

Fish Tales

The Official Publication of the
Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

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**My Experiences with Red Devils
Surprise, Surprise! Auction Finds
A Fish Keepers Must See; The Japanese Tea Garden San Antonio
Do you know *Aulonocara* sp. "stuartgranti Maleri" (Maleri Island)
FOTAS CARES 2011**

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Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

Here it is the end of May and I am just now getting Fish Tales out. I'll plead fashionably late!

The TCA held their annual Spring show and workshop last month. As always, all in attendance had a fantastic time. The next big show will be the annual FOTAS convention hosted this year by the Hill Country Cichlid Club. More details on this can be found on page 6. This is going to be a huge time and I hope to see everyone there.

This issue of Fish Tales is cichlid heavy with content. David Andrews relates his interesting, and painful experiences with an old aquarium favorite, the red devil. Dr. Arnold once again reports on a couple of auction finds that he successfully spawned. I give a short article on one of my favorite places to visit, the Japanese Tea garden in San Antonio. If you have ever been here you can appreciate my awe, if you haven't, put it at the top of your "to do" list. Kory Watkins writes on a beautiful peacock *Aulonocara* sp. "stuartgranti Maleri".

Annual FOTAS dues of \$12.00 per club will be collected at the convention in November. The FOTAS website can be found at [http://](http://www.fotaswebsite.com/)

www.fotaswebsite.com/. The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies has a lending library containing dvd's, video tapes and other media that is available to member clubs by contacting Dr. Keith Arnold at kbarnold2@gmail.com. The Braz Walker Collection of Aquarium Literature, housed in the Special Collections as A&M, is available only by visiting the Sterling K. Evans Library, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There are a number of other programs and awards that have been unused in some time. Hopefully we can review and report on everything we could have going on, in an upcoming issue.

I want to give my thanks to Caroline Estes of Amazonia Aquariums in Austin TX. for once again hosting the annual Cichlid Exposition. We were entertained by three wonderful lectures by Caroline herself, Walter Wootton and Dr. Keith Arnold. I'm already looking forward to next years event.

As always, questions, comments, concerns and suggestions are always welcome. A listing of FOTAS directors is on page 13. Anyone here can be contacted. These people are your FOTAS representatives. Please submit all articles for consideration to me at gasteeves@gmail.com.

My Experience with Red Devils

By David Andrews (TCA)

About ten years ago during a family vacation to Michigan, we stopped in Chicago for a few days of sight-seeing. Since I was the only one interested in fishy things, I went to the Shedd Aquarium while the rest of the family visited the Museum of Natural History (whatever it is called, just a bunch of dead stuff over there).

Being on my own allowed for a quick walk through the aquarium, but the thing that really caught my eye was a Red Devil (*Amphilophus labiatus*) surrounded by a cloud of fry – a really beautiful sight. I'm sure we are all in the aquarium hobby for various reasons, but this is one of mine – I love seeing parents with fry and the bigger the cloud of fry the better. I decided then and there that I wanted to experience



The beautiful Shedd Aquarium in Chicago.

owner when I saw a large pair of Red Devils in one of his tanks. He assured me they spawned frequently, but it didn't keep any fry because the Red Devils were difficult to sell. Unfortunately, that seems to be true of many fish that spawn in large numbers. It is especially true of Red Devils because they are mean, mean, mean, and pretty ugly as juveniles. In fact, they take a good while to change from a brown/gray fish to the pretty red, orange, and white colors you see on the adults. The change is also gradual, over many months.



Male red devil with fry in the author's tank.

this Red Devil sight in one of my tanks. Since I tend to focus on fish I can sell, I discussed the Red Devil with a local fish shop

I finally got my opportunity with Red Devils when I got them cheap at a TCA auction. I had bid on them a few times over the years, but given that I had tabbed them as a poor income producing fish, I didn't bid too high. I got 6 fish for about \$3. They certainly didn't look like Red Devils, but I trusted the seller knew what they were.

Over a period of months they grew. Eventually, they began getting some white in with the brown, and then some light orange started appearing. One grew larger than the rest, so I kept an eye out to make sure he didn't start killing off the others. One day I found one dead, and noticed the big guy had everyone, except the smallest, pinned against the back wall of the tank. Then I noticed the little one was guarding a small rock which was covered with eggs.

I removed everyone but the parents, and watched the parents for a couple of days. With egg layers, I generally let them keep their first spawn to see what they will do with them. Since I wasn't in these fish for the money, my only goal was to see the cloud of fry and pick up some Breeder Award points. So, I had less incentive to remove the eggs anyway.

