

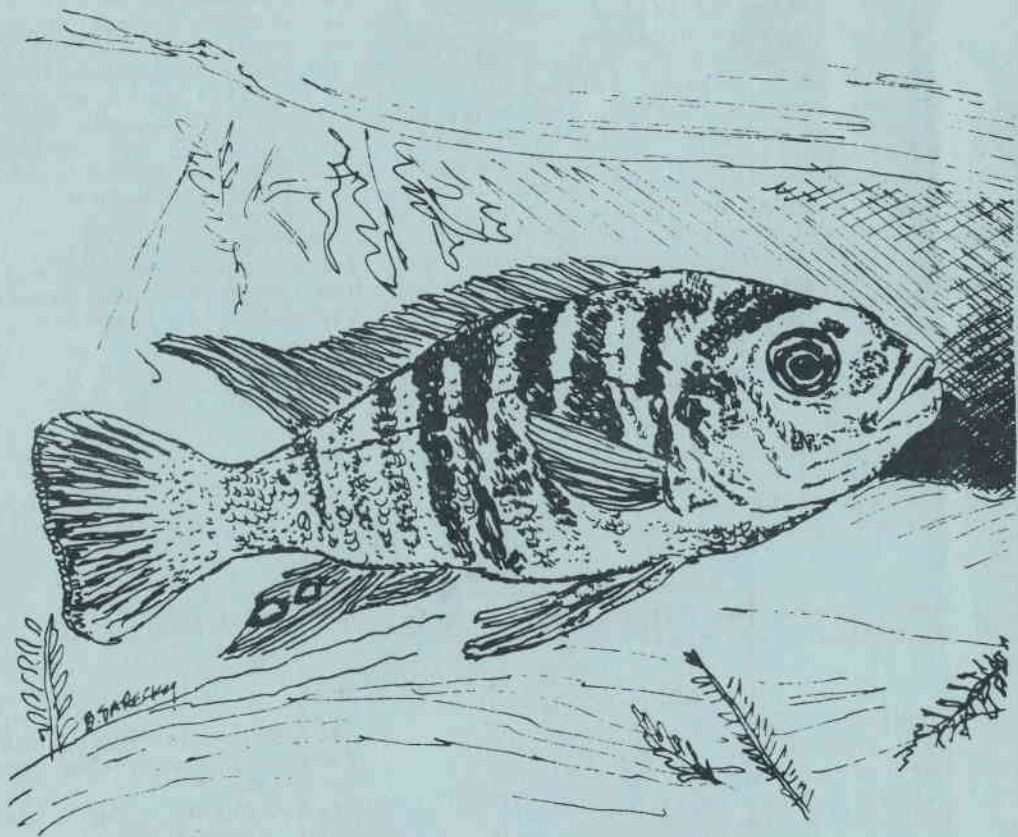
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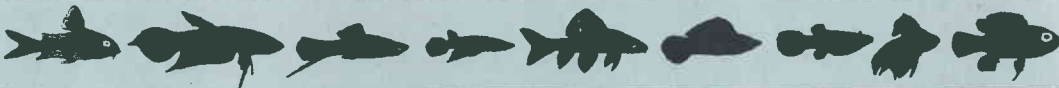
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

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P 10-11 The Pinkieating Halfbills Inc



POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY, inc.



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Delta Tale is published for the benefit of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society Inc., a non-profit organization, established in 1960 for the purpose of furthering the aquarium hobby by dissemination of information, encouraging friendly competition, soliciting participation in its shows, and promoting good fellowship. Correspondence should be addressed to PVAS, PO Box 6219 Shirlington Station, Arlington, VA 22206. Original articles and artwork may be reprinted by other non-profit organizations if credit is given to the author, Delta Tale, And PVAS. Two copies of the publication should be sent to Delta Tale c/o PVAS. Please place the authors name on one copy to insure that it gets to him/her. PVAS and Delta Tale disclaim any responsibility for content or availability of advertised merchandise or services in these pages. Customer satisfaction is a matter to be worked out exclusively between the advertiser and the buyer. All material for inclusion in Delta Tale MUST reach the editor by the 18th of the month prior to publication.

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FRUM THE EDITORZ DESK

The summer doldrums are upon us. The turnout at the past several meetings has been way down, as I expect the August one to be also. This happens every summer but things should get back up to full speed in September.

