

## **CICHLID RAMBLINGS**

**Rick Borstein, GCCA Webmaster**

I hope you had a great holiday! If you didn't make it to GCCA's Holiday Party in December, you missed a good time!

According to Doug Camerer, GCCA's BAP Chairman, I turned in 25 spawns. That's a record for me. Doug and former BAP Chair, Scott Moreen, put on a great program about our BAP program. I always enjoy hearing the statistics.

### **ACA Update**

I've been working hard on our American Cichlid Association (ACA) 2006 Convention bid. At this point—December 21, 2004— ACA has not received a formal bid from any other club. It looks good for GCCA!

Depending on the budget scenarios I have run, an ACA Convention could bring in anywhere from \$6000 to \$14,000 to the GCCA!

In January, I will be meeting with Chuck Rambo, ACA's Convention Liaison when I am in San Jose, California on a business trip.

Compared to many tropical fish societies, GCCA has a large corps of volunteers. I had to put together an organization chart for the ACA bid, and I counted sixteen different people that hold board and appointed positions. You guys rock!

We should know more about the ACA bid by the end of January, 2005.

### **Classic Update**

The Classic Committee is hard at work on the 2005 Cichlid Classic. At this point, we have most of our speaker line-up confirmed! I'm pleased to report that we have confirmed Lee Newman, the Curator of the Vancouver Aquarium. He will be collecting in Panama in March and will present a brand new talk to GCCA.

### **In the fishroom...**

The last month has been very productive in my fishroom.

You might remember that I "loaned" my colony of *Tropheus* to Mike Garibaldi who got eighty fry out of them in about six weeks. I got the fish back, proving that sometimes life gives you a second chance. Mike turned in thirty-three BAPs in 2004; he can breed just about anything.

I finally figured out how to raise *Tropheus* fry. I followed the basic directions that I've documented in the "How-to" section of GCCA's website. See [http://www.gcca.net/howto/hatch\\_substrate\\_spawnners.htm](http://www.gcca.net/howto/hatch_substrate_spawnners.htm).

I strip the *Tropheus* every three weeks. All babies, whether they're eggs or belly whompers, go into a two-gallon clear plastic Rubbermaid hatching container filled with six liters of water. I use a small, 7.5 watt Junior Aquatics heater and add one drop of Methylene Blue to each liter of water. Every three to four days, I do a 2-liter water change and add two drops of Methylene Blue.

I've encountered two problems with *Tropheus* eggs that I haven't experienced with most other mouthbrooders. Firstly, I believe the *Tropheus* eggs are light sensitive. I generally use

Acriflavine Plus for Malawian mouthbrooder spawns, but it didn't work with *Tropheus*. Acriflavine Plus is not a strong dye and doesn't block very much light. Secondly, the eggs are delicate. Using a large, smooth hatching container allows the eggs to spread out so they are not touching.

It is not fair to characterize this as 100% success. I still lose about 50% of the eggs, but I have enough for BAP!

I've been feeding Dainichi Veggie Deluxe pellets to the *Tropheus* with good results. No bloat at all! You can order a 2.2KG package from [www.Jehmco.com](http://www.Jehmco.com) or the smaller 8oz packages directly from Dainichi at [www.dainichi.com](http://www.dainichi.com). I also feed HBH Graze.

At the ACA Convention last May in Denver, I picked up ten, young *Cyprichromis leptostoma* "Kekese". Fortunately, my group turned out to be a nice group with more males than females. I put the Cyps in a 40-Breeder with some *Aulonocara stuartgranti* "ngara". In November, they started breeding like crazy. Cyps have very large eggs—some of the largest I've seen! My fish are still young, and the largest spawn I've seen is about eight fry.

I'd previously been warned to be very careful when stripping Cyps. Some females will spit out the fry when you net them. For those that don't, I use the turkey baster method first described to me by past GCCA President, Bob Matthews.

1. Fill a small container with water.
2. Take the bulb off a turkey baster and fill the basting tube (not the bulb) with tank water.
3. Cover the small end (pointed end) of the tube with a finger.
4. Insert the fish, head down, into the tube and put the bulb back on the tube.
5. Keep your finger on the tube and immerse the tip in the container of water you prepared earlier. Keep the end about one-half of an inch off the bottom of the water container.
6. Gently squeeze the bulb. This will force water through the gills and push water out of the mouth of the fish. The eggs/fry will exit the tip of the basting tube.

This method also works well for small Victorians and West Africans. Somebody will have to invent a larger turkey baster that will work for *Pseudotropheus*!

In the past few weeks, I have also spawned *Melanochromis vermillion*, *Haplochromis chilotes*, and *Astatotilapia bloyeti*. I'm going to be turning in a lot of spawns in January!

### **Can you write a Fish of the Month?**

If you are interested in writing a Fish of the Month article for our website, please let me know. With the help of Google, it only takes about an hour. Email me at [webmaster@gcca.net](mailto:webmaster@gcca.net) if you're interested. ☺

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**Rick Borstein, GCCA Webmaster**

We got it!

Yours truly will be the Convention Chair for the 2006 American Cichlid Association happening right here at home in Chicago.

If you have never been to an ACA, mark your calendar! ACA 2006 Chicago is July 20-23, 2006 at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest in Arlington Heights, IL.

Imagine ...

- 500+ cichlid fans

- All the top vendors of equipment and supplies

- 300 rare and beautiful cichlids in the largest cichlid show of the year

- Ten world-class speakers

- The country's top cichlid breeders

- A chance to buy fish you can't find anywhere else

As soon as I wrap up some work on our upcoming Cichlid Classic, I will "deep dive" into ACA Planning.

