



Fish Tales

Volume 8 Issue 1

A Visit to the Aquarium of the Pacific

CAOAC 2018 Convention



*The Most
Expensive Livebearer*

*Attempting to Artificially
Hatch Betta macrostoma*

*A Visit to the Rocky
Mountain Cichlid Association*

Pinguicula macclurei

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On the Cover: Leafy Sea Dragon Photo by Gerald Griffin

Design and Layout Gerald Griffin



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Fish Tales Submission Guidelines

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Next deadline.....
July 15th 2018

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Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

President's Message

Hello FOTAS Family

Many clubs are enjoying the summer with BBQ's and collecting trips. I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the terrestrial and aquatic world all they can. The natural beauty of our region all should appreciate. Get out there and jump in the water!

All has been quiet in the last few months. We are late organizing the FOTAS convention this year but it will occur in Schertz TX October 12-14th. Stay tune for further details very soon. The largest national cichlid convention is right around the corner. The Houston Cichlid Club and the Houston Aquarium Society are coming together to host the American Cichlid Association's 2018 convention. This is going to be a great time! Many of us have been anxiously awaiting this all year long. I'll see everyone there.

Until next issue, have fun and be safe.

Greg



FOTAS CARES! First Quarter Report



July FOTAS CARES Report

The most recent CARES update was a little disappointing on a couple of fronts. We had far more CARES species colonies discontinued than we did new entries. In addition, several participants did not return my inquiries for the update. These entries have been marked inactive and can be reactivated in those participants can get back with me. Congratulation to Ethan Grantham and the Greater Austin Aquarium Society for the successful registration of *Xenotoca lyonsi* and *Aulonocara* sp. "Lwanda".

I want to give a huge congratulation to Jim Valenzuela's huge accomplishment of spawning two difficult species from Barombi mbo in Cameroon. These were *Pungu maclareni* and *Stomatepia pindu*. Way to go Jim!

Remember that if you plan on actively working with a CARES species, register your fish and do what you can to ensure the next generation of aquarist's will be able to keep those fish in their tanks!

Canadian Association Of Aquarium Clubs 2018 Convention



**Article by Greg Steeves
Photos by Greg Steeves
and Zenin Skomorowski**

As I sit on a plane in Toronto's Pearson International Airport, waiting to depart to Texas, I've been fondly reflecting back on what has been an incredible week. This will certainly go down as one of the best fish trips I've ever been on.

I was asked if I would like to come to present by my friend Ken Boorman when I ran into him at the NEC convention last year. From there, I immediately started scheming. I am a Canadian national that hasn't been back to the motherland in seven years. I was going to make the most of this. I must mention that dealing with the CAOAC's staff was fantastic. They bent over backwards to ensure that anything I needed in regards to travel, was attended to. This is Canada's national convention and it was a huge honor to be asked to speak there but I was doubly honored when Ken asked if I would like to be the banquet speaker. I was happy to and very excited to do it.

I made plans to leave a couple days early, fly into the Maritimes, and visit family and friends. I landed at Moncton International Airport and my folks were there waiting for me. The next two days were packed full of fried clams, Tim Hortons, hockey playoffs, bird watching and catching up with friends. It was fantas-

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tic! Friday morning I said goodbye to the Maritimes and I was off to Toronto.

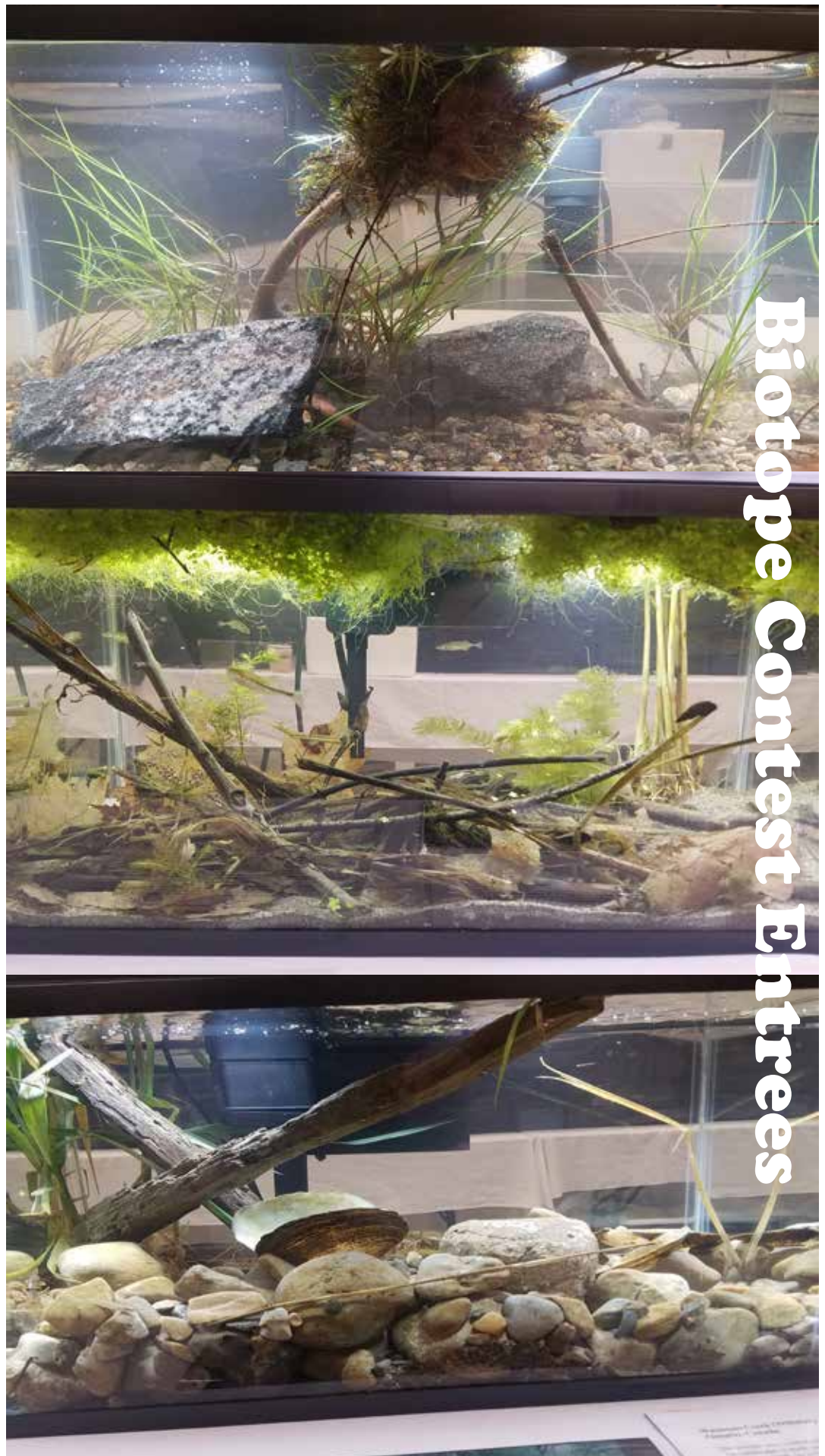
Upon arrival to Canada's biggest city, Anne Stevens was there to pick me up. We drove a half hour away to the Holiday Inn in beautiful Burlington Ontario. I checked in and went to my room to get rid of my luggage. I had been to an event in Chatham Ontario several years earlier and I was hoping that some of the friends I had met there, would be at this event. Fortunately for me, many were.

I met up with some of the other speakers including friends Jeff Cardwell, Rick Bornstein and Mike Hellweg. I made the rounds and met up with two of my best buds, Ken and Lisa Boorman. Ken was hard at work setting up his vendor space with a large collection of books, foods and other goodies. We decided it was time for dinner and we went to a wonderful bar and grill in the hotel itself. After a large plate of fish and chips, we were treated to a magic show by the bartender there. He was actually really good! During the meal, I met many of the attendees then it was off to the presentations. All the presenters were excellent and I gave a CARES presentation as well. Later in the evening there was an open hospitality suite and I

planned to socialize for a bit. After a call home, and a long day, I decided to forego the hospitality suite and get some sleep.