I came home two days later, and checked the pair. I now had no eggs, no fry, and one dead female in the tank. Chalk up bad experience number one with the Red Devils. I was pretty sure I had another female or two (probably three) so I wasn't too devastated.

I decided they needed more space, so I moved the Red Devils to a 125 gallon tank (they had been in half of a 70 gallon breeding tank. The big guy was about 3 ½ inches, and the others an inch or so less, so they hadn't outgrown the breeding tank, but I figured the females needed more space.

I had some large Burundi Frontosas in the 125, and a large deformed Red Bahia. (I generally keep deformed fish if they are too large for the others to eat.) Putting the Red Devil in with the frontosa was a bad idea. I don't have a lid on the tank, and frontosa jump. I lost two large males within a few weeks. I could have moved them, but I'm fairly lazy with fish that aren't producing.

Still, they were money fish, and I wasn't very happy with myself. Regardless, it was too late to do anything about it. It wasn't too long before the Red Bahia and two of the Red Devils decided life on the outside was better than life with the big male Red Devil, who was up to about 6 inches. I don't know why fish insist on jumping BEHIND a big tank when they jump out, but it always seems they do.

Soon after everyone exited the tank, I found the female guarding eggs. A day later, the eggs were gone, the female was hiding under a rock, and the male had the run of the tank.

A few weeks later, I found the male surrounded by a cloud of fry. Finally, the sight I had longed for. It was well worth the wait, though probably not worth the loss of the two big Frontosa. I took some of the fry (had to get at least six for breeder award points). I took probably 50-75. A few days later, all the fry I left in the tank were gone.

For several weeks, each day was the same in the tank, the male going where he pleased, and the female hiding under a rock on her side (I don't know how she does that – no choice I guess). The female would dart out at dinner time and get chased back to her hiding place. One day, I came home, and the female was out with the male, getting along very well. They were both guarding a spawn of eggs. Each day I came home, both fish were out, but they were always guarding another area. I couldn't see what they were guarding, but I assumed the eggs had hatched and had been moved. After a few days I was again awarded with the sight of a cloud of fry hovering around one of the parents. The female was allowed to stay out of hiding. Days went by, the female was still out, and the babies were all still there. The babies grew. I kept expecting them to disap

pear, but they didn't. After three weeks, Mom resumed her position under the rock and the male guarded the fry. I don't know if he is guarding them, or just tolerating them, but they are all still there. If they were a money fish, that would be a good thing. As it is now, they just eat.

wanted for some fry.

In a final note, I will address the aggressiveness of this fish. It leaps at your fingers if you put them over the tank. Even when just turning on lights. I don't know if it wants food, or wants you out of the way, but it



The near-death wound inflicted by the author's red devil on the author!

I have been richly rewarded watching the Red Devils. A man came by a few weeks ago to buy some fish, and he had nothing good to say about the Red Devil. "Meanest fish he ever had – took it back to the store and got his money back – wouldn't ever have a Red Devil again." After watching the parents with the fry, he asked how much I

strikes anything close. While talking to someone earlier today, I made the mistake of resting my arm on the side of the tank, and that stupid fish jumped out and took a bit out of the arm – drew blood, and left a nice mouth print on my elbow. Anybody want a pretty Red Devil - **cheap?**



<http://www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com/fotascares/>

FOTAS CARES

The largest conservation themed convention ever organized for the **aquarium hobby in North America will take place November 4th - 6th 2011 at the Airport Doubletree Hotel in beautiful San Antonio, Texas.**

What is FOTAS?

The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies (FOTAS) is a collection of aquatic organizations based throughout Texas and Oklahoma. Annual conventions rotate among the member organizations and have been held annually since 1953. In 2011, the Hill Country Cichlid Club, based in south central Texas, will host FOTAS for a second time.

What is CARES?

An acronym for Conservation, Awareness,

Recognition and Responsibility, Education and Encouragement, Support and Sharing, CARES is a hobbyist based organization. It was initially formed to promote the creation of a solid base stock of conservation priority species within the collective tanks of hobbyists. Since formulation of this concept, CARES has spread into the U.S. school system as well as worldwide projects such as the rebuilding of the Kenyan Marine and Fisheries Institute in Kisumu, Kenya. With hundreds of colonies registered and many success stories, CARES gives threatened fish a fighting chance for survival. On the 7th anniversary of this organization, we celebrate with a gathering of like-minded scientists, conservationists, and hobbyists.