I am going to need your help ... if you have a particular interest or skill, let me know!

### **Classic Update**

Oddly, we are ahead of schedule for the Classic this year. At the time of this writing—mid February—we've wrapped up all of our speakers and the Classic mailer, registration form, and t-shirt design are about 95% complete.

New this year—complete on-line registration on the web! You can register yourself and family, buy t-shirts and raffle tickets, and even enter your show fish entirely via the web. We are partnering with on-line registration vendor Regonline.com.

You can even reserve your room at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest at the special price of only \$69 per night via the web.

Go to [www.gcca.net/classic](http://www.gcca.net/classic) to register!

This year's Classic is going to be great. We have some terrific speakers:

- David Boruchowitz—Editor-in-Chief, Tropical Fish Hobbyist Magazine

- Lee Newman—Curator of Tropical Waters, Vancouver Aquarium

- Chuck Rambo—Collector at Lake Malawi and Lake Tanganyika

- Gary Lange—published Photographer in Tropical Fish Hobbyist and Aquarium Fish Magazine

- Mike Schadle—auctioneer extraordinaire returns to give his Cichlid Triva Quiz

Admission to the Classic is only \$20 if you register by May 18, 2005. Don't forget to get your best fish ready for the show!

### **In the fishroom...**

I turned in seven spawns at the February meeting—that is a record for me. I am only a few spawns short of the 100-spawn goal required for the coveted Master Breeder award.

1. *Astotilapia* sp. "Green Bloyeti" is a fast-growing Victorian cichlid. These little guys spawn at just over an inch. Get this—they grow to spawning size in only 3-1/2 months. That's a great BAP fish!
2. *Haplochromis* sp. "Tomato" is another Victorian. I traded Mike Garibaldi for these fish, which were already breeding size. The pretty red and green males are very aggressive, holding their own against aggressive *Mbuna* such as *Kennyi*. Females are outstanding holders and the fry grow fast.
3. *Archocentrus* sp. "Honduran Red Point" is a convict-like fish. I traded my son Sam for these. See his separate article elsewhere in this issue. Very pretty fish!
4. *Petenia splendida* is a large, basket-mouth predator from Lake Peten in Central America. I first got interested in this fish after talking to tankbuster expert Del Calhoun. I got four wild (supposedly) 3-inch specimens of the red variety in July 2004 at the Denver ACA convention. Although it took me a while to get them onto dry food, once they did they grew quickly. At seven inches, they started spawning. Good parents and over 300 eggs per spawn. These fish eventually grow to 16 inches, so big tanks are a necessity. I kept mine in a 90-gallon. Mike Helford has them now.
5. *Neolamprologus brevis* is a Tanganyikan shell dweller. I obtained these fish in trade with Sam Miller and put them in a 20-long. It was tough going at first. They would not accept PVC fittings instead of shells, so I gave in and gave them the real thing. Several months went by with no spawning action. Out of desperation, I decided to increase the hardness and pH and that seemed to do the trick. I added the reject water from my reverse osmosis system, salt and Kent R.O. Right. It's important to feed baby brine shrimp as the babies stay in the shell until they are 3/8-inch long. I had three generations of babies in with their parents, so you can leave the fry in the spawning tank.
6. *Neolamprologus brichardi* is a popular lyre-tailed Tanganyikan cichlid which, surprisingly, I had never BAP'd. I had bred several other close relatives, so I did not expect any problems from the bag of five fish that I purchased for the princely sum of \$2 at one of our BAP auctions. I put the *brichardi* in a 15-gallon tank and a couple of months later they spawned. Everyone should try this fish as both the parents and juveniles help to raise the babies. A separate fry tank is not necessary and you can breed them in ten-gallon tank.
7. *Cichlasoma boliviense* is medium-sized New World cichlid that I found to be fairly timid. These fish have huge spawns of over 300 eggs and exhibited very good parental behavior. I spawned the *boliviense* in a 15-gallon tank which was probably a little on the small side, but it was all I had open at the time.

It can be boom or bust in the fishroom. I don't know that I'll have anything to turn in for the month of March.

I've experienced on-going problems getting good spawns from *Aulonocara stuartgranti* "ngara". Regular readers of this column know that I am now on my fourth group of these fish. I have a group of seven in my 125-gallon tank now. Previously, I have only kept these fish in smaller tanks. I'm going to increase the pH and see what happens.

I'm getting frustrated by several Tanganyikan fish I've had on-hand for quite a while. My *Enantiopus melnogenys* and *Lamprologus mustax* aren't doing anything.

I have had two spawns from a large pair of Black Belt cichlids. The 9-inch male and 6-inch female are in a 65-gallon and I'm breeding them using the divided tank method. I think I jinxed myself when I mentioned to Del Calhoun at the February meeting that they'd spawned. I pulled the eggs to hatch artificially and the eggs all fungused. The female Black Belt is one of the messiest Moms I have seen. She spewed eggs all over the breeding slate, gravel, divider and the aquarium glass.

My son—Sam "I need more tanks" Borstein—has asked me to turn over some of my tanks to him after I reach Master Breeder. We will see, I keep saying!

### **It's so unlike me, but ...**

My motto is "spawn them and pawn them" so it's unusual for me to keep any fish or fry after turning them in for BAP.

