OCA

Ohio Cichlid Association

Cichlids - Catfish

Buckeye Bulletin

February 2018

• Next Social Meeting: Friday, February 2, 2018 at 8:00 pm •

• OCA Winter Auction: Saturday, February 10, 2018 at 10:00 am •

Ohio Cichlid Association

Buckeye Bulletin Staff

Andrew Schock
Editor
BuckeyeBulletin@gmail.com

Eric Sorensen
Exchange Editor
Eeleven@aol.com

The Ohio Cichlid Association's Buckeye Bulletin is produced monthly by the Ohio Cichlid Association.

If you have an article, photograph, or ad to submit for publication, please send it to buckeyebulletin@gmail.com. When submitting articles for publication in this bulletin, please remember to include any photographs or art for the article. The Ohio Cichlid Association is not responsible for any fact checking or spelling correction in submitted material. Articles will be edited for space and content.

For membership info please contact Hilary Lacerda: hilarylacerda@gmail.com or visit the OCA forum.

SPECIAL LAKE VICTORIA EDITION

On the Cover

This month's cover features a *Pundamilia nyererei*. More notably, this photo was taken by Ad Konings, a familiar face to OCA Extravaganza attendees and a familiar name to anyone who has read one of his many books. Thank you Ad!

Do you want your picture on the cover of the *Buckeye Bulletin*? Please email photos to buckeyebulletin@gmail.com.

In This Issue of the Buckeye Bulletin

About the Ohio Cichlid Association

The OCA is an organization dedicated to the advancement and dissemination of information relating to all aspects of the biology of cichlids and related aquatic life. Our purpose is to promote the interest, keeping, study, breeding, and the educational exhibition of Cichlids. Additionally, the exchange of ideas, meeting new people, and distribution of information concerning Cichlids is of primary interest.

The 2018 OCA Board

Don Danko	President Promotions*	Lew Carbone	Vice President Program Chair* Jim Smith Fund*
Sherry Olszewski	Treasurer* Refreshments	Jonathan Dietrich	Secretary
Hilary Lacerda	Membership Librarian	Andrew Schock	Bulletin Editor*
Gary Mendez	Web Master* Manufacturer Liaison*	Mark Chaloupka	Cichlid BAP
Steve Heinbaugh	Catfish BAP	Jeff Natterer	Bowl Show Extravaganza Chair*
Carole Doerr	Apparel*	Carl Olszewski	Raffle Refreshments
Scott Myers	Historian	Jonathan Strazinsky	Photographer
Marilyn Danko	At Large	Dan Ogrizek	At Large
Eric Sorensen	At Large*	Rhonda Sorensen	At Large*

* denotes appointed position

Get The Most Out of the OCA

The OCA's monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Feel free to invite a guest! There are many ways to get the most of your membership:

• submit an article, classified ad or photograph for the bulletin • put a fish in the bowl show • attend the OCA Extravaganza • turn fry in for the BAP program • attend the social meetings • buy and sell fish during the winter auction • join the board • start a forum discussion • visit ohiocichlid.com •

OCA 2018 WINTER AUCTION

Cichlids*Catfish*Plants*Hard Goods

Saturday, February 10th

Strongsville
Holiday Inn
I-71 & 82

**Enter for a Chance to Win
AMAZONAS MAGAZINE
Subscriptions**
50/50 Raffles Throughout the Day

Registration 10 AM till Noon
Auctions begins at 11 AM

Most major credit cards accepted
Higher split for OCA members!

For Auction Rules, Seller Sheets, and More: OhioCichlid.com

Ohio Cichlid Association

UNITED PET GROUP, INC

Proud Sponsor of OCA Extravaganza

A family of products committed to developing technologies and innovative solutions for pet owners and their pets.

Brands you know. Brands you trust.

Tetra

Instant Ocean®

Bringing the ocean home.

MARINELAND®

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FROM DON DANKO

Thanks to all that braved the extreme temperatures to come out to the January Membership Meeting and I hope all that attended had a great time! I gave a presentation on Tanganyikan Cichlid diversity and I hope I inspired you to think about keeping some. In my talks, I always try to present something new to keep me interested and passionate about what I talk about. To that end, I combined a presentation on Tanganyikan Mouthbrooders with one on Lamps and Julies. Additionally, I added some pics from Eric Sorenson's awesome 220 gallon Tanganyikan community tank. His pairs of tetracanthus are truly impressive, especially when both pairs are tending fry simultaneously! I'm in the process of converting the slides into a video and will be adding a voiceover for posting to the OCA's new YouTube Channel so that those who didn't get the chance to listen can view it.

Speaking of the YouTube Channel, thanks to Carl Olzewski for taking the lead to set up our new channel. So far, in addition to the 2017 Extravaganza Promo video, we have added Scott Myer's excellent videos on showing fish and also Jonathan "Jombie" Dietrich's very nice video on his neat and tidy fish room. Check out these videos at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAlgwAiaJI7kPVR5y3WdmIg

In February, we feature Victorian Cichlids at our meeting with a presentation by Victorian expert, Matt McGee. In addition to this fine presentation, our Bulletin is jammed packed with great and fresh original articles on this theme. The cover is graced by a lovely nyererei picture submitted by none other than Ad Konings. Our VP, Lew Carbone has submitted an article on why he is so excited about Victorians. Kevin Bauman has submitted two lovely species pictures as well. And, an article by Greg Steeves is also included. Last but not least, Mo Devlin presents the first of two articles on how to achieve the "Black Out Effect" when taking fish pictures. What a great edition! Congratulations, Andrew, and to all that contributed! Job well done!

I hope you thoroughly enjoy this issue of the Buckeye Bulletin and find something of interest to you. I look forward to seeing you at the Feb. 3, 8 pm, Membership Meeting at the Middleburg Hts. Recreation Center!

Best regards,

Don

Letter From the Editor

Hello OCA Members,

This has been a big year so far for the OCA and especially for the Buckeye Bulletin. Right on the heels of the 2017 Extravaganza, planning is well under way for 2018. But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, the OCA winter auction is right around the corner on February 10. The first time I attended a winter auction I came home with a carload of fish that I picked up at unbelievable prices. Now I have dozens and dozens of cichlids and catfish to unload to fellow hobbyists through the auction. There is truly something there for everyone, so be sure not to miss it!

As far as the Bulletin goes, business is booming, and that is a great thing for OCA members. We have been very fortunate to receive a ton of support from experts such as Ad Konings, Don Danko, Lew Carbone, Greg Steeves, Willem Heijns, Mo Devlin, Kevin Bauman and more! This edition focuses on Victorian cichlids, with articles by Lew Carbone and Greg Steeves. The beautiful cover shot was provided by none other than Ad Konings and a couple other very nice Victorian photos were contributed by Kevin Bauman. A huge thank you to all who support this publication!

Also included is a fantastic article from Mo Devlin. Having been fortunate enough to get a sneak peek at the article, I have already been using some of the techniques Mo describes. Mo has been very helpful and has answered a few questions I had after his great demonstration at Extravaganza. If you have questions for Mo, feel free to submit them to address below and he will answer in a future edition of the Bulletin. The OCA is very fortunate to have the contributions of Mo. Thank you Mo!

As always, please feel free to submit a story, a spawning report, a photograph, an article, or anything else you want to share with the club. This is your chance to be published alongside some of the biggest names in the hobby!

Thanks for reading!

