

* DELTA TALE *

Nov/Dec
1992

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

potomac valley aquarium society



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1992 PVAS OFFICERS

President	Beverle Sweitzer
Vice President	Alex Townsend
Treasurer	Kenny Warren
Corresponding Secretary	Julie Spall
Recording Secretary	Pete Thrift
Past President	Rick Mckay

1992 BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Tony Fitz

1992 COMMITTEE HEADS

Breeders Award Program	John Jessup
Library	Brian Groover
Membership	Gene Aldridge
Bowl Shows	
Programs	
Ways and Means	Pete Thrift
Corporate Agent	Gerry Hoffman
<u>Delta Tale</u> Editor	John Mangan

Printed by Top Cat Printing

Letter from the Prez

Hi Guys:

Poor John (ed.) has really had to wait for this one. The "natural" tank is full of snails and baby mollies. Somebody is happy in there. The female betta beat her husband to death so she is now alone and trying anyway that she can think of to get into the "cages" holding the baby mollies. She would love to eat them but for now she settles for the food that drifts out of the "cages". The plants are doing well. I put in some plant tabs the other day and we will see how that goes.

The worms are well, I don't really know. I have been too busy to pay much attention to them. I have switched from chicken food to kitchen scraps. Chopped potatoes and carrots and apples, etc. I put the scraps (not table scraps, although I guess you could use them) in the food processor and chop it fine. Then I dig a trench down the center of each box, put this 'gruel' in the trench and cover it with dirt. The books say not to do that because the bed will go sour, but they eat it all in about 2 days so nothing can go bad. My big beautiful Brasilianis (sp?) that I was going to put in the show died about 2 weeks before the show, so I buried him in one of the beds and he never even got a chance to smell bad. (yuk!)

Speaking of the show - turn out was less than the last one but we sure did have a bunch of beauties!! My fish didn't win anything but what can you expect when my female had to hide in a tube to keep from getting beaten or raped by her husband of 2 years and when my Angel had a droopy fin? I had a good time and saw some of the nicest fish ever. I was really proud to be the Prez of a club where the members are so capable. I hope that we can find a way to encourage other members to participate in the next show - whenever that will be.

We are cooking up a lot of fun stuff for the coming year. The video projector is on its way so that means we can watch educational videos and we can tape videos of club members fish rooms and ... Oh wow!! I get so excited about it. We should be able to have something at the next meeting.

The November meeting is the Election meeting and the December meeting is the Pot Luck Christmas dinner. Last year the food was out of this world and so much of it! Please try to make it to both.

The Hunting Creek tour was amazing. I was a little late - I couldn't believe it but I got lost. Not a lot, but a little and had to turn around and go back away and when I pulled in I saw this huge crowd and I thought " Oh no, they said they don't have tours and here is another group!!". Imagine my surprise when I suddenly recognized almost every face! We counted 40 (!!!!) people from PVAS. I was thrilled to pieces. We had a wonderful time and saw just about everything. The weather couldn't have been more perfect. Mr. Klinger, the owner was laid up with a terrible back problem and just his wife and Fred were able to give the tour and were they surprised when I had told them maybe 20 but most likely 9 to 11 and 40 showed. I was proud again. I have pictures and will try to remember to bring them in November for those of you that couldn't make it.

Well time to go - Stevie (my guinea pig) has a dirty cage and I have to clean it and change some more water. A fish keepers job is never done.

Later Dudes,

Blw

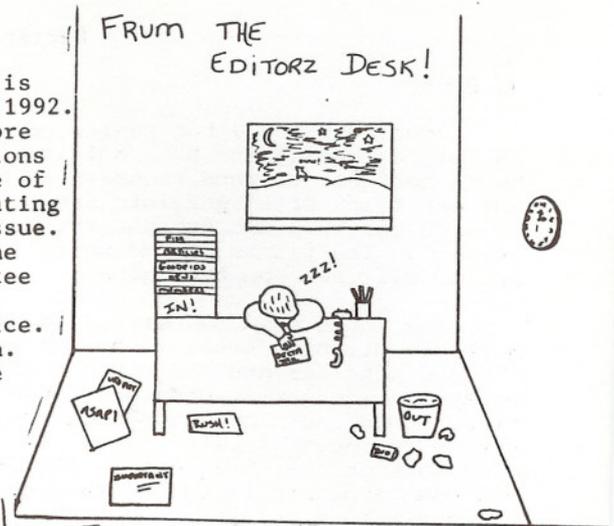
It's hard to believe, but this is the last issue of Delta Tale for 1992. We still have a lot going on before the year ends though. PVAS elections are coming in November. The slate of candidates proposed by the nominating committee can be found in this issue. This is only a proposed slate. The purpose of the nominating committee is only to insure that there is a candidate running for each office. Anyone who wants to can still run. If you want to run for any office you simply have someone nominate you from the floor prior to the election. If you don't feel that you know anyone well enough to ask them to nominate you just see any current officer, or me, and we will be glad to help you.

