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Fish Tales

The Official Publication of the
Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

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Cover Gloglight tetra *Hemigrammus erythrozonus*

Editorial

Where has the time gone? It has been one year since we began publishing Fish Tales once again. By in large it has been wonderful to have contributions from the FOTAS membership. There are a number of easy submissions I would like to see that will not only allow for a better publication but also benefit member clubs and their associated memberships. As an electronic magazine there are no constraints on room. Additions are as simple as adding a page. Use this publication to your advantage; get the information you might want, out to others. For the clubs this includes your meetings and other activities. If you would like to send specialized graphics to promote yourself, by all means, send it along. If you are an individual that is associated with a FOTAS club, and you have items for sale or are looking to buy, send it along to me and I'll be sure they are displayed on these pages. This is free for all members of FOTAS clubs and associations.

I've decided not to go digging on the websites of FOTAS societies anymore therefore, if you would like to have your upcoming events appear in the appropriate section, send them along to me. It is no problem to post these but they have to get to me in order to be published.

Oklahoma Aquarium Association hosted FOTAS 59 in September. Contrats to OKAA for a great show! A report on the convention by David Kalbert gives details on the event.

From the Hill Country Cichlid Club, Dave Hansen presents on a species of reophilic cichlid seldom seen in the hobby, *Steatocranus bleheri*. Dave is a well known expert on these bottom dwelling cichlids and his usual stunning photography proves the point.

Mary Wicksten from the Brazos Valley Aquarium Society presents a wonderful article on native coastal *Sargassum* and the host of animals that call these free floating seaweed masses home. I was especially interested in this article as I was fortunate enough to spend some time with my friend, and new FOTAS president Charles Jones this summer. We explored the beaches of Galveston Bay and especially the *Sar-*

gassum mops in depth.

Claudia Dickinson delivers the latest CARES update from Kenya. Both FOTAS and several member clubs have been actively involved in this project.. It's good to see the positive results our efforts are making. FOTAS has extended it's commitment to CARES projects by issuing a grant to a Hill Country Cichlid Club CARES project at the Mountain Valley Middle School in Sattler Texas. Junior high teacher Debbie Bumgartner is actively involved in the care of endangered cichlid species as well as introducing her students to the wonders of the aquatic hobby. She is developing the next generation of aquarists! I will be presenting an article on her efforts in an upcoming Fish Tales.

To wrap things up I have reprinted an interesting tidbit from the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife on the American Alligator. Folks out in East and South Texas might want to pay close attention to this. Always snorkel or collect with one eye open!

That's about it for this quarter. I hope you enjoy the issue and as always you may submit any material or news to gasteeves@gmail.com.





Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

FOTAS 2010
September 3-5, 2010
SPONSORED BY THE



- David Kalbert Photos by Diane Tennison

Wow what an amazing event for 2010. We, the OKAA, held our first major function by hosting the 2010 FOTAS convention in Oklahoma City. We knew this would be a major challenge for us but had gotten our feet wet by holding our first "big" auction in 2009 as a preparation for 2010. I would like to first of all thank Kyle and Monica Osterholt for the absolute dedication on getting the event up and fully running. They were the backbone for the full event.

Friday, September 03, 2010 started out with two great speakers. Gerald Griffin, talking about the SMP (species maintenance program) for the IBC, with a presentation of the wonderful world of bettas. Until I joined the OKAA and met Gerald, I thought the betta was the fish you found at the local fish store in the little cup with blue water. We always knew it was called the Siamese fighting fish.

Gerald's presentation is an absolute eye opener with the number of species actually under the genus betta and that all but the ones in the store actually get along with each other and do really well in a community tank.

Our second speaker of the night was Mark Denaro. Mark is an importer and seller of rare fish from around the world, a regular contributor to many aquarist magazines and has been to many of the places he imports fish from. The presentation

given by him was about many of the rare fish he imports.

Saturday, September 04, 2010 was the big day for speakers we had a line up of 5 speakers and the fish show completely up and running.