I don't really have anything else to say this month, at least I came up with more than last month, so until next month....

What's Happening in August:

Program- Mini Reefs. A good program for all of you keeping saltwater, or those of you thinking about getting started in salt.

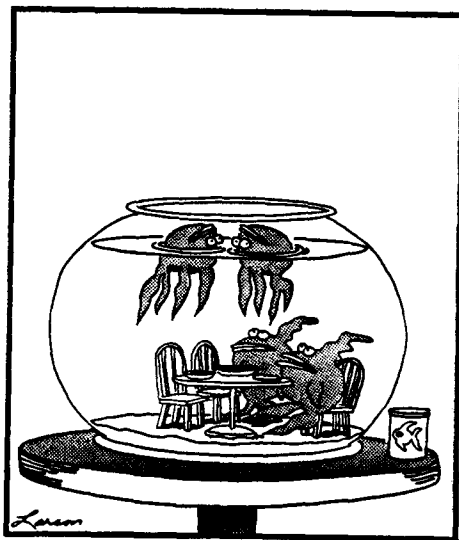
Door Prize & Raffles- lots of good stuff, as usual

Mini Auction-come and get some real bargins and/or sell some of that extra stuff you have.

Bowl Show- bring some fish.

Cichlids: New World Dwarf, Riftlake non-mbuna, open.

Egglayer/Livebearer: Killifish, Catfish non-corydoras, open.



"Well, the Parkers are dead. ... You had to encourage them to take thirds, didn't you?"

Instant Ponds for Your Yard

by George White, PVAS

It's still not too late to put a pond in your yard this summer--and it will only take about 30 minutes, not hours of work digging and pouring concrete. This would be well worth the effort if you wish to raise live food for your fish, put some size on your cichlid fry, give your goldfish a summer resort to vacation in, or try to put some color on your goodies.

The glass "pond." A German friend mentioned that one way to quickly produce some excellent live food for your fish is to set up some aquaria outside. (This idea supposes you do not have environmental problems like rowdy kids with rocks nearby). Just follow the following three easy steps:

First, make a resting frame (a "mini-stand") for your aquarium cutting two two-by-four boards about one inch more than the length of your aquarium and two to fit between the long two-by-fours. They should be cut with the idea in mind of placing their four inch side flat on the ground. Place the boards on the ground and check with a carpenter's level to make sure they are level. It is essential that the aquarium not be placed on uneven ground as the resultant stress will probably cause the aquarium to spring a leak or crack. The boards will not be level in almost all cases, so you will have to level the ground, pack it down very firmly and check again. After the two-by-fours are level, place the aquarium on them and fill with water.

Second, wait a day for the chlorine, or a week for chloramine to dissipate. Then add a level teaspoon of powdered plant food (like the kind used for house plants) and stir a bit. Add a jar of "green water" that you have collected from a still pond. The alge in the collected water should bloom in a week.

Third, add daphnia or other water creatures. After they have multiplied, you can either begin harvesting them or add some fish to your "pond." In either case you will probably need to add some vegetable matter to the pond periodically. One possibility is frozen lima beans that have been thawed. At first only half a bean will be needed per week, but the amount will increase as your pond's water creature population rises. Watch how your creatures are faring and try not to overfeed which could cause your pond to foul. If you do not have fish in the pond, add a teaspoon of plant food every two weeks or month depending on how well your alge is doing.

Avoiding the birdbath syndrome. If your local feathered friends are likely to mistake the aquarium for a bath, you could cover it with a piece of hardware cloth (a 1/4 inch rigid screen or a regular terrarium top. Actually, I have never had a problem with birds.

A better, unbreakable "pond." Hardware and construction materials stores sell rectangular concrete mixing tubs roughly three by four feet that are about a foot deep for about ten to fifteen dollars. These can be placed on the ground like an aquarium or be set in a hole. If you really want a fancy round or irregular shaped--and more natural looking--pond, you can order a koi pond through your local aquarium shop. While the koi ponds do cost substantially more, it's worth it if you want a permanent pond. These ponds also are safer for local birds than an aquarium "pond" would be.

Fish in a whiskey barrel. A sawed-off half a whiskey barrel sold at many garden shops as planters will make a nice outside "pond" pleasing to most fish. The barrel can be made water tight by lining it with a thick plastic sheet such as a good grade painting drop cloth sold at paint shops. To trim the plastic sheet to fit the barrel follow these steps: A, place the sheet in the barrel; B, fill it with water most of the way; C. pull the sheet over the sides of the barrel and tie it on to the barrel with a nice looking rope about two inches from the top; D. trim the excess plastic sheet about an inch below the rope.