Coming up in December is the annual PVAS Christmas Party. This will take place at the December meeting. If you are not familiar with how these work I'll explain. This is basically a dinner. PVAS will supply a main item or two, such as turkey and/or ham. Everyone else is asked to bring some type of side dish. Someone will be volunteered to coordinate this to make sure everyone doesn't bring the same thing. Since I'm writhing this in the middle of October this person isn't known yet. An announcement should be made at the November meeting and everyone should be contacted. If you aren't please get in touch with any PVAS officer and we will get you together with the coordinator. After dinner is the annual PVAS awards presentation. This is when any BAP or other awards will be handed out. The evening is ended with a gift exchange. Everyone is asked to bring a small, wrapped, fish related gift (nothing live!). These will be randomly distributed to everyone that brought one. One final note on this—since it is a dinner, and families are invited, we usually try to start the evening about 7:00 rather than the usual 8:00.

My final topic for this issue/year is our recent show. Show results can be found elsewhere in this issue. Please note the numbers on this page. I think they speak for themselves. The fish that were there were all excellent specimens and the people that brought them all deserve congratulations. Also thank you to the smaller than normal crew of workers that made the show and auction possible. You'll notice that I really haven't said anything to try to make people feel bad about not participating like I usually do after things like this. When I first started thinking about what to write this time that was my original plan, ie my usual ranting and raving. I've decided instead to try to do something more constructive and try to find out why few of you participated. You will find in the center of this issue the first annual(maybe) Delta Tale Membership Survey. Please fill this out in as much detail as possible, use more paper if you need to, and either mail it back to me or give it to me at one of the next meetings. Your answers will be a great help to the Board in planning 1993's activities for PVAS.

Unless we get a new president that fires me, talk to you again next year...

Jah



WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Nov. 9: PVAS Monthly Meeting. Speaker, door prize, raffles, mini-auction, bowl show- Corydoras, and open categories, plus lots of other stuff. This is also PVAS elections month. Anyone wishing to run for any office can still be nominated from the floor just prior to the election. Meeting starts at 8:00, everyone is welcome.
- Dec. 14: PVAS Christmas Dinner. 7:00 starting time, rather than the usual 8:00. All PVAS members and their families are invited. PVAS will provide a main course and everyone else is asked to bring a side dish. Also bring a small, wrapped, fish related, gift for the gift exchange. Any PVAS 1992 awards will also be presented at this time. Plus a special surprise. The unveiling of, well I'm not going to tell you. All I'm going to say is that it's something the board has been discussing for quite some time, and it will open up a whole new world of possibilities for our monthly programs.

Any PVAS member may place an ad in the Trading Post at no charge. Deadline for the next issue is Dec. 14. Send ads to John Mangan, 9770 Oleander Ave. Vienna VA 22181.



- FOR SALE:** - Perfecto 50 gallon tank, glass canopy, and fluorescent strip. Dimensions 36W by 18H by 18D. Wood stand. Tank is 3/8" plate glass - can be drilled. Perfect condition. \$100
- Above set-up with Eheim 2213 canister filter and VisiTherm heater included. Delivery possible. \$140
 - Eheim 2015 canister filter. Good condition. \$40
 - Tetra Marine Aquarist Manual, 2nd ed. by Loisel. New. \$12
 - FAMA magazines. 1991 complete. Good cond. \$10
- Pete Thrift (703) 971-0594

FOR SALE -- 10G Perfecto SW setup, incl tank, UG filter, fluorescent full hood, power head, submersible heater, coral gravel, salt. Like new \$45. Also 5½G Perfecto tank, canopy & flo light \$25; Eheim 2015 canister filter plus Eheim 2007 internal filter \$50. Call Chris at 301-229-6043 (Bethesda).