Andrew Schock
BuckeyeBulletin@gmail.com

AQUATICA

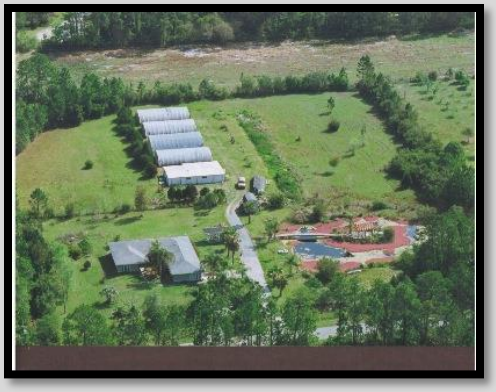
WWW.AQUATICASUPERSTORE.COM

THE LARGEST SELECTION OF PREMIUM AFRICAN CICHLIDS IN OHIO!

WE SPECIALIZE IN AFRICAN CICHLIDS AND OTHER FRESH WATER FISH AND CATFISH. WE STOCK OVER 10,000 PRODUCTS AND OVER 22,000 GALLONS OF TROPICAL FISH AND LIVE PLANTS!

THURSDAY & FRIDAY 12:00 - 8:00
SATURDAY & SUNDAY 12:00 - 5:00

6653 GRAFTON RD
VALLEY CITY, OH
330-866-0559



Mike's Cichlids

Mike's specializes in breeding African cichlids from Lakes Malawi, Tanganyika and Victoria. We breed Central & South American cichlids and stock a variety of Florida raised tropical fish such as Angels, Catfish, Plecos and more.

floridatropicalfishdirect.com

386-426-0131

CENTRAL Garden & Pet

At Central Garden & Pet, we know that the home is the heart of activity.

Central Garden & Pet brings you these fine brands

AQUEON

BLAGDON

CORALIFE

INTERPET

KENT

OCEANIC

TROPICAL FISH

Zilla

A special THANK YOU to Ken Walker

Jungle® Aquariums & Ponds Made Easy!

Jungle

Aquariums and Ponds made easy

Check out their full line of products at

Junglelabs.com

Your

Ad

Here

Please consider supporting the OCA! Sign up to sponsor the 2018 Extravaganza!

AMAZONAS

FRESHWATER AQUARIUMS & TROPICAL DISCOVERY

Amazonas Magazine

Hans-Georg Evers

Editor-in-Chief

Freshwater Aquariums & Tropical Discovey

Amazonasmagazine.com

SOCIAL MEETING INFORMATION

The Next OCA Social Meeting is Friday, February 2, 2018 at 8:00 pm

Middleburg Heights Community Center, Room C
16000 Bagley Rd
Cleveland, OH 44130

Meetings usually begin with a talk about cichlids or a related subject. The OCA is proud to bring world class speakers to Ohio, not only for our yearly convention, the OCA Extravaganza, but also for our monthly meetings. With Northeast Ohio being the hotbed for cichlid breeders that it is, we have discovered that there seems to be no shortage of world-class speakers locally, a number of which have used the opportunity to talk at OCA meetings to later tour the country with their fantastic presentations. After the talk we usually take a break for refreshments and some socializing among "cichlidiots". This also gives people a chance to look at bowl show entries, and after the break the bowl show winners are announced. Next, Breeder Award Program (BAP) awards are handed out. We have a Breeder Award Program for cichlids and one for catfish, turning our program into probably the largest one of its kind in the country. The entries are subsequently auctioned off, making some of the newest and rarest cichlids in the hobby available to our members at low auction prices! The OCA has had a number of first spawns in the United States and members have donated some very nice stuff to be auctioned off for the benefit of our Jim Smith Fund. Meetings end with a raffle, where we give away prizes that are set up on a huge table, which typically bends to the point of breaking under their load!

SOCIAL MEETING SCHEDULE

(All times approximate)

7:30	Doors Open
8:00	Social Time
8:15	Call to Order Announcements New Member Welcome & Speaker Introduction
8:30	Speaker
9:30	Break
9:45	BAP Awards Bowl Show Results
9:55	Mini-Auction
10:25	Raffle

Program Preview
January, 2018

Dr. Matthew McGee

By Lew Carbone

Matthew McGee received his PhD from the University of California, Davis. He then did post-doctoral work at the University of Bern, in Switzerland. At Bern, he worked under Dr. Ole Seehausen, the world authority on Victorian cichlids. (Seehausen's *Lake Victoria Rock Cichlids*, published in 1996, was the 1st major publication about Vics aimed at hobbyists, and is still the most important.) During this time, Matt spent several years studying the lake and its fish, and, through his research and publications, has himself become a leading authority. Among his most important papers was the first detailed study of the Haplochromine extinction patterns that developed after the introduction of the Nile Perch into Victorian waters.

Matt is in his first year as a professor at the School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, in Melbourne, Australia. He is currently on summer vacation, visiting his native U.S.

Matt's talk is entitled "Lake Victoria Cichlids: Speciation, Extinction, and Recovery". The word, from members of clubs who have heard this talk, is that he is an enthusiastic speaker who engages the attention of all those interested in cichlids, Victorian and otherwise.

Next month, Richard Kraus, who holds the position of Research Fish Biologist and Station Supervisor at the U.S. Geological Survey's Lake Erie Biological Station in Sandusky, will discuss Lake Erie and some of its problems.

UPCOMING
OCA SOCIAL MEETING PROGRAMS

2018

February 2
Matt McGee
Monash University, Australia
"Lake Victoria Cichlids: Speciation, Extinction, and Recovery"

March 2
Richard Kraus, Ph.D.
U.S. Geological Survey Biologist
Lake Erie

April 6
Chris Carpenter
"Shell Dwellers of Lake Tanganyika"

May 4
Charlie Mueller
Catfish

June 1
Lee Newman
"Cenotes, Caves and Fishes of the Yucatan"

July
No Meeting

August 3
Birger Kamprath
"Synodontis and Close Relatives"

September 7
Mark Sabaj Perez
The Cope Collection

October 5
TBA

November 2
Jeremy Basch
Geophagus

December 7
Christmas Party
Details TBA

FEATURED PHOTOS

FROM KEVIN BAUMAN

Neochromis rufocaudalis

Pundamilia nyererei

Imperial Tropicals

One of Florida's leading tropical fish farms since 1970

Operated by Mike Drawdy

Live Arrival Guarantee

Visit Imperialtropicals.com

Mike's Wet Pets

Aquarium Plants & Fish in Lancaster, New York

Family Owned and Operated for More than 10 Years!

Visit http://www.mikeswetpets.biz/

Or Email

Info@mikeswetpets.biz

The Cichlidroom Companion

Owned by JUAN MIGUEL ARTIGAS ASAZ

The Internet Cichlidae Information Center!

Visit: Ohiocichlid.com

Cichlid News

Visit http://cichlidnews.com/

Plecocaves.com

We carry Pleco caves, breeding caves, SERA fish food, Poret foam, driftwood, California Blackworms, OMEGA One food, cichlid caves, cichlid huts

Visit plecocaves.com

Or Email

plecocaves@gmail.com

RMS Aquaculture

Over 25 years experience in both freshwater and saltwater aquarium sales!

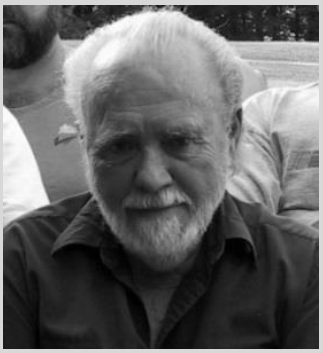
6629 Engle Rd., Middleburg Hts., OH 44130

(216)433-1340

Visit www.rmsaquaculture.com/

PLEASE SUPPORT THE JIM SMITH FUND

Ohio Cichlid Association
www.ohiocichlid.com
Supporting the Hobby Since 1984



Throughout the year, we will be running a number of fund raising activities for the OCA Jim Smith Fund for Conservation and Education. These will include the following:

- Raffling off donated livestock or goods
- 50/50 Raffles during OCA events
- Donated bags of fish will be raffled at club auctions
- Sale of shirts and goody bags donated by Omega/Ad Konings
- Donations will be accepted through a button on the club website

Please consider donating cash, livestock or hardgoods at any OCA event or meeting to help raise money for the Jim Smith Fund. Because of the generous donations of our members and supporters, we have been able provide much needed grants for cichlid or catfish research and conservation! Thanks for your anticipated support!