I've made three exceptions lately. I have about thirty *Tropheus duboisi* fry and a dozen *Cyprichromis leptostoma* "kekese" fry. The white-dotted duboisi fry are so darn cute, I had to raise them up! The cyps are growing fast and there always seems to be a good market for them. I have over fifty *Chalinochromis ndoboï*, a nice-looking Tanganyikan that isn't very common. I'm going to try growing these up all of these fry and selling them at the Classic.

Also unlike me, I have two tanks completely empty ... that probably won't last long!

### **Fighting Hydra**

Hydra is a small parasite that look a bit like a tiny octopus. Hydra get up to about one-eighth inch long and have stinging cells on their tentacles. Adult fish aren't bothered by them, but they can sting and kill very young fry.

Battling hydra is difficult if you feed baby brine shrimp. If you overfeed the BBS—which is all too easy to do—a hydra bloom may result. Then, you have about a thousand times more hydra than fry and you can guess who is going to win that battle.

We have noticed that hydra thrive in tanks with gravel substrates, plants and driftwood. Hydra need a stout place to attach to and feed. When we replaced gravel with silca sand, our hydra problems became much more manageable. We occasionally add 12 drops per ten gallons of Aquarisol—which contains soluble copper—to control the hydra. Aquarisol doesn't seem to bother fry or adult fish, but the hydra sure don't like it.

### **Sand Substrates**

A few months back, I saw an advertisement for a cichlid aquarium substrate that mixed white and black coralline sand. This salt and pepper blend was great looking, but when I priced out how much I would need for my 125-gallon tank it came to \$140! Gasp!

A few months ago, I bemoaned the cost of this substrate to Dan White, GCCA's Sergeant-

at-Arms. Dan told me about Black Beauty, a very inexpensive bulk material used for sand blasting. Mixed with cheap white silica sand, I figured I could have my salt and pepper look on the cheap. You can find Black Beauty at Brick Supply companies. I bought a 100-pound bag for \$8.50. You can pick up white silica sand for about \$3 per 50-pound bag while you're at the brick supply company, or find it any Home Depot store.

I found that mixing 1 part Black Beauty to 8 to 10 parts of silica sand created the salt and pepper look I liked best. One downside—washing the sand is a time-consuming, messy job. You should avoid breathing the dust from these materials, too, so use a dust mask.

### **Sand and Fry**

I found an unexpected benefit of using sand in fry tanks. Netting out the fry is much easier! Just use a standard aquarium net and scoop up the fry and sand. The sand falls right through the net!

Since I feed baby brine shrimp generously, I like to keep one or two ram horn snails in each fry tank. They eat up any leftover food. Once fry are a bit bigger, I usually add three to four small baby bristlenose plecos to the tank.

I think fry do better over a sand substrate than in bare tanks. To me, the fry seem more comfortable and some fry will actively dig in the substrate to find food.

Bare fry tanks can be a bit unstable after a big water change. With only a sponge filter to maintain the biological balance, it is easy to crash a tank. A three-quarter inch layer of sand offers some biological insurance.

### **Can you write a Fish of the Month?**

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**Rick Borstein**

*GCCA Webmaster*

It seems like a long time since I wrote my last *Ramblings* and a lot has happened since then. On to the fish!

### **California Wholesalers**

I visited Chuck Rambo—one of our 2005 Classic speakers—on a March business trip to San Jose. Hanging out with Chuck is great. Chuck has visited Africa twice and is a treasure trove of cichlid knowledge. Besides the dinner we shared, Chuck offered to take me around to some local wholesalers.

The first place we visited was ASAP. ASAP is a very large outfit with both freshwater and marine fish, plants, etc. The owners are true tropical fish fans, and participate, and support the local clubs. One of the local clubs even holds auctions in this wholesaler's huge meeting space. Attendees can go down to the wholesale floor, pick out some fish from the tanks, and bag them. They immediately go up for auction starting at the wholesale price. Everyone wins—the wholesaler moves out some fish, the club takes the surplus over the wholesale price, and bidders get to select the fish they really want.

I had told Chuck I was looking for some *Etoplus* species as I hadn't seen Red Chromides in pet shops in quite some time. I was quickly distracted, however, by all the other great fish I found.

I picked up six *Aequidens thayeri*, a not-very-common *Aequidens* which Chuck tells me is seldom imported. I also picked up three female *Melanochromis exasperatus* for my son Sam to round out his colony.

The fish that most excited me were Chocolate Gouramis. Indulge me here—I have story to tell.

While I was in the Suburban Aquarist Society (SAS), I met fellow club member Ed Daniels. Ed owned a print shop and I got to know him when I was editor of the Society's publication *Aquarist News*. Ed is one of the nicest guys you will meet in the hobby. We go fishing regularly for bass and bluegill and he has become sort of a surrogate Grandfather for my sons. Ed was a master breeder and knows a lot about fish, but hasn't been very active in the hobby the last few years.