The Hill Country Cichlid Club, together with the Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies, the Oklahoma Aquarium Association, and USA Fish Box are supporters and

participants in CARES. FOTAS CARES!

We have assembled a stellar lineup of speakers including:

- Les Kaufman
- Ad Konings
- Anton Lamboj
- Paul V. Loiselle
- Melanie Stiassny
- Charles Jones
- Kathy England

Babes in the Cichlid Hobby

The ‘Babes’ will be in attendance continuing their incredible tradition of funding efforts in areas of cichlid conservation.

Rare Fish Availability

The largest gathering of CARES species will be available for sale in the main CARES room. For those wishing to sell fish, rental tanks will be available and must be purchased in advance. For more information and to reserve the aquariums you require, please contact [Dan Schacht](mailto:Dan_Schacht@dwschacht@gmail.com) at dwschacht@gmail.com.

For up to date information on FOTAS CARES, stop by and visit the forum at www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com.

FOTAS CARES Show

As with other aquatic events, FOTAS CARES will have a show that is free for all to participate in. However, this is not your typical show! Breaking from the traditional method of showing fish rows of bare tanks, this show will consist of participants creating displays for their fish. Each entrant may contain only one species but one may enter as many displays as they wish. These dis-

plays may or may not consist of live fish. Examples include tri-fold displays, aquariums displaying live individuals, posters, video displays or anything else the entrant can come up with. The species being depicted must be reserved in advance. Substantial prize lots including cash, auction credit, goods, and awards will be presented to the three winners. Criteria being judged include presentation, educational value, and aesthetics, with bonus points being awarded for depiction of a CARES species.

Vendor Information

For information on vendor space please contact [David Fair](mailto:David_Fair@midmitt.att.net) at midmitt@att.net.

FOTAS CARES Registration

Registration provides unlimited entrance to all FOTAS CARES events including a pizza party with Melanie Stiassny on Friday evening, all speakers and special happenings, a TexMex Awards Banquet Saturday night, and entrance to the giant auction all day Sunday.

Speakers

Les Kaufman

Well known for his knowledge on the haplochromine species of the Lake Victoria region, Les Kaufman is



responsible for the introduction of many haplochromines into the aquatic hobby. On the forefront of identifying the deep problems that plague Lake Victoria, Les was the scientist responsible for erecting the Lake Victoria Species Survival Plan (LV-SSP). Many of the colonies of fish collected for

the LV-SSP have since been extinguished from the great African lake and survive only in captivity today thanks to his foresight. Les is presently involved with studies on coral reefs of the world and played a pivotal part in bringing the CARES effort to Kenya.

Ad Konings

A prolific author on the cichlids of Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika, as well as cactus, Ad Konings is a perennial favorite among hobbyists



throughout the world. Ad's perspective on the fish of Africa's Great Rift has been keeping aquarists on the edge of their seats for decades. Ad is presented at FOTAS CARES courtesy of USAFishBox.

Anton Lamboj

A prominent scientist best known for his work with West African cichlids, Anton Lamboj is an excellent presenter, frequent visitor, and friend to many. Anton lectures at the University of Vienna in Austria and has written countless books and papers and has described many West African cichlids.



Paul V. Loiselle

Author of many publications dealing mainly with cichlid fishes, Paul Loiselle is well known for his ongoing conservation efforts around the globe, and in particu-



lar, dealing with the environmental changes occurring in Madagascar. A champion of bridging the gap between the hobbyist and the scientist, Paul is considered among the most knowledgeable minds with regards to changing environmental conditions and the consequences to aquatic life on Earth.

Melanie Stiassny

Considered to be the ichthyologists' ichthyologist, Melanie Stiassny is sought after to present at conferences and conventions around the planet. Her current work on the Congo



River is examined on a National Geographic special. We are extremely proud to present Melanie at FOTAS CARES. This is a rare opportunity to meet the most preeminent ichthyologist on the planet today.

Kathy England

Kathy England is well known in the fish world as a longtime aquarist and water gardener. She maintains a large fish house together with her husband, Marvin, containing many varieties and species from around the globe. Kathy comes to us from the Texas Cichlid Association.



Charles Jones

A well known hobbyist who has worked at many levels within the hobby, Charles Jones has presided over his home club, Houston Aquarium



Society, and is current President of the Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies. Charles will share his knowledge of the history of aquatics in Texas.