The Jim Smith Fund is the OCA's endowment fund that annually awards Cichlid and Catfish researchers and others funds to promote Conservation and Education efforts. To date:

- 2008: $1,000 was given to support the construction of Anti-Netting Devices in Lake Malawi
- 2009: $1,000 was donated to the Stewart M. Grant Conservation Fund
- 2010: $1,000 was donated to the Max Hayes High School to support local education
- 2011: $2,500 awarded to Jay Stauffer at Penn State to catalog 3,200 collections of Cichlids
- 2012: $1500 awarded to Jay Stauffer of Penn State University to videograph cichlids in the wild
- 2013: the Jim Smith Fund was able to make two awards, one to Ed Burress for Pike Cichlid research and the other to Ron Coleman for Central American research
- 2014: an award of $1000 was made to Ad Konings for Tanganyikan breeding facilities
- 2015: Melanie Stiassny received a $1200 grant to fund attempts to collect live Teleogramma obamaorum. Sam Borstein received $2000 to study Malawi Cichlid feeding techniques.

The Jim Smith Fund has awarded over $13K to support Conservation and Education!!

SOLILOQUY ON CICHLID VARIATION

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY GREG STEEVES

Over the years I have wondered about the possible perils involved with genetic variation within a small colony of cichlids. The problems associated with Lake Victoria have led to a situation where the remaining individuals of many species are thought to only exist in captivity. My question has been "**If it is only possible to work with a small number of fish, and there is no possibility of introducing wild fish (fresh genes) into the mix at some point, why would we even bother with trying to conserve a species where eventual genetic degradation will inevitably deform the offspring to an unrecognizable form of their ancestors?**" I guess if the answer is that it is senseless to pursue such a fool hardy endeavor, many of my fellow aquarists would not have multiple tanks devoted to a single species. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums would not participate in the Lake Victoria Species Survival Plan. Although I use the cichlids of that African Great Lake as my primary example, this situation exists with cichlids all over the world. So to quote Cheech Marin, "Why is this is?"

We know that closely related humans and other higher life forms should not procreate. The main reason for this is lack of genetic variation between relatives. Here is a hypothetical example that is based on a disease characterized by a genetic flaw on gene "D". An individual has two copies of each chromosome therefore each gene as well. 99% of a population will have two copies of the healthy D gene (DD). One percent will carry one copy of the diseased gene (dD). The disease is recessive, that is, an individual will not be affected unless it has two copies of the bad gene (dd). If the mother carries one copy of the gene (dD), the offspring has a 50% chance of inheriting the diseased gene. If the offspring mates with a random member of the population who has a 1% chance of carrying the disease, the probability of both members carrying the defective gene is 50/100 x 1/100 or .5%. If mating occurs with a sibling for example, the rate of the disease jumps to 25% (50/100 x 50/100). This is over simplified, and using a disease as a mutation, but one can see where back breeding would certainly provide for a very high percentage of an individual within a population to be (dd) within a few generations (Quarks, Quirks and Quips April 2007). This is a good point against captive breeding but eludes a very key point. Fish are not mammals.

Les Kaufman pointed out to me that cichlids (we were discussing the haplochromines of Lake Victoria), were plastic. These fish are always trying new things. With variation as an evolutionary tool, mutations are either good or bad. A fish born with a new characteristic will either prosper, or be picked off and out of the gene pool quite quickly. Not only will the adaptation have to serve the individual as a survival mechanism, but that individual will also have to be capable of thwarting rivals and breeding. In a natural setting, only the strong survive long enough to pass on their genes. This is rather basic, but how will future generations in captivity not be diluted by the weaknesses of their relatives? The answer to this lies in the capacity for genetic variation of cichlids. Simply, greater than 99% of the entire genetic makeup of a population (perhaps even a species) can be found in a single individual (Paul Loiselle pers conv). This means that in a spawn of 100 fry, all will have differing triggers for variation. If the spawning female has a (dD) gene, only a single fry will inherit this. That one fry would have to be spawned back to his mother in order to produce a batch of fry in which 25% would inherit the (DD) gene. Even in a closed system, the possibility of this lone fry surviving long enough and out competing others to breed with his own mother is miniscule. A weak fish will not likely be able to out-compete stronger fish to pass on its genes. So, the two big reasons for not equating cichlids with mammals: the attribute of genetic variation between siblings, and a much larger brood size with cichlids.

Within a wild population of cichlids, only the strongest, largest and most colorful dominant males (with some exceptions, as in species with sneaker males) spawn with females. If a mutation occurs within a population which allows for greater dominance, there is a good possibility that the male will pass along his genetic code to a single individual of his spawn. This individual might pass this trait along to the succeeding generation until a random spawning of two carrying individuals pass along the trait in a greater number of fry. Eventually, if this is mechanism successful for survival, it will become established within a population. Most mutations will end with the death of the individual.

Cichlid keepers will recognize that within an aquarium population, as in a natural setting, the largest, brightest, most colorful fish will do the spawning. Even among females, the strongest in the pecking order is likely to be the best fry producer. Now and then, we will see a deformity or abnormality of an individual in a spawn. This occurs naturally as well and these stand outs are usually picked off as a snack to a predator. There is always a risk to being different. A species looks the way it does for a reason. When we find an obvious mutation in our aquarium we "cull" the individual. My preferred method is to feed the fish in question to a larger fish -- a quick end.

Although there is no way we can provide an environment that would equate a natural habitat, the "plasticity" of cichlid fishes allows for them to easily adapt to conditions we provide for them. Many of the factors that regulate genetic transfer in nature are in place within a captive population. When we work with single pairs of fish, different rules apply but by closely observing offspring and culling deformities to ensure their genes don't enter the pool, we can keep our fish in a form representative of their wild ancestry for countless generations.

Enterochromis sp. "Red Back Scraper"

Within the haplochromine realm, an entire population is able to manipulate physical factors of their body to incorporate a changing environment (Paul Loiselle relating a Humphry Greenwood observation with *Haplochromis lividus*) but this is not a genetic change, this is plasticity. Unknown factors of captivity can alter the appearance of an entire population (Personal observations with generations of *Enterochromis* sp. "Red Back Scraper")

Platytaeniodus degeni

It is one thing for natural selection to allow for changes to a species but another instance to be aware of is line breeding. This is a process where we don't allow the fish to choose their mating partners anymore and use natural variation of individuals to accentuate certain characteristics we want to enhance. The most commonly encountered are albinism, exaggerated finnage, and color manipulation. When the human hand intentionally interferes with species' mate selection, one is able to manipulate a captive population into something that, although the same species, is much less likely to be a representative of a natural population than if we allowed for a group of fish to sort things out for themselves. The shining example I most often use is the group of *Platytaeniodus degeni*, a snail eating haplochromine from Lake Victoria, housed at the San Antonio Zoo. After in excess of 20+ generations of spawning, and starting with a very small "seed" population, through allowing for group mate selection and culling the very small number of deformities along the way, with only a few hiccups, the population today is healthy and an accurate representative of the ancestral founder stock. The original goal of the LV-SSP was to hold populations of haplochromines until a time where Lake Victoria might be stable enough to allow for reintroduction. Unfortunately, it is now realized that conditions have changed drastically in the great lake over the last 30 years and to reintroduce an extant species would be sending it to a totally alien environment, one unfamiliar to its relatives of generations ago. The environment has changed, not the captive held species. This is precisely the reason we should maintain our fish in conditions which allow for them to survive and breed according to their standards, not ours. While this might not be an ideal arrangement, it is doing the best with what we have and what we know.

