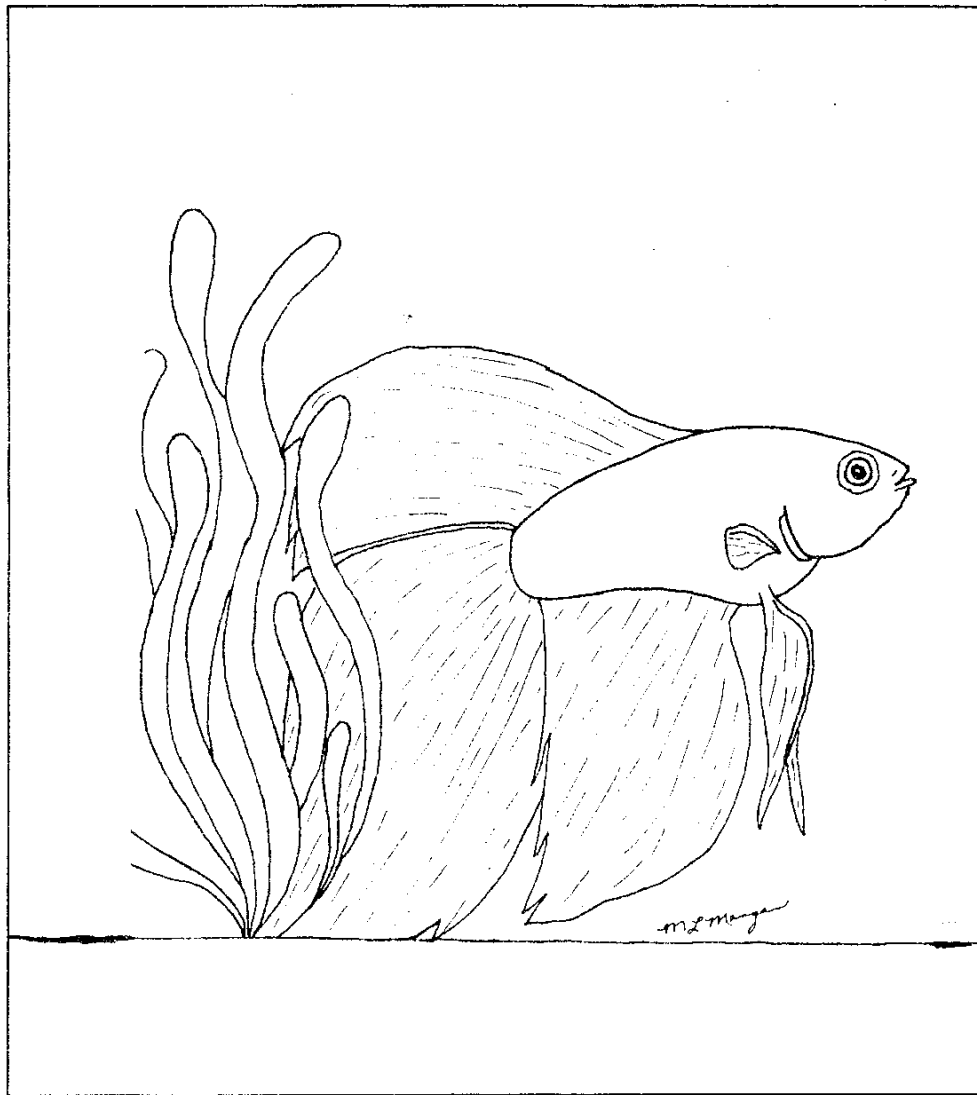


DELTA TALE

Official Publication of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society

Volume 29 • Number 3

May/June 1998



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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 thru the dissemination of information and advice, and the promotion of good fellowship among the membership by organized activities and competitions.

