



*FOTAS*

# *Fish Tales*

*Volume 9 Issue 1*

CARES SPOTLIGHT  
ANABANTOIDS

UNRAVELING THE  
MYSTERIES OF THE  
BETTA PET TRADE



SUPER SHELLIES

BFD? OH BIG FISH DEAL

STUART M. GRANT  
CONSERVATION FUND

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**Photo by Mo "AquaMojo" Devlin**

**Design and Layout**  
**Gerald Griffin**



Volume 9 Issue 1

The FOTAS Fish Tales is a quarterly publication of the Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies, a non-profit organization. The views and opinions contained within are not necessarily those of the editors and/or the officers and members of the Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies.

FOTAS Fish Tales Editor:  
Gerald Griffin [herpchat@yahoo.com](mailto:herpchat@yahoo.com)

Fish Tales Submission Guidelines

**Articles:**

Please submit all articles in electronic form. We can accept most popular software formats and fonts. Email to [herpchat@yahoo.com](mailto:herpchat@yahoo.com). Photos and graphics are encouraged with your articles! Please remember to include the photo/graphic credits. Graphics and photo files may be submitted in any format, however uncompressed TIFF, JPEG or vector format is preferred, at the highest resolution/file size possible. If you need help with graphics files or your file is too large to email, please contact me for alternative submission info.

**Art Submission:**

Graphics and photo files may be submitted in any format. However, uncompressed TIFF, JPEG or vector formats are preferred. Please submit the highest resolution possible.

Next deadline.....

June 1st 2019

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# President's Message

President's Message April 2019

FOTAS organizations are knee deep in great events taking place. Be sure to get out and support clubs by attending meetings or maybe some of the other great activities such as swaps and auctions. These should whet the appetite for the big event of the year, The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies annual convention taking place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana August 23-25. Visit [www.selas.us](http://www.selas.us) for more information.

In FOTAS news, we had CARES medals made and they are available to any club (does not have to be exclusively FOTAS) holding a show and are to be presented for "Best CARES Fish in Show". For the time being, you can contact me for these. Clay Trachtman has enacted the new FOTAS BAP Program. Contact Clay to get involved. FOTAS CARES has had no new submissions this year so far. You can apply to register your CARES fish at [www.caresforfish.org](http://www.caresforfish.org). when you are prompted for your organization, enter FOTAS.

I hope everyone has a great spring and see you in Baton Rouge!

Greg



# **FOTAS CARES!**

## **First Quarter Report**

### CARES Report

Hello reader. There have been no new CARES species registered by FOTAS clubs thus far into the new year. I know that there are a lot of FOTAS fish keepers out there maintaining CARES fish so get them registered. If you are not sure if you have a CARES fish, check out the Priority List at [www.caresforfish.org](http://www.caresforfish.org). I will be sending out emails to all active CARES participants in the coming week or two. If you do not get one, I no longer have you listed as active so contact me to fix this up. I will post a list of milestones next report.

Thanks  
Greg

# From the Editor

As a magazine editor for an Aquarium Organization, it is very frustrating that people do not contribute articles. Twenty years ago when I was publishing a herpetology news letter, I can remember always having content. However, when it comes to fishkeeping, there seems to be a difference; people aren't submitting content. I remember 20 to 30 years ago, FLARE! Magazine always had articles to read, but as an interim FLARE! Editor, I discovered that even back those 20 to 30 years, there were issues with no articles. So maybe, even with such little material, I appreciated the magazine and even the content that wasn't articles.

Now that I have been relieved of a number of my duties, I have a lot more time to dedicate to Fish Tales. When I first took over Fish Tales it was a quarterly magazine, however over the last couple of years, the lack of material forced me to only produce three issues instead of the normal four. I know that without Greg Steeves constantly submitting articles, I may not have been able to publish as many issues as I did.

