought fill-in-the-blank at *The Other Fish Store*, what can you tell me about it?" "Well, I can tell you that you dialed the wrong number. The number for *The Other Fish Store* is 555-1212." That's what I would like to say, but instead I bite my tongue and do my best to give them the required information so that they will be satisfied with the product or livestock that they bought from someone else.

Would you call up a Chrysler dealer and ask if there's supposed to be dual air bags on your new Ford? Would you call Burger King and tell them that you just ate at Wendy's and would they be kind enough to evaluate the nutritional content of your recent meal? Probably not. I suggest that you don't call Store A and ask them what to feed the fish that you just bought at Store B.

Small stores are never operating with a large surplus of cash which means that every sale is important to them. Buying product at a different store is the customer's prerogative, but don't throw gas on a fire by telling Store A about what you bought at Store B. Giving advice to customers can be very time consuming. Most merchants are willing to do it because they want to provide good services and they want to give you a reason to come back to their store. The aquarium hobby is very "info-intensive", which leads me to believe that someday there will be a fee charged for giving advice. Everyone talks about the "information highway", what they don't tell you is that it is a toll road.

2) Buy one or more good books and refer to them often.

Most aquarium society members understand the value of having access to the good fishkeeping books that are available. However, you would be amazed at how many beginners are unwilling to buy a book. They are more willing to spend \$75 to \$300 on a tank and all the equipment, then another \$20 to \$100 on fish to inhabit their new toy. But

they won't spend even \$10 on a book to learn the basic techniques that will allow them to enjoy their purchases.

The perfect aquarium book is yet to be written. Many books contradict one another and sometimes chapter three will contradict chapter two of the very same book. This just goes to show that there is more than one way to successfully maintain an aquarium. Many people will gain experience in the hobby via trial and error. This is fine although I believe that they will have more success and will enjoy it more if they learn some of the basics before diving in. This is an area where aquarium society members can make an impact. If a friend or relative expresses an interest in starting an aquarium, give them a book as a gift or at least recommend a particular book to them.

3) Buy test kits and use them on a regular basis - especially if you are having a problem with a tank.

I believe that the vast majority of fish deaths are caused by poor water conditions, most of which can be detected by simple water test kits. When a fish dies, many hobbyists immediately assume that it died from a disease. "All my fish got ich one day and they dead the next" is a line that I have heard from time to time. I try to explain to these people that these parasites do not kill that quickly, but that ammonia or nitrate can.

When a hobbyist calls or come into the store because he/she thinks that there is something wrong with his/her fish, the first thing I want to know is if he/she has tested the water. Usually the answer is "No" or "Yes, the pH is fine". It's nice to know that the pH is within the acceptable range, but pH is not much of a fish killer. Ammonia and nitrite levels are much more important when it comes to identifying problems in a fish tank.

A freshwater hobbyist should be armed with the following test kits: ammonia, nitrite, and pH. For breeding purposes, a hardness kit can be added. A saltwater hobbyist should be armed (and they usually are) with most of the test kits that are available. For some reason unknown to me, beginning marine hobbyists are almost always willing to buy and use test kits, but beginning freshwater hobbyists are not.

4) Do not expect your fish store to buy your fish or trade with you a "retail".

As with any other business, a fish store has to make a profit to keep the doors open. If you have 100 baby convicts that you would like to sell to a store for merchandise, you have to be realistic in your expectations about what you can get for them. Fish that are easy to breed and raise do not cost very much on the wholesale market, and young fish are worth considerably less. If you want to trade in your fish for their retail value, then you will be disappointed.

Another typical phone conversation:

Customer: I'm calling to see if you buy fish.

Store: Yes, I buy fish all the time from as many as eight different wholesale suppliers.

Customer: No, I mean from an individual like me.

Store: Well, sometimes yes, sometimes no. I will sometimes buy fish under certain circumstances and only at wholesale prices.

Customer: What are the "certain circumstances"?

Store: I will buy fish if they are of a variety that I feel I can sell, if they are of an appropriate size that I can sell, if they are at a reasonable price that still allows me to make a profit.

Customer: Oh, well I bought this fish for \$20. Can I trade it in for merchandise valued at \$20?