In the morning I got to meet many more people and was treated to several other great talks. I also met Frank Igularia and instantly struck up a great friendship. Frank runs an aquarium maintenance business in the Toronto area. He organizes the biotope contest and asked me to be a judge. Again, I considered this a huge honor and agreed. These tanks were amazing. Most were set up to represent a natural biotope from local waterways. The displays were amazing. There was big money on the line as first place got 300.00, 200.00 for second and 100.00 for third. This was incredible! There was a large general all species fish show, a betta show, guppy show and a killifish show. In addition to Canadians and Americans, there was a large contingent in attendance from England and Germany. This is a big show! Many excellent vendors were set up and selling their wares.

The banquet was a lot of fun. Awards were presented, recognition given and general merriment ensued. Ron Bishop, COAOC president and



CAOAC Betta Show



CAOAC Killifish Show



CAOAC General Fish Show

fellow east coaster, was an excellent emcee. This was an absolute blast! I handed out the award for best cichlid in show, representing the American Cichlid Association, to Catherine Salmon. After further formalities, I was introduced, and walked up to give my talk. I got to the podium with “Creatures of the Comal” on a flash drive but ran into a small problem. There was no computer, projector or screen.

I thought Ron was pulling one over on me (I still think he probably was). After a good laugh and a little scrambling, we were ready to roll. I enjoyed giving my talk and even got to rib my new buddy Frank a bit. After the formality of the evening had come to a close, I made my way to the hospitality room for a couple hours of chit chat with my fellow Canucks. By the time I got to bed, I was pooped.

The next morning I had breakfast with Terry Clements, Zenin Skomorowski and other friends. After this it was off to the auction.

The method they used for their auction was very interesting, and efficient. Bob and Jerry rotated auctioneering

duties. One would do an item then pass the mic to the other. I assisted with a little running. The winning price was collected immediately upon delivery of the item. I said my goodbyes and I was off.

My brother and his family lives near Burlington so he picked me up and I got to spend time with them before flying out Monday. The flight back to Texas was not as wonderful as my week had been but the wonderful time I had in Canada was well worth it. I very much look forward to returning to the CAOAC and seeing all my old and new friends once again.



Greg Steeves enjoying his trip back to his homeland!



The Boorman's with Greg



Jerry Draper with Ray "Kingfish" Lucas!

Ron Bishop and Barb Draper awarding Ashley Rezka for most points in the Betta Show.



Karen Rogers, Catherine Salmon, Peter DeSouza, Morgan Ruttle and Ashley Rezka posing with their awards from the CAOAC Show.



Lisa's Lair Bookstore, a staple at Fish Conventions in the NorthEastern US and Canada!



CAOAC Auction





Pungu maclareni



Article by Jim Valenzuela
Photos by Greg Steeves

A short introduction to this wonderful group of fish from West Africa. Cameroon's Barombi Mbo, near the town of Kumba is a very small crater lake. The entire surface area is approximately 2.5 square miles. The recorded depth is approximately 364 feet, while only the top 131 feet supports enough oxygen due to lack of large current for fish to live. The cichlids from Lake Barombi Mbo possibly come from a *Sarotherodon* species that may have evolved over thousands of years ago. All Lake Barombi Mbo cichlids are on the CARES priority list and are critically endangered. Over fishing and over harvesting of lumber are the main reasons for the needed urgency for breeding and distribution. Here are the eleven endemic cichlid species from Lake Barombi Mbo.

- *Stomatepia mariae*, feeds primary on shrimp, insect larvae and small fish.
- *Stomatepia mongo*, feeds primary on shrimp, insect larvae and small fish.
- *Stomatepia pindu*, feeds primary on shrimp, insect larvae and small fish.
- *Myaka myaka*, monotypic genus, feeds on the phytoplankton in open water.
- *Pungu maclareni*, monotypic genus, feeds mostly on freshwater sponges.

- *Konia dikume*, lives in open water prefers deeper water, prefers mosquito larvae
- *Konia eisentrauti*, lives in open water, however may prefer deeper water.
- *Sarotherodon caroli*, lives in all areas of the lake, phytoplankton feeder
- *Sarotherodon linnellii*, lives in all areas of the lake, phytoplankton feeder.
- *Sarotherodon lohbergeri*, lives in all areas of the lake, Phytoplankton feeder.
- *Sarotherodon stenbachi*, lives in all area of the lake, phytoplankton feeder.

Although the above fish species are very unique, they are not the most colorful fish compared to the Great Lakes in the East. However, what they don't have in bright colors they make up in personalities. I'm currently maintaining three of the above species. Someday I hope to get more. They are available, usually not very often though, from a very few select breeders. The *Stomatepia mongo* was thought to be extinct in the wild however, recently made available and has been bred and now available in extremely limited numbers.

I want to share my personal experience with the *Pungu maclareni*. February 2015, I attended my club's annual

swap meet, Hill Country Cichlid Club HCCC in San Antonio, Texas. A friend had 4 bags of each, *Pungu maclareni* and *Myaka myaka* for sale. I had no information about these fish previously, but was highly encouraged by a few friends to get them as they are very seldom offered for sale. All appeared to be adult fish. They were not cheap. Well, both species looked really nice and they went home with me that day.

Traveling the 500 miles back home, I was a bit nervous getting them home safely. All 8 fish arrive fine and were put in an 85 gallon tank by themselves. A couple months later they would be put outside under the patio along with the other fish for the summer months. At this time, I had about 30 tanks outside. My water supply is pulled from my 1000 gallon pond. Our Louisiana summers are perfect for keeping fish outdoors. Both species were doing well in their set up. My fish are kept outdoors from April to about the middle of October depending on the weather, and brought back indoors for the winter months.

No real reason to do this other than I prefer to be outdoors in my fish patio during the summer months. I believe the fish breed more, grow faster and look better. Outside tanks also have the advantage of more natural food. I'm constantly finding small insects in the tanks. Water changes are easily done, replacing tank water from the pond. I use no water conditioners. In June 2016, the fish had already been transferred outside for the 2nd time, for the summer months. I usually do heavy water changes, 80% every other day in the summer along with several feedings daily for all fish. I use sponge filters only, tanks have no gravel.

On June 25th, I removed all the



fish from the Barombi Mbo tank and put them into 2 five gallon buckets, while I thoroughly clean the excess algae. One bucket had the *Myaka myaka* and the other bucket had the *Pungu maclareni*. I get lots of algae and green water due to the amount of light the tanks receive, they stay very warm during the Louisiana summers. As I was getting ready to move the fish back into the cleaned tank with clean age water, I noticed that the bucket with the *Pungu* was full of fry. I messaged my friend in Texas Greg Steeves, informing him that I have fry from *Pungu maclareni*. I'll always remember his comment, that's fantastic these fish are not bred very often!





I was able to retrieve 26 fry! At first, I wasn't sure if the fry had come from one individual fish or more? From my experience now, it may have been 2 fish that spit? The fry were fully formed and started eating first bites fry food right away, growing very rapidly in their new ten gallon tank. I moved them to a larger tank within the month. They didn't look anything like the parents for a least a couple of months. Small *Pungu* do have a tinge of red on the fins. A few months after the spawn, I started noticing the *Pungu* breeders with swollen bellies. The fish all started to slowly waste away. I failed to save the *Pungu*, I lost all 4 breeders in a very short

I did I wasn't aware what triggered them.