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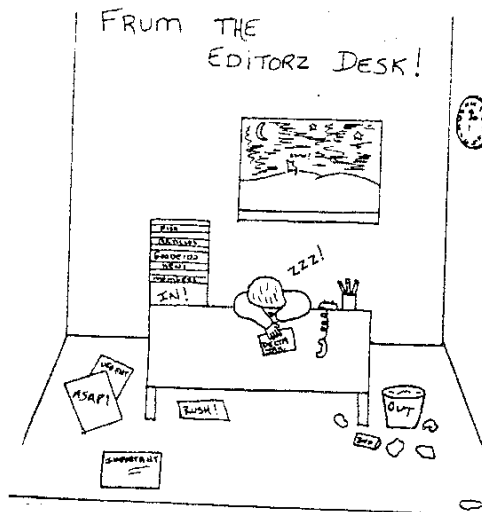
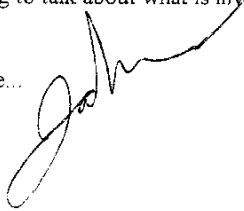
703/352-3365

From the editor's desk

Summers here (or close enough) and many aquarists will be spending much more time outdoors, on vacation, etc. Don't forget about your fishes though. When the weather is warmer it also means your tanks are probably going to be a little warmer. This means that the fish are generally going to be more active, uneaten foods and plant debris will decay faster, and the oxygen levels in the water will be lower. Therefore, keeping up with water changes and other tank maintenance is even more important now. The warm weather also gives you a chance to acquire some free live foods - daphnia, mosquito larvae, etc - to condition your fishes for spawning and/or raising fry. You could also try putting some of your fishes outside in ponds or other containers. Many aquarium fishes do very well outside during the summer. Don't forget the PVAS meetings. We've got some good programs lined up for the next few months so don't miss them.

I'm still looking for a volunteer to be in charge of distributing *Delta Tale* to the local shops. I have a few people who are getting it to a few shops on a hit and miss basis but we really need to get this better coordinated and do a better job. You wouldn't have to distribute them all yourself, just get all of the volunteers organized so all of the shops are covered on a regular basis. If anyone is interested in doing this see me at any of the monthly meetings to talk about what is involved.

Until next time...



The Exchange Page

by Julio Melgar

Have you ever wondered what other clubs publish in their newsletters? This new section of the Delta Tale will present a few articles published in newsletters throughout the country so that you can access them from our library. All you have to do is call Alex Townsend and ask him to bring the newsletter to the next monthly meeting. We ask you that you please return the original publication as soon as possible. Read on and enjoy.

Discus have always been popular at our auctions. **Discus Diaries** by **Gene Harris** is a series of articles that were published from **August to December of 1997** in the **Wet Pet Gazette** (Norfolk Aquarium Society). The author walks you through his experiences since he bought his first discus. If you like brown, green, blue, or red pancakes, this one is for you.

If you are interested in collecting trips, take a look at **Collecting Sheepshead and Highland Swordtails (Xiphophorus birchmanni and Xiphophorus malinche) in the Rio Calnali** by **Rich Serva and Gina Tash**. The article describes both species, their habitats, and the authors' personal observations in the wild and in aquaria. This article appeared in the **December – January, 1998** issue of **Tank Topics** (Greater Akron Aquarium Society).

In the **March – April, 1998** issue of the **Darter** (Missouri Aquarium Society), the article **Apistogramma, the Identification of Complexes Within the Genus** by **David Soares** is a good introduction to the groupings within the genus Apistogramma. If you want to read more about Apistogramma groups and complexes, the article **Apistogrammas** by **Kathy Knudsen Olson** was reprinted in the **August – September, 1997** issue of **The Daphian** (Boston Aquarium Society). This article was first published in the February, 1996 issue of "Northwest Aquaria" (Greater Seattle Aquarium Society).

On equipment, **Mike Vasey** writes **Filters and Filtration** in the **March 1998** issue of **Café Menu** (Columbus Area Fish Enthusiasts). This article is a good overview of the different types of filtration, filters, and personal preferences.

The Mid-Atlantic Cichlid Keepers pub, **Mack Attack!** has a nice article on the **January 1998** issue. **Bob Staffiera**, in **Breeding the Cyphotilapia frontosa**, describes in detail his success with 3 varieties of this East African species.

From Fin Fax, **February 1998**, **The Beautiful Epiplatys lamottei** by **John Clairmont** is a good article on keeping and breeding this African killie.

Also in Fin Fax, but in the **November 1997** issue, **Hatching Rainbowfish Eggs** by **Gary Lange** should be of interest to all of you working with 'bows.

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.erols.com/dsnell/pvas.htm>

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

July 13: PVAS Monthly Meeting. Program - Dave Snell will be giving a slide presentation on a recent native fish collecting trip made by several PVAS and NANFA members. Bowl show, raffles, mini-auction, door prize, refreshments, and more. Doors open at 7:30, meeting starts at 8:00. Additional parking is available next door (lot entrance around the corner) to the Wood Facility, everyone is welcome.