PVAS 1992 FALL SHOW RESULTS

	First	Second	Third
<u>I. Livebearers</u>			
a. Guppies (1)	Mangan		
b. Mollies, Swordtails, Platies (1)	Roberts		
c. Goodeids (6)	Mangan	Mangan	Mangan
d. AOV Livebearing Fish (1)	Mangan		
Best Livebearer - Mangan			
<u>II. Egglayers (Non-Cichlid)</u>			
a. Catfish, Corydoras (7)	Tramm	Hughes	Tramm/Hughes
b. Catfish, Loricariidae (6)	Cohen	Roberts	Lindgren
c. Catfish, Synodontis (7)	Tramm	Townsend	Tramm
d. Catfish, Naked (0)	No Entries		
e. All Other Catfish (0)	No Entries		
f. Betta Splendens (8)	Sullivan	Duley/Duley	
g. AOV Bettas & Anabantoids (2)	Roberts	LeMessurier	
h. Sharks & Loaches (5)	Lindgren/Tramm		Lindgren
i. Characoids, Under 3" (0)	No Entries		
j. Characoids, Over 3" (0)	No Entries		
k. Barbs (0)	No Entries		
l. Goldfish & Koi (0)	No Entries		
m. Danios & Rasboras (5)	Roberts	Shaw	Roberts
n. North American Native Fish (0)	No Entries		
o. AOV Non-Cichlid Egglayers (1)	Pallansch		
Best Non-cichlid Egglayer - Cohen			
<u>III. Cichlids</u>			
a. New World Large (over 7") (4)	Lindgren	Zimmerman	Peraza
b. New World Medium (4-7") (0)	No Entries		
c. New World Dwarf (under 4") (1)	Cohen		
d. Angelfish (8)	Melograna/Melograna		Melograna
e. Discus (2)	Townsend	Thrift	
f. Mbuna (1)	Cohen	Townsend	
g. Tanganyikan (4)	Cohen	Cohen	Cohen/Shaw
h. Cichlid Pairs (7)	Cohen	Cohen	Cohen
i. AOV Cichlids (1)	Tramm		
Best Cichlid - Cohen			
IV. <u>Marine Fish & Invertebrates</u>	No Entries		
V. <u>Family of Fishes</u> (3)	Thrift	Anderson	Lehman
VI. <u>Plants</u> (2)	Shaw	Shaw	
VII. <u>Photography</u>	No Entries		

BEST IN SHOW - ZACHARY COHEN - ZEBRA PLECO
RESERVE IN SHOW - BRIAN & WENDY TRAMM - SYNODONTIS CATFISH
 TOTAL ENTRIES - 84
 TOTAL ENTRANTS - 20
 TOTAL PVAS ENTRANTS - 10

1992 PVAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The nominating committee submits the following list of candidates for election to the 1993 board:

President- Beverle Sweitzer
Vice President- Alex Townsend
Treasurer- Rich Blumberg
Corresponding Secretary- Mark Kaprow
Recording Secretary- Julie Spall
Board of Governors- Pete Thrift, Kenny Warren
(two positions open)

The nominating committee is required by the PVAS bylaws to submit one candidate for each office. Anyone else wishing to run for any office can be nominated from the floor prior to the election.

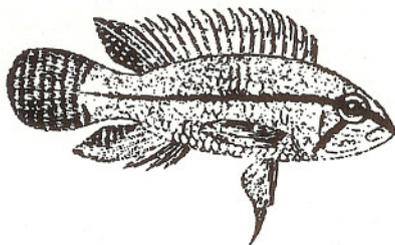
ed. note- the following poem is dedicated to George White. J.M.

A TAIL OF FIVE FISHES

by Sabrina Seeley

Five little cichlids in a tank by the door
One of them jumped and then there were four
Four little cichlids happy as can be
One got sucked up the filter tube and then there were three
Three little cichlids weren't sure what to do
The biggest got jealous and then there were two
Two little cichlids he tried to have fun
She couldn't take it and then there was one
One little cichlid with no where to run
Will get sold at the auction and then there will be none

Reprinted from the Splash, Milwaukee Aquarium Society.



It's been awhile since I ran this column. So to refresh your memories, it is simply a collection of assorted stuff that has passed across my desk (a "magnet" for all sorts of stuff). It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with fish, but I think it's worth telling you about, and, like the song says (kinda) "it's my column and I'll write what I want to".

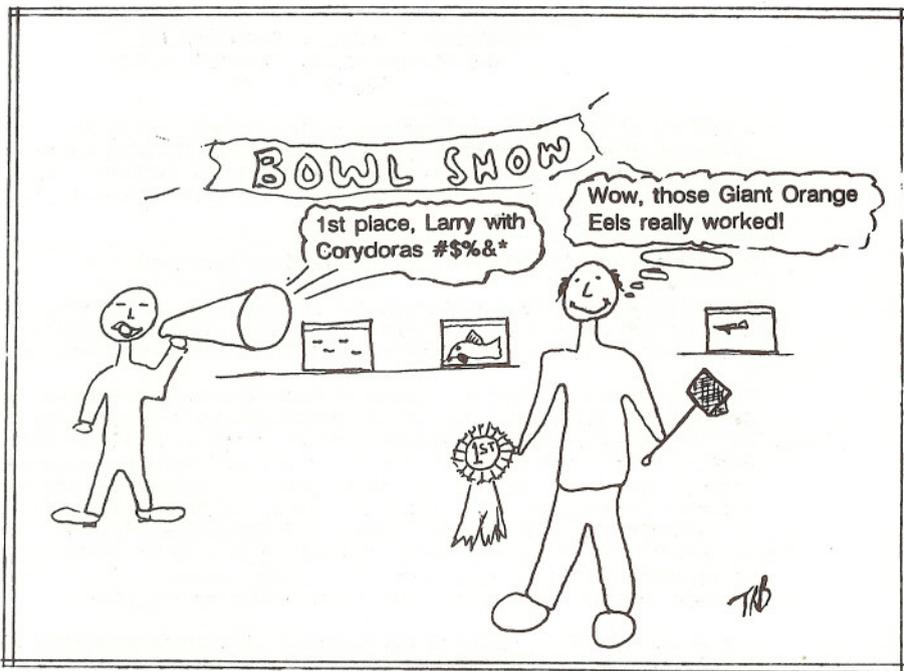
First topic is a serious one. I recently received a fund raising letter from "Zoological Society of Florida". They are apparently similar to our local FONZ, and support Miami's Metrozoo. The letter describes the damage done to the zoo by Hurricane Andrew. The zoo took a direct hit by the hurricane and damage was extensive. A few quotes from the letter: "...huge transport trailers were blown 100 yards into our black rhino enclosure...the animals food preparation facilities were destroyed...our diagnostic lab and it's lifesaving supplies were shattered...more than half of our zoo staff have lost their own homes, and yet they are here every day..." They are asking that contributions of \$10 (or more) be sent to Zoological Society of Florida, Crisis Relief Fund for Miami Metrozoo, 12400 SW 152 st., Miami, FL 33177-1499.