We started the day with David Stewart, one of our local Oklahoma City folks whose focus has been on aquarium plants. David grows and sells many unique and rare plants. He gave a lecture on how to set up an aquarium directed as plants being the main focus and the fish being secondary.

Denny Rogers, of the Northwest Arkansas Aquarium Society, was our second speaker of the day and talked about the Freaks of the fish world. He started with a basic 101 on genetics and built a great talk on how fish can be a freak turned into a desirable pet. It was amazing to learn the difference between hybrids and mutations.

Our third speaker of the day was Michi Tobler. Michi has traveled the world studying fish. He presented places he had been to and what kinds of fish came out of the ecosystems in that area. He showed how one species of fish, given different environmental factors, can have completely different shape and color.



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Our fourth speaker of the day was our own Dean Hougen, past president and current vice president for the OKAA. Dean has been an avid breeder of Central and South American cichlids. He provided a presentation that was geared for getting your fish into a spawning situation.

After Dean's presentation, Mark Denaro, Denny Rodgers, and Charles Jones got down to the hard task of judging the show fish. They worked for quite a long time to figure out show winners by class and overall show winner. The people's choice awards were also tallied at this time which was a close race.

The banquet started at 7pm and included a presentation from Mark Denaro. He presented an overview of a trip by him to Peru along the Amazon River. He had many amazing photographs of the local wildlife and information about the flora and fauna. He also discussed a trick he learned while visiting a local exporter of fish and how he was able to increase the viability of the stock he

received.

After the presentation we had a couple of small auctions for the Braz Walker Endowment Fund and the Dr. Keith Arnold FOTAS Patron Award. Fish show awards were also handed out at this time.

Sunday started out early for many club members getting things for the auction ready. Many sellers and buyers were on hand real early and the selling tables filled up very quickly. If you have never attended a fish auction you would be amazed at all the varieties of fish for sale including many rare and extinct in the wild fish. The amount of aquarium equipment available would allow most anyone to have a fish room up and running in just a few hours. The auction started a little after 11am and ran nonstop till 6pm when we sold the last of nearly 500 items.

If you enjoyed this years FOTAS, the 2011 convention will be held in San Antonio by the Hill Country Cichlid Club. This convention will be a big change in that vendors will be invited to display their wares and the event will be focused around the C.A.R.E.S program.



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A Rheophilic Suprise, *Steatocranus bleheri*, Meyer 1993

- Dave Hansen



I have a fascination with riverine cichlids! In this diverse group, the members of the *Steatocranus* genus are among my favorites. Their charming personalities and entertaining behavior certainly make up for any short comings with regards to coloration. Perhaps it is the nearly human-like nature of these fish that captivate me. This allure of *Steatocranus* species has become well known and the genus is gaining popularity in the aquarium hobby.

Steatocranus currently contains nine described species and one undescribed. Uli Schliwen of Germany is currently working on a revision of the genus and I am eagerly anticipating the results of his work. Recent expeditions to Western Africa have revealed numerous unfamiliar species making this quite an exciting time for enthusiasts. The subject of this article is one species in particular, *Steatocranus bleheri*. This fish is not nearly as common as other members of the genus. My attempts to find information on the web, either articles or pictures, yielded very few results. Even my "go to" book, The Cichlid Fishes of Western Africa, by Anton Lamboj, contains but three short paragraphs on this particular cichlid. My hope is that this article will bring some much deserved

attention to this fantastic species.

Steatocranus bleheri is found in small communal groups in the Lubumbashi River. This waterway is part of the Luapula River System located along the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia. This is a complex of rivers, shifting channels, lagoons and swamps containing some of the world's largest wetlands. The city of Lubumbashi near the river, is a hub of the southeast DRC and home to over a million people. I would love to visit this area one day as the DRC is home to many fascinating cichlids

Steatocranus bleheri share many physical characteristics with other species of the genus most notably, a reduced swim bladder and elongated body. *Steatocranus* are considered a small to medium sized cichlid. Named for the well known collector Heiko Bleher, *S. bleheri* leans towards the smaller end of the spectrum. Males will reach a length of about 9cm (3.5 inches) while the female remains slightly smaller. After approximately one year, I could see very few obvious differences between the two sexes. In addition to the male being slightly longer, he was also