July 23 - 26: American Cichlid Association convention, St. Louis, Missouri. See elsewhere in this issue for more information.

Aug. 10: PVAS Monthly Meeting. Program - a presentation by John Mangan on the PVAS breeder's award program featuring slides of a large variety of fishes, all by PVAS members. Note: this is a new presentation not just a repeat (like everything that's on tv tonight) of the old one. Bowl show, raffles, door prize, mini-auction, refreshments, air conditioning, etc. Doors open at 7:30 meeting starts at 8:00.

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.

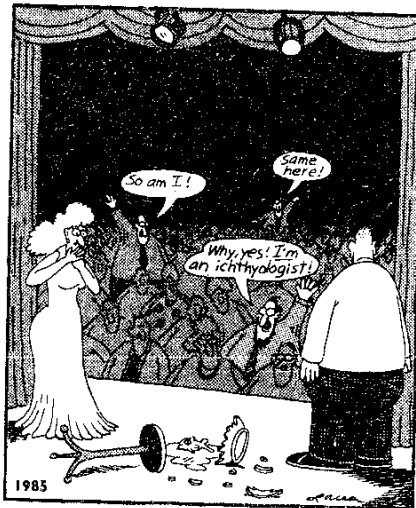


Photo taken
at last month's
PVAS meetings
←

A lucky night for Goldy

Julidochromis transcriptus "gombi"

by Gene Moy

Julidochromis transcriptus is one of several species from the genus readily available in the hobby. Members of the genus are referred to as "Julies". Julies are slender, torpedo-shaped cichlids from Lake Tanganyika. *J. transcriptus* have three horizontal black lines and several vertical bands or blotches intersecting the horizontal lines. I believe that "gombi" refers to the collection location of a particular population. The "gombi" population has less black and the horizontal lines are interrupted by white background color.

I picked up three of these fish a little more than a year ago at one of the PVAS auctions. The one inch long, young *transcriptus* were kept with six *Neolamprologus leleupi* about the same size in a 30 gallon aquarium. From time to time I also kept a couple of upside-down catfish with the cichlids. The tank was decorated with some quartz, shale, and other rocks to form caves and crevices. I also placed a couple of plastic plants for further decoration. An outside filter augmented by an air driven inside filter provided the necessary filtration. Initially I added rift lake salts to the tank, but have not replenished salts in the tank during the last nine months.

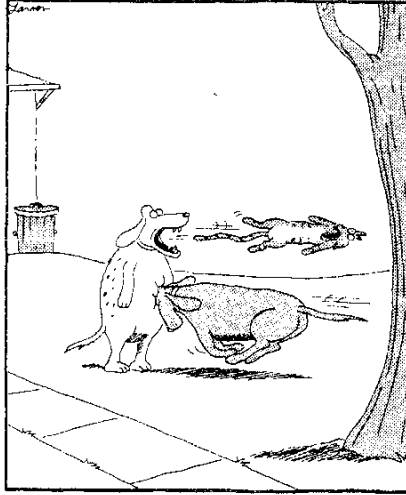
The cichlids grew over the course of one year to double their original size. While cleaning the gravel one day I noticed movement. Upon closer examination I saw two baby fish dart to try to find a better hiding place. I did not see any larger fry for a while after that, though I continued to see fry between 1/4 to 1/2 inch darting about when I moved some of the rockwork. During the Fall auction, I sold off my *N. leleupi*, giving the tank over to the *transcriptus*. I also moved the *Synodontis* catfish out.

Since giving the tank to the *transcriptus* I have seen several batches of young. One of the fish was the odd fish out, so I subsequently removed the odd fish to another tank as well. These fish are secretive spawners so I never saw any eggs until recently. The last batch of twelve eggs was stuck to the underside of a piece of shale. The eggs are bluish-green about 1.3 mm (1/16 inch) ovoids. I had presumed the larger fish was the male, but have since read that males may be smaller for these fish. I do not know which of my fish is the male, as I have not witnessed the actual spawning nor been able to examine their breeding tubes. I did notice that the smaller fish has a slightly more pointed dorsal fin.