Next- I don't remember where I cut this out of but here it is: "Turtle Care Hotline Up and Running. In an effort to benefit the more than one million pet turtles and tortises in the United States, the New York Turtle & Tortise Society has set up a 24 hour Turtle Help Hotline. The number is (212) 459-4803. Callers can receive information on how to get turtles to eat, how to deal with disease, and what role fanciers can play in stopping the destruction of the turtle's wild habitat. The turtle society also provides an adoption service for unwanted turtles, and a wild turtle rehabilitation service."

And finally- something that actually is relevant to fishkeeping: Judy Rosenthal sent me an article that her father cut out of the Miami Herald. The headline- "Instafish fun holds serious promise". "Just add specially treated water, wait 30 minutes and- Fish Boom Bah- live tropical fish are hatching from tiny eggs before your eyes." The kits are made by Orbis Scientific and come in two versions, with one you have to send in a card to get your fish eggs, with another, "Can-O-Fish", the eggs are included. The fish are "Zanzibar jumping fish", most likely some species of Notho. I would guess. The kits are mainly designed to be used in classrooms and the fish hatch within 30 minutes. The company is also interested in using the fish for mosquito control and also has a contract with the defense department to research using the fish for environmental testing. I'm going to keep this article in my files and next time I need to fill in a page I will reprint the whole thing.

LARRY FISHNET

by Tom Biery, PVAS



MULLA

by Abner Mull, PVAS

What happens when taxonomists get stuck



Xiphophorus
unpronounceblei



Bigcichlidus
axelrodi



Fred

MINUTES OF A BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
THE POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY
August 10, 1992

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society was called to order at 7:10 PM on August 10, 1992, at the Wood Recreational Center. Officers and board members attending were Beverle Sweitzer, Julie Spall, Pete Thrift, Alex Townsend, and Kenny Warren. Also attending were John Jessup, John Mangan, and Sandy Warren.

The minutes of the July meeting were read and approved.

The president reported the resignation of John Oliva and the pending resignations of Brian and Wendy Tramm, all due to job changes and relocations. Alex Townsend was nominated to serve the remainder of Vice President Oliva's term.

The main item discussed was the 1992 fall show/auction weekend, to be held on October 9th, 10th, and 11th, at the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge in Alexandria, VA. It was reported that the PVAS portion of the show will be sanctioned by the American Cichlid Association and the American Livebearer Association. Award ribbons for first, second, and third places in each show subclass, and award trophies for best in class, reserve in show, and best in show will be ordered by Pete Thrift and Kenny Warren. Alan Reed, Dave Shaw, Dave Herlong, and Gerry Pottorn will be invited to judge the PVAS classes. Other outside judges may also be invited; PVAS will supply any other judges needed. Alex Townsend will serve as show co-chair with Beverle Sweitzer, replacing the Trammis.

The Board agreed to research the purchase of a video projector to be used for future meeting programs. Beverle circulated literature on one projector priced at approximately \$500.

John Mangan volunteered to serve as the Nominating Committee chair. Gerry Hoffman will serve as a committee member.

There were no formal motions made at this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM. The next meeting of the Board will take place at 7 PM on September 14th at the Wood Center.


PETER A. THRIFT
Recording Secretary

MINUTES OF A BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
THE POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY
September 14, 1992

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society was called to order at 7:15 PM on September 14, 1992, at the Wood Recreational Center. Officers and board members attending were Beverle Sweitzer, Julie Spall, Pete Thrift, Alex Townsend, Kenny Warren, and Tony Fitz. Also attending was John Mangan and Sandy Warren.