(3.5 inches) while the female remains slightly smaller. After approximately one year, I could see very few obvious differences between the two sexes. In addition to the male being slightly longer, he was also somewhat more robust than the female. The males also possess more elongated dorsal and anal fins than the female. The genus is often referred to as the “Buffalo Head” cichlids due to the massive nuchal humps males can develop. You will not find that characteristic in this species. Males can develop a

toctranus irvinei the lone exception. I use fine grain pool filter sand for the substrate. I normally place rock piles about a foot from each end of the tank. I then place breeding caves and/or logs at the very end of the tanks. I have found this method offers a comfortable place for the male to relax without feeling exposed. He can duck into the rockwork and still feel he is guarding his breeding site. I use lots of live plants (primarily *Anubias* species) for both cover and aesthetics. I have never had problems with plants



slight bulge, but it is very common to see no hump at all. Both sexes maintain the same dark gray coloration. Variations of body patterns are mood dependant. *S. bleheri* are deeper bodied than most other members of the genus. The forehead is very steep tapering off to a small mouth. The body contains two horizontal stripes that converge at the caudal peduncle. This is a trait that they share with *S. mpozoensis* and there is some debate in the scientific community if in fact *S. bleheri* is a variation of *S. mpozoensis*. The general consensus is leaning towards the two being distinct species. As is typical of the genus, they spend most of their time on the substrate.

I maintain numerous riverine species and have found a manner of tank setup that is successful for most. Due to the fact that these fish stay relatively small, I chose a 30 gallon long tank size. This is a three foot long tank and has always worked out perfectly for most every *Steatocranus* species I have kept; *Stea-*

being damaged by any member of the genus although I have heard reports to the contrary, from others. Overall this group of fish tends to be timid. I believe the rocks and plants help them to feel at ease. A common mistake hobbyists make with rheophilic cichlids is the presumption that they need to create a whirlpool to mimic the fish's natural waterways. Keep in mind that their bodies are designed to keep them out of the current and from being dragged downstream. While some water movement is appreciated there is no need to have filters and power heads blasting away. I typically will use a slightly over-sized filter for the tank size to promote some extra water movement and ensure the water is well oxygenated. I place the filter flow over a large rock allowing the current to be dispersed. This will reduce the flow of the water but creates some small turbulence in other parts of the tank. One observation I have



genated. I place the filter flow over a large rock allowing the current to be dispersed. This will reduce the flow of the water but creates some small turbulence in other parts of the tank. One observation I have made is that *S. bleheri* will always pick the spawning site furthest away from the filter flow, which confirms my opinion that they really do want to stay out of the current. I use low wattage, full spectrum lighting and diffuse it slightly so as not to over power the fish. The lack of intensity keeps them from looking washed out and stressed. Our water is South Texas is very hard. The pH is about 8.2 in most of my tanks and is very hard. Typically any measuring device for hardness maxes out. *Steatocranus bleheri* has had no issues growing, breeding, or maintaining its appearance in these conditions.

Feeding has been very simple. Members of the genus are typically not specialized feeders and *S. bleheri* is no exception. I feed several different types of flake, though most of foods are spirulina based. They do get more intermittent feedings of flake with higher protein content as well. Occasionally they get a treat of frozen brine or daphnia. They will eagerly accept any type of food. I feed on the light side in general. My colony gets fed four times a week unless there is fry in the tank. In this instance, the sparse feedings increase.

I acquired a group of eight in the fall of 2007. When

I was given the fish they were presented to me as *Steatocranus* sp. "square head". The fry had only been free swimming for about seven days when they were relocated to my tank. Initially much of their time was spent hiding. Before long however, they were out exploring the tank. They grew slowly and they exhibited no aggressive behavior towards each other. After a few months they had put on some size and this is when I began to notice some characteristics that led me to think these might not be *S. sp.* "square head" after all. The most obvious trait was the horizontal stripes converging at the base of the caudal fin. The upper lip protruding past the lower also had me questioning as this is a trait seen in *S. bleheri*. Anxious to confirm my suspicions, I forwarded images to a couple of my colleagues who determined that these were in fact *S. bleheri*. Later, the fish's namesake had confirmed this as well. I was not disappointed at all that they were not the *S. sp.* "square head" and was actually quite excited to have *S. bleheri*. I had never seen this species available and it had been on my want list for quite sometime.