So this is where we are at. I am going to be putting more energy into Fish Tales and try to keep it on it's quarterly basis. I will be trying to stick to my deadlines to the best of my ability and hounding people to death on submitting articles. Also, with the new BAP program, this should help generate new articles as well. Here is the schedule as it stands:

Issue	Submission Due Date	Publication Due Date
One	March 1st 2019	March 31st 2019
Two	June 1st 2019	June 30th 2019
Three	September 1st 2019	September 30th 2019
Four	December 1st 2019	December 30th 2019

To make this magazine work, I need YOUR help! We need 5 articles an issue minimum. To date, I have only ever rejected one article! I need submissions! Remember, submissions do not have to be just articles, it could be artwork, photographs, anything you can think of can work in our publication, even what you may have googled about and think others should know about. Doing any DIY projects? Document it, and let us read about it! Let us do our part helping our fellow and future fishkeepers!

Gerald Griffin  
Editor of Fish Tales Magazine

Send submissions to [herpchat@yahoo.com](mailto:herpchat@yahoo.com)

# Stuart M. Grant

## Cichlid Conservation Fund



Dear Friends,

After a hiatus of more than one year I want to update you on the developments regarding the protection of cichlids in lakes Malawi and Tanganyika. There have been some developments at both lakes and those in Lake Malawi have not been very favorable for the well-being of fish populations.

A little over a year ago Larry Johnson and seven other participants of his safari on Lake Malawi set out to Taiwatee Reef to release a whopping 700 *Chindongo saulosi* that David Nkwhazi of Stuart Grant Ltd had bred for reintroduction. Unfortunately the visibility at the reef was very poor and no count of *C. saulosi* was made prior to the release. However, the video of the release (thank you Pete Barnes) shows that there were no resident *C. saulosi* visible in the area of release.

There have also been reports that wild *C. saulosi* were offered for sale in Germany and China. Whether these were collected at the reef or captivity raised could not be determined, but I'm afraid that publicizing our reintroduction efforts also informs individuals with no scruples about extracting the last few specimens to make a buck.

A similar scenario was met by Mattia Matarrese and his team who, together with Pierre le Roux, visited Chidunga Rocks to prepare for the release of a second batch of *Melanochromis chipokae*. They couldn't find a single individual of *M. chipokae* even though Pierre had released 68 fish in May. Also here I fear that most of these were extracted by collectors. It was decided to not release any more chipokae at Chidunga Rocks till a time when the ornamental fish collectors stop targeting these rare species. We are still breeding these and other species in Malawi and Pierre has been gracious enough to hold stocks of them at his facility.

I have spent the better part of seven months updating the status of all Malawi cichlids for the recently released Fish Tales - 6

red list update by the IUCN and at a workshop in Malawi in May this year it became clear that a huge number of species have disappeared. Most significantly for Malawi, the principal food fishes Chambo (*Oreochromis* species) and Kampango (*Bagrus meridionalis*) have decreased more than 99% in population density compared with data of 20 years earlier. Still there is no regular collection of data about what fish and in what quantities are being caught around the lake. The Utaka have been heavily overfished and now the lake water is slowly getting turbid as the fish that used to eat the plankton has been all but eliminated. The sole species which showed an increase in population density was the Usipa, the lake sardine, as it now has more food available. However, the commercial trawlers are now targeting this species and it is expected to have declined at the next census.

There is fortunately some good news from Malawi. Ripple Africa, a non-profit organization based in the UK and led by Geoff Furber, managed to convince the government that it would be better for the fish and fishermen to empower the local communities and allow them jurisdiction of the lake's shoreline. They have established about 200 fish conservation committees and have setup bylaws in Nkhata Bay and Nkhotakota. Now that each village along the lake shore owns the right to fish and is able to arrest and fine fishers from other villages who intrude on their portion of the lake, the fish now appears to slowly return to normal densities. Also illegal nets, such as mosquito nets which were used to catch the tiniest of fish in the very shallow water, have largely been abandoned in the areas which were converted by Ripple Africa. Check out their website and find out the staggering number of confiscated mosquito nets.