Neptune Aquatics

Famous for Plecocaine

Contact:

John Patakos

mrloha@aol.com

Handcrafted Aquariums LLC

@handcraftedaquariums

https://handcraftedaquariums.com/

https://www.facebook.com/HandcraftedAquariums/

Triton Freshwater Aquatics

https://www.facebook.com/tritonfreshwateraquatics/

http://tritonfreshwateraquatics.com/

"We are innovators, hobbyists, and perfectionists. We are the best fish foods in the world."

OMEGA ONE Natural Seafood Formula

VICTORIANS IN MY CICHLID HOBBY

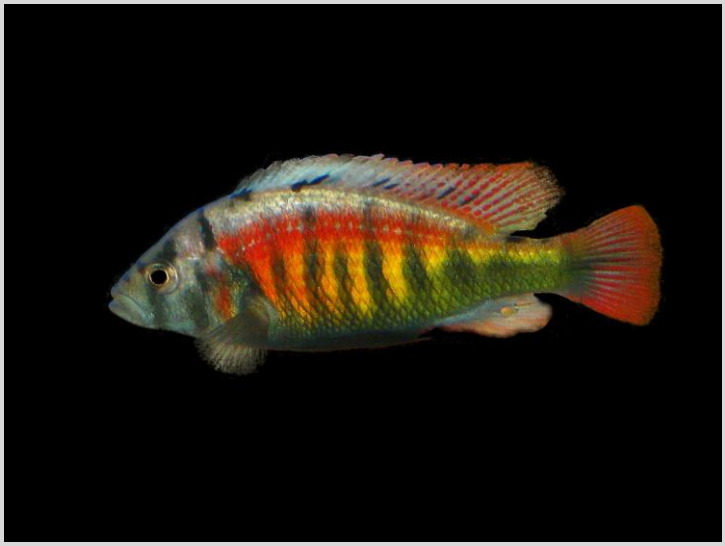
BY LEW CARBONE

People think of me as the “Vic guy” of the OCA. It’s not exaggerating (though I’ll leave it to you whether it’s bragging) to say that I’ve kept and bred more cichlid species from the Lake Victoria Basin than anyone in the club. The segment of the cichlid hobby that I’m best known among around the country is the Vic-loving community. So Victorians must be my favorite group of cichlids, right?

Wrong.

My favorite fish are medium to large Neo-Tropicals. The situation is rooted in the fact that when I was new to the hobby, and setting up my basement fishroom, I naturally focused on the cichlids that first attracted me to the family, Malawians. Because I’ve never wanted to take on the task of remodeling the room, it’s still designed more appropriately for Malawians, having only 2 75s, 4 55s, and a 40 breeder as my larger tanks. The rest are 29g and smaller. I’ve had some success breeding the larger Neo-Tropicals in the 75s and 40 breeder, but the 55s are useless for that. While I still like keeping the larger Malawi haps, I only work with 1 or 2 species at a time, and I’m pretty much burned out on mbuna and Peacocks.

I like photos of Tanganyikan cichlids in books and on-line, I like reading about them, and I love to see large Tanganyikan community aquariums. While I do breed them once in a while, I don’t really enjoy keeping them in my smaller tanks because they seem to be hiding all the time. Shell-dwellers work pretty well in my tanks, but I’ve done almost all the common ones, and can’t seem to get my hands on species that I haven’t done. My favorite Tang experience was breeding *Lepidiolamprologus* “Nkambae” in a 55g, and I may take on another of the larger Lepidiolamps in the future. As you can see, Tangs are not a big part of my hobby.



Astatatilapia "Tomato" - Photo by Author

Don’t get me wrong: I don’t just do Victorians and other East African Haplochromines because that’s all I have left. I really like them. Yes, the colors can be spectacular, but I also like many Vics that aren’t as stunning as, say, *Pundamilia nyererei, Astatatilapia* “Tomato”, or Xystochromis phytophagus “Christmas Fulu”. In fact, some species, like *Yssichromis pyrrhocephalus*, which are just silvery fish with a little red on the males, are so enjoyable to keep that I plan on breeding multiple generations.

Xystochromis phytophagus "Christmas Fulu" - Photo by Greg Steeves

I also like the fact that we're in kind of a "golden age" of Vics, with new and interesting species finally coming into the hobby with some regularity. The New England Cichlid Society, for example, has been bringing in species that are new to the US hobby, and Oliver Lucanus is starting to receive shipments from a commercial collector in the Victorian Basin.

This "golden age" extends to science, also. People such as Ole Seehausen, Matt McGee and Les Kaufman are doing more research on the lake, along with the rest of the bodies of water in the Victorian Basin, than has ever been done before. They're learning more about the recent extinction event of which we've heard so much gloomy news, but they're also finding that many species that were thought extinct, or near extinction, have rebounded, sometimes even having already adapted to new ecological niches.


Yssichromis pyrrocephalus - Photo by Greg Steeves

Then there's Lawrence Kent. Lawrence is a high-level employee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who travels all over the world for work, and collects fish in his spare time. When he's in the vicinity of Lake Victoria and has a day off, he'll go to the lake and pay local fisherman to catch

Haplochromines for him to photograph. He'll also ask them to keep a sharp look-out for mouth-brooding females. When such females are found and everything goes right, he'll strip those fry out, bring them home to his fishroom in Seattle, and raise them up. (This solves the problem of matching collected females to the correct males.) He gives them an informal name, usually based on collection location, and distributes them through the hobby. He'll also show photographs of the grown adults (and the live fish, when possible) to Vic experts, to see if the species can be identified. In 2012, he raised up a group pulled from the mouth of a female caught in Lake Victoria's Murchison Bay, in Uganda. Based on the opinions of Dr. Paul Loiselle, Irwin Schraml and Greg Steeves, it was determined that they are *Haplochromis lividus*, a species thought to have disappeared during the extinction. They are now known in the hobby (and exist in the Cleveland area) as *H. lividus* "Murchison Bay". This stuff is fun!

Haplochromis lividus "Murchison Bay" - Photo by Kevin Bauman

Many people who don't have a lot of experience with Victorian Basin cichlids think that females from different Vic species all look alike. While many species' females do look nearly identical to those of other species, as a blanket statement, it's truer of Peacocks. Though all closely related, Victoria Haps have evolved, relatively recently, at a furious pace. They have developed a multitude of morphologies, and many Vic species' females can be easily identified, especially when you know what's in your fishroom. That means working with Victorians isn't nearly the problem some have made it out to be.

And finally, one of the big attractions of Victorians, for me, is that most of them mature quickly. Remember that I like big Neo-Tropicals, but just have room for a couple species at a time. Most of the time, for any type of cichlid, I start with juveniles. That means while I'm patiently waiting quite a while for a group of, say, *Parachromis* to mature, I get my fill of action by playing with Vics. They balance my fish room psychologically, you might say.

Sources:
Buntbarsche Bulletin #282, June 2014
Greg Steeves (personal communication)
Various Facebook posts by people and organizations mentioned

For further information:
African-cichlid.net (website)
Africancichlids.net (website and Facebook page)
Haplochromini (Facebook group)

Your

Ad

Here

Please consider supporting the OCA! Sign up to sponsor the 2018 Extravaganza!

Cobalt Aquatics

Cobalt Aquatics will always strive to bring the highest quality products to market.

624 Wilkerson Rd.

Rock Hill, SC 29730 USA

803-591-9500

Visit www.cobaltaquatics.com/

Something Fishy Inc.

Sales-Setup-Service-Leasing

The premier breeder and aquarium retailer specializing in African Cichlids in Northeast Ohio.