I wish I could truthfully report that tranquility continued in the tank, but at about six months of age, the carnage began. It seemed in one week that each time I turned the tank lights on, I found a dead fish. Death and destruction would occur in quick fashion. A fish would look great



time I turned the tank lights on, I found a dead fish. Death and destruction would occur in quick fashion. A fish would look great one moment, with finnage intact and swimming around normally only to be dead an hour later. My group of eight was now down to three. Two of them were about the same size and one was the runt of the group. The two larger ones did not exhibit any physical differences and I had no idea if they were either males, either females, or one of each. I kept a close eye on them in case I needed to separate the two, but peace settled back in and they continued to grow. While the rate of growth was equivalent, one of the cichlids began developing a small hump on his head. It was shortly after this that they began to gravitate together towards one side of the tank and kept the runt at bay on the other side. At the one year mark (almost exactly), the female disappeared into a breeding log for an extended period of time. The fact that they might be breeding had not occurred to me. They had not developed what I would consider a tight pair bond. The male was content to hover above a rock on his end of the aquarium, keeping his eye on everything in the breeding site. About a week later, I was shocked to see fry swimming around the entrance of the log. I immediately began feeding crushed flake and frozen cyclops. The fry were very shy and would not venture out to get the food. They eagerly ate when the small particles floated into their abode. I still had no idea how large the spawn was at this time. I would see about ten fry at any one time in the opening of the breeding log. After about a week of this passive behavior, they be-

gan to venture out a bit. The total brood numbered 40 fry. The male was content to hover above his brood and occasionally would scoot off to grab a fry that had ventured too far away. He would grab the baby in his mouth and deposit it back to the spawning site. The runt of the original group exhibited some aggressive posturing on his side of the tank and killed a few fry. The male had enough of this and kept him pinned in the corner for a number of days. Lesson learned! Once the juveniles gained some size, the runt lost his taste for the dominance war and swam around with the young ones. The fry from that first spawn have now outgrown the runt.

My first goal was to get these beautiful fish into the hands of some of my fellow hobbyist. I donated six fry to our local club's Breeder Award Program and gave out all but a small number to some others who had expressed interest. In the words of Dr. Paul V. Loiselle, "one should never keep all the eggs in one basket".

This first spawn had gone just like it had for every other *Steatocranus* species I had bred previously. The pair have bred like clockwork about every two months, but the interaction between the male and female has changed somewhat. During the initial spawn I had not observed the male in the breeding log, only the female. Several spawns later, the male and female alternated in the log and recently have seen them inside together. When the male is alone in the log, the female assumes his position hovering

female has changed somewhat. During the initial spawn I had not observed the male in the breeding log, only the female. Several spawns later, the male and female alternated in the log and recently have seen them inside together. When the male is alone in the log, the female assumes his position hovering over the breeding site. They also exhibit what I consider much tighter pair bonding than the other *Steatocranus* species I have kept. Another interesting behavior that I had not seen before occurred when the pair is guarding and fanning eggs. At feeding time, whoever is not in the spawning cave will eat. Once a couple of bites have been consumed, it goes over to the log, waits as the other one leaves the log, then enters as the other leaves to feed. In other species, I see the more common activities of the female putting off feeding unless food enters the cave or both individuals eating and not being overly concerned with leaving the site unattended for a short period of time. The older siblings do not harass their younger brothers and sisters in the least. I find the social aspect with several generations of offspring living together in harmony simply amazing!

Steatocranus bleheri is an absolutely wonderful cichlid. Their limited size allows for the hobbyists with space concerns to maintain a pair in a smaller sized aquarium. I regard them as subtly beautiful in their own right and an enduring personality that will appeal to everyone. When observing the collection of fish I have amassed in my fish room, inevitably I find myself captivated with the actions of *S. bleheri*. When I have guests visit, I try to hold off showing the *S. bleheri* tank until the end because this is where my visitors attention will be. I hope to see this incredible little cichlid find a home in more hobbyist tanks. As a pleaser, it's a sure thing!