**▲ ASAP is a large fresh and saltwater wholesaler in San Jose, CA.**

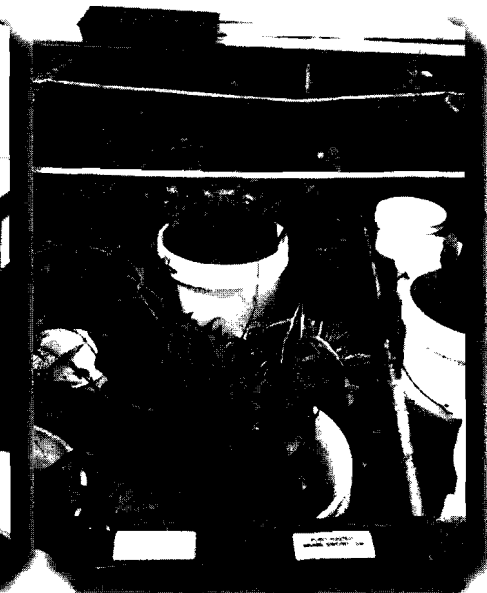


**▲ Nice corals!**





**▲ Chuck Rambo**



**▲ ASAP had lots of beautiful plants such as these swords.**



**▲ Need to bag a lot of fish? This air operated bagging station securely closes fish bags.**

About fifteen years ago, Ed started talking to me about a fish he had always wanted to obtain—Chocolate Gouramis. This little fish is native to Asia and is red-brown with nice markings. Interestingly, they are cichlid-like in that they are somewhat aggressive and are mouthbrooders. Ed's interest was no doubt fueled by a number of mentions by Axelrod about the elusivity, difficulty and beauty of these little fish and he was determined to find them. Although Chocolate Gouramis have been occasionally available in the hobby, Ed had never seen them in person. Shops weren't interested in carrying them because of the soft water needed to keep them in good health.

Thus, it was karmic that day at ASAP that I came across a tank full of 75 Chocolate Gouramis in excellent shape. I checked the price list. They were only \$1.75 each! I immediately bought a dozen and bagged them up. I was so excited I checked out of ASAP without buying any Red Chromides!

Our next stop was to Jim Ellenberg's place, Mostly Cichlids. Jim is a regular at ACA conventions and a great guy. He has started his own wholesale business, with the usual startup woes. His business has been steadily increasing which was great to hear. It is important to support the businesses that support our hobby, so I was very pleased to see such a great variety of uncommon cichlids at his place. I picked up six *Astotheras rhytisma* for myself and six tiny *Neolamprologus multifasicatus* for my 7-year-old son Ed.

We filled the bags with oxygen and packed all the bags into a fish box. Chuck and I had a quick lunch at a great little Mexican restaurant and then it was off to the airport for the trip back to Chicago.

On my drive back from O'Hare Airport, I couldn't resist calling Ed Daniels. He was thrilled to hear about the Chocolates and quickly set up a 5-gallon tank to take them. He came by a couple of days later to pick them up and was really excited to see Chocolate Gouramis for the first time. We split the remaining ten fish (two were DOA).

As of April 22, I still have four alive, but unfortunately Ed's mysteriously died in mid-April after he fed some frozen brine shrimp.

### **Cichlid Classic Update**

Don't forget to register for the Cichlid Classic online at <http://www.gcca.net/classic>. It only costs \$20 if you sign up by May 15, 2005.

You can even reserve your room at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest at the special price of only \$69 per night via the web if you register by May 10, 2005.

We have a great speaker line-up, sure to please:

- David Boruchowitz—Editor-in-Chief, Tropical Fish Hobbyist Magazine
- Lee Newman—Curator of Tropical Waters, Vancouver Aquarium
- Chuck Rambo—Collector at Lake Malawi and Lake Tanganyika
- Gary Lange—published Photographer in Tropical Fish Hobbyist and Aquarium Fish Magazine
- Mike Schadle—auctioneer extraordinaire returns to give his Cichlid Trivia Quiz

See you there!

### **In the fishroom...**

Although I turned in seven spawns in February, March and April have been slow. I'm up to 98 spawns and Master Breeder is within sight!

I turned in *Haplochromis* sp. "Blue Fire Fin" in April. Like most Victorians, it breeds small, holds well and is moderately aggressive. Males have an interesting blue-gray background with nice red fins and a blush on the chest.

I finally had some success breeding *Aulonocara stuartgranti* "ngara". My colony of three males and five females started producing regularly in my 125-gallon tank. I believe that reduced lighting helped. I kept two-thirds of the tank relatively dark and one-third brighter. The dominant male stayed in the light flashing for the females which came into his "lighted boudoir" when they were ready to spawn. I let the females hold to term and gently stripped them. Spawns have been in the 10–15 range, but the fry are fairly large. I'll be turning these in for BAP in May!

The April Swap Meet was a lot of fun, although not quite as busy as the event in February. Still, there were lots of great fish to choose from. I picked up three trios of *Gephyrochromis lawsi*. Males of this stumpy-shaped Malawian have a yellow base color with a purple blush on the upper flanks. Very attractive! Females are tan, but still nicely shaped. I also picked up a trio of *Pseudotropheus polit* which—surprisingly—I hadn't spawned yet.

The *Gephyrochromis lawsi* turned out to be a good purchase! They spawned two days later!

### **Big Fish Issues**

I haven't dealt with a lot of tankbusters before, so for you big fish novices, take note if you have to handle one.

Last week, I noticed my large 9-inch Black Belt cichlid in distress swimming near the surface. I had switched to a hard pellet a few days earlier and was sure that the poor fish had an intestinal blockage. I prepared a 5-gallon tank with some salt, Epsom salts and Quick Cure and got ready to move the fish. I wasn't at all sure I could cure the fish, but I thought it would be worth a try.

I gently lifted the Black Belt out of the tank with my hands and was halfway across the fishroom when he suddenly found a *lot* of energy. I yelped as he spined my palm, and nearly had him in the hospital tank when he flipped himself in the air and landed *behind* a 90-gallon tank. Wincing and bleeding (me, not the fish), I retrieved the fish which was now covered in dust, flake food and dead bugs and ran to the sink with him to rinse him off. He spined me again, and fell to the floor on the way back to the fishroom before I finally picked him up and got him in the hospital tank.