4764 State Road Cleveland, Ohio 44109

216.635.1625

www.Somethingfishyinc.net

Rift Lake Aquatics

6777 Engle Rd. Suite J
216-215-1639
www.shop.riftlakeaquatics.net
Jim@riftlakeaquatics.net

North East Ohio Discus

Nate & Bonnie Larson

620 West Nimisila Rd,
Akron, OH 44319

Phone: 330-882-5158

Email: neohdiscus@aol.com

Hours by Appointment only

The Ohio Bigfoot Conference

The premier Bigfoot conference in the world.

Visit Ohiobigfootconference.org or check them out on Facebook for up-to-date information

TODAY IN THE FISHROOM

WITH MO DEVLIN

The Black Out Look

One of the questions I am asked frequently is “how do I get that black out look with my photos? What it’s referencing is an image that basically showcases the fish on what appears to be a completely black background minus any heaters, filters or plastic mermaids. With a lot of images, the results can be quite striking, showcasing the fish. There’s a couple separate ways it can be accomplished. I’m going to describe two.

The beautiful Victorian cichlid shown above was shot in a one gallon photo tank using the methods described in this article.

It's All About the Light

If you've heard me talk about aquatic photography in the past you have no doubt heard me say this before. What makes a photograph is not the camera sensor, or the autofocus system, or the depth of field. Photographs are made with light. Newer and better gear progressively is allowing cameras to require less and less light to be able to capture an image, which is both an incredible technological feat, and a useful tool, but it's not the point. Your ability to control that light is a definite advantage in your end result.

Nuts, Bolts and Fish that Don't Sit Still

In order to understand the first "rule of blackout" you need to understand the mechanics of how the image is initially captured. Camera sensors aside for a minute, it really comes down to three things: the ISO, the aperture and the shutter speed. For those of us old enough to remember film cameras, ISO is the equivalent of ASA, which was the indication of how sensitive a film was to light. In Digital Photography *ISO* measures the sensitivity of the image sensor. For all practical purposes the aperture and camera speed does the same thing as old film cameras. The aperture basically is the same as the pupil in your eye. The darker it is, the wider the pupil. Picture walking out of a dark room into the bright open sunlight. Your "squinting" is your pupil adjusting to the additional light being provided to your brain…which is your own personal image sensor. The shutter speed is how quickly your camera's "pupil" can open and close to capture the light it's being shown. If you were at a NASCAR race at the rail and the cars zipped by, you'd see them of course, but it would appear as a blur. If you were in the back in the cheap seats, you would see the same car at the same speed, only with less blur. That equates to your focal length of the camera lens…a macro versus a telephoto. But that's an entirely different discussion when it comes to capturing an image. For simplicity's sake, let's just say that the camera has an obvious leg up on its ability to stop motion. One of the more common problems with aquatic photography is motion blur. Fish keep moving. That "stop motion" advantage does have a drawback…and as you might imagine…it's light.

Taking Control

It's important to understand that all of the elements mentioned above work together to provide a finished product. The best piece of advice I can give, other than adding more light when possible, is taking your camera off its automatic setting and start shooting in manual mode. The automatic setting is the training wheels of a bike. It's there to keep you upright and moving forward. At some point you need to pop those off and start learning how to do wheelies.

Let me give you a scenario that you can relate to. You take the camera on automatic, point it at the fish, and take the photo. A couple things might be part of the end result. First is that the fish is blurry because it was swimming. If you are lucky enough to get it sitting still, it will still be in focus, but the image may appear grainy and not as sharp as the image your "brain sensor" is recording. You might also see that part of the fish is in focus but, and depending on the angle…the other part is slightly out of focus. Your camera was making all of those decisions for you. The first thing it considered when you looked through the viewfinder was, you guessed it, the amount of light that was available. So, the first thing it did was select a higher ISO which gave it the ability to capture the image in what is no doubt normal…but for the most part, low light settings. The second thing, and I say this, but it all happens instantly, is that it picked the aperture that it was going to use to record the light. It opened its "pupil" as wide as it could to see the light refracting off the fish. Finally, it picked the speed that the "pupil would blink" to capture the image. Try blinking your own eyes at $1/320^{th}$ of a second. It doesn't

happen. So, it will select a much slower “blink” to accommodate the other two factors (ISO and Aperture).

The black out look. This photo was shot in a one gallon photo tank using the methods described in this article.

Taking Control of the Light

What actually happens when achieving the black out look is you are eliminating the ambient light in your photograph. What that means is that instead of seeing the fish alongside the plastic mermaid, you have just enough light to record the image of the fish and NOT the mermaid. How that’s achieved comes down to some additional tools and tricks.

Before we get into that, we are back to the mechanics of what happens in the camera. First thing is to select an ISO that is much lower than your camera in automatic mode. The lower the better. For explanations sake, I’m going to say an ISO of 100. To put that in comparison, many of your automatic setting shots outside are shot at an ISO of @400. Every time you drop your ISO you are in effect doubling the amount of light needed to get the image. So, an ISO of 100 is a lot more light needed. Next is the aperture. The higher the number the smaller the “pupil” the more light is needed to see. I can’t give any exact numbers, but going back to the previous example, at an ISO of 400 outside your camera will pick a safe aperture of around 5.6 – 8 under normal conditions. So, we want something much higher. Again, every time you go UP you are requiring double the light needed to satisfy the sensor. The shutter speed is the last step. If your additional light source is a flash, most cameras will sync up to 1/250th of a second. Some cameras will sync at higher shutter speed. The best way to explain “syncing” is that when the light goes out from the flash, the shutter is basically closing too fast for the light to get back to the sensor. If you are using external lights, like the Lume

Cube Don Danko mentioned in the last publication, you can use higher. Try sticking with 1/125th or 1/250th. The benefit of a higher shutter speed, and this especially when using a flash, is that it will give that extra bump to stop action. So, when that fish quickly turns, that extra bump in speed will keep everything crisp.

The above photo further illustrates the point of utilizing a slightly higher shutter speed to stop action during a turn. It also shows the added benefit of using a higher aperture to increase the depth of field. Both front and back of this 12" fish is crisp and in focus.

Confused yet?

Don't be. Here's the simple explanation. The camera is asking for more light to satisfy the ISO & aperture. All of this is done at the expense of the ambient light in the tank. The camera sensor will only record what is properly reflecting back the necessary light…. meaning the fish. The shutter speed is opening and closing too fast to give the sensors enough time to get the background. The aperture also prevents any extra light to be included in the photo. By the way, an added value for a higher aperture is an increased depth of field…meaning more of the fish will be in focus. Bonus? The benefit of the lower ISO is that there will be less noise and better color and detail. That's it. Black out.

None of this is an exact science. The second most popular question I'm asked, other than my gear, is what are my camera settings. Depending on what you are using that may vary. With what I use, my ISO is generally at 25, shooting at an aperture of *f*36 or higher and a shutter speed of 1/320th of a second using the Nikon that sync's higher than most DSLR's. Keep in mind that I use several flash units to afford me this opportunity. I put it in perspective this way: I use Nikon SB910 flash units…which can illuminate a subject as far away as twenty or thirty feet. I average using at least three sometimes as many as five of them on a fish tank that at best is 20" deep….and sometimes a photo tank that holds a gallon of water.

Dumbo Betta shot in a very small photo tank. One of the benefits of using more light to achieve higher detail and color.

But don't despair if you read this and say, that you don't have the tools to do the job. There's LIGHT (like how I worked that in again) at the end of the tunnel. I mentioned that there are a couple ways to get the black out look. In the next installment I'm going to give you a couple ways to "cheat" the process in post-production.