References:

Lamboj, Anton. The Cichlid Fishes of Western Africa. Bornheim, Germany: Birgit Schmettkamp Verlag, 2004.

Hansen, David. "*Steatocranus*: A Genus Review". The Lateral Line Vol 2 Issue 38 June 2009: 16-19.

Meyer, M. K.*; 1993; "Description of a new *Steatocranus* species from Luapula River system, Zaire"; Zoologische Abhandlungen Museum für Tierkunde Dresden; 47 (9); pp 113-120.

Fall Live Fish Auction
11:00 am start - Check-in 10:00 am
American Legion Post
11702 Galveston Road
Houston, TX. 77034
(Where the jet is)

Texas Cichlid Association
Fall Auction
Hilton Garden Inn Irving, TX.
Usual TCA auction rules apply

Hill Country Cichlid Club
Sunday November 7, 2010
Collecting Trip - San Marcos River
San Marcos, TX.
Meet at noon just below Saltgrass Steakhouse.

Brazos Valley Aquarium Society
Thursday November 11, 2010
Monthly Meeting
3502 Carter Creek Parkway, Bryan. TX.

Texas Cichlid Association
December 4, 2010
Christmas Party and Crazy Santa Gift Exchange
7:00pm Spring Creek Barbeque
1509 Airport Freeway
Bedford, TX.

Hill Country Cichlid Club
December 4, 2010
Annual members only Pot Luck Christmas Party
Dr. Michael Kidd Presenting on Lake Malawi
See Members section of HCCC website for more details.

Oklahoma Aquarium Association
 No Meeting details submitted however information on Oklahoma City, Stillwater and Tulsa Chapter meetings can be found here:
<http://www.theokaa.org/vb40/showthread.php?7291-2010-Meeting-Schedule>

Upcoming Events

Houston Aquarium Society
Sunday October 17th, 2010

Sargassum Season

- Mary Wicksten



In late spring and early summer, beach-goers in the Gulf of Mexico and nearby seas can find great masses of the brown seaweed *Sargassum* cast ashore. For people, it may be a nuisance. It makes a mess on beaches. But fishes, birds and sea turtles look to it as a haven and a source of all sorts of good stuff to eat.

The best way to collect the tiny creatures that live among the seaweed is to use a dip net that comes up under the seaweed instead of trying to scoop it horizontally. Look carefully the animals are camouflaged! Usually, it's their motion that gives them away as they try to flee back into the water. You'll have your best luck if you scoop up fresh, larger (foot-wide or more) clumps that offer a lot of hiding places.

Animals from the *Sargassum* can make an interesting exhibit in the aquarium. First things first, though the seaweed won't last very long, and may fall apart if you put it into your tank. You can buy artificial plastic *Sargassum* but most of the animals will do OK

among your existing rocks, corals or algae.

Which animals should you keep? The signature animal of the *Sargassum* is the sargassum fish, related to anglerfishes. This pudgy creature walks on its fins. Well camouflaged, it creeps up on a fish or shrimp and opens its huge mouth to gulp it in. These fish will eat each other, so you only can keep one per tank and away from any other fishes that are not intended for its food. Be cautious also of the sargassum crab. Related to the fierce blue crab, this crab will hunt, grab and eat smaller fishes and shrimp.

There are two common types of sargassum shrimp. The larger, with elongate pincers, is *Leander tenuicornis*. If the shrimp can get a very small fish between those pincers, it's lunch. The other shrimp, *Hippolyte zostericola*, is less aggressive. It's small enough to get into places where predators can't follow, but even in a bucket, it can fall prey to *Leander*.