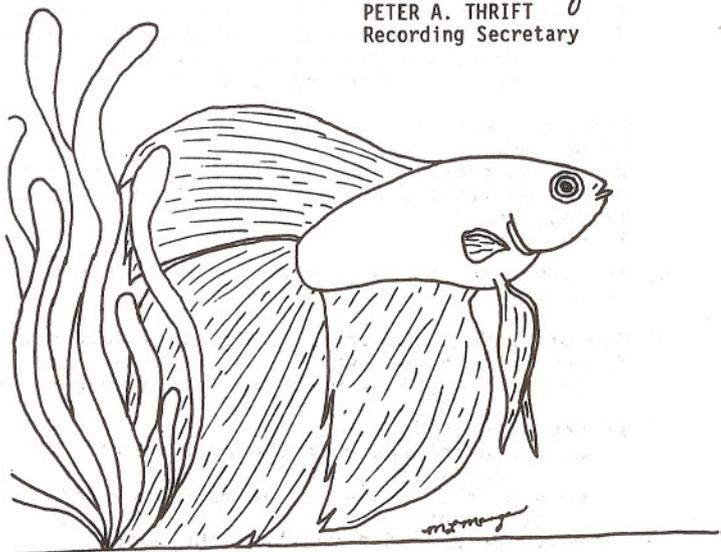
The arrangements for the October show and auction were reviewed. Beverle and Alex discussed a list of action items to be accomplished, and various board members and club volunteers to perform them. The three outside judges for the PVAS portion of the show included Dave Herlong, Alan Reed, and Dave Shaw. It was decided not to modify the agreement between PVAS and the Chesapeake Area Killiefish Club whereby PVAS would operate the raffles on Sunday.

The status of the Nominations Committee was discussed.

It was the decision of the Board that, beginning with the January 1993 meeting, each mini-auction seller will donate \$1 to the club, and retain all proceeds from the sale of his or her auction items.

There were no formal motions made at this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM. The next meeting of the Board will take place at 7 PM on October 19th at the Wood Center.

Peter Thrift
PETER A. THRIFT
Recording Secretary



7. cont.

What topic(s) would you like to see programs on?

What is your favorite part of our meetings?

Is there anything you would like to see changed?

Would you be willing to give a program?

8. Delta Tale:

Do you regularly read the president's message?

" " editor's page?

" " what's happening?

" " trading post?

" " mirror?

" "board minutes?

Have you ever used the trading post? to buy? to sell?

Is there anything you especially like about Delta Tale?

What would you like to see more of?

Is there anything you don't like?

Have you ever submitted an article, puzzle, or artwork to

Delta Tale?

If no, why?

would you submit something in the future?

If no, why?

9. Have you participated in the Breeders Award Program?

If no, why?

what can we change to get you to participate?

10. Please use the space below for any additional comments, complaints, suggestions, on anything. What are we doing that you like or don't like? What do you want more of? What do you want us to change? etc. etc....

Name:

(optional)

POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY



POST OFFICE BOX 6219 SHIRLINGTON STATION ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22206

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Date: _____ 19 _____
Name: _____
Street: _____ Apartment: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
Telephone H: _____ W: _____
Occupation: _____
Where did you hear about PVAS/get this application? _____

Number of tanks: _____ Time in hobby _____
What can this club do for you? _____

What do you want to do for the club? _____

Membership dues for the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society are:

Family/Individual: \$12/yr
Corresponding: \$ 9/yr
Junior (under 18): \$ 5/yr

Please send application and check for dues to the address above.

MINUTES OF A BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
THE POTOMAC VALLEY AQUARIUM SOCIETY
October 19, 1992

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society was called to order at 7:10 PM on October 19, 1992, at the Wood Recreational Center. Officers and board members attending were Beverle Sweitzer, Pete Thrift, Alex Townsend, Kenny Warren, Tony Fitz, and Rick McKay. Also attending was John Mangan, Gene Aldridge, Ray Hughes, and Sandy Warren.

The Board briefly discussed the recent show and auction weekend. It was the consensus of the Board that the PVAS portion of the show was very poor in terms of number of entries and member participation. Tony Fitz stated that the Chesapeake Area Killiefish Club portion of the show was fairly good.

John Mangan, the Nominations Committee chair, discussed the slate on candidates for 1993 Board vacancies. Ray Hughes was nominated to fill the remaining year of Wendy Tramm's Board seat.

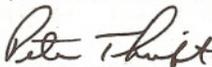
It was the decision of the Board to set the dates for the 1993 PVAS weekends as follows: February 7, May 23, and October 15-17th. Deposits for use of the Alexandria Howard Johnson's hotel on those dates were authorized.

The Board agreed to expend \$500 to purchase a video projection system to be used for programs at future monthly meetings.

The need for a volunteer to orchestrate the December club holiday party was discussed.

Rick McKay volunteered to arrange a future club tour of the Peter Thode discus/angelfish hatchery near Baltimore.

There were no formal motions made at this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM. The next meeting of the Board will take place at 7 PM on November 9th at the Wood Center.