The lazy man's solution. A large kiddies' wading pool would offer a spacious fish home if you can convince your family that it is off limits to non-finned creatures. If you can pull this off, you will have a large enough habitat to run some nifty studies on fish behavior, such as how Apistogrammas and other cichlids, set up territories.

Rumor has it one member of PVAS even managed to raise a fine batch of mosquito larvae by leaving his canoe or boat rightside up for several months. His fish loved the wrigglers.

Whatever type of pond you decide on, you may wish to change about twenty per cent of the water every two weeks to keep it from becoming a stagnant mess. If you decide a permanent pond would make a nice addition to your yard, you should buy a book on garden ponds such as the new one from Tetra Press by Wieser and Loiselle.

Potted plants can be added to the whiskey barrel or the plastic tub or koi ponds to make them more of a landscaping improvement. (and you can tell your spouse that you are working on the yard, not fooling around with fish again.)

ps. Small ponds usually do best in partially shaded locations.

TO ALL EXCHANGES AND MEMBERS OF THE
AMERICAN CATFISH AND LOACH ASSOCIATION

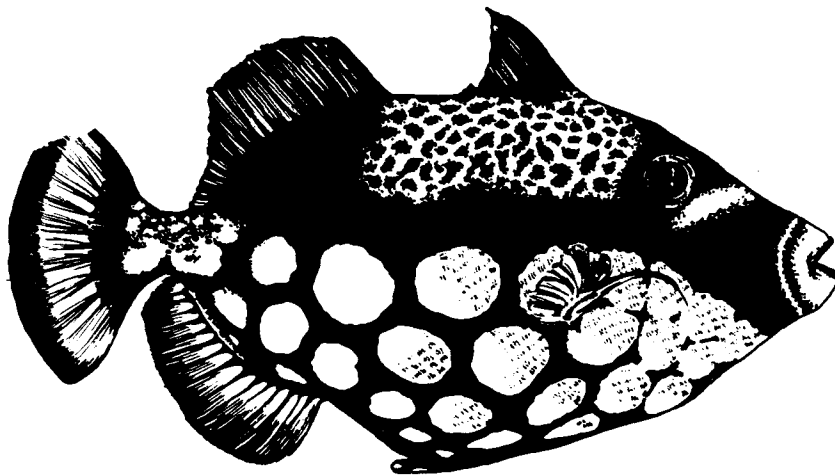
In an effort to breathe life back into the faltering ACALA, I recently offered my services as interim editor. With the assistance of several people, CATALYST 53 was completed and mailed in late march. Included therein was a plea for member support and the cooperation of the incumbent officers to effect elections. NO OFFICER RESPONDED; IN SPITE OF SEVERAL REQUESTS FOR MAILING LABELS AND FUNDS FOR #54, THEY WERE NOT FORTHCOMING; OUT OF A MAILING OF 350 ISSUES, I HEARD FROM ONLY 8 PEOPLE. Only Ginny Eckstein lent encouragement and support throughout, reflecting her commitment as a concerned member.

ACALA is almost certainly defunct. I suggest all exchanges be terminated. I further STRONGLY SUGGEST that all clubs announce that membership applications and renewals be halted at once. If anyone feels the organization owes them money, write to the person to whom you sent the check. I cannot help you in any way! I have never held any ACALA funds.

Let this be an example to all national specialty groups. Elect responsible officials, require their timely performance, and immediately impeach those who fail to perform. But MORE IMPORTANTLY support your interest group, as apathetic members America's catfish and loach devotees killed their own club!

James K. Langhammer

reprinted from Tropic Tank Talk, publication of the Greater Detroit Aquarium Society.



SEARCHING FOR CICHLIDS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

by Doug Hutchings
Guapiles, Limem Province, Costa Rica.

Today I learned a valuable lesson that could have saved me a lot of time and trouble - that whoever gives names to rivers usually knows what he is talking about.

After walking miles to Rio Toro Amarillo, all I found was a raging bull of yellow sulfur water surging forth from a distant volcano. Reportedly, no fish exist in its foul smelling waters (my experience indicates that tropical fish will live in anything wet!) but in any case, visibility is zero.