Store: I don't think you're following me. If I take in your fish for full retail value, then I am losing money on this transaction. Besides, I then have to feed this fish and have no guarantee that I will ever sell it.

Customer: Oh, so what you're saying is that you don't buy fish.

Store: Correct. It's been a pleasure not doing business with you.

I admit that this "typical" phone call may not be all that typical. I particularly took some liberties with the store responses by adding some things that I would want to say, but probably wouldn't. The point of all of this is that you have to remember that a fish store needs to be a viable economic entity, not just a fun place where fish hang out. Most fish store owners want to help out their customers whenever possible. But don't make it seem like these owners owe you something.

5) Be willing to assume some responsibility for keeping your fish alive and healthy.

Beginning and intermediate aquarists do not always have the best of luck in keeping their fish alive. This is understandable since they need to acquire more experience in order to reduce the number of fishkeeping mistakes that might be made. However, anyone should be willing to take responsibility for the fish that are in their care. When an aquarist has a problem with a newly purchased fish, his/her most common reaction is to blame the store. Now I'm not trying to say that the store is never to blame, just that we need to examine the circumstances before trying to affix the blame for a problem. Fish are placed under great stress when they get moved around. A fish may go through a very tumultuous ride before it finally arrives in the hobbyist's tank. Unfortunately, that is the nature of the hobby. There is really no way around this problem. Because the fish is already under stress, it is up to the hobbyist to provide the best conditions possible for this fish when it arrives at its final destination.

If a new fish is placed in a tank with unacceptable conditions (particularly ammonia, nitrite, pH, chlorine, oxygen, temperature, and/or vicious tankmates), then you can expect this weakened fish to get weaker still. Some just give out. However, many fish are quite

resilient. They can bounce back very quickly if put in the right environment. The first 48 hours in the new tank are the most critical.

Most (but not all) fish stores offer some sort of guarantee. They have some sort of replacement policy in case a newly purchased fish dies. Advanced hobbyists are rarely concerned with this guarantee because they would rarely need to use it. Beginning aquarists are much more concerned about a guarantee because they are much more likely to use it. A "fair" fish guarantee is one that balances the interests of both parties. If the fish store did sell an unhealthy fish (most would never do so knowingly), then they should be responsible for replacing the fish or refunding the customer's money. However, if the cause of death is due to hobbyist error, then the hobbyist should bear that responsibility. That's why many fish stores want to test a sample of the aquarium water - to determine if there is an identifiable reason for the fish's demise.

In a logical world, that is the way the fish guarantee would operate. However, life just isn't that simple. The pet superstores have made a big splash in the market by offering "unconditional replacement guarantees" for as many as fourteen days from the time of purchase. This unconditional guarantee means that they will replace dead fish during this time period regardless of why the fish died. This is crazy! If you buy a discus and put it into a 70 degree tank with a high pH and high ammonia, you can expect that discus to die. Just rot down to the superstore and they'll give you another one to take home and put into that same tank. In my opinion, this type of guarantee promotes irresponsible fishkeeping and is sending an indirect message to the new hobbyist that they don't have to learn how to care for a fish because the store will replace the fish when it dies. My advice on purchasing fish: buy your fish from a reputable, knowledgeable dealer regardless of whether they have a guarantee. Then take responsibility for keeping the fish alive once you get home.

This list of five suggestions is not intended to offend anyone, nor is it intended to imply that all fish store customers need a lesson in consumerism. I have no doubts that many serious aquarists already do the things that I have discussed in this article. I'm also quite sure that many hobbyists have suggestions for how a fish store could better meet their needs. Why not put those ideas on paper in the form of an article for your aquarium society? Just a thought.

Reprinted From "Aqua News", Minnesota Aquarium Society

Breeder's Award Program

BAP Checkers:

Annandale/Falls Church area: Jeff Burke (703) 941-3230
Montgomery County: Ray Hughes (301) 424- 3531
Montgomery County: Wayne Considine (301) 977-5973
Mt. Vernon/Olde Town area: Gene Moy (703) 765- 0865
Oakton/Vienna area: Rick McKay (703) 281- 1647
Occoquan/Lake Ridge area: John Mangan (703) 491-4980
Prince George's County: Lorne E. Williams (301) 630-7674
Springfield/Franconia area: Pete Thrift (703) 971-0594
Warrenton/Manassas area: Gerry Hoffman (540) 347-7486

We still could use some more checkers. There are a number of areas where we don't have anyone. Even if there is someone already listed for your area we could always use someone else to help spread the work around.