Less than a month after the June spawn, I attended the Cincinnati ACA convention. I had previously read Dr. Paul Loiselle's article 2003, The Aquarium Husbandry of the *Pungu* in the *Cichlid News*. I was fortunate to be able to have breakfast one morning with Paul and Greg. I was telling Paul about my *Pungu* spawning. I was going on and on showing my excitement. I remembered that Paul interrupted me looking straight in my eyes saying, do you have fry? Paul might not remember this conversation, but I certainly kept mental



period. Later, I determined that possibly they were receiving too much protein as I had some large *Synodontis* in the same tank that were being fed a pellet protein food. The four *Myaka myaka* sharing the tank were not affected at all. Feeling very disappointed about losing these fish I kept blaming myself. I was extremely happy, I was very fortunate to have fry. As you can see, this breeding was by pure accident. I did nothing to deserve this spawn or if

notes. I told him yes I do. His response as I recall, you need to spread them out. You live in a hurricane area of the country. I hadn't thought about this before, but quickly decided to give Greg about 6 juveniles. I also brought a few fish to our club's rare fish auction, leaving me with about 16 fish. All was well with the remaining *Pungu* until the summer of 2017. I learned a very valuable lesson during that summer. I lost quite a few

different fish in several tanks. I had never experienced this type of fish loss before. All fish were affected. I started losing the *Pungu*. I was devastated. At the end of this crisis, I had only 7 *Pungu maclareni* left. I was very depressed and was constantly thinking what could I have done differently? Should I give up? To have a onetime success story and then to have a disaster story was most concerning. I read everything I could find and asked lots of questions. Actually, there was very little information on breeding of these fish that I could find. I was extremely happy that I took the advice to spread them around.

October 2017, the *Pungu* were once again, brought indoors for the winter months. This time I used heaters. I had read that 80-82 degrees was good and for breeding purposes a temperature of 85-86 degrees. Using a heater now maintained the temperature. I don't use heaters in any of the other tanks. I then started increasing the water temperature, adding lots of driftwood and kept the tank fairly dark with just a blue light. I felt having the tank dark in an area that received no traffic to interrupt these fish would be better. I would constantly find small pieces of driftwood on the bottom of the bare bottom tank. I can only assume that the *Pungu* were removing or eating it. It's a wonderful sight to see the *Pungu* feeding. At times, all 7 fish were feeding in unison with their heads down picking food from the bottom or from the driftwood. I provided artificial plants for cover. No gravel in the tank. Filtration was a power filter and a couple of sponge filters that I occasionally cleaned.

Water changes were done less often now. The tank water had become very dark from the tannins from the driftwood. I might add now, that I find this fish to be very nervous and spooky. Sudden movements by the tank usually resulted in their panic. They're constantly chasing each other though, no noticeable fin damage was observed. *Myaka myaka* are the tank mates. While I still only had the 7 fish, I was determined to make another attempt to try and breed them. I wanted to do everything right this time, learning from my past mistakes especially on the feeding. I contacted Dave Schumacher asking for his recommendations for food. I started feeding an algae base and Spirulina flake and later on he introduced to me the Northfin products. After getting the water temperature and feeding on the desired path, I paid little or any attention to this tank. I fed, siphoned the bottom and topped off the water

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level as needed is all I did for the next couple of months.

On December 1st, 2017, I noticed one of the *Pungu* was holding. I stripped and got 4 fully developed fry! I was so excited to have fry again! This was much more meaningful to me, because the parents were fry from the June 2016 spawn eighteen months earlier! The conditions must have been correct with the few changes that I made I'm guessing? Looking closer, I noticed another fish was holding. Then to my surprise, I got 9 more fry on December 15th. The schedule below indicates the breeding dates and fry numbers.

- 04-*Pungu maclareni* 12/01/17
- 09-*Pungi maclareni* 12/15/17
- 04-*Pungu maclareni* 02/07/18
- 17-*Pungi maclareni* 02/19/18
- 18-*Pungi maclareni* 02/19/18
- 16-*Pungi maclareni* 03/04/18
- 19-*Pungi maclareni* 03/22/18
- 11-*Pungi maclareni* 04/12/18
- 11-*Pungi maclareni* 04/28/18

The last spawn at the end of April, I made the decision to disrupt them and moved them outside for the summer months. Identical water, driftwood and filtration were transferred. I have no idea if this interruption will stop the breeding. Time will tell? I still have questions. For example, is there a breeding season? The fish are still fed several times a day in very small amounts. This tank has a heater, trying to keep the same temperature of 85-86 degrees.

The information in this article is provided only to share what I did for success in maintaining and breeding this very unique fish. It worked for me. I'm a novice fish keeper, I'm sure there are many other methods that will get the same results. In the above breeding cycle, I would check the fish several times each day trying not to disturb the tank. Closer examination was done at night wearing a black T shirt, hoping they wouldn't notice me too much. If I noticed one was holding, not eating or staying by itself in the corner, I would record the date and then would strip the fish in about 13 days. Anything less than 13 days the eggs were not developed far enough in my opinion. The 13th day seemed to work best for me. I didn't want to let the fish hold and release on its own. I had read that the parents would eat them. On one or two occasions, I would

strip the fish at night very carefully, as these fish are known to spit while catching or while in the net. I also learned that they're jumpers! It didn't take long for me to really hold on to these fish while stripping. Identifying the sexes did take me quite some time to tell the difference. I feel the males have deeper black around the throat and cheek areas and seem to be a bit larger than the females. No two fish have the same markings. Both sexes do hold which can add more to the confusion. At times, I would have two fish holding at once but one never seemed to hold for long. Thirteen days later I would only have one that was holding. This happened twice. I'm not sure if this means anything? I just had it in my notes.

Conclusion, I have all fry raised in separate species only tanks according to dates. The fish are fairly close in size as the dates are pretty close as well. The fry are raised in 55's and the smaller ones are in 30 gallons. I enjoy seeing them schooling together. I'm still feed

ing an algae based flake food several times a day. As I write this article early May 2018, all fry are outside. One tank has 6 small *Heterchromis multidens* that seem to be doing well with the *Pungu maclareni* for now. The *Pungu maclareni* has been a wonderful fish to work with and I would highly recommend this fish to anyone that desires something a little different and not often seen in the hobby. If you have the space, setting up a tank with cichlids from Barombi Mbo would be very satisfying and keeping a fish that is on the CARES priority list would also be very rewarding as a hobbyist. As of today, *Pungu maclareni* fry from me are now in Louisiana, Texas and Colorado with very experience aquarists. Now if only the *Myaka myaka* will spawn.

References

Paul V Loiselle, Cichlid News 2003.
Greg Steeves, Insight on Lake Barombi, Cameroon
Troy Veltrop, Buntbarsche bulletin 2010





A Visit to the Rocky Mountain Cichlid Association

*Article and Photos by
Greg Steeves*

As I sit in a plane on the tarmac at Denver International Airport, I'm wishing I had taken a bit more time to enjoy the area and spend more time with my friends. This was my first trip to Colorado without my buddy Bob Grauer being here. I want Bob to know that the legacy he left with the Rocky Mountain Cichlid Association is alive and well. President Jesse Schumacher is beloved by the membership and the club appears very strong.

Jesse asked me to present to the RMCA but it took a while for my schedule to line up with their meeting dates. I have been fortunate enough to speak here several times and have enjoyed each trip. This particular voyage was a quickie. I flew in Friday morning, presented Friday evening and am now returning home Saturday morning. My topic was to be a presentation on CARES. My participation in CARES is geared towards haplochromine cichlids thus my talk was to be about haplochromines and CARES involvement with these fishes. More on that.....

I arrived in Denver at 11:00 am and was greeted by Kevin Fehringer. I had known Kevin from previous trips and was very happy he volunteered to cart me around (he might think twice about that next time). After the usual salutations, I hopped in his car and

away we went. As we drove along entering Aurora Colorado and things began to look familiar. We were not far from the hotel that the ACA convention in 2013 was at. I had a feeling I knew we were headed and, if correct, I was okay with that. Several years ago, Bob Grauer invited Lee Ann and I to stay at his home and feed his fish while he and Carol were in Mexico. Knowing how much I loved the area; his kind offer was graciously accepted and Lee Ann and I had a wonderful week of exploring. On the first day of that trip, while trying to find the road that went to the mountains, I got lost, er, temporarily misplaced. While roaming, we were hungry and stopped at a restaurant we happened across called Sam's No.3. This Greek/Mexican restaurant turned out to be our favorite place and since then, every trip to Denver has included a stop here. This is where Kevin was taking me!