Similarly, the nearby Rio Sacio proved to be "dirty river" indeed, and Rio Frio too cold for comfort. I expected Rio Blanco to be downstream from a whitewash factory, but I was in for a pleasant surprise.

White River is neither white nor is it a river, at least not now at the end of the dry season - just a stream tumbling down a tropical mountainside connecting a series of clear, shallow pools. What I saw when I on put my mask pleased me even more.

As I floated between boulders (it wasn't deep enough to swim) fish darted out in all directions. By far the most common one was an attractive silver characin with red and blue fins, known locally as sardina. Always in motion like danios, they would nip bits of bread out of my hand, and it was very easy to catch them in my fingers to use for bait. Some of the older specimens were as large as 4" (100mm) SL.

There were mollies (in Central America, where aren't there mollies?) but not with the fabulous sailfins I've seen in Honduras, Belize and Yucatan. A few ugly Sleeping Gobies looked like sunken cigars as they sunned themselves, while fat suckers predictably sucked algae off the rocks.

CICHLASOMA NIGROFASCIATUM, the Convict cichlid, was common, but with poor stripes and colour, as was CICHLASOMA ALFARI, which I will not describe in the hope you will see it for yourselves when it hits the market in about a year.

But what really surprised me was the presence everywhere of the blue-eyed whale headed cichlid, NEETROPLUS NEMATOPUS. Ever since I'd first seen this puckered-mouthed oddity in the warm still waters of the volcanic lagunas of Nicaragua, I'd assumed him to be a strictly lacustrine species, like his Tanganyikan look-alikes in the TROPHEUS genus. So here they were in a fast-flowing stream in the middle of a Costa Rican jungle, half way up a tropical mountainside, breeding like crazy, defending the fry with a passion, the male a light grey with a charcoal midline dot, the female the exact negative, charcoal with a light grey midline dot. Not a spectacular fish, but interesting with intelligent steel blue eyes.

Like their buddies, the Convict cichlids, they hung around the salad bar munching fresh green algae. Insofar as any fish eats anything exclusively, these seem to be primarily algae shearers wherever they occur, and they love living among limestone boulders.

Many of the Central American locations I have studied look very much like Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi. Temperature, pH and hardness are similar, so it is little wonder the cichlids here resemble their African cousins.

The "tropical" fish seem to like it, but I was getting cold. Certainly this wasn't the first time I'd experienced cichlids thriving in water too hot or too cold to register in the "safe zone" on any aquarium thermometer! I decided to retreat to Rio Santa Clara, at a lower altitude and warmer.

Santa Clara translates to Saint Claire, but clara also means "clear", so I hoped that the name giver was taking advantage of a double entendre.

Sure enough, Rio Santa Clara proved to be so clear I could see as far under water as above it. Because it had become too shallow, the local people had created pools by making dams of rocks, possibly for fishing but more likely for bathing and washing clothes. In this part of the world, someone who says he has running water probably lives near a stream!

This river contained the same complement of fish as Rio Blanco with the addition of a homely, bass-like creature known locally as bobo, prized for its good eating.

Here, the sardina dashed about like complete neurotics, especially where the current is swift; gobies and suckers were frequent, mollies present, killies seemingly absent and four species of cichlid in attendance.

The most common, the convict, could predictably be found wherever the boulders formed a cave or gave protection from the current. A gregarious fish, convicts are always in twos, fives or tens - they are never alone. They are always defending a particular site from which they do not stray, and usually they are defending a shoal of obedient fry.

Another gregarious cichlid, NEETROPLUS NEMATOPUS, was not as common here as in Rio Blanco, but individual specimens had grown very large, as much as 5" or 125mm, much larger than their Nicaraguan brothers.

CICHLASOMA ALFARI occurred commonly, but usually alone, wandering like nomads. Whereas CICHLASOMA NIGROFASCIATUM and N. NEMATOPUS would not let themselves be chased more than a very short distance from home, CICHLASOMA ALFARI would take off for good at the sight of my mask. I have never seen them breeding or defending fry, nor have I seen them eat, and they certainly don't like strangers.

A large solitary male CICHLASOMA ALFARI looked stunning in what seemed to be breeding dress (waiting for the bride? was she late?) somewhat like a large GEOPHAGUS BRASILIENSIS. It wouldn't surprise me if this CICHLASOMA also snacks out on earth.