The young grow very slowly and readily accept most foods. The largest ones are only now approaching 12 mm (1/2 inch). The newly hatched young are about 4mm (3/16 inch). The young sometimes swim upside-down, especially when underneath a rock.

Some time having passed, I now have about two dozen fry of various sizes. This is consistent with what is supposed to happen. The largest fry are now about one inch, after three months.

These fish can be kept in a community tank, but you will not likely raise very many fry. For breeding purposes, *transcriptus* seem to do best if kept as pairs in their own tanks. *J. transcriptus* are shy and should be provided with lots of rockwork. The adults and young readily eat most foods including crumbled flake foods.



Fortunately for Sparky, Zeke knew the famous
"Rex maneuver."

APISTOGRAMMA JURUENSIS

Don Kinyon PAS

This is a nice Apisto that doesn't seem to get a lot of press. Very much like the *A. Caucatoides* that are very popular, at least in the more colorful strains, this subtle-hued little fish seems easy to keep and breed.

The particular fish that I'll talk about are a yellow strain, somewhat more colorful than others I've seen. It's the same basic shape as *A. Caucatoides*, although the lips are not quite as thick, and the forward spike of the dorsal fin isn't as high. The yellow coloration is more dominant during spawning in both sexes, with the male displaying bright yellow sides and lower fins, and orange and black on the dorsal fin. The female is bright solid yellow with black markings.

I was housing five pairs of these fish as part of a business venture, and while I was deciding whether to try and raise some, the largest of the females presented me with a large patch of eggs on the underside of a flower pot. The fish hadn't been with me long; about two weeks, and had eaten anything offered them; frozen beef heart, brine shrimp, blood worms, live black worms, white worms, chopped earth worms, and several prepared dry foods.

As soon as I discovered the eggs, I moved them to an eight gallon tank with water from the main tank; pH of 6.0 and very little hardness. Neither tank was heated. The breeding tank stayed at about 75 degrees and the fry tank stayed at 76 or 77.

In three days the eggs hatched and in eight more about 45 fry were swimming around the tank. The mortality rate was low, and the fry grew fairly quickly for apistos. The young fish fed well on baby brine shrimp and micro worms, and by one month they were three eighths of an inch, by two months about a half and inch.

With their attractive colors and ease of maintenance, these should be a common and popular apisto in the future.

Decapsulating Brine Shrimp (*Artemia*) Eggs

by Julio Melgar

Anyone that has hatched brine shrimp cysts knows that hatch rates vary widely between different brands and between different batches of the same brand. At a PVAS meeting a few months ago a group of members were discussing the hatch rates of some of the eggs they were using. Most were complaining that at some point in their lives they have had cans of cysts that yielded very poor hatch rates. While some of the more reputable brands have acceptable hatch rates, most do not.

I remember in my earlier days as a hobbyist trying those little packages of *Artemia* cysts and getting very few, if any, nauplii hatched. I then tried some of the larger cans with better success but I usually ended with a mixture of nauplii, unhatched eggs, and shells. This meant that before feeding the nauplii to my fish I had to go through the tedious process of separating the nauplii from the mixture. Empty shells and unhatched eggs can cause an intestinal obstruction on young fry, killing them soon after.

I was almost ready to give up on *Artemia* but an article written by Lee Bell opened up my eyes to a new method not only for improving hatch rates considerably but also to get an almost clean, shell-less culture of nauplii. This process will also improve hatching times from 36 to 48 hours to about 12 hours when decapsulation is almost complete. The concept is simple: to dissolve the shells by using diluted household bleach (Clorox). All you need is bleach, a glass container, a brine shrimp net, an air source (pump), aquarium tubing, a watch, sodium thiosulfate (Start Right) or any other dechlorinator, and some measuring devices.

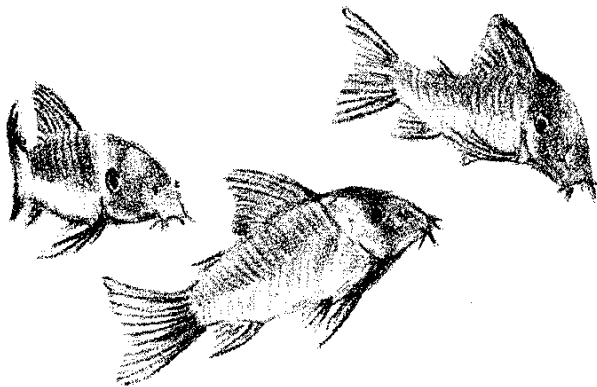
Method:

Make sure you have everything ready before you start.