After a great lunch, we made plans to check out a couple stores. I asked if we might be able to squeeze a trip to the hills in. I wanted to get some footage of magpies for my "Birding at Greg's" video series. This is a little Facebook thing I started with filming birds at my feeders in the yard. Over the last couple years, people really seem to like it (or maybe they are being polite and I am too obstinate to know the difference). No matter, Kevin said he wasn't really a bird guy but we could go to the

the hills and wander around. That would come later. First stop was a fish store owned by a RMCA club member. Unfortunately, the gentleman's son was sick and the shop was closed. Great start Kevin! Off we went once again. We drove to another shop called "Something About Fish". This is where a friend of ours, Mathew Grant, works. Matt does a great job of promoting the shop on social media. Search it up and check out his pictures and videos. The first thing I noticed when I walked in was how clean the tanks were. The fish seemed very healthy and the aquariums well lit. Along with some bread and butter stuff, they had a great selection of *Neocardinia* and *Cardina* shrimp. There were also these really cool crabs called panther crabs, that I had never seen before. I stood looking at them and was briefly trying to figure out how to get them home. My logical thoughts took over thankfully and I decided against purchasing them but man, were they cool! Another highlight was a tank full of the ever-popular catfish L-46. The zebra pleco are beautiful and I can only surmise that there is a local breeder of them. They have an impressive saltwater section as well with lots of cool frags. If ever in the area, I highly recommend visiting Something About

Fish.

Next, Kevin and I were off to the foothills to look for magpies. Driving through some incredible scenery, we ended up at a nice public trail in Evergreen. Here we began the search for the elusive corvidae I wanted to see. It was a very brisk hike and I found myself getting out of breath. I know I am not at the peak of physical fitness but am capable of walking for a fair distance. I told Kevin I was a bit out of breath. He laughed and reminded me that we were over 8000 ft above sea level. I guess that would do it. We found a large herd of caribou but little sign of any birds. Kevin suddenly brought to my attention a large moving black and white spot up in a distant pine tree. We walked closer and noticed not one, but three magpies up this large tree. Success! As I started shooting video, my breath had returned and my mission was complete. Suddenly more magpies arrived and before I knew it, they were all around us squawking. It was fantastic. On the way back to the car, we noticed a little sparrow sized bird on a fence post. As I started filming and more arrived. I had never seen this little species before and was excited they were being so accommodating to my video camera. I even-



tually checked my Merlin app to discover these were dark-eyed junco. Double score. As we were preparing to leave, a large redtailed hawk flew over our heads. Word got out and now all the birds want to be “Birding at Greg’s” stars!

We were once again off and going to get me checked into a hotel for the night. The club put me up at a very nice Holiday Inn. Kevin and I rambled to each other for a while until it was time to get to the meeting.

The Rocky Mountain Cichlid Association now holds their meetings and auctions at a school that Jesse teaches at. It’s a beautiful facility and I hope the membership realizes how fortunate they are. People began to pile in. There were a lot of familiar faces along with others I hadn’t met. One of the highlights for me was seeing Bill Parsons bring a large piece of HCCC member Jim Valenzula’s famous Cajun driftwood. I’m not going to tell Jim how much this went for or he will load up the family truckster and show up with a couple cord at the next RMCA auction.

It was getting close to meeting time and Kevin assisted

me on setting up the a/v equipment for my presentation. As sometimes happens, there was a glitch. PowerPoint would not recognize some of my videos.

Kevin diligently worked trying to get thing fixed up and I was no help at all. We couldn’t seem to rectify the problem so I came up with another option. I had been working on a CARES presentation in video form for a while. I had shown it to a couple close friends looking for suggestions and opinions on my show. It had been very positive but I had never shown it to a group live. I decided to bite the bullet and suggest we show the video. I could give an impromptu CARES discussion along with a Q&A to follow. I was quite nervous about this premiere but, as it turned out, I doubt my original presentation would have gone so well.

After the viewing, we discussed CARES and the new changes that had been made to the program. Jesse added to the talk by live showing the CARES website and pertinent areas while I spoke about them. All in all, it was fantastic. It looks as though RMCA will be our next CARES club!





Following the bowl show and presentation, was an auction. There were lots of cool fish and plants there. I would estimate there were between 40-50 lots. I was asked to auctioneer and did. The RMCA have a great meeting format and I think I will suggest that my own club adopt some of their activities.

After the meeting, a large group of us went to a nearby restaurant called Chicago Pizza. We all sat together trading stories and getting to know each other better. I really enjoyed my evening! Kevin then took me back to

my room where I got a good night sleep. He returned early in morning. We took a quick drive into the foot hills so I could see the mountains once again, then to the airport. I thanked him for so generously volunteering his time to tout me all over the state and humoring my birding request.

I thank the Rocky Mountain Cichlid Association members for having me up to speak and I hope I was able to spark interest in our very important CARES program. I look forward to one day coming up again. Remember, we can't save them all, but we can all save one!







The Most Expensive livebearer - *Poecilia latipinna*

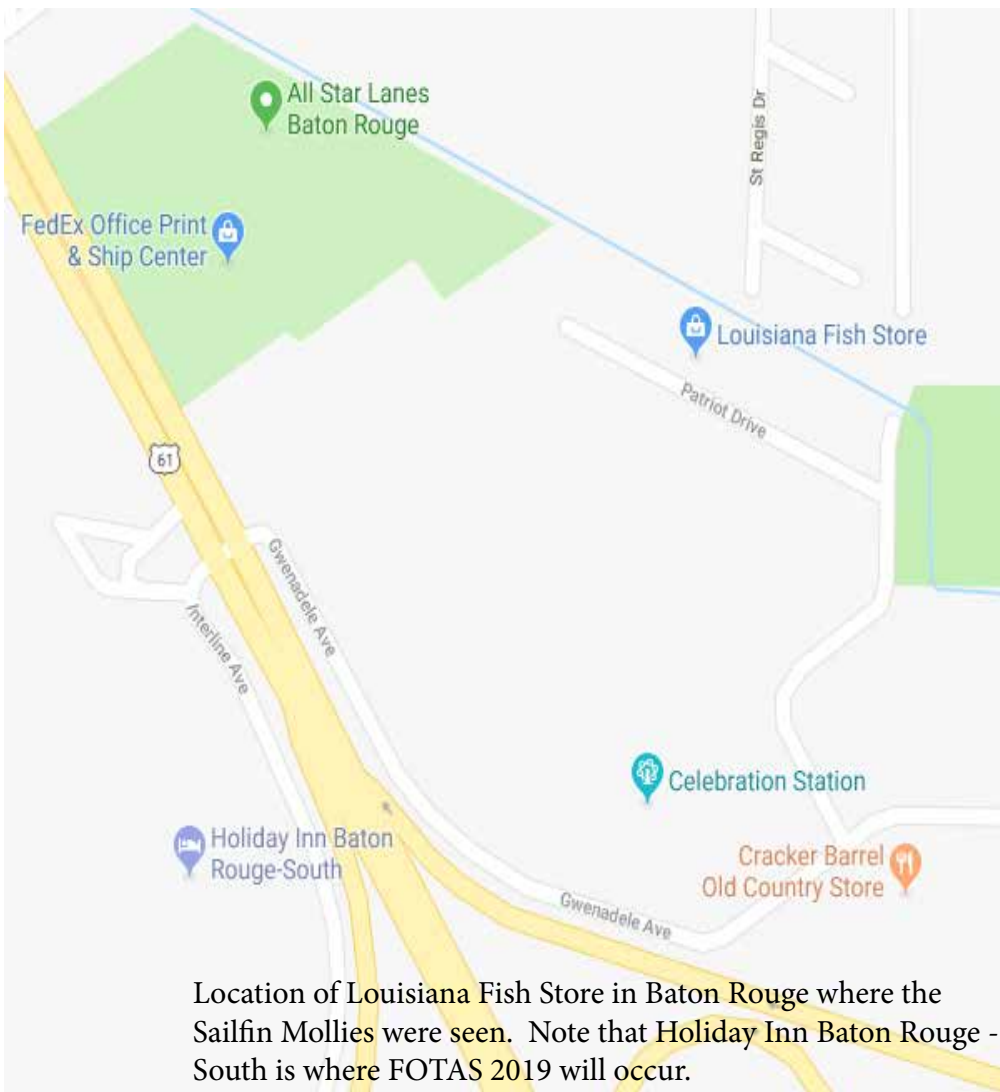
Article and Photos by
William 'Clay' Trachtman