PETER A. THRIFT
Recording Secretary

Official Notice!!

Starting at the January 1993 meeting their will be

New Mini-Auction Rules

Sellers will be charged a \$1.00 registration fee to put their items into the auction. Limit- 5 items per person.

Sellers will receive ALL of the selling price of their items. PVAS will no longer take a 1/3 commission as we have in the past.

DISCUS SYMPOSIUM 4 -- SOME NOTES

Alex Townsend, PVAS

Tom Biery, PVAS

For the second year in a row, the Potomac Valley Aquarium Society was represented at the Discus Study Group's annual symposium. With expectations of seeing outstanding fish and looking forward to the opportunity to talk with Discus breeders and fellow hobbyists, we headed for New York on Friday morning, August 21, the first day of the three day symposium. This year's event, held at the LaGuardia Marriott, was highlighted by the presence of such noted Discus authorities as Jack Wattley, Manfred Gobel, Heiko Bleher, Ken Reeves, Dieter Untergasser, and Peter Thode. We've attempted in the following paragraphs to give some general idea of what the symposium was all about and to summarize some of the comments made by the speakers in the course of their presentations and conversations.

Symposium activities were held in two large rooms -- one for the talks and presentations and the other for the fish and manufacturer's displays. In the latter were approximately thirty tanks of Discus for show and sale. Show fish were judged by Jack Wattley and Heiko Bleher on Saturday afternoon, with the best-in-show award going to a very large high-bodied red turquoise with exceptional coloration. Missing from this year's show was Mark Weiss' display of very expensive and beautiful Discus (which created something of a sensation at last year's show), but there certainly were enough high quality fish present to hold the interest of attendees.

The Symposium began Friday afternoon with a talk by Jack Wattley. Jack's talk, appropriately perhaps for the lead-off presentation, was a broad discussion of a number of topics of interest to the hobby. He opened with a comment regarding the confusion generated by the increasing number of names being given to strains of Discus by different breeders. In Jack's opinion, these names create little difficulty if they accurately describe the appearance of the fish. He left further discussion of this topic, however, to Manfred Gobel and Heiko Bleher (see below).

Explaining that he still receives questions regarding his method of hatching Discus artificially, Jack offered the following comments. First, he noted that the commercial breeder has little choice but to hatch some of the spawn artificially, because some parents are habitual egg eaters, and some spawns are of potentially high value. As for the procedure itself, Jack removes the spawn from the parents (he does, however, allow some proven parents to raise their spawns) and places the eggs in water containing methylene blue. Approximately 12 hours before the estimated time of hatching, they are placed in clear water, perhaps with a little bactericide such as nitrofurizone or

furazoladone (Furan II is one commercially available product containing these ingredients). After hatching, the fry are not fed until they absorb their yolk sac and leave the bottom in search of food. At this point, the water level in the containers (shallow pans) is lowered to about one inch and a fifty-fifty mixture of raw and hard-boiled egg yolk (into which is also mixed some newly hatched brine shrimp) is spread thinly around the edge of the pan at the meniscus. The fry receive a water change within two to four hours after this feeding (the use of antibiotics can extend this time to a maximum of six hours). The fry are fed on this mixture for about 3 days, in well water of pH 7.2 and a hardness of 375 ppm (TDS). On day 4, the fish receive live baby brine shrimp, and the feeding of egg yolk is discontinued. After ten days, beefheart is included in their diet. The fry are fed five or six times daily.

On the subject of Discus health, Jack stressed that Discus are not difficult fish to raise, but the serious hobbyist or breeder should definitely get hold of a microscope. Most Discus health problems can be recognized even at a rather low 200X magnification. Also, he warned against the urge to over-medicate fish. As an illustration, he discussed a case of "Discus plague" he witnessed in another hatchery; the fish were cured with water changes and by lowering the pH to about 4.0 (no medications were used).

As for acceptable tankmates for Discus, Jack recommended Corydoras, Ottocinclus, and Cardinal tetras, but stated that perhaps the very best tankmate is the true Rummy-nose tetra.

Concluding with some comments on the future of the Discus hobby, Jack predicted that we have seen only the "tip of the iceberg." We will continue to see new varieties emerge, and more countries around the world are becoming active in breeding and raising Discus. In addition to the US, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, and several Southeast Asian nations, Discus are now becoming popular in Sweden, South Africa, and Mexico. Perhaps surprisingly, Jack also predicted that Israel will become a powerhouse in the breeding of Discus (he noted that he soon will be visiting Israel to provide advice on breeding). As an aside, Jack noted that, in Japan, there basically are two prices for Discus -- low end and high end -- with virtually no middle ground.