He died anyway.

Memo to self—Use a net when handling big fish!

Chuck Templeton advised me to use a wet towel, which keeps both the handler and fish safe.

Fortunately, I was able to trade Ric Perez for a 9-inch replacement male. He was one of the smallest fish in the 500-gallon tank Ric had him in! He seems a bit befuddled to have half

a 65-gallon tank to himself instead of having to share a tank with a 3-foot-long shovelnose castfish and numerous monster cichlids including a pair of breeding pair of *Cichlasoma dovii*.

### **Speaking in St. Louis**

Gary Lange—one of our Classic speakers—invited to speak to the Missouri Aquarium Society (MAS) and I was pleased to be able to deliver my “Digital Imaging for Aquarium Hobbyists” talk recently. MAS meetings are lively and there were about 40-50 folks in attendance. The club’s projector died when someone kicked out the plug, so for a time I was doing a slide presentation with no slides! Fortunately, the church where they meet had a projector and we used that for the remainder of the talk.

MAS is a well-run club. About a third of the members keep cichlids (I asked). There were some interesting cichlids on the BAP table, and they went for good prices at the BAP auction.

Steve Edie, an MAS member, showed me his fishroom and I was impressed. He has about twenty tank in all, but has three gorgeous, planted show tanks in his family room and living room. His cichlid show tank had some large, beautiful *Scianochromis fryeri* (*Haplochromis ahli* for oldtimers), *Cypis*, *Lamprologus leleupi* and *Neolamprologus compressiceps*. A 180-gallon planted tank contained over 50 large Cardinal Tetras. These little fish are amazing in a group. He also had numerous rasboras and tetras, which breed in the heavily planted tank.

Steve’s secret to success with planted tanks is Compact Fluorescent lighting and a layered substrate containing laterite. He spreads the laterite in a horseshoe pattern to leave an open swimming area for the fish. The tanks are nicely aquascaped with tall plants like big swords in the back and smaller plants like dwarf *valisineria* and pygmy chain swords in the front.

Steve had an interesting moss plant I hadn’t seen previously. Superficially, it looks like Java Moss, but attaches to driftwood or rocks where it grows into a low, upright carpet. Steve said many of his egg-scattering fish like tetras spawn in the fronds of this plant. He was nice enough to give me a sample to take home.

Steve had a nice group of *Uaru* and Altum Angels in his fishroom. He recently bred dwarf snakeheads (I didn’t know they were mouthbrooders!).

One tank that I found particularly interesting was 40-gallon long completely filled with shells and the shell-dwelling cichlid *Neolamprologus multifasciatus*. There were at least 200 of these little fish of all sizes. Every few months, Steve sells off 30–40 fish at an auction. If he doesn’t pull fish out, when the tank reaches a critical population density males start killing the fry of rival fish.

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**Rick Borstein**

### **GCCA Webmaster**

Whew! Another Cichlid Classic completed. If you didn't make this year's show, you missed a good one. Next year, no Cichlid Classic! We will instead host the American Cichlid Association Convention which will be at least four times larger. Don't miss it.

### **Cichlid Classic Recap**

Since I was co-chair for the 2005 Cichlid Classic, I was more deeply involved than in years past. I would like to thank all the people who worked so hard this year. If you only attend, you should know that there is a great deal of behind-the-scenes work that goes into the Classic each year.

I want to thank a few folks who made quiet contributions. Apologies in advance if I miss somebody.

Don Cave was a great mentor for the registration and show process. Don handled all the manual registration and show fish and put up with the many issues we had reconciling our on-line registrations with our manual entries. Thanks, Don!



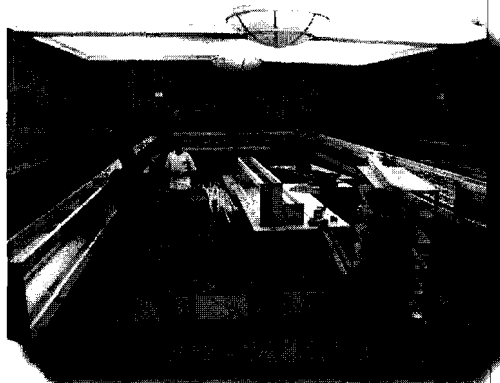
Putting together over a hundred goodie bags for attendees is a lot of work. James Clevenger, Cory Helfand, Don Cave, Frank Wozny and Sam Borstein worked the assembly line to get the bags done.

Cory Helfand put in long hours working the registration desk and handling funds for the Classic.

Keith Knapp, Del Calhoun, Chuck Templeton, Mark Schmidt, John Calhoun, Sam Miller, Gene Longino

and Tom Christiansen put in hard work on show set-up. Each year, we fill an entire large rental truck with over 200 tanks, 80 2 by 4's, scads of plywood, yards and yards of PVC airpipe and schlep the whole thing from our storage locker to the hotel. This is hard manual labor, but seeing everyone pull together for set-up is an amazing process.

Sam Miller booked air travel and hotel for all our speakers and coordinated their stay. Mike Garibaldi picked up all





our speakers at the airport and made sure they got where they needed to be on-time. Mike also offered some great last-minute contributions. He was able to obtain silent auction fish and came through in a pinch to purchase a cable I needed for the speaker room.