My passion for the aquarium hobby is only superseded with my love of photography. And I enjoy talking about both. If you have any questions that are specific to this process or simply want to send questions to the editor about issues you are having with your DSLR, IPhone photos, post processing, whatever…ask. I would be delighted to add a Q&A to what I hope is a regular contribution in the Buckeye Bulletin. Ask anything and I will do my best provide an answer based on my experience.

Mo Devlin
Aquamojo.com
www.facebook.com/aquamojo/
You Tube - http://bit.ly/2Ful8sf

Python Products, Inc.

No spill Clean & Fill Gravel Cleaner, Ulti-Vac, and more!

Pythonproducts.com

Bergen Water Gardens &Nursery

7443 Buffalo Road,
Churchville, NY 14428

(585) 293-2860

http://bergenwatergardens.com/

The Fish Factory

"Aquatic Business of the Year"

9218 W Oklahoma Ave
West Allis, WI 53227

(414) 546-2201

Thefishfactoryonline.com

Reserve your spot in every issue of next year's bulletin by contributing $100 in sponsorship at the Extravaganza!

Swiss Tropicals

Stephan M. Tanner

HOME OF SIMPLE AND EFFICIENT FILTRATION SYSTEMS based on the Poret® and Jetlifter™ brands of products.

Swisstropicals.com

NorthFin Premium Fish Food

Canadian Aquatic Feed Inc.

First Canadian manufacturer of premium quality aquatic food!

www.canadian-aquatic-feed.com

BLUE ZOO RADIO

with Frank Reece

www.bluezooradio.com

JANUARY CICHLID BAP REPORT

Listed below are the Cichlid BAP submissions for last month. Members successfully bred these cichlids and raised fry to a minimum of 1”. Varying point values determined by spawn difficulty were given to members’ total Cichlid BAP points.

Congratulations on these spawns and thank you for your participation.

January 5, 2018

Lew Carbone

Coptodon snyderae	10

Congratulations to:

Lew Carbone

3,000 Point Level

CICHLID BAP TOTALS

Listed below are the Cichlid BAP grand totals. The information is maintained by Mark Chaloupka. See Mark at monthly meetings for more information about the Cichlid Breeders Award Program. Thank you for your participation.

CURRENT B.A.P. STANDINGS (1/5/18)

BREEDER	2018	TOTAL

MASTER BREEDER 1000 POINT LEVEL

Lew Carbone	10	3005
Don & Marilyn Danko	-	2405
Dan Woodland	-	2070
Josh Cunningham	-	1640
Bryan Davis	-	1455
Bill Loudermilk	-	1200
Linda Wallrath	-	1130
John Tesar	-	1110
Mark Chaloupka	-	1075
Rich & Maggie Schoeffel	-	1065

900 POINT LEVEL

Dennis Tomazin	-	965
Jeff Yadlovsky	-	955
Tom Swiderski	-	905

800 POINT LEVEL

Hilary & Antonio Lacerda	-	870
Dustin Brummitt	-	840
Jonathan Strazinsky	-	840
Ken & Sue Galaska	-	800
Gary Mendez	-	800

700 POINT LEVEL

Jeff Natterer	-	705
Bill Schwartz	-	700

600 POINT LEVEL

Bob Blazek	-	660
Charlie & Cathy Suk	-	615
Steve Zarzeczny	-	600

500 POINT LEVEL

Tim Craig	-	540
George Anagnostopoulos	-	515
Ron Georgeone	-	510

400 POINT LEVEL

Rick Hallis	-	495
Phil Hypes	-	475
Eric & Rhonda Sorensen	-	475
Kyle May	-	460
Bob Bina	-	435
Tyler Toncler	-	420

300 POINT LEVEL

Jonathan Dietrich	-	335
David Hale	-	335
Tony Poth	-	335
Greg Senn	-	325
Gary Zalewski	-	325
Ken & Karen Grimmett	-	310
Tom & Carolyn Evers	-	300

200 POINT LEVEL

Andrew Schock	-	290
Dennis Kuehn	-	285
James Shakour	-	275
Jason Mlynar	-	260
David Hearn	-	255
Dave Esner	-	250
Ken Walker	-	240
Justin Way	-	220
Mark Kazanoff	-	215
Paul Collander	-	205

100 POINT LEVEL

Marc & Dawn DeWerth	-	195
Ozeal Hunter	-	190
Bill & Janice Bilski	-	185
Chuck Carroll	-	185
Denis Rozmus	-	185
Andrew Subotnik	-	180
Bob Evers	-	175
Charles Nowakowski	-	165
Frank Mueller	-	160
Steve Heinbaugh	-	150
David Ayers	-	145
Greg Seith	-	145
Dan Ogrizek	-	140
John Griffith	-	135
Carl Oszewski	-	135
Joe Ring	-	120
Steve Olander	-	115
Peter Nario-Redmond	-	115
Aaron Stevens	-	115
David Toth	-	115
Raymond Langer	-	110

BREEDER LEVEL

Mark Huntington	-	95
Dolores Bacisin	-	85
Pete Gembka	-	80
Rick Wood	-	75
Bob Tillman	-	70
Matt Urbin	-	70
Dave Dimond	-	65
Anthony Scarton	-	65
Nicholas Zarzeczny	-	65
Jim Jensen	-	60
Paul Palisin	-	60
Chris Jaskolka	-	55
John Kaminski	-	55
Dave Dimond	-	50
Margaret Heifner	-	50
John Kahl	-	50
Roger Stark	-	50
Alex Gorges	-	45
Ethan Wiley	-	40
Matt Lacy	-	35
Christopher Sooy	-	35
Tom Tansey	-	35
Jason Gorges	-	30
Paul Hutnyak	-	30
Keith Robinson	-	30
Adam Stallman	-	30
Wayne Corman	-	25
Fred Roberts	-	25
Andy Lacerda	-	20
Scott Meyers	-	20
Bill Sensor	-	20
Jason Webb	-	20
Ken Carey	-	10
Jim & Amy Damm	-	10
Ron Drungil	-	10
Ben Jensen	-	10
Cory Knarr	-	10
Michael Meyer	-	10
Mike Trader	-	10

The points list for the Breeders Award Program has been updated to include only current members. If you are a current member and your name has been omitted, please see the B.A.P. Chairman at the social meeting so we can correct any errors.

Please remember: You may only turn in a species or strain of fish for B.A.P. points one time. If you need a list of what you have been credited with, see the BAP chairman at the social meeting.

Scalz Fine Art and Illustration
Sam Garcia Jr.

Extensive Cichlid and fish collection for purchase

https://www.facebook.com/ScalzNatureArtist/

NorthfinUSA

"NorthfinUSA because your fish are worth it!"

"100% veteran owned"

"The first ever US run business that has been providing Northfin fish food since day one."

http://www.northfinusa.com/

GCAS
Greater Cincinnati Aquarium Society

Gcas.org

Meetings held last Sunday of month at 7:30 pm at 10245 Winton Road, Cincinnati, Ohio

---

Greater Cleveland Aquarium

2000 Sycamore Street
Cleveland, OH 44113

216-862-8803

Greaterclevelandaquarium.com

The Wonder of Cichlids

African Cichlids for Sale

Thewonderofcichlids.com

617-895-9902

Your Ad Here

Please consider supporting the OCA! Sign up to sponsor the 2018 Extravaganza!

JANUARY CATFISH BAP REPORT

Listed below are the Catfish BAP submissions for last month. Members successfully bred these catfish and raised fry to a minimum of 1”. Varying point values determined by spawn difficulty were given to members’ total Catfish BAP points. Congratulations on these spawns and thank you for your participation.

Breeder	Species	Points
Bill Schwartz	Ancistrus L279 "Huacamayo"	10

CATFISH BAP TOTALS

Listed below are the Catfish BAP grand totals. The information is maintained by Steve Heinbaugh. See Steve at monthly meetings for more information about the Catfish Breeders Award Program. Thank you for your participation.