The next presentation was given jointly by Manfred Gobel and Heiko Bleher who focused mainly on their effort to construct an objective and standardized categorization for the many varieties of Discus now available. Heiko began the talk, however, by reading a letter to the symposium from Dr. Eduard Schmidt-Focke, who recently underwent surgery and thus was unable to attend. Schmidt-Focke used his letter to warn of the water problems that breeders are experiencing in Europe stemming from contamination due to the uncontrolled use of pesticides. He also warned

against the over-use of medications, which he believes weakens the fish.

Turning to their main topic, Heiko and Manfred noted that there remain many problems with the classification of *Discus*, especially in the use of subspecies. Based on the number and variety of wild forms which have been collected, they believe that "locality" or even "race" would be better tools for *Discus* classification than is the concept of subspecies. Heiko particularly stressed the observable differences within a single subspecies which correspond to collection locality (for example, the blue *Discus* collected in the Rio Purus differ from those in Lake Manacapuru, which differ from those in the Rio Urubu -- all classified as *Symphysodon aequifasciatus haraldi*). Similarly, the selective breeding of so many hybrid forms of *Discus* has made the standardization of *Discus* varieties both more difficult and more necessary.

In an effort to bring some order to this current confusion, Heiko and Manfred have published a new book -- titled simply *Discus* -- which, by their count, brings to seventynine the number of titles of books on *Discus* (WOWSER!). The book divides *Discus* into four "wild-caught" groups, A through D (corresponding to Heckel, Brown, Blue, and Green types, respectively), and five "captive-bred" types, E through I. The latter are labeled Striped Turquoise, Solid Turquoise, Red Turquoise, Red forms, and Hybrids and unclassifiable forms, respectively. Each of the groupings is subdivided, as necessary, to account for each of the known varieties. The book contains a fold-out map of the Amazon basin showing the collection localities for the various wild forms. To allow for the insertion of supplements, as new wild forms are collected and new hybrids appear, the book has been published in looseleaf format on heavy coated stock. Copies were available at the symposium at a price of sixty dollars.

Manfred Gobel went on to explain that the book also presents, for each subdivision of *Discus*, a set of criteria by which the fish can be judged. These include such things as overall size, coloration, finnage, etc. For example, the wild Tefe Green *Discus* should measure 15 to 18 centimeters with a well-rounded body and normal finnage, but can vary greatly in color pattern.

Ken Reeves, a noted *Discus* breeder from Colorado and (in real life) a veterinarian, spoke on the topic of "De-Mystifying *Discus* Keeping." One of his key points was the considerable variability in the natural conditions found across the *Discus*' broad habitat. By way of illustration, he pointed out that the Amazon basin covers an area greater than the continental United States. Thus, we should be aware that *Discus* will adapt to a range of water conditions, as long as that water is warm and clean. On the subject of nutrition, Ken emphasized the need for a varied diet and espoused the practice of making and mixing one's own *Discus* food, which can be done in conjunction with an

aquarium society program. As a basic mixture, he recommended a recipe consisting of two parts trimmed beef heart, one part trimmed liver, one part vegetables (which might include spinach, peas, carrots, etc.), one part fish, and a little paprika and parsley. Ken feeds this frozen mixture (or a variation thereof) as a staple diet, supplemented with dry and a little live food.

Among other highlights of the symposium was Heiko Bleher's three hour, 600 slide (no kidding!) presentation on Discus breeding around the world and collecting in the Amazon basin, including pictures of some very nice (and hitherto unknown) Apistogramma species. Manfred Gobel opened the Saturday program with a showing of his newly completed Discus video. Manfred explained that, because of space limitations in his hatchery, each of the fish in the video had to be moved individually into a show tank and given time to become acclimated. Thus the making of the video was both laborious and time consuming. The single copy of the video, incidentally, was donated to the Discus Study Group and sold in Saturday night's auction for almost \$150.00 (Manfred no doubt wishes he could sell many more at that price). Included in the video were pictures of one of the newest hybrids, the "Pidgin-blood" Discus, characterized by black spots on the upper half of the body and the absence of dark bars.

There is an interesting story concerning the introduction of the Pidgin-blood Discus, the gist of which was told to one of us by Manfred Gobel. The fish is said to have originally appeared at Aquarama '91, in Singapore, the largest aquarium show in the world. Those of you who have seen the write-ups on Aquarama '91 in the aquarium magazines know that this show had an especially large number of Discus entries. Among these were a few fish entered by a breeder from Thailand which, because of their highly unusual coloration, were disqualified because show officials believed they had been hormonized. The breeder insisted his fish had not been given hormones, but, because it took considerable time to find an interpreter to allow the breeder to state his case, the decision of the officials to disqualify the fish could not be reversed. In any event, some of these unusual fish have made their way into the tanks of a few German and US breeders, and we probably will see some offered for sale to hobbyists in the very near future.