Scott Moreen reprised his role as Show Judging Chair. Coordinating judging of 140 entries fairly and on-time requires a lot of organization skills! Del Calhoun took pictures of all the entries for our customized awards. Del also employed

his considerable artistic skills to make some beautiful awards that our Division winners will enjoy for a long time to come. Special thanks to Jan Cave for presenting the awards and Mark Schmidt for MC.

Speaking of Mark, he worked many hours coordinating our contract with the hotel, making sure the facilities were set up to our spec, booking speakers, ordering t-shirts and lots more. Working with Mark on planning this year's Cichlid Classic was great preparation for the ACA next year.



John Calhoun was a great host of our hospitality suite. Remember that it is not only the fish that motivate people to attend the Classic, but also the good times we share with our fellow hobbyists. Spending time in the hospitality suite is a great way to meet people in a relaxed atmosphere.

I missed most of the auction, but there are several people who always help out. Sam Miller, Willie Heard, Terry Fairfield, Jenna Fairfield, Sam Borstein, Chuck Templeton and many others made sure that our auction went smoothly.

It's a good time to mention that prices were very good at this year's auction. We averaged over \$15 per bag of fish. We finished earlier than usual and were out of the hotel by 10PM.

Again, I am sure I missed some people and here are my apologies in advance. It is great to see the many people that contribute to a Classic.

### **In the fishroom...**

I turned in BAP #100—*Gephyrochromis lawsi*— at the June meeting! I'm now a Master Breeder!

I couldn't have reached this goal without the help and suggestions of many club members.

Most fish breeding information is not in books, but there's a ton in the collective minds of our members.

Becoming a Master Breeder has been a long-time goal of mine. There are less than ten master breeders in our club, so I'm proud of the achievement. Still, reaching goal is often a bit deflating leading to the inevitable question—What next?

I'm going to try some species that are "projects." At the June rare fish auction, I purchased seven *Theraps fenestratus*. This fish will grow fairly big and has pugnacious reputation. I also bought a bag of Eric Rogne's BAP Oscars. I've never kept this fish, but always wanted to have it. If you're on the BAP bandwagon, tank space is at a premium so big fish that take a while to mature aren't a good bet.

Discus are beautiful and I've always wanted to try them. To get started, I'm going to work with Jim Michaelsen of our club's discus experts.

I still have fish breeding! Crushed for tank space two months ago, I moved a trio of *Julidochromis regani* to a ten gallon tank at the bottom of a rack. The fish laid about thirty olive green eggs in a Boester Bell. The eggs disappeared shortly after—I never saw the wrigglers—so I assumed the parents had eaten the eggs. I continued to feed baby brine shrimp to the tank. Three weeks later, we found one-half inch fry in the tank. These fish are really secretive. We think the parents are on another spawn and kicked the older babies out. I've bred many of the Julies and can recommend them. They are pretty and can be bred in small tanks.

*Lipochromis parvidens*—the June Fish of the Month—was an interesting experience. This is a big, predator Victorian that is really gorgeous. Most Victorian fry are really easy to raise up, but I have had problems with these fish. They can eat so much baby brine shrimp that they burst. Beware of overfeeding these fry!

The fish that is causing me frustration lately is *Stomatepia mariae*. This is large West African fish is grey-black and—honestly—pretty darn ugly. Still, you don't see them around much and it's always fun to have a fish that nobody else has. I've had two females drop and no success raising the eggs artificially. The eggs are very delicate, so stripping is a challenge. They are breeding regularly, so I'm still hopeful.

*Altolamprologus compressiceps* is a crack-spawning fish from Lake Tanganyika. I had bred its close cousin, *Altolamprologus calvus*, previously in a Boester Bell, but wasn't having success. At the April Swap Meet, one of the vendors was selling caves designed just for *Altolamprologus* species. They look like a tiny, clay toaster. The half-inch vertical slots offer an attractive location for these laterally compressed species. About two weeks after putting the "toaster" in my tank, I had a female guarding about 40 eggs. I pulled the toaster at the wriggler stage and put them in a 5-gallon tank to grow out. The downside to breeding *Altolamprologus* species is that the babies grow *really* slow. It can take three or four months to get them up to one-half inch long.

### **Methylene Blue**

Methylene Blue is an anti-fungal dye which colors the water. It's often used to combat fungus on fish eggs. How much is the right amount to use?

Too little and fungus growth will not be prevented. Too much Methylene Blue and you can kill the eggs.

When I asked around, nobody could give me a specific amount to use. "Just get it so the water is dark blue, but not too dark blue" was what I heard.

The package labeling is not very helpful either. A range is given and the only dosage given is for a ten gallon tank.

**Not very helpful ...**

Here is my unscientific research into the proper amount of Methylene Blue. I recommend 3 to 4 drops per gallon. If anyone has a different opinion, let me know.

**Can you write a Fish of the Month?**

If you are interested in writing a Fish of the Month article for our website, please let me know. With the help of Google, it only takes about an hour. Email me at [webmaster@gcca.net](mailto:webmaster@gcca.net) if you're interested. ☺



## **CICHLID RAMBLINGS**

**Rick Borstein, GCCA Webmaster**

As I was laying in my bed in a London hotel room on July 7th, totally jet lagged from my flight and the 6-hour time difference, I was really groggy and perturbed. Wow, I thought, this sure is a loud city! There were sirens going off every two minutes...

Just moments later, one of my work colleagues called to ask if I was OK. Of course, there had been bombings in the underground only a couple of blocks from my hotel!

And that was the way I started out my first trip to Europe!

### **The London Aquarium**

For most of the day, I was trapped inside the hotel room as the police had barricaded the hotel entrance. I was glued to the TV anyway, but by 3PM, I was feeling really cooped up!