Hotel Information



The Doubletree San Antonio Hotel is located just minutes from San Antonio International Airport (SAT) on Interstate 410 across from the upscale North Star Shopping Mall. The hotel is also convenient to the downtown area, and is close to major attractions and business centers. They are minutes from the Alamo and other historic missions, the famous River Walk, and San Antonio Convention Center. Six Flags Fiesta Texas and Sea World of Texas are also nearby. This full-service San Antonio, Texas hotel offers value, comfort and location to business and leisure travelers, providing complimentary 24-hour shuttle service to the airport and nearby businesses.

The hotel features dramatic Spanish colonial architecture throughout. Spacious Spanish mission-influenced guest rooms and suites

are well-appointed with all the comforts of home and modern amenities like data ports and high-speed Internet access. There is also a complete business center located near the lobby.

A sparkling, outdoor pool and whirlpool accentuate our inviting Spanish courtyard with lush vegetation and fountains. Work out in our fully-equipped fitness center. Or, pamper yourself in the eZENTial Bodyworks Massage and Spa, offering a full array of spa services. Several championship golf courses are nearby. The staff will be happy to help you with arrangements for tee times. For your dining pleasure, the award winning Cascabel Restaurant inside the hotel features southwestern cuisine in a casually elegant atmosphere. Relax with cocktails at the intimate Cascabel Bar.

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Surprise, Surprise!

By Dr. Keith Arnold (BVAS)

In July, at the HCCC fund raiser in Austin, and in October, at the fall HCCC auction in Shertz, I purchased a bag of young *Cryptoheros cutteri* “Rio Jutiapa”, AKA Honduran “Red Points” (a species closely related to the Convict Cichlid) and a bag of young *Julidochromus marlieri*. The Central American “Red Points” were new for me and it’s been many years since I had kept and bred Convict Cichlids. I had a colony of *J. marlieri* before, but lost the colony for reasons that remain obscure to me to this day, since my other members of this genus have done well in my tanks.



***Julidochromus marlieri* kept and bred in the author’s 10 gallon aquarium.**

When I came home with these fish, despite my best intention not to buy any more fish, I placed the “Red Points” in a planted 10-gallon aquarium for growth and a decision as to where I would ultimately place them. Similarly, when I returned home with the *J. marlieri*, I only had a 5-gallon tank available, bare, but with a “cave and a couple of pieces of rock. But the fish would only re-

main there for a “short while” as I prepared a 20 long for them.

On February 2nd, while carrying out routine water changes, I discovered young in both tanks: the two species had matured and spawned in those dinky tanks! In both species, the few fry that I have seen (no more than 2 or 3) were no larger than 1/2 to 5/8 inch in total length. The fry are relatively secretive and I have to stand before the tank for a couple of minutes before they come into view.

I do not use heaters in my tanks, but the water, soft and alkaline, is usually a few degrees above room temperature. I change 10 per cent of the water at 7-10 day intervals, some times less frequently. The fish receive high quality flake food once or twice daily, with frozen blood worms offered at irregular intervals. The “Red Points” also receive crushed

ramshorn snails once or twice a week, as this is an abundant food source, a scourge, really, in my tanks and these cichlids eagerly consume this food.

Well, I do have two 20-long tanks that can accommodate these fishes, so as soon as the fry put on a little size, I’ll make the moves. Guess I’ll have some more fish for auctions!

A Fish Keepers Must See
The Japanese Tea Garden, San Antonio
By Greg Steeves (HCCC)



When people visit San Antonio, a list of things to do and places to see can get quite extensive. With Seaworld, Six Flags, the Riverwalk and loads of other great spots, one hidden gem usually eludes the sight seeing visitor; the Japanese Tea Garden.

Directly across the street from the entrance to the San Antonio Zoo lies a non descript paved path going up a slow sloping hill. This unassuming trail is lined with mesquite, yucca and cactus. As you breach the crest of the hill, an amazing sight unfolds out of nowhere. You have found the Japanese Tea Garden.

The attraction is a mixture of well manicured botanical offerings coupled with some impressive water features and a large pagoda. The walking paths are often lined with local artists attempting to capture of the beauty of this location. The large ponds are interconnected and fed by an impressive 50 foot water fall. Aquatic life consists of many large and breeding koi, goldfish, live-bearers and of course, Texas cichlids. You will also find numerous turtle species and occasional predators such as cranes and egrets.

