

DELTA TALK

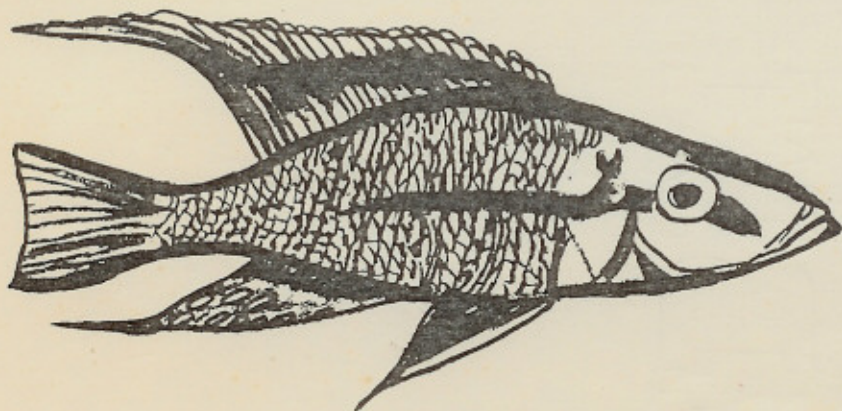
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papers

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Haplochromis compressiceps

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.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Susan Sprague
 Staff Writers Ruth Brewer, Jerry Meola

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Front cover Haplochromis compressiceps male

1975 Meeting Dates

Jan. 13	April 14	July 14	Oct. 13
Feb. 10	May 12	Aug. 11	Nov. 17
March 10	June 9	Sept. 8	Dec. 8

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

The Board of Governors met at the Story residence on May 6 with nine members present. Final planning for the spring show was the priority item on the agenda. Bob Smith reported that his crews were appointed for loading and assembling, registration and judging. Carl Hardy said that he has been in contact with people in Richmond and an unusually large number of entries could be expected and plans were discussed to handle this. Mary Hardy reported that she had enough donations of food for the refreshment stand, but needed help in handling the stands. Susan Sprague brought up the question of advertising and this was tabled until after the membership meeting on May 12. Jerry Meola will have a projector for use during the auction and it was suggested that we ask Steve Siska for help in manning this. Ruth Brewer was asked to get in touch with the O'Connell club for volunteers in the Saturday morning benching. Following the discussion of the show, Chuck Story reported that he and Susan Sprague had held talks with another printer and that it seemed possible to go back to the old format which has more appeal to prospective advertisers. The Breeders Award Program was reviewed briefly and it was decided to set February 15 the last date for spawns to be accepted under the retroactive rule. All entries under this rule must be completed by June 15. Bob Smith brought the two bowl shows that are missing from 1975 (January and June) and it was agreed to revise the schedule for November as follows: Cichlids: angels rift lake-all, other African-all; Egglayers: bettas, corydoras, open; Guppies: green, half-black red, AOC.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth Brewer, Recording Secy.

MEETING NOTICE

Remember that our June 9th meeting will be at the National Aquarium. We expect everyone to be there by 8:00pm so we can have plenty of time to see the sights.

Because the meeting is not at the coke plant, we will not be having a bowl show in June. We figure it's too much hassle to drag fish all the way into town.

CHANGE TO THE BOWL SHOW
NOVEMBER 17, 1975

Guppy: Green, H/B Red, AOC
Cichlid: Angelfish, Riftlake all, Other African all
Other: Bettas, Corydoras catfish, Open

Remember that November is for double points.

Bob Smith
Vice-President

BREEDER'S AWARD PROGRAM

The Breeder's Award Committee is accepting spawnings retroactively under the following conditions. Spawning must have occurred on or after February 15, 1975. All appropriate documentation must be completed and received by the Breeder's Award Chairman, Gene Aldridge, on or before June 15, 1975. Since oral presentations cannot be accepted at the June meeting, entrants must submit a written summary of spawning procedure as part of this appropriate documentation for fifteen (15) point and above category fish.