Finally, there was the ever present pair of guapotes, CICHLASOMA MANAGUENSE. Every pond seems to have a pair, never more, never less. They seem to have been put on earth solely to keep down the exploding numbers of other species, and to keep fishermen happy.

Their many children roam about at will in shallow water, totally unsupervised once they surpass 5mm TL. It seems to be nature's way that many of the fry of this dog-faced cichlid will die in the same manner that they cause others to die, by being eaten.

The big surprise of the day came from the convict cichlid, which is rapidly becoming my favorite fish. These were completely different from the Pacific slope variety I wrote about in the last installment, and different again from the Guatemalan strain familiar to hobbyists in North America.

Here on Costa Rica's Atlantic zone, the congos (*) are weak on stripes but strong on colour. Except when guarding fry, the stripes are broken or pale, sometimes reduced to mere dots, but the eye is electric turquoise. But when babysitting, the iris turns jet black, as does the entire lower half of the body, while the bars become complete and pronounced.

This is the very opposite of the fry guarding CICHLASOMA NIGROFASCIATUM on the Pacific side, where it is the white between the bars which becomes exaggerated. Just as the Spanish and Portuguese speak different languages, so do the congos on opposite sides of the cordilleras.

The breeding Costa Rican CICHLASOMA NIGROFASCIATUM is one of the most spectacular fish I've seen in the Americas. The stripes disappear altogether to be replaced with a flood of glowing pastels and a single midline dot of black. The female's head turns gold while her lower half and dorsal fin are yellow. The eyes are electric turquoise. The male is also yellow all over except the stomach, which is violet, with eyes like actor Paul Newman.

From photos I believe this Costa Rican convict has found its way to Europe, and hopefully it will some day show up in the hobby in North America. With a little selective breeding it would be possible to develop a super-convict. The day may come when we describe CICHLOSOMAS by their location of origin as we now do with certain African cichlids and killifish.

Returning to the town tired, the restaurant in the \$2 hotel is serving cold beer and ceviche, i.e. raw fish in onion, lemon juice and mayonaisse. What fish am I eating? Sleeping Gobie. I wish I hadn't asked.

A debate is erupting in my mind - where to go tomorrow? The Atlantic? The San Juan (Nicaraguan) system? You can go from sea to sea by public bus in less than six hours at a cost of \$4. Rivers and streams are everywhere, each with its own unique assortment of fish. Truly a fish lovers paradise.

(*) EDITOR'S NOTE: Convicts are sometimes called congos

Reprinted from the Willowdale Aquarium Society's "Fish Finatics", October 1984.

(From the ATF FORUM / FISHNET Computer Bulletin Board Service)

THE LIVEBEARING HALFBEAKS

By James K. Langhammer

Among the livebearing fishes kept by aquarist, halfbeaks remain among the least known and appreciated. They have a reputation for difficult husbandry which is best assigned to the "lazy aquarist syndrome" than to any unusual demands of the fish themselves.

Nomenclature of the halfbeaks is badly confused and many references are outdated. For years they were assigned to the family of HEMIRHAMPHIDAE, but more recently they have been merged with the closely related flying fishes into one family, the EXOCOETIDAE. The halfbeaks comprise one subfamily, the HEMIRHAMPHINAE; the flying fishes comprise the subfamily, EXOCOETINAE; and the sauries comprise the subfamily, SCOMBERESOCINAE.

Halfbeaks are primarily marine and egg-laying with one species (EULEPTORHAMPHUS viridis) growing to 45cm (18 inches). Aquarists, however, are basically interested in the livebearing, freshwater forms of which there are four genera.

The largest aquarium species is the Celebes halfbeak (NOMARHAMPHUS celebensis). This is an elegant fish with beautiful and highly variable patterns of red and black on a beige body with iridescent green highlights, several populations have been given specific recognition due to pattern differences but in my experience, in a population of breeding NOMARHAMPHUS all the variations eventually occur. The babies at birth are very large (approx. one inch) and the largest litter I've seen has been 18 viable offspring. Adult females grow to between 3 and 4 inches, with the males usually smaller.