A panel discussion featuring Jack Wattley, Peter Thode, and Ken Reeves brought out a few interesting points. On the subject of water stabilization, Jack Wattley explained that he uses peat to soften his water and lower its pH. He recommended a brand of Canadian peat marketed by Lambert (it comes in a white package with red lettering). A question from Tom Biery prompted a lively discussion on the benefits of artificial vs. natural hatching and raising of Discus fry. The panel agreed, however, that artificial techniques result in larger batches of fry that are equal to or better than those left with the parents. The participants also agreed, on the subject of the sexing of individual Discus, that size (males are normally larger) is the

most reliable indicator.

The formal presentations concluded on Saturday afternoon with the showing of a video by Dieter Untergaster on the subject of Discus health, emphasizing the use of the microscope in detecting parasitic problems. The video featured pictures of live Dactylogyrus, Capillaria, Chilodenella, Hexamita, and Spironucleus. Capturing these on video, along with explanations on the safe handling of fish from which samples are taken, represents a major contribution to the hobby. Following the video, Dieter held a hands-on demonstration with several microscopes, showing symposium participants proper dissecting and viewing techniques.

Saturday evening's banquet was highlighted by the presentation of awards for winning entries in the Discus show (as noted above, there were some very nice fish). Ellen Halligan, who organized the symposium (a job she does each year in addition to editing the Discus Study Group's newsletter and running a Discus hatchery), took the opportunity to announce that, at future DSG symposia, the Best-in-Show award would bear the name of a noted New York area Discus hobbyist, Dr. Joseph Jagust (known affectionately as "Dr. J") who recently succumbed to illness. A number of the winning fish in this year's show were Dr. J's fish or were bred from his stock.

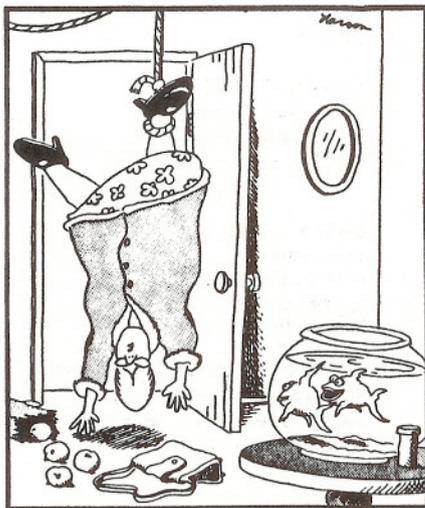
A dry goods auction was held immediately following the banquet. Auctioned items were donated to the DSG by the various manufacturers (and some items by individuals). Judging from the number of sales and the lively bidding, a healthy portion of the funds necessary to pay for the symposium were generated in this auction. The fish auction was held separately on Sunday morning -- the symposium's finale. While we didn't stay for the complete auction (yes, we have to admit we were by this time "Discused-out"), we could see that small fish (quarter to half-dollar size) were selling at about 15 to 20 dollars, two to three inch fish were selling at about 30 dollars, adult individuals at about 100 dollars, and we saw a breeding pair of turquoise Discus go for 425 dollars.

In addition to the formally scheduled activities, much of the fun of attending the show was had conversing with new and old friends. Discussions, of course, centered around the keeping and breeding of Discus, and it was here that we were really able to learn much about who was doing what in the hobby, as well as pick up some tips on how to do things better or more efficiently ourselves. But the discussions didn't stop at Discus. The raising and breeding of Plecos, the culturing of live foods, and even the raising of turtles and frogs were among the topics discussed. (Did you know, for example, that one of Jack Wattle's hobbies is the breeding of fancy South American frogs? -- All those Discus to breed and he needs a hobby?!) Not surprisingly, some of these discussions continued into the wee

hours of the morning, fueled both by beer and camaraderie -- and it really was amazing how someone's prized Discus would suddenly become nine or even ten inches in length by the time the clock hit 2 a.m. But that's just part of the fun to be found at the DSG Symposium.

Finally, as the symposium began to wind down, the topic of conversation increasingly turned to Discus Symposium 5. One of the rumors making the rounds had it that next year's event might be held in a new location -- Chicago. While that would make travel more difficult for those of us in the east, a move to the mid-west would no doubt make the event accessible to some hobbyists for whom New York is too long a trip. Also, it would be nice to see, in addition to breeders and hobbyists from Europe, attendance by some of the better known breeders from Asia (together, of course, with some of their fish for show or sale). In any case, our weekend at Discus Symposium 4 was well worth the trip -- we learned a lot, met and talked with Discus hobbyists and breeders from around the world, had a lot of fun in the process and, perhaps most important, came away with new inspiration to try just a little harder to raise healthier fish.

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13 JAN	13 APR	13 JUL	19 OCT
10 FEB	11 MAY	10 AUG	9 NOV
9 MAR	8 JUN	14 SEP	14 DEC

Meetings are held at the John J. Wood Facility, Room 7, 3730 Old Lee Highway (Rt 237), Fairfax City, VA. Doors open at 7:30, and the meeting starts at 8PM. ALL ARE WELCOME!