I snuck out of the hotel and headed for the London Aquarium. This was one of my only free days in the city, and being a true cichlidiot, I just had to see some fish.

The facility is situated right on the banks of the Thames river, near the London Eye Ferris wheel, and holds over two million gallons of water. It is small in comparison to Chicago's Shedd Aquarium, but still worth visiting. The entrance fee was £9.85, about \$17 US, so it was kind of expensive to get in.

Like most public aquariums, there is quite a focus on saltwater fish, but there were interesting exhibits on the native fish of the Thames river. The Thames, once heavily polluted, has made a remarkable comeback due to the efforts of the government. The river is fit and safe now. Even in downtown London, you can see people fishing!

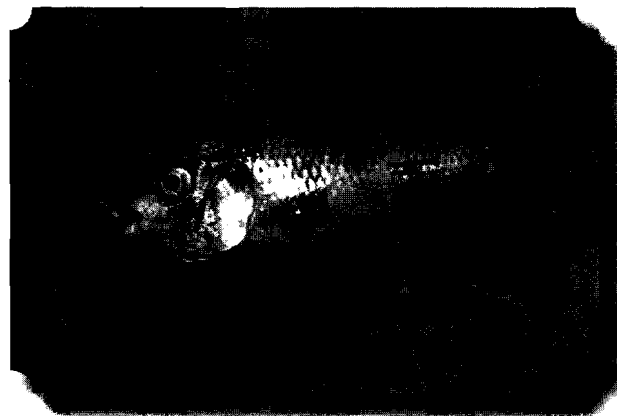
While I enjoy ocean fish, I was most interested in finding the cichlids. There was an interesting exhibit of *Serotheradon linnellii*, a West African fish from Lake Barombi-Mbo. I was unfamiliar with the fish and happy to see something new. West African expert Randall Kohn confirmed that this tilapia has not yet been imported into the United States.

The sign on the tank read:

Lake Barombi-Mbo, and the other lakes in this area are formed from craters left by volcanoes coming inland from the sea. Because these lakes are so isolated, there is a high level of endemism. This means the eleven species of cichlids in Lake Barombi-Mbo are found nowhere else in the world. These cichlids are under threat because of water extraction, the effects of deforestation, and overfishing. Alien species have been introduced to the lake to counteract the overfishing, and these fish outcompete the native fish for food and territory.

The adult fish I saw were golden brown in color, thick bodied, and with pronounced black chins. Like other West African tilapias, it has a "tilapia spot" in the rear half of the dorsal fin. Some individuals had three to four spots on the flanks, but the dominant fish seemed to be solid gold-brown in color.

*Serotheradon linnellii* is critically endangered in the wild. It would be really great to get some in the United States to maintain a captive breeding population. I am going to try to contact the aquarium to see if this is possible.



The London Aquarium also had a fantastic Malawian exhibit. The large 25 foot long exhibit was a habitat recreation. In this huge exhibit were great examples of *Copadochomis borleyi*, *Lebeotropheus trewavase*, and many other Mbuna types. It really is interesting to see these aquarium fish given the chance to stake out territories in a large exhibit.

If you find yourself in London, make sure to take a stroll along the Thames and check out the London Aquarium.

### **The National Aquarium**

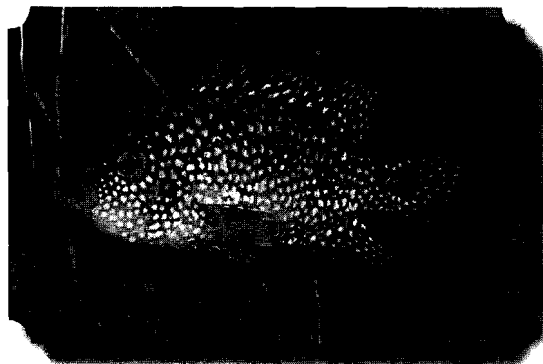
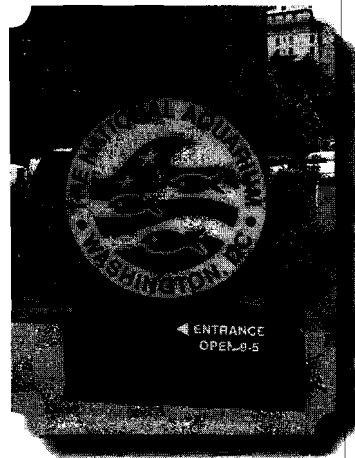
The next month, I was in Washington, D.C. with a couple of free hours one afternoon. The National Aquarium is located right in downtown Washington in the Department of Commerce Building, about a quarter mile from the White House.

The National Aquarium is the U.S.'s oldest aquarium and is downright tiny! The aquarium has been at the current location since 1931, but the original facility began in Woods Hole, MA way back in 1873 as part of the Federal Fish Commission. The website for the national aquarium— <http://www.nationalaquarium.com>— has only five pages!

Admission to the National Aquarium is only \$5 and you can easily complete the single-floor in an hour or so. This aquarium is evocative of the old-time public aquariums—just a few large installations and tank after tank of exhibits. Most of the tanks are small enough that you could envision them in your own home.

The focus is primarily on watersheds of the United States, but there are a few interesting cichlid finds here. There was a nice display of Texas Cichlids, the only cichlid native to the United States. Other exhibits included a large display of 6-line *Burundi frontosa*, some nice Mbuna, and one of the largest Jaguar cichlids I've seen.