TRADING POST

Carl & Mary Hardy 765-1940
G. pellegrini 1½-2" \$1.00

Susan & Mike Sprague 534-7487
L. brichardi 1½-2" \$2.00
P. zebra (cobalt)
male 4" 7.50
M. simulans male 5" 5.00

BOWL SHOW RESULTS AND STANDINGS
May 12, 1975

GUPPY

No entries

CICHLID

a. Angelfish b.pr.
b. Mbunas
c. Other

1st
Lloyd
Aldridge
Jessup

2nd
McInturff
Aldridge
Jessup

3rd
Long
Jessup
Jessup

EGGLAYER/LIVEBEARER

a. Tetras
b. Characins
c. Other

H. Gaines
B. Hardy
J. Gaines

H. Gaines
M. Young
B. Hardy

J. Gaines

J. Gaines

POINT STATUS

CICHLID

	<u>May</u>	<u>Qtr.</u>	<u>Ann'l</u>
Jessup	12	25	58
Aldridge	8	12	18
Sprague	-	-	13
Gaines, J.	-	8	12
Lloyd	5	8	12
McInturff	-	3	3
Long	2	2	2
Qtr. award		Jessup	

EGGLAYER/LIVEBEARER

	<u>May</u>	<u>Qtr.</u>	<u>Ann'l</u>
Hardy, B.	10	21	38
Gaines, J.	10	19	35
Gaines, H.	7	7	10
Aldridge	-	9	9
Lloyd	-	2	7
Nixon	-	-	7
Siska	-	4	4
Young, M.	3	3	3
Qtr. award		Hardy, B.	

<u>NATIVE AMERICAN</u>		<u>OPEN</u>	<u>BEST OF SHOW</u>
1st	Glascoek	Meola	Davis
2nd	Lloyd	Williams	
3rd	Denis J. O'Connell Aquarium Society	Mayhew	

CICHLID CLASS (71)

<u>CENTRAL/SO. AMERICAN NON-DWARF</u>		<u>CENTRAL/SO. AMERICAN DWARF</u>	<u>ANGELFISH</u>
1st	Jessup	Hardy	Owens
2nd	Gaines	McInturff	Owens
3rd	Williams	Jessup	Owens

AFRICAN

<u>RIFTLAKE MBUNA</u>		<u>RIFTLAKE NON-MBUNA</u>	<u>TILAPIA</u>
1st	Hudson	Gaines	Lloyd
2nd	Aldridge	Meola	Jessup
3rd	Aldridge	Gaines	--

<u>HAPLOCHROMIS</u>		<u>NON-RIFTLAKE</u>	<u>RIFTLAKE PAIRS (1 M, 1 F)</u>
1st	Meola	Glascoek	Sprague
2nd	Story	Jessup	Meola
3rd	--	McCorkle	Aldridge

<u>NON-RIFTLAKE PAIRS (1 M, 1 F)</u>		<u>OPEN</u>	<u>BEST OF SHOW</u>
1st	Hudson	Meola	Gaines
2nd	Jessup	Meola	
3rd	--	Clark	

TOTAL ENTRIES - 273

The POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY wishes to thank the following aquarium shops and individuals for donating items for our raffle:

Springfield Aquarium - 8 oz. can Tetramin
 Gene Aldridge - assorted items
 Chinatown Tropicals - large can Tetramin
 Engleside Pet Shop - Hush I
 James Hanchin (employee of S. Seas Rosehill) - shrimp hatchery
 Korvettes Pet Shops - 20 gal. tank with stand
 Mount Vernon Pet Shop - can of fish food
 National Petland (both shops) - 2-\$10 gift certificates
 P J's Pet Shop - 10 gal. set up
 Puppy Palace, Springfield - 3 stage outside filter
 Steve Siska - 10 gal. tank
 Ye Olde Pet Shoppe - cichlid book
 Aquarium Supply - 29 gal. tank with stand

The whole club is also indebted to all those who helped set up and take down the stands. Thanks to the ladies who prepared all the baked goods and to those who sold them. Also thanks go to the babysitters who give up some of their sleep so that the fish aren't left alone.