1. Add approximately 1/4 cup of cold water and 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons of brine shrimp cysts to the glass container (I use a pickle jar). Place your air source in this mixture and allow the cysts to rehydrate for about an hour. What I did is cut 2 holes through the lid. One hole should be big enough for your tubing to go through. The other one will work as an exhaust for the air you are putting in.
2. After an hour of rehydration, add 1/2 cup of household bleach to the mixture and continue aerating. Watch the cysts closely for the next 4 or 5 minutes. After about 3 minutes you will notice the cysts changing color from brownish to orange. It's at this point when the shells begin to dissolve. Depending on the batch, at the 4 or 5-minute mark pour the eggs into your brine shrimp net and rinse them the best you can. Quickly rinse the glass container and add the eggs back into the container with some water. Add dechlorinator until you can't smell bleach anymore. Make sure to also dechlorinate your brine shrimp net. Pour the eggs into your net for one last rinse and you are ready to go.

3. Take a portion of cysts to hatch. Place the rest of the decapsulated cysts in a margarine cup or something similar and store them in the refrigerator. You should hatch the stored cysts within a week or so to make sure that they have not been spoiled by bacteria nor fungused. The decapsulated eggs can also be fed to fish without a problem.

If you have any questions feel free to look me up at the monthly meetings and I'll try to help you out with anything that might not be clear from this article. Also, if you have never hatched Artemia cysts before, don't be afraid to ask. There are plenty of members that do this regularly and are all willing to help you get started.



Zebras, Mangos and Gold Nuggets: Keeping Them Alive

by Charley Sabatino

Zebra, Gold Nugget and Mango plecos are among the most sought after fishes in the aquarium hobby. Almost every hobbyist who has seen them has wanted to buy one, until they see the price. The second concern of anyone who intends to keep one of these gems is how to "keep it alive" (the first one is the \$30 - \$70 required to purchase one). Actually, these fish can be kept quite successfully, provided a few guidelines are met.

The first step in successfully keeping one of these plecos is purchasing a healthy specimen. Unfortunately, plecos are one of the fish in the hobby that do not ship well. The trip from South America to transhipper to distributor to retailer can wreak havoc on a pleco's health (or any fish). Look for one with a full (not bulging) belly, clear eyes (not sunken in), well formed open fins, and bright color with no blemishes, ulcers, or parasites. Most plecos are extremely active when flushed out of their hiding place (some are like lightning!!!). Sluggish movement is generally a sign of ill health. Heavy breathing is also not a good sign: it can be a sign of disease, poor water quality, or stress.

Beware of a pleco that is at the top of the tank, or at the outlet of a filter or lift tube. This behavior can sometimes spell trouble. A healthy, content pleco is usually stuck on driftwood, tank walls or another aquarium fixture. In addition, some plecos will eat or forage for food out in the open during the day - this is a good sign, but is not typical. Ask your dealer how long the fish has been in his/her tanks, ask if it is eating. A new arrival may show signs of stress and it may be best to wait a few days before making a purchase to allow it to acclimate to aquarium life (a very common practice with our saltwater colleagues). A reputable dealer will gladly provide you with this information to the best of his/her ability.

O.K., now you've bought one (without taking a loan). Now what? Set up a quarantine tank and isolate your new fish to make sure it is truly free of disease, it is eating, and getting acclimated to your water conditions. This will minimize stress when it is introduced into your main tank.

Successful long term care for these fish can best be accomplished by gaining insight from their natural habitat.

The Zebra Pleco (*Hypancistrus zebra*) comes from clearwater basins of the Rio Xingu in Brazil. This habitat consists of clean, relatively fast moving water containing high levels of dissolved oxygen. Therefore, the proper aquarium conditions for the zebra must include very good filtration, lots of aeration and regular partial water changes.

This fish is fairly territorial. Multiple specimens must be kept in a relatively large tank with plenty of hiding spaces/territory markings to prevent aggression. This territoriality is

somewhat less when zebras are kept with other species of pleco, but should still be considered when choosing tankmates. Zebras are omnivorous, enjoying both meaty and vegetable based foods. Algae wafers are a good staple, but other more meaty foods should be used as well. As with all aquarium fish, a varied diet is best.

