



The
GCAS
C.A.R.E.S.
Conservation, Awareness
& Recognition
Endangered Species
Preservation Program

by CLAUDIA DICKINSON

It was but a decade ago that when asked what we, the hobbyist, could do to aid in worldwide aquatic conservation efforts, the general consensus was that our monetary donations would bring about the greatest hope for positive change. While our financial donations are still essential today in order to assist in areas over which we are not able to participate personally, through the sovereign work of dedicated scientists, such as conservation champion Dr. Paul Loiselle, the hobbyist now plays a relatively new and critical role in the favorable outlook of our fishes.

As you look about the room tonight and count the heads of your fellow GCAS Members and our guests, think of what we can do as a team. Envision each one of us returning home to clear out an existing tank, or to set up just one new tank, with the intent of devoting that aquarium space to a species of fish that we would most enjoy working with that is currently found in the most distressing situation of being on the Endangered, if not Extinct-in-the-Wild, List. Hope has been found for a future that seemed bleak for countless species, through the diligence and care of concerned hobbyists such as you.

The creation of the **C.A.R.E.S. (Conservation Awareness & Recognition Endangered Species) Preservation Program** is based on the critical and timely significance of *Conservation*, the *Awareness* of our membership of the issues involved, and the *Recognition* of our membership for their role in ensuring a positive future for *Endangered Species*.

The foundation for any program relies on the strength in its roots, which result in a solid base for growth and enrichment as we move into the future. For the GCAS, the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program** is intrinsic as the GCAS does, in fact, truly *care*.

The C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program has four major objectives:

- 1) To bring **AWARENESS** to the critical situation of our fish in nature.
- 2) To **RECOGNIZE** hobbyists who maintain endangered species.
- 3) To **SHARE** data and experiences through notes and graphing so that others may learn to maintain those same, and similar, species.
- 4) To **PRESERVE** endangered species for future generations.

During the initial phase of the program, we will focus on the *Awareness* of conservation and on *Recognizing* our members who are, and who wish to be involved. At this stage of the program, the method of *Recognition* will be through maintaining a published data chart, for which Modern Aquarium Editor-in-Chief Al Priest has so graciously agreed to allocate magazine space along with his exceptional layout talents. This chart will be comprised of your name, the endangered species maintained, the source from which the species was obtained, which is critical for identification purposes, as well as a few specifics of interest to fellow members. An up-to-date chart will be readily available at our monthly meetings as well in order for you to view current information at all times. Progress of procreation will also be graphed, as naturally, reproduction is key to the longevity of the species. A Certificate of Recognition for your endeavors will be awarded by the GCAS Board of Governors and the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program** Staff at the end of the year.

The detailed task of compiling and maintaining a current Endangered Species List has been taken on by Al Priest, our **C.A.R.E.S. Endangered Species List Coordinator**. You may refer to this list, a copy of which will be available for you at the Membership Table, to see if a species of fish you are keeping is

endangered, along with the current status of that species. You may also use this list to search for a species that you may be interested in working with in the future. Elsewhere in this issue (page 14), Al explains the complexities and technicalities of his compilation of this list, and what will be involved in his keeping it current for us. I feel great confidence that we have the perfect individual at the helm for this exacting role and am most grateful to Al for his time and his efforts.

For those of you interested in finding out the possibilities of how to obtain a species listed on the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program Endangered List**, please consult with either myself or any staff member. We will be compiling our GCAS "wish list" and doing our utmost in searching for those fish that are available. If you would like assistance, or are in need of equipment to set up a tank for housing an endangered species, please do not hesitate to ask.

The identification of a species is a very important aspect of the program as we want to be certain that the fish we are keeping are, in fact, the species that we believe them to be. The best method for us to accomplish this is through knowledge of the 'source' that we have acquired the fish from. If our fish are obtained from a source on the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program Source List**, a universally accepted knowledgeable source, or from offspring of a fellow member's endangered fish already registered in the program, they will be considered qualified to be registered in the program. If a fish is obtained from other than a source on the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program Source List**, a universally accepted knowledgeable source, or from offspring of a fellow member's endangered fish already registered in the program, a specimen will be personally evaluated by a member, or members, of the C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program Staff.

The physical jotting down of notes on the activities of your endangered species is highly encouraged. More often than not, scientists are unable to do this, as their time is absorbed with technical research. *Your* observations are important! Scientists actually welcome and appreciate the notes on the behavior of our fish which we can give to them. And for us ~ watching and observing our fish is what we do ~ it is *our* forte!

The **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program** is off to a good start and will go into full swing as we continue to proceed with:

- 1) A compilation of all of the endangered species currently being maintained by our membership.
- 2) Data in regards to those fish currently maintained such as their age, spawns, ability to raise the young, and if there is a desire to continue to maintain the species.
- 3) A list of those of you who would like to clear a tank and begin to maintain or take on another endangered species.
- 4) A list of resources and methods, as well as an offer of assistance, by which those of you who wish to may obtain endangered species that you are interested in working with.
- 5) A method by which the GCAS maintains a current listing of endangered species and their status. This list has been compiled and will be managed by Al Priest, our **C.A.R.E.S. Endangered Species List Coordinator**.
- 6) A method of **Recognition** to all participants in appreciation for your endeavors towards saving our fish through the **C.A.R.E.S. Preservation Program**.

All are welcome to be a part this exciting new program, and those of you who join in are to be applauded!

There is no greater joy than to walk into your fishroom to be greeted by thriving fish, bodies squirming and faces pressed against the glass, begging for food, their vibrant colors glistening and reflecting in the light, only to think that this fish will no longer be seen again in its natural environment, and were it not to be in your tanks...well, it just would not be at all....

Well, almost no greater joy ~ for that is the day that you walk in, to discover a miraculous spawn from your endangered species, and for that sight a warmth as no other floods over you in knowing that this species shall continue on well after its natural habitat is beyond the capabilities of sustaining life. And then, as we look around this room again, and catch each other's eye, we share another sort of warmth in the knowing that we have succeeded, and risen to the challenge!!! Please, clear a tank, save a fish ~ we, and those who follow, shall all be glad you did!

A special thank you to Joe Ferdenzi, without whose encouragement and words of wisdom this would not have come to fruition, and to Al Priest, whose support, dedication, time and talents are unequivocal.

Also, a most warm and heartfelt thank you to Dr. Paul Loiselle, an inspiration to all, and most certainly the wind beneath our wings.....