NAME	2018	TOTAL
Dan Ogrizek		420
Steve Heinbaugh		365
Dave Ayres		315
Don & Marilyn Danko		285
Phil Ayres		230
Ken Walker		120
Eric & Rhonda Sorensen		110
Dan Woodland		100
Matt Urbin		90
Tom & Carolyn Evers		80
Bob Blazek		80
Hilary Lacerda		80
Bill Schwartz	10	70
Bob Bina		70

John Kaminski	70
Justin Way	60
Bryan Davis	60
Phil Hypes	60
Jeff Natterer	50
Ken Galaska	45
Tyler Toncler	45
Matt Lacy	40
Josh Cunningham	40
Kyle May	40
George Aganostopoulos	40
John Tesar	30
Karen & Ken Grimmett	30
Lew Carbone	30
Andrew Schock	30
Bob Evers	30
Jason Mlynar	25
Tony Poth	20
Gary Mendez	20
David Toth	20
Paul Palisin	20
Jeff Yadlovsky	10
Dave Hearn	10
John Griffith	10
Carl Olszewski	10
Anthony Scranton	10
Jon Dietrich	10
Richard Shamray	10
William Zarzeczny	10
Wayne Corman	10
Mark Chaloupka	10
David Hale	10
Jonathan Strazinsky	10
Bob & Jennifer Tillman	10

Super Cichlids

https://www.supercichlids.com/

478-230-6028

Lisa@SuperCichlids.com

Seachem Laboratories

Just add water. We'll do the rest.

Check out the NEW HydroTote!

http://www.seachem.com/

Tropical Fish Club of Erie County

5725 Herman Hill Road
Hamburg NY 14075

http://tropical-fish-club-of-erie-county.com

Your

Ad

Here

Please consider supporting the OCA! Sign up to sponsor the 2018 Extravaganza!

South Central Cichlids.com

"Caves made so you will enjoy them as much as we enjoy making them!"

-Will not leach chemicals
-Won't break down over time
-Will not have sharp edges

www.southcentralcichlids.com

Good for the Hobby – Organizations – Industry

Ray "Kingfish" Lucas

Thanks for 25 years and 500 shows!

OCA BOWL SHOW

Listed below is information about the monthly meeting Bowl Show. The Bowl Show is your opportunity to show off your fish. Each month different categories of Cichlids and Catfish will be judged. Points will be given and prizes will be awarded. All members are welcome to participate. This is great practice for our yearly Extravaganza show! See Scott Myers, at a meeting for more information.

Bowl Show Report from Lew Carbone:

Our elected OCA Bowl Show Chair has, unfortunately, been forced to resign due to health reasons. However, experienced showman Scott Myers will take over the position. (That means that if you participate, you won't have to compete against him!) I'm filing this report because he wouldn't have time to get it in before this issue's deadline.

Here are the details for this year's Bowl Show:

>Cash prizes: $15 for 1st place in each class and an additional $15 for Best of Show.

>Points: In each class, 10 for 1st, 7 for 2nd, 5 for 3rd, 1 for any non-placing entry, and an additional 5 for Best of Show.

>Best of Show will be awarded only if there are 2 or more show entries.

>Grand Prize for 2018: 75 gallon aquarium or cash equivalent.

>Size restrictions refer to full-grown adult sizes as reported by Cichlid Room Companion or Planet Catfish.

February Classes:

Victoria Basin Cichlids
Loracariids (Pleco types) 6" or under
South American cichlids 6" or under, excluding Angels and Apistos

2018 BOWL SHOW CLASSES

February 2
Victoria Basin
Loricariids (Pleco types) 6” or under
South Americans 6” and under, exclude Angels, Apistos

March 2
Mbuna
Catfish,exclude Mochokids, Loricariids, Callichthyids
Fish Photography

April 6
Tanganyikan Shell Dwellers
Angels
Callichthyids (Cory types)

May 4
Loricariids (Pleco types) over 6”
Peacocks
Open New World

June1
Central Americans over 6”
Tanganyikan Mouthbrooders, exclude Frontosa
Frontosa

August 3
Mochokids (Synodontis types)
Discus, Uaru
Old World, exclude Rift Lakes, Vic Basin

September 7
Apistos
Open Tanganyika
Malawi Haps

October 5
Central Americans 6” and under
Open Catfish
Female cichlids

November 2
South Americans over 6”
Open Old World, exclude Malawi, Tanganyika
Loaches and Botias

December 7
Julidichromis, Telmatachromis, Chalinochromis
Tanganyikan Lamps, exclude Shell Dwellers
Open Malawi

All classes are for cichlids, unless otherwise specified.

Dissecting the Hobby

By Dan Woodland

Maximize Your Results at Fish Auctions

Auctions have always been a staple of the hobby where hobbyists can buy and sell fish they have raised. They are also great if you want to acquire or liquidate equipment. There are many things you can do to make sure an auction is successful and those things can be grouped into two areas: buying and selling.

Selling

When you sell items at an auction there are several things to keep in mind. First, be sure your offerings are the proper size, in good health and presented correctly. You have a responsibility to the presenting organization, the fish and the buyers (your customer). Be prepared when you arrive the morning of the auction. Your fish must be the proper size/age, depending on the species. You can refer to and follow the Ohio Cichlid Associations rules on BAP. Those rules can be found at http://www.ohiocichlid.com/meetings/bap-cichlids. The reason for the size rules are to give the fish a chance to live and the new owner a fair chance at raising the fish you are selling. Imagine you are the buyer when packing your fish. Do you want to get a fish that's too young and fragile to live through the next couple of days? Probably not.

Next, make sure your fish are in good health. This should go without saying, but but it bears repeating. Your fish are going to be stressed enough, so give them and the buyer a fighting chance.

Lastly, you need to make sure you present your fish at the auction properly. There is more involved than simply bagging fish and dropping them on the table. First you need to make sure you bag the fish properly. See Kyle May's article that follows this column to learn how to properly bag fish. Don't use baggies, zip lock bags or bread bags. They won't last the day and will cause a real mess when they leak. At some clubs there is a re-bagging fee, so save yourself some money and buy the proper bags from the start. Plastic containers are acceptable, but try to limit them to larger fish that typically pop bags or won't last all day in a bag. Bag your fish to last all day. Use bag buddies, a relatively inexpensive product. They are available in many places on the internet. Simply follow the instructions on the bottle and you're golden. I'm not a shill for Bag Buddies, but I do use them all the time.

Prior to the auction, don't feed your fish for a day or more (depending on the species). For example, Cichlasoma bocourti take nearly four or five days to clear out their intestines. This will help reduce stress on the fish and help guarantee they live in the bag and the new owner takes possession. Excess waste in your bag will have a negative effect on the waters quality.

Double bag – if needed. Some think we should double bag every fish If your bags are higher quality (3mil or more) and the fish won't poke a hole in the bag, I don't think it's necessary. Fish three four inches or more certainly should be double bagged. Some special cases exist where fish should always be double bagged like Plecostomus. Plecostomus should be double bagged or bagged using a square bottom bag. **Bagging tip:** Place black plastic or newspaper in the first bag as a "liner" (between the two bags) when bagging plecostomus and s larger fish. This makes it dark in the bag keeping them calmer. Another trick is to shred clear plastic bags, and place a hand full of the shreds in a bag with multiple fishes you think might be aggressive. The plastic acts as an invisible fence. If one fish attacks another, it meets resistance and stops in its tracks. Call it an invisible force field for you scientific types. ☺

Although auctions are typically “buyer beware”, how many times have you heard a species name and your arm shoots into the air to bid, only for you to find out that they are not the right fish you thought they were? How many times have you bid on fish only to find that they are so tiny you don’t have any chance of getting them home alive? Think of the other guy when bagging your fish. This is a hobby and there will be other auctions. Remember your actions can influence a young hobbyist positively and negatively. Organizations like the OCA do a great job inspecting fish as they are dropped off, but occasionally a bad bag gets through. Be aware and you won’t get burned. Make sure you use the right bag; fish should never have to be curved or bent to fit into a bag. There should be enough room for them to turn around, just like a dog in a crate or cage. An example, a three or four inch fish would do nicely in a six to eight inch wide bag. Limit yourself and don’t try cramming an entire spawn of H. carpintus into one bag.