Vital Statistics.

Max. size = unknown. Probably 4 - 5".

pH = 6.5 - 7.0 although reports have stated higher.

temp. = 75 - 84° F

Foods = algae wafers, zucchini, romaine lettuce, frozen bloodworms, krill, other frozen meaty foods.

Mango (L47) and Gold Nugget Plecos (L18 or L81) are undescribed species also found in the Rio Xingu and have care requirements similar to the zebra. However, unlike the zebra, both are big driftwood grazers so have plenty available. Furthermore, they get a lot bigger than the zebras, so allow for sufficient tank space.

Vital statistics:

Max. size = 6 - 10" for both.

pH = 6.5 - 7.0 although reports have stated higher.

Temp = 75 - 84° F.

Food = algae wafers, zucchini, romaine lettuce, frozen bloodworms, krill, other frozen meaty foods.

In conclusion, care for Zebra, Mango, and Gold Nugget plecos can be summarized in four statements:

- 1) Good filtration
- 2) High levels of dissolved oxygen
- 3) Varied diet
- 4) Regular partial water changes

Now the above are no more than the basic guidelines for success with all aquarium fish. However, Zebras, Mangos, and Gold Nuggets are among those especially sensitive to things like undersize tanks and filters, poor maintenance, and improper diet and as a result will be the first to show stress, become sick or die.

To summarize the summary: CARE for your fish, don't just keep them.

References:

"Zebra plecos: so many questions about these little fish". Ginny Eckstein. Aquarium Fish Magazine. Sept. 1995.

Conversations with Lee Finley.

Reprinted from: *Modern Aquarium*, Greater City Aquarium Society. Feb. 1996.

Breeder's Award Program

BAP Checkers:

Annapdale/Falls Church area: Jeff Burke (703) 941-3230
Centreville/Chantilly/Manassas area: David Snell (703) 968-9084
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*****

Gerry Hoffman 905****
Jeffrey Burke 445***
Don Kinyon 335***
John Mangan 155**
Gene Moy 150**
Lorne Williams 75*
Dave Snell 30

Recent activity: There's been a lot of BAP activity lately. First - if you live in the Centreville/Chantilly/Manassas area Dave Snell has recently volunteered to be a checker for that area. This should make it much easier for those of you living in that area to get involved in the program. New points: Don Kinyon receives 15 points for *kribensis* (*Pelvicachromis pulcher*), 15 points for *Apistogramma juruensis*, 15 points for *Apistogramma* sp. "Rio Mamore Red", and 15 points for *Apistogramma* "panduro" ("pandurini "). This advances Don to the "**Advanced Breeders**" level. Congratulations Don. Gene Moy receives 20 points for albino *Corydoras*, and 15 points for *Julidochromis transcriptus* "gombi". Gene now advances to the "Intermediate Breeder" level - congratulations Gene. Dave Snell receives 10 points for *Aphyosemion gardneri*, and 10 points for *Poecilia reticulata* (half-black yellow). Gerry Hoffman regains 895 points.

Those of you that are fairly new to PVAS may not know that the BAP chairman prior to me vanished from the face of the earth, along with all of the records. While looking through some old issues of *Delta Tale* recently I came across some BAP reports and based on these I am giving Gerry back the points he lost (or at least most of them). While Gerry's 905 points may look like a lot he isn't the all time point leader. Long time PVAS member Garland Neese retains that honor with 1115 points (as of 1991, he may have had even more). That should give you all something to strive for.

While there has been a lot of BAP activity taking place it has been mostly among a small group of members. I'd like to encourage more of you to participate in this program. You don't have to be an expert aquarist or fish breeder. You can receive points for breeding even the easiest of fishes and advance as fast or slow as you want - I've been a member for 20 years and only have 155 points so far (we won't even mention Jim Long). The competition is very friendly and any of the participants would be glad to help you get started, give advice, answer questions, etc. To help you become more familiar with the BAP the August PVAS monthly meeting will feature a presentation on the program explaining just how it all works. Even if you aren't interested in the BAP this is something you should come and see just for the slides that will be shown, all of which were taken by PVAS members.

*You'll always
find great
refreshments
and conversation
at a PVA's
meeting.*



"Well, I'm addicted. ... Have you tried Carol's sheep dip?"