Lake Tanganyika

While the authorities in Malawi do little to nothing about the rampant overfishing going on in the lake the





This video can be found at <https://youtu.be/Sar4GZ8gxvU>

situation in Tanzania on Lake Tanganyika is much better. The authorities try hard battling illegal fishing, partly supported by visitors who want to see the cichlids in the lake. They have imposed fees—\$50/week/visitor—which are used for a special police force patrolling the entire shoreline of Tanzania and arresting any fisherman with illegal nets or while fishing in forbidden areas. I have just returned from a trip in Tanzania and Zambia and have noticed the difference in fish densities in Tanzania compared to those in Zambia where there is very little oversight, similar to Malawi.

Zambia used to have more than 20 commercial trawlers that targeted the open water fish, Kapenta (*Limnothrissa* and *Stolothrissa*), and in the 1990s fisheries was sure that there would be no end to the Kapenta fishing. Huge quantities of Kapenta were caught at night, attracted by lights, frozen in large warehouses, and then shipped to Lusaka or even exported to other countries. More than 10 years ago it became clear that Kapenta was limited and every commercial company has abandoned its collection. Still, Kapenta has not yet returned and the local fishermen are actually poaching in Tanzanian waters to catch some. With the cichlid stocks it is not much different: shallow water sand-dwelling cichlids have basically disappeared in Zambia while any fish that dared to swim out into the open water has been captured. Nowadays fishermen use small

meshed gill nets that are draped near shore and by throwing rocks and by loud splashing on the surface they hope to scare a few fish into the net.

Not only are the food fishes threatened with extinction in Zambia also the ornamental fish collectors have wreaked havoc on the more popular species such as the all-orange *Neolamprologus mustax*, the yellow and the white *Altolamprologus calvus*, the so-called Transcriptus Gombe, and various others that are also targeted by the food fishermen. We also visited Toby Veall's compound and were happy to see that many vats were dedicated to breeding the Maswa Duboisi and all appeared in good health.

Chris and Louise Horsfall of the Lakeshore Lodge in Kipili are successfully breeding several threatened species which they will hold till such time they are no longer targeted in the wild. At present more than 80% of the fish collected by the ornamental fish trade is exported to Asia with more than 11 exporters operating in Tanzania alone! We are in this for the long haul.

This year was a great year for our fundraising as we received a little over \$12,000! Our total from 2007 till now stands at \$98,205! I would like to thank Mattia Matarrese and the Perth Cichlid Society, Steve Edie and the Missouri Aquarium Society, Dick Au, the Nordiska Ciklidsellskapet, Patrick Tawil, Associazione





Italiana Ciclidofili, and the Babes in the Cichlid Hobby for their large donations to the Fund. Thank you ALL for your support and concern for our cichlids in the wild.

Remember that a portion of each package of Frozen Cichlid Formula of Omega One supports the Fund!

Ad

**Holy Grail Cichlids: The Search Continues**

**2019 ACA Convention**  
**July 18-22**  
**Cromwell, Connecticut**  
 Red Lion Hotel Cromwell

AMERICAN CICHLID ASSOCIATION

Hosted by the New England Cichlid Association

NECA New England Cichlid Association





# Super Shellies

**Article by Brett Wimer**  
**Photo by Dave Shumacher**

When you say African cichlids most people will think of big aggressive fish in a huge tank. However, that's not the case with multies (*Neolamprologus multifasciatus*). They're one of my favorite fish that I keep because they're a good beginner cichlid, and they have very interesting personalities. They are also the most common shell dweller, so they're not too difficult to acquire.