Lastly, make sure you label your bags correctly including number of fish in the bag, the correct species name and spelling, and what is in the bag, cross breeds, bad eye or for equipment broken, working, needs impeller etc. Oh, and make sure the writing is legible; printing your labels makes that a non-issue. Auctions can be a long process and properly bagging and presenting your items will help the host club process the items more quickly so everyone, including the fish, can go home sooner.

Buying

Bidding – as an auctioneer it’s very difficult at times to tell if someone is bidding. Unlike the common myth, auctioneers can’t see you blinking or nodding your head. Hold up your hand or bidding card for all to see card and only drop it when the item has surpassed what you are willing to pay. Be sure you want the fish or item before you start bidding. If you’re unsure, don’t raise your hand/bidding card. Auctions can be very long and, as a buyer, you can help by bidding properly and effectively, thereby shortening the auction. By the way, some auctioneers will pass you buy unless you bid properly. Keep it in mind otherwise you may loose that “fish you’ve been looking for”.

Be sure to bring enough styros for the fish you plan to buy, if you bring too many, someone will be happy to buy them from you for their fish. Also be prepared to re-bag fish you’ve purchased. Bring bags, bag buddies, water conditioner and rubber bands. The water conditioner is a must especially if you are in a city where you are unfamiliar with the water chemistry. I have a permanent plastic container with all my bagging supplies. I put it in the car everywhere I go when I plan to buy fish. It is a big help. When I get home after the auction I resupply the container and put it away for the next time.

It wouldn’t hurt to know where your new fish will go when you get home too. Having an empty tank or two is a good thing when you leave for the auction. I know it’s a sacrilege to have empty tanks, but it won’t kill you make you to have a few empty for moving fish etc.

One last point, if you’re new to the hobby or bagging fish for an auction- ask questions. Guys that have been in the hobby for decades are here to help, so don’t be afraid to ask. As a kid I was told “the only stupid question is the one you don’t ask”.

See you at the OCA February auction.

More to come…

How To Properly Bag Fish

By Kyle May

"...the bagged fish with your name on it is an example of your skills."

Any good sports team knows that strong adherence to the fundamentals is necessary for success. As a good aquarist you must also practice good fundamentals in all facets of the hobby if you want to be really successful. One of the fundamentals is bagging fish. I spend a lot of time at auctions handling hundreds of bags of fish and can safely say that many aquarists are horrible at bagging fish. What difference does it make? Plenty. Proper bagging reduces the stress on fish during transport, ultimately resulting in fewer losses, healthier fish stock, and it gives the buyer a fighting chance to keep them all alive. If nothing else, think of the next guy when bagging fish. Bag them like you are the one getting them.

As with most things forethought is key. Making sure you have the proper sized bag is the first step. Remember, if taking fish to auction the fish must survive in the bag from the time you bag them to the very end of the auction, and then survive the drive home. Since you can't predict the drive home, let's assume that you are bagging fish at 6am for an auction that ends at 10pm and that your buyer has a 1 hour drive home. That's 17 hrs in bag. Pick a bag that will hold plenty of air for the fish, make sure that you have clean water in the bag, and that you use a sedative like Bag Buddies to help the fish survive. Many people are using a product called Polyfilter which will absorb large quantities of waste chemistry helping keep the water clean. Pick a bag that has plenty of room for your fish. Don't crowd the fish in the bag.
I've seen plenty of 6" fish in an 8" bag. This is not only an example of poor bag choice, but is a glaring example of an aquarist with very poor husbandry skills. If you can't bag a fish correctly, it makes me question all of your skills as an aquarist.

Ultimately the bagged fish with your name on it is an example of your skills; make sure you send the right message to others. Let those who buy your fish, no matter how insignificant the fish is to you, know that you care about the fish enough to package them properly. Your bag sends a message that you do your best to make sure that every fish you bag has been treated like it was your favorite fish.

What follows it a step by step primer on how to properly bag fish. These rules have become fundamentals and have been proven by generations of aquarists. These are not rules that I created, but are a compilation of techniques shared by some of the top aquarists I've known. These are aquarists who typically ship fish over great distance and time, and are aquarists who have a great reputation for successful delivery of healthy fish. I've improved my bagging skills over the last few years and I follow these steps to the letter. Whether I'm bagging fish that I know will sell for big money or if I'm bagging fish that I know will be lucky to sell for $1, they all get bagged the same. Consistent and proper bagging of fish has reduced my losses during transport to an extremely low level and has resulted in an increase of satisfied customers purchasing my fish. I hope that you'll consider the fundamentals when bagging your own fish and follow these time tested-techniques.
I think that your success rate will increase as will your reputation for excellence as an aquarist.

1. As with most things the first step affects the success of the entire operation. Choosing the correct bag is key. Consider the size and amount of fish in the bag. Also consider the time in bag. If in doubt use a larger bag than necessary. Do not try to save money by re-using old bags. It makes you look cheap and potential buyers will think twice about buying your fish. Use a new bag and present your fish properly.

2. Proper amount of Water and Air.

2/3rds Air

1/3 Water

3. Using Bag Buddies or bits of Polyfilter will increase your success and the health of the fish in the bag.

4. Never, ever, blow into the bag. Air you exhale has a very low amount of oxygen in it. Instead put air in the bag using a spare air pump. This allows you to put the highest concentration of air into the bag and makes it very easy to get a nice tight bag without much slack. The ultimate way to pack fish is to use oxygen; it's expensive, but the results are really worth the extra money and effort.

5. One key to having properly bagged fish is making sure you have an effective seal. You could tie a knot, use twist or zip ties, but these are not the best way to seal a bag. Knotting the bag makes them hard to undo and the other fasteners are just as apt to puncture the bag as they are to make an effective seal. For these reasons, use good quality rubber bands. These are available in big bags at office supply stores. Never re-use old rubber bands as they have a high failure rate. Use only new rubber bands that are at least ¼" thick. A bag like the one in the pic at the right, costs just a couple of bucks, so why not do it right?

6. Tying off. Now you've got fish in the bag, the bag is full of air and you are ready to complete the deal. First, secure the rubber band around the closed end of the bag by wrapping the rubber band around the bag and back through itself. Roll the rubber band down onto the bag as far as possible to insure a tight fit.

7. Next fold over the closed end of the bag and wrap the rubber band around the bag until tight. Finish up by twisting the rubber band over the top of the loop a couple of times to secure the entire works.

8. Always double bag your fish, even if they are going on a short trip. Double bagging is very cost effective and is a good safety net for your fish should anything happen to the first bag. Over 20% of bags fail in one way or another at auction, and many fish have been saved by the secondary bag.

9. **Here is the finished product, a properly bagged fish. Notice how double bagging rounds off the corners of the bag preventing fish from becoming trapped in the folded corner. Not only will your fish have a safety net with the second bag, but they'll also be more likely to survive the trip by not getting crushed in the fold.**

If you choose the correct bag, use bag buddies, fill the bag with air, seal it properly and double bag each time, you'll find that your fish will arrive at their destination happy and healthy. As a result those who get fish from you will be much happier too.

Your level of expertise is reflected in the quality of fish husbandry skills you practice.