BAP Standings:

Breeders Award *
Intermediate Breeder **
Advanced Breeder***
Master Breeder****
Grand Master Breeder*****

Jeffrey Burke 445***
Don Kinyon 275**
John Mangan 155**
Gene Moy 115*
Lorne Williams 75*
Gerry Hoffman 10 +
Dave Snell 10

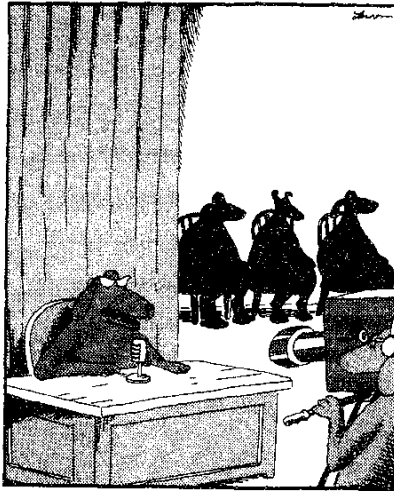
Recent activity: Don Kinyon receives 15 points for *Apistogramma caucatoides* "Triple Red", and 25 points for "Green Tetra" *Hemigrammus hyanuary* (tentative id). Gene Moy receives 30 points for *Heros appendiculatus*, the Turquoise Severum.

TRADING POST

PVAS members may advertise in the trading post at no charge. Send ads to *Delta Tale*, c/o John Mangan, 12633, Oakwood Dr. Woodbridge, VA 22192.

For Sale: backissue aquarium magazines. Many different titles. Send SASE for catalog.
For Sale: Plastic fish bags. Standard thickness and 3 mil extra heavy. Several sizes of each will be available at PVAS monthly meetings and Auctions.

John Mangan, 12633 Oakwood Dr., Woodbridge, VA 22192.



"Dogs that drink from the toilet bowl —
after this."

Tired of watching stuff like
this on TV? Come to a PVAS
meeting instead.

POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY
PO BOX 664, Merrifield, VA 22116

Application for Membership

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street: _____ Apt. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Optional information:

Occupation: _____

Where did you here about PVAS/get this application? _____

Number of aquariums: _____ Time in the hobby: _____

Special interests: (e.g., catfish, cichlids, etc.) _____

Reason for joining: _____

Membership dues for PVAS are:

Individual/Family: \$12/yr

Corresponding: \$ 9/yr

Junior (under 18) \$ 5/yr

Please send application and check to the address above.

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361-7769

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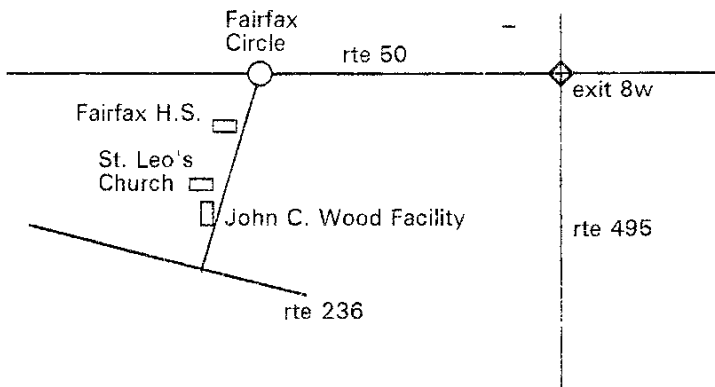
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and thrive without them.

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PO Box 664
Merrifield, VA 22116



Meetings are held at the John C. Wood Facility, 3730 Old Lee Hgwy. (rte 237), Fairfax City, VA. Room 7 (in the rear of the building). Doors open at 7:30, meetings start at 8:00. Everyone is welcome.