P*oecilia latipinna*, aka the Sailfin Molly, can be found throughout the southeast US in canals, ditches, swamps, or really anywhere there is enough water to support them. Some are even found in brackish water! The male sailfin molly is characterized by a large beautiful, enlarged dorsal fin that gives the fish its common name (but let's be honest, if you are reading this, you know that already).

Throughout my childhood, I always enjoyed catching fish with a net; not to kill, but to put in my backyard pond at my parents' house. I caught no shortage of mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) or the minnow as I called it back then, and even the occasional trout fry (I believe), but I never saw anything that I would consider "aquarium quality."

Flash forward to 2007ish, and with the advent of the internet and aquabid, I discovered that there were Sailfin Mollies in Louisiana. Not only that, people were selling wild ones on aquabid! I contacted one of the local sellers in Baton Rouge who invited me to come to his place and we would catch some. I took him up on his offer, and using a cast net, he caught a bunch of them. Easy as pie, I had a bunch of Sailfin Mollies. Sure it wasn't as much fun as catching them myself, but I had some.

Well as time goes by, the fish died out as the fry got eaten by other fish. One thing that I was extremely disappointed with was the fact that very few of my male fry grew the large sailfin. I contacted my friend Bill Allen out of Shreveport (cheap plug: Bill will be



Once we got back inside we examined our loot. We caught a ton of mosquito fish as well as a smaller fish with a black stripe. We determined that this was *Heterandria formosa* which is more commonly known as the Least Killifish. The Least Killifish is interesting in its own right: it is the smallest fish found in North America and is the 7th smallest fish in the world, it is also a livebearer even though it is called a killifish. The one thing that was not though, was a Sailfin Molly.

Flash forward to April, 2018. I was at the store and once again see the fish with the orange and blue fins. Not only that, but it is dry enough for me to get down to the water's edge and try to catch some. I grabbed a small net from the store and a bucket and set off to the bottom of the ditch.

The water was clear, and I could

speaking at FOTAS 2019, at the Holiday Inn Baton Rouge - South), who informed me that not all of the males will develop the large dorsal fin. He did not know what caused this but that it was either genetic or environmental.

Flash forward to 2017. Louisiana Fish Store opened a new store with a ditch behind it. One day we were sitting out behind the store, and we saw some fish in the ditch. These are nice looking fish too, with a shimmering orange and blue finnage. We were too far away to tell exactly what they are, but I was nearly positive that they were Sailfin Mollies.

At that time it was too wet to go down there to catch any, so we waited. After waiting a few weeks or so for the area to dry (this is a tough spot to get to, so it really needed to be dry), my friend Nick and I went down there with a net. We did not see any of the orange and blue fish, but we grabbed a bunch of fish anyway.

clearly see that these were in fact Sailfin Mollies. Unfortunately, the net that I had was way too short for me to even attempt to catch them. But at least I know had confirmation that these fish were in fact Sailfin Mollies.

Undaunted, I went to a local sporting goods store and over spent (\$30) for a large net with a mesh that I thought was fine enough for me to get some Sailfin Mollies. Two days later, I went back with my large net. I tried multiple approaches, but the large males would never swim near the net. And on the rare occasion that they did, once I moved the net, they would jump out of the net.

After nearly an hour, I decided it was time to head back with my loot. I was disappointed, I knew I had caught a bunch of female sailfins, but I was not sure if I caught a single male. It was at this time, that I lost my footing a slid into the ditch, my shoes and socks were completely filled with mud and water (\$50 for



Male *Heterandria formosa* (Least Killifish).

for the shoes, \$3 for the socks).

After putting all of the fish into a 29 gallon holding aquarium, I was able to more closely examine them. I actually caught a bunch of smaller males as well as adult females. I asked my go-to livebearer expert, Bill Allen, if they would turn in to large males or if I would be stuck with these smaller males. He was not certain and informed that only time will tell.

Not being one to leave something alone, I turned to another live bearer expert: Google. It turns out that there are 3 types of males in the species. There are the large sailfins that everyone wants (the ones that I could not catch), a smaller intermediate stage of male that shows some of the distinctive characteristics of the sailfin traits, and then finally a 3rd stage of male that shows no distinctive color or characteristics of the sailfin traits (Snelson, 1985). This explains why back in 2007, so few of my male fry showed that beautiful sailfin trait.

This made me curious, in my experience, the vast majority of the male Sailfin Mollies did not show the sailfin trait, so how did fish farms produce enough male mollies with the large sailfin trait? On this subject, I turned to another live bearer expert: Charles Clapsaddle of Goliad Farms (<https://goliadfarms.com/>). Charles Clapsaddle informed me that small males were more common in hybrids. He also stated that in his experience, later maturing males get larger than

early maturing males. In his commercial hatchery, he only uses the largest males as breeders, and he never sees small males in his populations.

With that information in hand from Charles Clapsaddle as well as the information about the 3 types of male mollies, that leads me to conclude that given the best conditions (lots of water, good food etc.) a larger percentage of males will show the large sailfin trait. I have no way of proving this, but eventually the small males that I caught will go into my 210 gallon aquarium and I will see if that is enough water and enough high quality food for them to develop.

So in conclusion, why would someone go out and spend \$83 on a male Sailfin Molly that does not even look all that great when that same person could spend \$3 in a store for a better looking version of that same fish? Well for me, the experience is priceless.

Snelson, F.F. Environ Biol Fish (1985) 13: 35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00004854>

Male *Poecilia latipinna* (Sailfin Molly)



Sailfin Mollies for sale at a local fish store.

sailfin molly
Poecilia velifera

freshwater

average adult size  length: 4 in	temperature  72-82°F	temperament  peaceful	characteristics  community	care level  average
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2.5" SAILFIN MOLLY
FW SKU 102326

102326
FRESH FISH
#IPOGS-01

2⁹⁹

PLEASE REFER TO A FISH SHEET FOR MORE INFORMATION
555551023263 STB-141A 04/02/17 84

A Visit to the Aquarium of the Pacific

Article and Photos
by Gerald Griffin

I was quite happy to have an opportunity to visit the Aquarium of the Pacific while attending the International Betta Congress Convention in Long Beach California. The Aquarium sits upon 5 acres on Rainbow Harbor in Long Beach and is directly across from the Long Beach Convention Center and the Queen Mary which incidentally happened to be where the IBC Convention was held. The Aquarium is a medium sized Aquarium which sees an average of 1.5 million visitors a year. The Aquarium first opened on June 20th 1998 and incidentally is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this month. The Aquarium employs over 300 employees directly and has approximately 650 volunteers. Also the Aquarium of the Pacific is the 4th most visited Aquarium in the United States.

1. Georgia Aquarium, Atlanta at 2.2 million visitors annually.
2. Monterey Bay Aquarium , Monterey California at 2.08 million visitors annually.
3. Shedd Aquarium, Chicago at 2.02 million visitors annually
4. Aquarium of the Pacific, Long Beach, California at 1.6 million visitors annually.