Next time you are in San Antonio, plan on a afternoon walk at the Japanese Tea Garden!



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Do you know *Aulonocara* sp. "stuartgranti Maleri" (Maleri Island)
By Kory Watkins (USAFB)



A beautiful male *Aulonocara* sp. "stuartgranti Maleri" in the aquarium of the author.

I bet many of you have heard someone say that they have a Sunshine Peacock. Most are probably correct. However I would also bet that some of the time, they in fact, have been misguided. There are a few different species of peacocks that are referred to as the "sunshine peacock." There are many beautiful *Aulonocara* species from Lake Malawi but the true Sunshine Peacock is eye candy.

The *Aulonocara* sp. "stuartgranti Maleri" (Maleri Island) is an extremely attractive peacock from Lake Malawi in Africa. When growing up, males and females are pretty much identical and can not be sexed on sight. If you have several different breeding species of Peacock it is a must to separate the fry. At 2-3 inches the males will start to mature and the first tinges of color start to appear. Females will always retain the same dull color with faded vertical lines. Once the males are fully grown they will display a bright blue and yellow color that will make you gape for days.

At present, the species is included in the *A. stuartgranti* complex by virtue of its similar behavior and body shape. It is separated from others in the complex as it appears to form an isolated population in the lake, suggesting it is a distinct species. There are several geographical variants available, as well as a couple of man-made forms that exhibit a deep orange/red colorations. It should be noted that neither these, nor any other species or morph of *Aulonocara* should be mixed in the aquarium. Females of the various species are almost identical and they may hybridize. Please make sure you are certain which species you are working with.

The "stuartgranti Maleri" has not yet been described to science but is everywhere in the hobby. The appearance in color and pattern is very close to an *Aulonocara baenschi*. It is very often referred to as a "Sunshine" or "Yellow Peacock". If you compare the snouts of the two they can be told apart. In *A. baenschi*, the profile of the snout contin-



Aulonocara sp. "stuartgranti" Maleri Island in the aquarium. Photo by the author.

ues in a convex curve over the eye. In *A. sp. "stuartgranti maleri"*, this line is much straighter. Knowing this is very important. You do not want to get two different species and think you have the same thing. You could come out with hybrids which is frowned upon in the hobby.

Konings (1995c: 198) provides the following behavioral notes in the wild:

All forms of the stuartgranti group behave in a similar manner. They are rather common in the intermediate habitat where females and juveniles are found in small groups (or singly) feeding from the sandy patches between the rocks. They are most numerous on gently sloping coasts where many rocks lie scattered on the sandy floor. Males excavate nests between rocks and territories are marked with a shallow rim of sand at the entrance of the spawning-cave. Digging is rarely observed in *Aulonocara*, although males of several species have tunnel-nests between stones.

I myself have a group of *A. sp. "stuartgranti Maleri"* that consists of two males and eight females. The group is in a standard 55 gallon aquarium with a group of *Cynotilapia Axelrodi* from Nkhata Bay. The tank has two sponge filters rated for 40 gallons each. For my substrate I use pool filter sand that you can get at the Home Depot costing six bucks for 50 pounds. In addition to the pool filter sand I also use some breeding caves and a few pieces of Texas Holey Rock. The breeding is non stop and the temperament level is very calm. Out of the 20 plus aquariums that I maintain, this is by far my favorite one.

If you are into Cichlids and wanting to try something with a striking yellow and blue color, you might want to look at getting *Aulonocara sp. "stuartgranti Maleri"* (Maleri

Island) . When doing so remember to go to a reliable and knowledge source when shopping for this species or any species of peacock. I recommend Dave's Rare Aquarium Fish. Great selection and the species are always pure. There are a handful of peacocks that are similar to others so we as hobbyist must make sure we are getting the correct species that way there is no risk of crossing our fish.

After reading this short article I hope you have learned a few things about the Maleri Island peacock and how it differs from the other close species of peacocks. Finally please remember to get you Peacocks or any species of fish from a good reliable source!

References

Konings, Ad. 1995. *Malawi Cichlids in Their Natural Habitat* (Second edition). Cichlid Press.

Fishandtips.com <http://fishandtips.com/displaydb.php?ID=39>

USA Fish Box . com <http://usafishbox.forumotion.com/t5-aulonocara-sp-stuartgranti-maleri-island?highlight=aulonocara+sp+++stuartgranti>



The female *Aulonocara sp. "stuartgranti"*.



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