Multies are easy to keep in the home aquarium because they are very hardy in the right conditions. They're from lake Tanganyika so they will want to be around 80 degrees fahrenheit which is what I keep mine at. They also need hard water and a ph of about 7.5 and up. Multies can be kept in a tank as small as ten gallons. The tank should have a deep sand substrate because they love to rearrange the tank and bury things. Another thing that you need in the tank is plenty of escargot snail shells. At the very least you should have enough shells for each fish to have one but, having extra is highly recommended to reduce aggression.

One of the best parts of keeping Multies is how easy they are to breed. First, you should start with six fish, so you have a good chance of getting the right ratio of males to females but, you should only have one male with four to five females in a smaller tank like a ten gallon. The males and females look very similar with tan stripes on their sides and bright blue eyes but, the females have darker stripes while the male have duller colors. When they are full grown, the males will be about 2 to 2 ½ inches and the females will be about 1 to 1 ½ inches. Once you have a ratio of one male to 4 or 5 females, you should feed a high quality sinking pellet and feed a frozen food such as, brine shrimp

about once every other day to condition them to breed. Doing a 25 percent water change every week also will also encourage them to breed. When they are getting ready to breed, the females will split up into different groups and the male will go back and forth between the groups. They lay eggs in the shells so you won't see them until the babies come out of the shells. When you first see the babies they will be about a quarter of an inch and will look like a pair of eyes with a clear tail lying on the sand near the shells. You can put java moss in the tank to give them something to graze on. About two weeks after that, they will start to swim more and can eat hikari micro pellets, which the adults will also eat.

Multies have very unique personalities. They will start out being very skittish for the first few weeks and then they will start to get used to you. Once they get used to you, you will be able to watch them remodel the tank by moving shells and sand around. Each colony likes to build different landforms, mine like to build hills in the corners and move almost all the sand away from the shells. Sometimes during water changes sand will get moved around the tank and get in the shells. The next day the tank will look completely different if they don't like it. Also, they may bury things like the heater, which one thing I learned to watch out for.

These small cichlids are amazing little fish. They're active, interesting, hardy and easy to breed. It doesn't get much better than shellies for a beginner fish. I highly recommend them to anyone who wants to keep cichlids but doesn't want to get a huge tank but, who also wants to try keeping African cichlids.

# A-Salting your Betta

Article by  
Gerald Griffin

**A**dding salt to a fresh water fish always brings controversy when you talk to aquarists. Normally you have people on both sides of the fence, some diehards that dig in their heels saying salt should never be added to the opposite extreme where they have always used salt on their freshwater fish. Now to note it is said that there are some fish species that do poorly with salt added like Tetras and Corydoras catfish. In my experience most Tetras do not really mind the salt unless they are breeding and the same can be said for the cory cats. It might also be worthy of note here that the information came from putting fish in salt baths and recording which ones died. Not quite the therapeutic doses we are considering in the aquarium or with Bettas. With that however most fish are quite tolerant of salt in their water and a number of freshwater fish like livebearers are actually able to tolerate full salt water. Some Ichthyologist believe that a number of the Poeciliids were actually saltwater fish to begin with and adapted to freshwater so they retain their ability to survive in full saltwater.

First off we need to explain that not all salt is the same. You will find some websites proclaiming when using  
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salt it needs to be Sodium Chloride and not marine salt. Marine salts contain other buffers that may cause damage to some freshwater fish. Other websites will proclaim that Marine salt is better because of the trace minerals and other salts and buffers. When it comes to the salt there is even controversy over iodized verses non iodized salt. The level of iodine is low and actually would not hurt Bettas. The controversy over table salt verses rock salt is also an issue. The truth is that the anti-caking agents in common table salt can cause damage but those are normally at such low doses that most fish do not even notice them. One disclaimer though, salt used to use Yellow Prussiate of Soda which is Sodium ferrocyanide. I don't know about you but I don't want to put cyanide into my tank or with my Bettas. So check the ingredients. Most salts have switched to Sodium aluminosilicate. If you look you may find articles on Aluminum toxicity. I admit in a pinch using table salt instead of my standby Morton's Ice Cream salt and have noticed absolutely no difference in the reactions to the fish. I have also used Marine salt in place of regular sodium chloride and have not noticed any perceivable difference. The place you would see the difference most is your wallet.