5. Steinhart Aquarium, San Francisco, California at 1.4 million visitors annually

The Aquarium houses over 11,000 animals representing over 500 different species. The displays range greatly from small displays up to 350,000 gallon display.

Upon entering the lobby one is greeted by the Southern California and Baja Gallery. the first exhibit is approximately 142,000 gallons and is three stories tall. It represents a kelp forest and contains a number of California residents found around the Catalina Island. Other exhibits here include a 211,000 gallon Seal and Sea Lion Habitat as well as the Gulf of California exhibits.

The Northern Pacific Gallery houses organisms from the Bering Sea and include a Sea Otter Habitat, Giant Octopus, various seabirds and also include spider crabs, jellyfish and sea anemones.

The Tropical Pacific Gallery features it's largest exhibit

which is 350,000 gallon display. The exhibit houses Olive Ridley Sea Turtles, Zebra Sharks, and elsewhere in the exhibit are Leafy Seadragons, Weedy Seadragons, Big-bellied Seahorses as well as many others.

The Explorer's Cove covers the Shark Lagoon and the Lorikeet Forest. The Shark Lagoon is 10,000 square feet and houses over 150 sharks and rays. Some of the sharks kept are Whitetip Reef, Nurse, Sand Tigers and in the touch pools are Bamboo Sharks and Epaullette Sharks. Other touch pools include Horseshoe Crabs and Moon Jellyfish.

The June Keyes Penguin Habitat houses the Magellanic Penguins and is quite popular with the tourists.

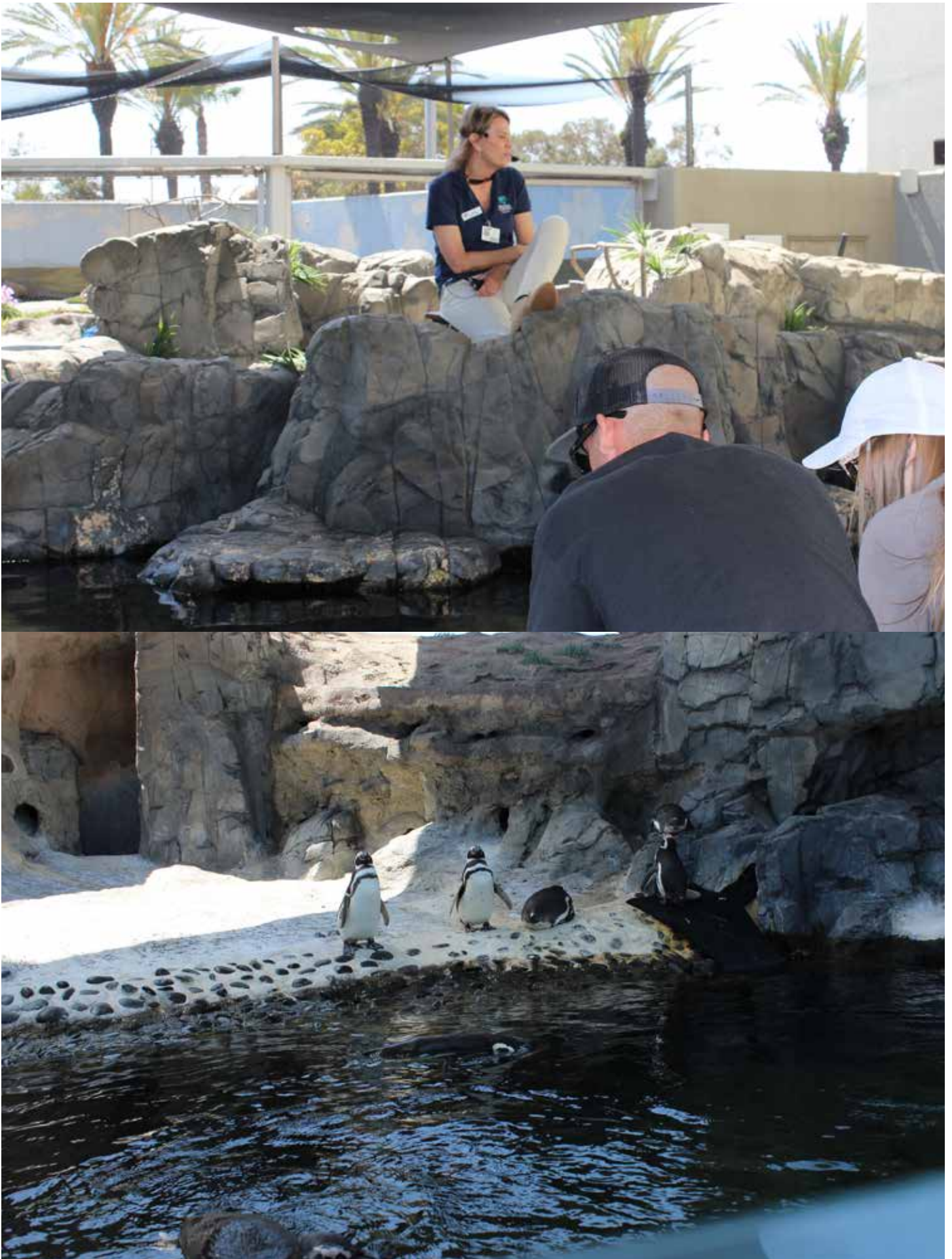
Other features include a lot of informational displays about Water Cycles and Usage in the Long Beach area and a series of tanks featuring the adaptability of Rainbow Trout and Steelheads.

The Aquarium also houses a number of classrooms and engages in a number of Conservation Programs such as breeding Giant Sea Bass, Abalone, the Guam Micronesian Kingfisher and Conservation efforts on the Vaquita Porpoise. They also have programs working on reducing Single-Use Plastics, Green Technologies and Seafood for the Future which targets sustainable fishing and aquaculture.

Overall the Aquarium of the Fish Tales | 26









Bonnethead Shark with Rays

One of the many types of Rays on display.