Given the amount of time I had, the aquarium was the perfect size to "sneak into" on a business trip.



*Texas Cichlid*

*OB Zebra*



One more thing— the National Aquarium should not be confused with the National Aquarium in Baltimore, which is a separate, much larger and unaffiliated facility.

**ACA 2006 Update**

Planning for the 2006 American Cichlid Association Convention (hosted by GCCA in July 2006) continues apace!

At the last GCCA Board Meeting, we hammered out many details including the schedule. You can find complete details about the convention at <http://www.aca2006.com>, including a streaming movie. ☺

## CICHLID RAMBLINGS

**Rick Borstein, GCCA Webmaster**

Why is it that at that when Summer transitions to Fall life seems to go about ten times faster? It always seems that way to me...

### **In the fishroom**

Mike Garibaldi gave me four juvenile *Neolamprologus helianthus*. These Tanganyikan fish look like a yellow *Brichardi* and have loads of attitude. I have them in a 90-gallon sand substrate tank with eight five inch *Cichlasoma fenestratum*. The *helianthus* are downright nasty and the larger *fenestratum* stay well away from them.

Things got a bit worse when the dominant pair decided to spawn. Both the male—the bigger fish—and the female excavated sand around a shell I had placed in the tank. In typical fashion, the female stayed in or very close to the shell while the male patrolled the perimeter, meting out his wrath on any fish that came nearby.

Since *Neolamprologus helianthus* are secretive cave spawners, I wasn't really aware when they spawned. When I thought they were getting interested, I started feeding live baby brine shrimp.

My son Sam first noticed the tiny fry. I siphoned them out and placed them into a two gallon Rubbermaid container for grow out. Spawns are tiny and continuous. My first batch was eight fry. I'm leaving the fry in the tank for successive spawns to see what happens.

Lots of other fish are simply frustrating me! My *Aequidens thayeri*, *Ptyochromis grandideri*, *Cichlasoma cutteri* and *Pseudotropheus polits* are refusing to breed.

### **Getting into Discus**

Now that I've spawned over 100 species of cichlids, I thought it was time to try discus. When you buy discus, there are two ways to go—wild or fancy. The fancy ones have been line bred for color and form. Many cichlid hobbyists don't care for fancy discus and consider them hybrids, but it doesn't bother me.

I set up a new 110 gallon acrylic tank with two large sponge filters and two heaters set to 83.5F. All I had to do was to find the discus. Easier said than done ...

Researching the topic on the web it is apparent that 1) Discus breeders get in and out of the business quickly; 2) people can't take pictures of their fish and 3) there is a great variety of "creative" names for discus.

Emails to breeders went unanswered, phone numbers were disconnected... it was frustrating to try to buy discus!

I originally wanted to get some wild-type Red Spotted Green Discus. These are Tefe Green discus with some nice red spots on the flank. I tried several sources without any luck.

I eventually found some fancy types I really liked from Wayne Ng, one of the premier discus breeders in the world. They will eventually have a mostly white background with red dots and thin lines. The pictures on the web site looked really good and I emailed the company and received a prompt reply. I was referred to his agent in San Francisco and the deal was done. The fish were shipped in from Hong Kong, held for two weeks, and then shipped on

to me.

The discus arrived in fine shape and were eating bloodworms the next day. The fish are growing and, hey, I haven't killed them... yet!

The only way I can justify the amount I spent is to blame it on the alternate economy of eBay. I'd sold a bunch of junk on eBay and made a lot of money. The funds were sitting in my PayPal account so they never hit the "real money" in my checking account.

I think I've been bitten by the discus bug now. I'm still interested in getting some Red Spotted Greens—Chicagoland Discus says they can get them—but I have to clear out some other fish first.

### **GCCA Tank Sale**

Getting ready for the 2006 ACA Convention required clearing out our storage shed and selling close to 300 used tanks. I'd like to say a big THANK YOU to Keith Knapp who single-handedly packed up all the tanks and brought them to the October Swap Meet. Keith then stood out in the rain all day while folks picked them up. Keith, you rock!

Lots of folks took advantage of the great pricing—two tanks for only five dollars.

I took reservations for the tanks on-line and only one person didn't show up!

### **Society Fish Exchange**

GCCA was contacted by the Capital City Cichlid Association (CCCA) about fish exchange. We eventually agreed to send CCCA a box of 10-12 fry for them to auction off at their meeting.

Fortunately, I received donations from several members including Scott Moreen, Mike Helford, Mike Garibaldi and Mark Schmidt. I also put in a couple of bags. Here's what we sent:

- *Aequidens portalgueensis*
- *Gephyrochromis lawsi*
- *Haplochromis obliquedens*
- *Melanochromis exasperatus*
- *Mpipia lutea*
- *Oreochromis niloticus baringoensis*
- *Pseudotropheus phaeos*
- *Pseudotropheus polit*
- *Steatocranus irveni*
- *Stomatepia mariae*
- *Tilapia mamfe*
- *Vieja bifasciatus*
- *Hemichromis letourneaxi*

I talked to Sarah Henkel who is coordinating the exchange on their end. Looks like we'll be receiving some interesting fish including discus, *Petrochromis*, etc.

Mike Kincaid has agreed to receive the fish for us. We should get them in time for our November 13 meeting.

### **ACA 2006 Update**

We are on track for the ACA 2006 Convention which our club is hosting July 20-23, 2006.

The website is the best place to get information about the event. Go to <http://www.aca2006.com>, for full details including a streaming movie! ☺