By Jerry Meola, PVAS

I have become totally fascinated with the beauty and graceful behavior of the *Haplochromis compressiceps*. I have continued to study them since the spawning I reported in last month's Delta Tale.

I am continually disappointed when I read articles describing the Malawi "eye eater". This description came to my attention again in an exchange bulletin from another club. Typically, the author had never raised the fish. Anyone who has raised the fish will have a much higher regard for them. We are the chosen few.

The description of the fish as an "eye eater" is probably a result of the description in African Cichlids of Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika by Dr. Herbert Axelrod. Most people fail to notice that even this description by Dr. Axelrod contains the notation that the description is one from the natives of Malawi and not one resulting from scientific observations. In their book, Cichlid Fishes of the Great Lakes of Africa, Fryer & Illes studied this allegation and after dissecting numerous fish they concluded that the stomach contents of the fish were typical of *Haplochromis* and there was no evidence of a diet of "eyes" in the stomach contents. Local superstition often attributes characteristics to local animals that are not justified. Does anyone believe the South American knife fish really contains the soul of deceased relatives? The name Ghost Knife remains but the superstition can not be believed. *Haplochromis compressiceps* is a fish that is of no use to the natives of Malawi. It is not heavy enough to be used as a food fish. It is understandable that a "useless" fish is degraded by the natives.

If we study the jaw structure of the fish, it is difficult to picture the fish eating an eye. The lower jaw protrudes forward concealing the mouth. The fish is one of the few *Haplochromis* whose mouth is toward the top of the head slanted downward. Most *Haplochromis* species have a mouth straight back from the middle of the head. Any of these fish would have less difficulty in attacking an eye than *Haplochromis compressiceps*.

All species of animals recognize the need to fight for survival. One of the more desirable attributes of African cichlids is their behavior in aquaria. The fight to survive and maintain territory is always there. A species of animal will fight to survive with a maximum effort. Eyes are the weakest point of an opponent's body. Any species, man included, will attack an opponent's eyes if the need to win is strong enough. A blinded opponent is defeated and a blinded fish can quickly become dinner for another. Any fish who is by nature predatory may attack the eyes of his anticipated dinner, but the danger of such an event in a well fed aquarium is remote. It is much easier to eat food we put in the tanks than to risk a life or death struggle with another. This is true of any species, not only *H. compressiceps*.

I have been attempting to determine if there is any "typical spawning behavior" in the species. I have had two other spawnings this month from which certain conclusions can be proposed.

I have three females, named #1, #2, and #3 naturally. #1 spawned last month and I mentioned that #2 developed eggs in her ovaries rapidly after that spawning as if triggered by the spawning. I had predicted a spawning in a couple of weeks. She spawned three weeks to the day. #1, who had spawned only recently, began to develop eggs rapidly after this spawning by #2. In three days she was bulging and she spawned two weeks later. The spawning of one apparently facilitates further spawning.

The tank had been very rough and territorial. I removed the decorations and lighting to allow the tank to calm down. The tank was empty a week with the compressiceps gone for two days at a show. When the tank was redecorated, the fish peacefully established more reasonable territories. The *H. compressiceps* did not try to breed until the lights were reconnected. The illumination was definitely a factor in all three spawnings.

Three weeks to the day the second spawning began. The water had been changed three days earlier. This had caused a recurring parasite problem I have been unable to trace. The tank was treated with Quick Cure, a mixture of formaldehyde, malachite green and silver oxide, which cured the problem in twelve hours. I do not believe either the water change or the medication had anything to do with the spawning. There was no water change or medication before the third spawning.

Female #2 had continued to fatten after the last breeding well in excess of my beliefs. I think I came close to losing her due to egg binding. The egg tube had been extended for three days, but she had not been able to release eggs. I noticed the tube extended backward rather than down. The eggs were holding it in that position. The egg tube was down after the spawning was complete. She had dropped in excess of one hundred eggs (she is only five and one half inches). The first and third spawnings were both by #1 and her egg tube was always down rather than back.