This small patch of Sargassum can host a multitude of aquatic life adapted to live in drifting ecosystems.

tween those pincers, it's lunch. The other shrimp, *Hippolyte zostericola*, is less aggressive. It's small



A small pipe fish found in a *Sargassum* clump in Galveston Bay.

enough to get into places where predators can't follow, but even in a bucket, it can fall prey to *Lean-der*. Both of these shrimp will do OK in an aquarium where there is nothing small enough for them to catch (keep them away from go-bies) and there is nothing

big enough to eat them.

If you look very carefully at the *Sargassum*, you may find camouflaged snails, sea spiders and two species of nudibranchs. The larger one, *Scyllaea pelagica*, can swim by flapping its body. Regardless of what you might read, *Scyllaea* feeds exclusively on hydroids that live on the *Sargassum*, not the seaweed itself. That means that once the food supply is exhausted, the nudibranch will die. Don't keep one unless you intend it for short-term display. A smaller round nudibranch feeds on bryozoans on the seaweeds and also doesn't last long in an aquarium.

The seaweed attracts other fishes that like to hang out in the safety of floating objects. You can find juvenile jacks, spadefishes, triggerfishes, and even seahorses among the seaweeds. These fishes can do well in your tank as long as they receive the proper food and are kept away from aggressive other fishes such as puffers. Should you find a baby sea turtle, leave it alone--they are protected by law. Contact your local fish and wildlife department or sea turtle rescue association if you find one on the beach.



FOTAS CARES

60TH ANNUAL FEDERATION OF TEXAS AQUARIUM SOCIETIES CONVENTION



San Antonio Texas, November 4th –6th 2011.

A world class speaker lineup including Melanie Stiassny, Charles Jones, Ad Konings, Paul V. Loiselle, Kathy England, Les Kaufman and Anton Lamboj. Fish show, Banquet, Auction, Babes in the Cichlid Hobby and much, much more! Something for every aquarist!

For more information visit
www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com.

Lake Victoria C.A.R.E.S. Through Conservation Update

- Claudia Dickinson



Dr. William Ojwang (right) and KMFRI staff receive the new blower unit and related central air equipment donated to the Lake Victoria C.A.R.E.S. Conservation Through Education Project.

Co. and others have done to make this possible.

Meanwhile we are working on the big tank and we will shortly embark on fitting the pipes and having the new pump running. I'll keep you posted.

Kind regards,

William

A warm and heartfelt thank you to those of you whose immense generosity in donating funding, equipment, supplies, and assistance continue to make the Lake Victoria C.A.R.E.S. Project possible!

The main blower and central air system equipment arrived at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute in Kisumu on June 16th. The majority of this impressive gift, valued at \$800, was donated by John Maier of Jehm Co. John has gone above and beyond in accommodating the Project, switching the equipment to the necessary 220V and taking much time to go over all details to ensure that it has the opportunity of a long life in Africa.

Heartfelt words of deep appreciation to John for his great kindness and generosity in stepping up and donating this vital piece of equipment to the Project! Along with his wonderful gift, and those from the American Cichlid Association, Dr. Dwight R. Smith, ATI, Python Products, Kingfish Services, the Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies, the Hill Country Cichlid Club, and others, air is just that close at last for the fishes of Lake Victoria C.A.R.E.S.!

On the day of arrival Dr. William Ojwang reports:

Dear Claudia,

It is with great pleasure to let you know that the box with air pump and the accessories arrived as you can see in the attached photo. Thanks so much for your continued kind gesture, and for all that John of Jehm



Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies Directors 2010-2011

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TEXAS ALLIGATOR FACTS

Reprinted from the Texas Parks and Wildlife
website www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Name: American Alligator - *Alligator mississippiensis*. "Alligator" is a corruption of the Spanish "el lagarto" or lizard, in reference to its large, lizard-like appearance.

Range: In Texas, the alligator ranges from the Sabine River of East Texas to the Gulf of Mexico and across the coastal marshes to the Rio Grande. This range includes about 120 counties in East Texas and the Gulf Coastal Plains.