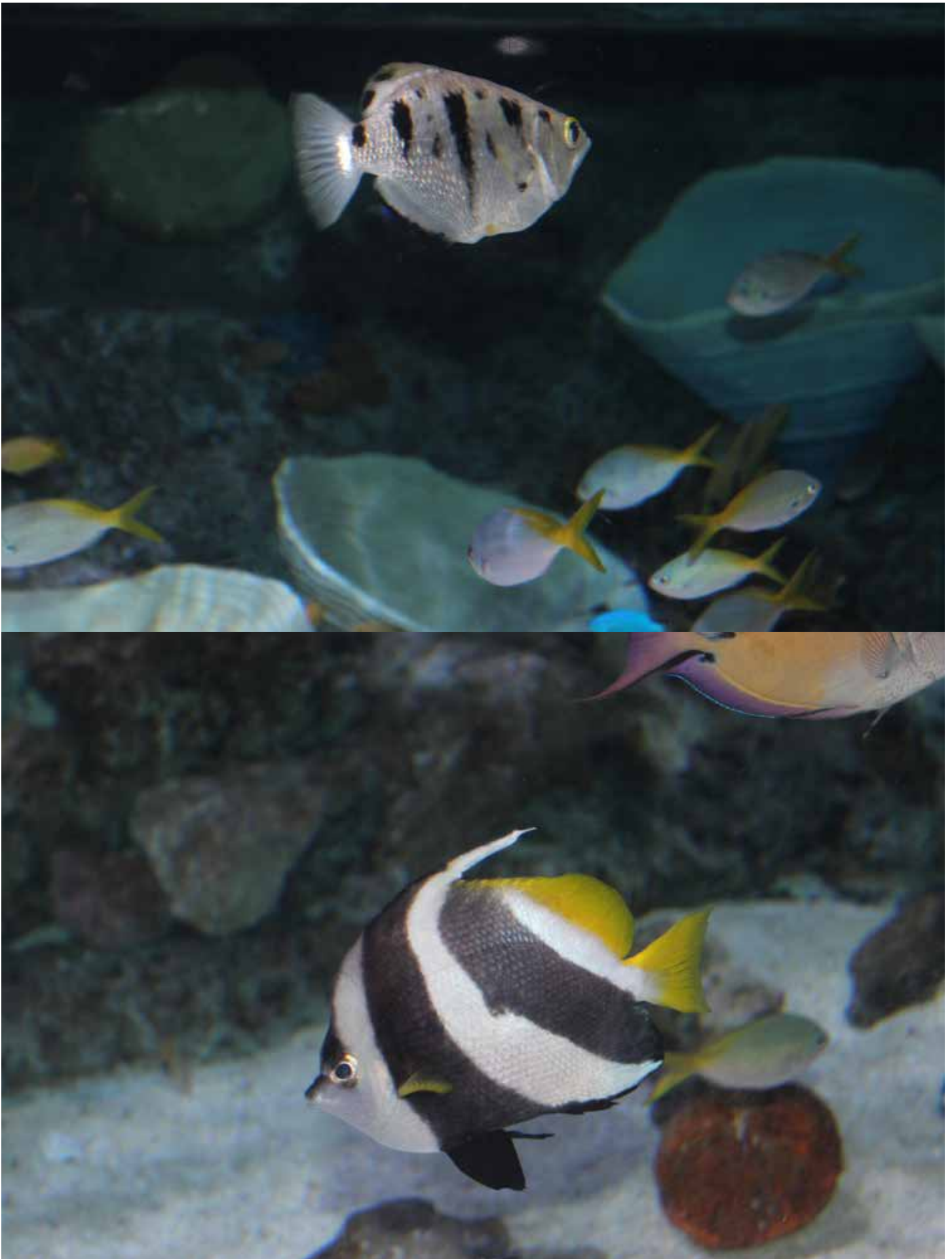


Weedy Seadragon



Leafy Seadragon





Moon Jelly Touch Tank

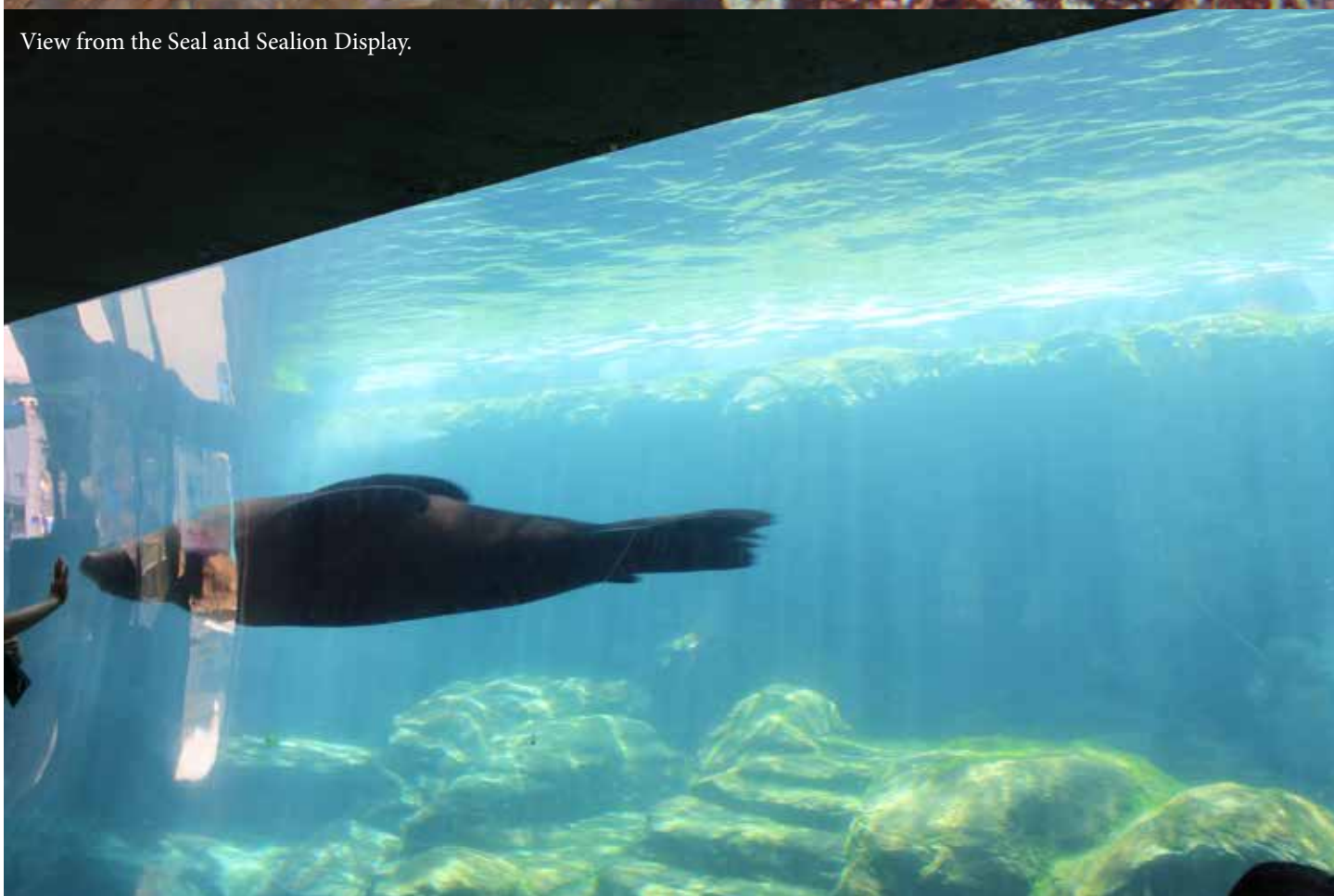


Flamboyant Cuttlefish

Clowning Around!



View from the Seal and Sealion Display.



Pacific's displays are well thought out and gives the visitors a good overall view of some of the organisms that come from the Pacific Ocean. If ever visiting the area I would highly recommend checking it out. The Aquarium of the Pacific is well worth the few hours it takes to see all of the exhibits.



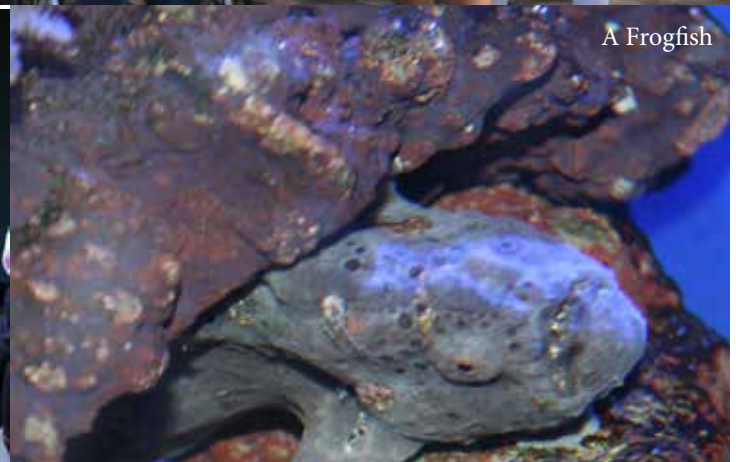
IBC Founder Dr. Gene Lucas and Area 1 Representative Morgan Ruttle showing off one of the stuffed Bettas that travel the globe.



Group photo of the IBC members that attended the Aquarium during the 2018 IBC Convention in Long Beach California.



One of the many displays for frogs.