The light had been off the tank for several days before the second spawning. The male did not attempt to spawn until they were on and then proceeded to spawn immediately. The male had preferred to spawn in the light and in the brightest corner of the tank in all three spawnings. Surprisingly all three spawnings were on Wednesdays when I was home. The first two were early in the day on days I took off from work. The third spawning I had also predicted for a Wednesday on which I worked. I left the lights on as I had on previous occasions to facilitate the spawning. They waited instead until I was home to spawn in front of me. It is possibly coincidence or I may have voyagers but more likely my continual feeding near the other end of the tank may help the spawning by keeping the other fish away.

The male had not cleared an area for the first spawning but proceeded to do so after that spawning. I had destroyed his work when I cleaned the tank. He resumed clearing the area after the tank was redecorated. He had cleared a small area for the second spawning but the eggs were laid on the gravel rather than the clear area. This was not conclusive until the third spawning two weeks later during which time I did not touch the tank. The male continued to clear the front of the tank until he had an area eighteen inches long between the glass and the driftwood. There was a pile of gravel at the end he used as a natural border in his territorial claims.

The area had been cleared to the bottom of the tank but was not especially clean. The females did not help at all. The third spawning again took place on the border between the clear area and the gravel with the eggs on the gravel. The vertical tilting of #1 was not as pronounced in #2. She inclined at about 60 degrees and turned a little sideways to pick up the eggs. When #1 spawned for the second time she also did not need to assume a vertical position because of the hill built by the male. She was able to pick up the eggs in a "normal" spawning circle because the forty five degree hill was a natural incline from which she could approach them perpendicularly. This spawning position was clearly the easiest for the female to pick up the eggs. The jaw structure will always require some adaptation in positioning to enable the female to reach the eggs. This can be accomplished in several different ways as evidenced by these three different methods, two by the same female.

The spawning activity itself is a beautiful sight. The male compressiceps would travel the full six foot length of the tank swimming from the front to the back to attract the female. He was a ribbon of color flashing across the tank. When he had lured the female to his corner, he would bend his body in a half moon away from the female and vibrate rapidly. The female would follow with less bending, but equally active vibrations. In all three spawnings I have noticed that the male prefers to circle clockwise. Several times they did circle counter-clockwise but this would not last more than a few circles. One time the male made one counter-clockwise circle, stopped, paused and changed directions.

Early in the second spawning #2 would drop from one to three eggs at a time, increasing to eight or ten later in the spawning. #2 did not pick up the eggs after circling. Similar to the first spawning of #1, the eggs were left on the gravel. This female, however, left the eggs for a much longer period of time as if she did not know she was to pick them up. She circled for several minutes without picking up any eggs and had over twenty five eggs on the gravel. When she began to pick them up she could not find them all. The circling motion had scattered the eggs as far as eighteen inches from the nesting site. This was her first spawning and some of this behavior can be explained by inexperience. (In the third spawning, #1 did not leave the eggs on the gravel. She did, however, drop eight to ten eggs at a time and picked them up rapidly.) #2 did not search for the eggs very hard and I had anticipated collecting the eggs myself and raising them artificially. The female was finding some of these eggs as much as twenty minutes later. It is quite a tribute to the male's protection that not one egg was eaten by another fish. All the eggs hatched.

The male compressiceps had cleared all the fish from his area prior to spawning except for a *Synodontus nigropintus* catfish. The cat had nested under a rock only inches from the spawning site in plain view of the spawning. The male compressiceps had spent a considerable amount of time trying to dislodge the cat, but the cat had dug a hole in the gravel and was protected by an overhanging rock. The compressiceps spawned with the cat only three inches away. During the early spawning eggs lay as close as one inch from the catfish, but the catfish was never able to venture out to claim a most delectable meal of eggs.

In all three spawnings the male appeared to release sperm at the same time the female released the eggs rather than while circling above the eggs. He never appeared to try to fertilize the eggs while above them.