Size/Age: Newly hatched alligators measure 8-9 inches in length. Males and females grow at similar rates until they reach three feet. After that, females grow much slower. A Louisiana study revealed that male alligators at age 10 averaged 8.4 feet. Females age 10 were about 6.9 feet. At age 20, females measured 8.4 feet and males 11.5 feet. Any alligator over 9 feet is almost certainly a male. The longest recorded length for an alligator is 19 feet 2 inches. This massive animal was taken in Louisiana in 1890. An alligator this size could weigh as much as 1,000 pounds. Males regularly reach ages of 35-40 years in the wild. In captivity, they have reached 50-60 years of age. Older males are the exception, not the rule. Females are not as long-lived. Under captive conditions, they often reach 30-35 years. Probably few wild females live that long.

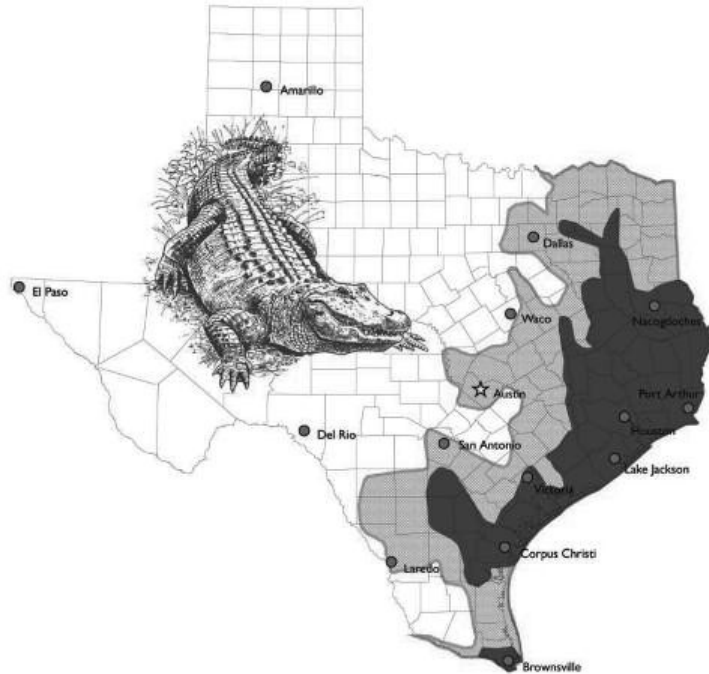
Food: Young alligators eat spiders, insects, crayfish, shrimp, minnows and crabs. As they grow larger, they begin to feed on fish, small turtles, frogs, snakes and small birds. Alligators 4 feet and longer eat a wide variety of food items and are very opportunistic. Large turtles, fish, wading birds, ducks, muskrats, nutria, otters, raccoons, even other alligators and an occasional deer are eaten. Carrion is also a major dietary component.

Nest: Courtship and mating occur in late spring and early summer. Typically, female alligators lay their eggs in mid-June into early July. The nest mound is composed of grasses, cattails and mud. The female lays 15-60 eggs in the mound and flattens it by crawling across it. The sun and decaying vegetation provide the heat for incubation. The eggs hatch in 65-70 days, usually in late August and early September.

Alligators With the human population in Texas continuing to expand, increased contact between people and alligators can and be expected.

People: Alligators naturally shy away from humans. Problems arise when alligators are fed by people. The alligator loses its fear of humans and begins to associate people with food. This produces a potentially dangerous situation. An alligator that has been frequently hand-fed will often lunge at an outstretched hand. This action is often interpreted as an "alligator attack." In reality, the alligator has been conditioned to respond to an outstretched hand, expecting to be fed. For this reason feeding of any wild alligator is not recommended. The normally sluggish alligator can become quite agile if unexpectedly disturbed or annoyed. People and pets should not approach alligators closely. This is particularly true of nesting females. As with all wild animals, alligators should be treated with respect. Alligators are protected by law. Any potentially dangerous alligator should be reported to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department so that proper handling can be initiated. Contact your local game warden or call 1-800-792-1112. Alligator-human conflicts are rare in Texas. No human fatality attributed to alligators has been recorded in Texas. Good judgment on the part of humans can reduce incidents to a minimum.

For further information, contact the Alligator Program of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at (409) 736-2551, ext. 23 or 25, or e-mail txgator.info@tpwd.state.tx.us





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