A Frogfish

Attempting to Artificially Hatch *Betta macrostoma*



Article and Photos By Missina Burcaw

©2018 Missina Burcaw

When I was a kid and just starting out in the wonderful world of betta breeding, I saved up my money and purchased a book from the pet store called “Simaese Fighting Fish” by Gene Lucas. Inside that book I found out that *Betta splendens* were not the only bettas to be kept in captivity and fell deeply in love with one species in particular: *Betta macrostoma*. Sadly it would be many years before I was able to own a pair of these magnificent looking fish, because back then they were going for over \$1000 a pair on aquabid! So I raised other species of wild Bettas: *pugnax*, *bellica*, *simplex*, *falx*, *rubra*, *unimaculata*, and more. Then at the beginning of this year a few friends of mine decided that I should become a macrostoma owner and to make a long story short, I drove 10 minutes down the road and then returned home with a cooler that contained two females and one male macrostoma. Over the next few months I watched as the male ate spawn after spawn. In desperation I decided to strip him and artificially hatch the eggs. What follows is my attempt to do just that.

Breeding setup:

I set up a 20 gallon long tank with a sponge filter. The sides, back and bottom were spray painted and the tank had drift wood, almond leaves, and clay pots for hides. The pair was fed a mixture of Ken’s beef heart Fish Tales | 36

flake food, frozen blood worms, brine shrimp, and mysis shrimp, and sometimes given betta pellets. The tank lights were on a timer and on for about 8.5 hours a day. The water in this tank is almost all RO/DI water. The tank is not temperature controlled and is in my garage, but the tank tends to stay around 77 to 80°F, the pH of the tank is around 6.5 but changes with water changes as the RO water is about 7.5 when I add it to the tank. The GH of the tank is 0 and the KH is 30.

Stripping the Male:

My pair spawns basically every two to three weeks. Once the pair had spawned, I used a small glass dish filled with clean RO/DI water, toothpick, wet wash cloth, and a large net. I scooped the male out of the tank and wrapped his body in the wet cloth. He struggled to get away but I held him firm, only dropping him once or twice before I got over my fear of squeezing him too much. Then I used the tooth pick and gently opened his mouth, stuck his head into the bowl of water and the eggs came tumbling out. That done, I returned the male to his tank and his mate, where he glowered at me for the rest of the day.

Artificially hatching the eggs:

My first attempt to artificially hatch the eggs was a

failure and all eggs and fry died within the first week. I used a Cobalt rocket 65 tumbler and placed the eggs inside of it and then the entire thing into the adult's tank. I think this was my major issue and why the entire first batch died.

My second attempt started out much better. I set up a five gallon tank with a sponge filter, RO/DI water, and almond leaves and placed the egg tumbler inside of this tank. I treated the tank every night with $\frac{1}{4}$ dose of Seachem paraGuard. By the end of the first five days, I had only lost about 15 eggs. By the end of 21 days, I had at least 20 fry left. I did water changes every few days and replaced the water with aged RO/DI water. When the fry were 21 days old I began to introduce newly hatched brine shrimp and microworms. I let them out of the egg tumbler at 25 days. While I have fry that are alive and feeding, I am not sure what will become of them. Out of the 20 or so fry, only one swims normally. The rest are belly sliders. I have tried to look up information on the internet regarding this, but have not found much. I have found a few references to "defective" fry from egg tumbling but nothing that is concrete. I will continue to grow these fry out to see what will become of them. It appears that the fry that are artificially hatched do not develop their swim bladders properly. A member of the Tampa Bay Aquarium Society gave me a link to a paper on a similar problem that fish farms had with raising *Dicentrarchus*





labrax and *Sparus auratus* (<http://archimer.ifremer.fr/doc/1989/acte-1432.pdf>). The problems that they had with the food fishes is very similar to the issue I am seeing with these artificially hatched macrostoma fry. The fry have lordosis (inward curvature of the spine) and cannot regulate their ability to swim in the water column. The breeders in the article discovered that during the larval development of the fry, they needed to ingest air in order to inflate their swim bladders and be able to develop normally. I'm not positive how to simulate their device to use in an egg tumbler, but it's worth looking into one day.

Male brooded fry:

Although these attempts have not ended the way I hoped, I do have some hopeful news. Two weeks after removing the eggs from the male, my pair spawned again, I decided to try another approach to getting him to hold. A few breeders said they covered their tanks completely and this helped the male hold. The sides, back and bottom of the 20 gallon long tank are painted, so I taped newspaper over the front. I checked on the male every three to five days and found him holding each time. I withheld all food and did no water changes for 21 days. On May 8, exactly 21 days since they spawned, I checked on him and found he was no longer holding. A quick search of the tank revealed many fry, all swimming normally. The water chemistry is as follows: nitrates: 80, nitrites: 0, ammonia: 0, GH: 0, KH: 30, pH: 6.5, and temperature fluctuated from 77 to 80°F depending on if it was night or day. I do not use heaters and the fish are kept in a garage.

**The Southeast Louisiana Aquarium Society Presents
The 2nd Annual SELAS Fish Show
and Auction
Sunday August 26, 2018
Knights of Columbus Hall
4021 Trenton St. • Metairie, LA • 70002
Doors Open at Noon**



FISH SHOW INFORMATION

MULTIPLE CLASSES • CASH AWARDS

- All Fish Must Be Registered Prior to Event (No Walkups)
 - \$5 Entry Fee Per Fish
- Fish Must Be in Aquariums By 11:30 AM
- Visit www.SELAS.us for Official Rules and Forms

AUCTION INFORMATION

- \$3 Cover Charge or \$5 Bidder Card (Bidder Card Necessary to Bid)
 - Final Value Fees: 1st Dollar Goes to SELAS, then 80% of Final Selling Price Goes to Seller / 20% to SELAS
 - Auction Starts Promptly at 1 PM
- Visit www.SELAS.us for Official Rules and Forms

Etc.

- Pizza and Soft Drinks will be Provided
- \$3 Cover Charge or \$5 Bidder Card Required

IBC Convention 2019
June 20th to 23rd
Hosted by OBBA and NTBS
Atrium Hotel
4600 W Airport Freeway
Irving Texas 75062
855-516-1090

Room rates are \$99 plus tax

Free parking

(This is a tentative location, package details subject to change)

FULL CONVENTION PACKAGE INCLUDES:

Breakfasts with Registered Hotel Room.

2 Dinners (includes Awards Banquet)

Sandwich Bar Friday and Saturday

President's Reception/Hospitality Suite

All workshops, (including Judging Seminars)

IBC General Membership Meeting (members only)

Open Executive and Judging Board Meetings

Convention Auction

PACKAGE PRICING:

FULL PACKAGE \$150.00

FULL PACKAGE \$160.00 WT-Shirt

MEALS ONLY \$110.00

BANQUET ONLY \$ 60.00

WORKSHOPS ONLY \$ 50.00

HOSPITALITY ROOM \$25.00 FOR ALL CONVENTION

CLASS SPONSORSHIPS \$20.00 PER CLASS

ALL PRICES WILL INCREASE \$10 AFTER MAY 1, 2019

Registration Payments can be made by PayPal to herpchat@yahoo.com

Checks can be mailed to;

Gerald Griffin

PO Box 143

Talala OK 74080

Lots of things to do in Dallas if you wish to Sightsee!

There is also a Hotel Shuttle

Yes this is the same Hotel as the 2009 and 2013 Conventions

FOTAS 2018

The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies

65th annual convention hosted by the

Hill Country Cichlid Club



Jim Valenzuela

Barombi mbo - The Lake, The fish, The fry

Dave Hansen

Aquarium Photography 101

Charles Jones

FOTAS Fishy Trivia Contest



Live fish show, Speaker Presentation, Super Sunday Swap Meet, Game show and Funny Money Auction!

October 12th-14th

Schertz Community Center.

1400 Schertz pkwy, Schertz, TX. 78154

Previous Issue of Fish Tales

What would you like to see in the next Fish Tales Magazine?

Contact the Editor if you have story ideas or would like to contribute to Fish Tales!



Fish Tales

Volume 7 Issue 3

A Betta Way - DIY Autochanger

*Cypress Driftwood in the
Aquarium*



*Something Fishy - A Visit to the
Ohio Cichlid Association*

Working with Live Foods

My Adventures in the Aquarium Hobby