I used two methods to save the fry to determine if one was preferable. The #2 female was removed from the tank after five days. The tank had been darkened for the entire time since the spawning to prevent a repetition of the earlier loss of fry. (I had left town for four of these days or I would have removed the female after the third day. The tank was not fed during these four days.) I had anticipated her spitting the eggs when netted but this did not happen. She was placed in a twenty gallon tank alone. She released the fry after twenty-one days and continued to care for them for the next three days. I removed her after that time or she would have continued to nurse the fry. The fry were completely without egg sacks. Two or three died the first three days possibly from being weak. I normally like to remove the fry from the parent when they still have egg sacks. This gives both mother and fry more time to gain strength.

#1 female was left in the tank although she had spit the eggs last time. I wanted to learn whether she could carry with the male in the tank. Surprisingly, she had very little difficulty. I was apparently mistaken in my belief that the male had beaten her the last time. As long as she remained on the other end of the tank she was safe. Last time the #2 female had this corner of the tank. She was the apparent culprit last time. The #2 female was removed after eleven days and placed in a breeder net in the same tank as the other female and fry. I can not imagine why I did this, but fortunately there were no problems. #2 took her fry back into her mouth immediately and did not release them for a full day although they were twenty-four days old. When she released them the next day I netted her out and returned her to the big tank. I stripped the #1 female after thirteen days and raised the fry in the breeder net until they could be released. Both methods worked fine and I think almost anything will work. My earlier problems were not typical of the species. I am surprised that both females held the eggs well when netted. They are certainly a hardy fish.

Once the spawnings started they proceeded rapidly. In the second spawning they were so intent on the spawning that I reached into the tank to clean the inside of the glass right where they spawned and they quickly returned and continued. Cleaning the glass was necessary to improve my photography. The best part of these spawnings is that I was able to take twenty photographs of the sequence. In this large tank the spawning should approach as nearly as possible the natural spawning. I am more enthusiastic about the slides than I am about all those fry.

My study of the *Haplochromis compressiceps* ended with this spawning. The male was removed from the tank. The male *Haplochromis fuscotaeniatus* was beginning to compete for territory. I would not like to risk losing either. The *fuscotaeniatus* was beginning to show an interest in his females and that is a spawning I would love to report.

VISIT TO A FISH ROOM

By: Bryce Taller
Reprinted from Oklahoma C'quarist
Sept. 1974

We have had a brief cool spell plus a stormy spell too and the effect on the fish has been quite noticeable. They were much more active and had much better appetites for a few days. There was a great deal of courtship behavior in evidence. In fact we even managed a couple of spawnings. As you can see, the effect of weather on fish continues to preoccupy us. The only problem is, we are not too sure of what we have learned or how to learn more. However, here are some of the ideas we have picked up. We hasten to add that these are not proven facts but merely random observations. Also many factors besides weather may affect the behavior of fishes.

For one thing, it seems to us that it is not the time of year that affects a fishes behavior so much as it is the type of weather that prevails at that time of year. That is to say that if you have a series of storms and a lot of rain late in the summer the fish will react as they do when that type of weather shows up in the spring. Also it seems that fish react to much more than temperature. It is fairly easy to heat the tanks in winter and we can even air condition the fish room in the summer, but this does not alter the fishes behavior too much. A changing barometer pressure seems to have more effect on fish than a steady barometer that is persistently steady; the effects are fairly rapid, usually a matter of minutes. Despite an artificially controlled light environment, that is lights that are turned on and off at a certain time every day, the fish somehow sense the true length of daylight and are influenced by it. Many of our fish seem to go to sleep some hours before we turn the lights off at night. Of course, it may be that they are good for only so many hours after we turn the lights on, and go to sleep at the end of that length of time, whether the lights are off or not. It would be interesting to see if these 'awake' periods vary with the season of the year, though the fish presumably has no way of knowing if it is summer or winter.

In short, some very interesting observations can be made concerning the effect of weather on fishes and if you are to make a serious effort to breed them, you must certainly take the weather and the seasons into account.

Meeting Dates

Board of Governors

June 3 8:00pm
Ruth Brewer
2167 Evans Court
Falls Church, Va.
893-6997

Cichlid group

June 18 8:00pm
Susan & Mike Sprague
6708 N. 18th St.
Arlington, Va.
534-7487