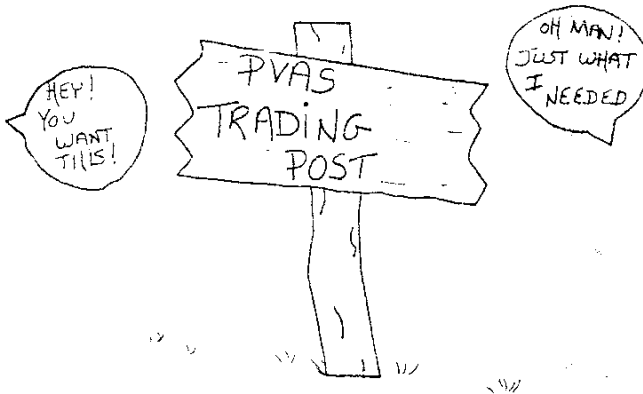
TRADING POST

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.

For Sale: 36" new 40 gal w/glass canopy & strip light. \$45.
48" used 40 gal & low boy stand \$70.
75 gal combo w/undergravel filter & gravel \$100.
many more accessories available.
contact Scott LeMessurier at (301) 977-6455

ed. note: Scott is moving at "the end of the month" so contact him soon if interested. My apologies to Scott for not getting this printed sooner.



98 ACA SHOW ME CONVENTION



Now hear this! The '98 ACA convention is coming to St. Louis, Missouri on the 23~26 of July.

The Missouri Aquarium Society, Inc. (MASI) is proud to present this convention at the Renaissance Hotel just across from St. Louis International Airport. This event features a banquet, workshops, and eight speakers including Dr. Paul Loiselle, Dr. Peter Lewis, and Ad Konings. Representatives and dealers will be on hand to display hobby related items. Over 300 fish will be displayed in the country's largest fish show, with prize species from all over the world. Prizes will be awarded for each of the classes.

At the conclusion of this event, a dry goods auction and the nation's largest Cichlid auction will be held. The auction will consist of odd and rare fish from all over the world.

SHOW ME your Cichlids and we'll show you a good time. Meet me in St. Louis for the nation's largest Cichlid convention.

For more information, please contact:

Convention Chairman

Pat Tosie
(314) 225-7625

Show Chairman

Randy Ison
(314) 916-3767

Auction Chairman

John Van Asch
(618) 277-6165

Registration Chairman

Kathy Deutsch
(314) 741-0474



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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:

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Junior (under 18) \$ 5/yr

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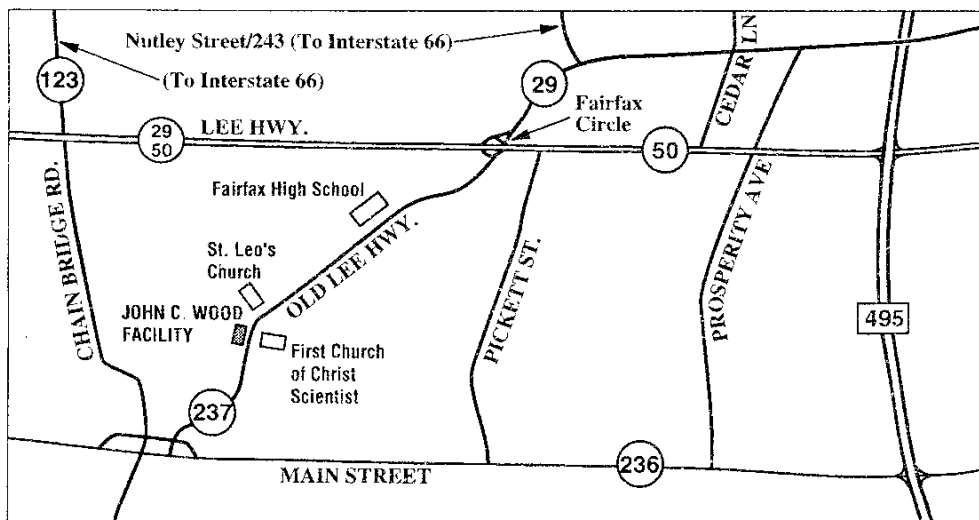
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MEETINGS are held at the John C. Wood Facility, 3730 Old Lee Highway (Route 237), Fairfax City, Virginia. We meet in room 6, which is located behind the police station. Doors open at 7:30 and meetings start at 8:00—**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**