The commonest halfbeaks seen in the hobby are members of the genus, DERMOGENYS. They are described in most aquarium books and are often illustrated. The genus is given the common name of the Wrestling Halfbeaks because of the habit of the males to fight vigorously with one another. Smith in the THE FRESHWATER FISHES OF SIAM, OR THAILAND gives an interesting account of the fish's behavior and the natives' wagering on staged contests. Be wary of specific identification on these fish. Most authors refer to them all as DERMOGENYS pusillus but D. pusillus in and around Indonesia. Imports received from Thailand are probably D. siamensis. In addition there is D. sumatranus from Sumatra and Bornea and several species from the Philippines. Wrestling halfbeaks are unusually large at 3 inches. Broods usually number around 20, although the ALA Brood Record is 92.

My personal favorite is the Thread-jawed Halfbeak (HEMIRHAMPHODON pogonognathus - meaning literally "the thread-jawed half-beak-with-tooth"). In Jacob's LIVEBEARING AQUARIUM FISHES, he calls this species the Red Halfbeak which it simply is not! I've never seen a specimen even hinting of red coloration. Males easily grow four

inches but are much slenderer than the Celebes Halfbeak. In this genus the dorsal fin has many more rays than the anal fin, and in males the REAR of the anal fin is modified for copulation: in the previous two genera, the form of the anal fin is modified in males. Males are larger and more colorful than females and bear a strong resemblance to African killifish in the genus EPIPLATYS. Litters are very small and the young are usually produced one per day for one to two weeks. Several other species are described in the genus.

Photos of the preceding three genera can be seen in FRESHWATER AND MARINE AQUARIUM, DECEMBER 1983 in Joanne Norton's continuing series, "Freshwater Livebearers". Her discussion of the halfbeaks is well worth reading.

The final genus, ZENARCHOPTERUS, has probably never been seen alive in the U. S. There are many species in the Austral-Asian region. The only photo I've ever seen - and it is very poor - is in TROPICAL FISH HOBBYIST March 1984, page 63. As always with unfamiliar fishes, this genus is very intriguing to me. The dorsal and anal fin are approximately equal length. In males of some species, the middle rays of the dorsal fin are elongated. Apparently in all species, the MIDDLE rays of the anal fin serve as the copulatory organ and in some species (e.g., Z. gillis), these rays can extend as far back as the rear of the caudal fin. The species of ZENARCHOPTERTUS extends from SE Asia to New Guinea and NE Australia. They sound like a must for an early import effort by some dedicated aquarist.

Halfbeaks are really easy to keep and manage. In my experience, they cannibalize their own young only when starved! Anyone can culture daphnia: keeping daphnia swimming in the breeding tank will allow halfbeaks of all ages to live safely together. Most halfbeak deaths are attributable to velvet (Oodinium) infections: this parasitic alga is sure death to halfbeaks and is much more common in home aquariums than most aquarist realize. Velvet can be controlled with prophylactic treatments of copper or malachite green, followed by water changes a day later.

Reprinted from TROPICAL TOPICS, The Indianapolis Aquarium Society,
Indianapolis, Indiana October 1985.

AMERICAN LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

To be held in conjunction with the Medina County Aquarium Society Annual All Species Show and auction.

AUG. 29-30, 1987

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For more information contact Wayne Swait (216) 948-3833 or Earl Steffensen (216) 666-3636.

Q & A

Questions on any aspect of fishkeeping can be sent to Rick Bell 1785 Hill Meade Sq. Frederick, MD 21701.

ed. note- the Q & A column is now back in business. Send your questions to Rick at the address above and he will answer them in this column.

TRADING POST

Ads for the trading post should be sent to Tom Hetzel, 5601 Seminary Rd. #1702, Falls Church, VA 22041, by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY



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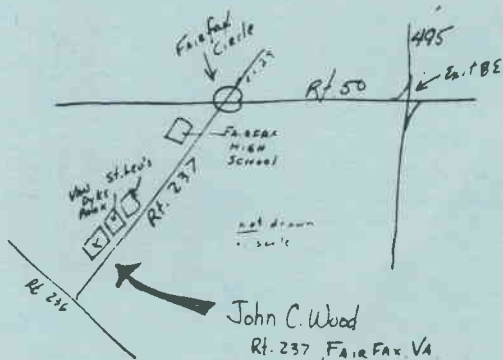
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Fish culturist
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Philadelphia, PA 19145



The Potomac Valley Aquarium Society will meet on the following dates in 1987:

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

Meetings are held at the John C. Wood Facility, RT. 237 (Old Lee Hgwy.)
Fairfax City, VA. Doors open at 7:30, meetings start at 8:00 PM. Everyone
is welcome.