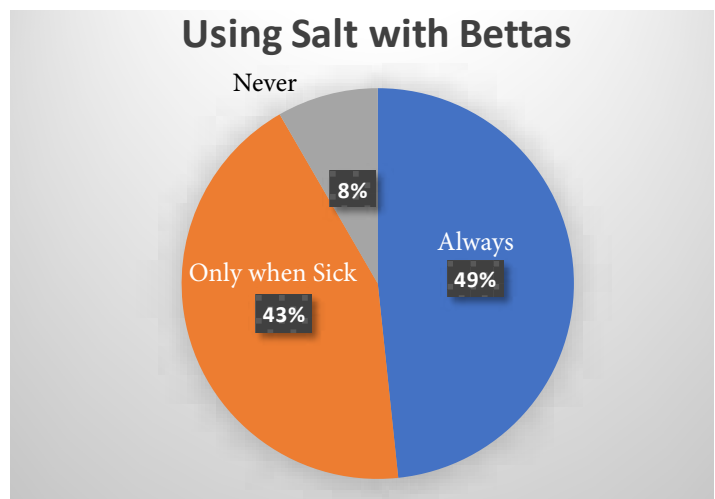
Marine salts are much more expensive than the typical sodium chloride salt.

Benefits of adding Sodium Chloride to the water is that it adds electrolytes which reduce osmotic stress to the gills. Salt also aids in the production of slime coat which actually makes it harder for protozoan parasites from getting a foothold on the fish. Especially sensitive to this would be Ich, Velvet and Costia. Velvet and Costia can wreak havoc on breeders and this alone should be enough reason to use salt. Salt also aids in the healing of wounds on a fish if it was wounded. The old time standard has always been adding salt to water of a wounded fish to aid in healing. The chloride ion in salt also helps in nitrite poisoning which can also get out of hand in the small containers that Bettas are kept in.

Now as to the water chemistry created by the addition of the salt. First off salt will have more effect in soft water than it does in hard water due to the mineral salts already present. Salt based water softeners actual are somewhat questionable here. The salt based softeners are actually ion exchange systems replacing sodium ions for magnesium and calcium ions. This works great for your plumbing systems but can mess up your fish depending on the type. For soft water fish these water softeners do not really have any effect.

So when it comes to dosing the most cited dosage is one tablespoon per five gallons. This is the dose I use for all Bettas. At this dose the salinity doesn't even measure on a refractometer. To get a bump on the refractometer you have to use one teaspoon per gallon, then you get a salinity of 1.001. So you see that at therapeutic doses of one tablespoon per five gallons doesn't cause any stress on the electrolyte balance of the Betta. Remember that salt water has a salinity of 1.024 which equates to 32 parts per thousand salt.

Tsp/Gallon	Salinity	PPT
1	1.001	1
2	1.002	3
3	1.003	5
4	1.005	7
5	1.006	8



With 56 respondents 29 chose to use salt all the time. Only if they are sick received 22 respondents and not at all received 5 respondents. So the majority of Betta keepers use salt with only a small portion refusing to use salt. As to IBC members the majority report that by using salt they encounter fewer health issues.

Anthony "Jay" Looney reports that "Salt worked great to prevent ich/velvet in young fry... I've even treated a fish with a salt bath and seen near instant results. Love the salt!" C J Cowan states "I use it as prevention. Same level as on box, it brings tap water to about 1 ppt. The thing is that it helps the fish breath much easier as well and puts less strain on the kidneys. There is a wide variation of salinity in the betta natural environment in Thailand even by season. Some wilds are found in waters that are technically brackish."

Valerie Nichols says "I know a lot of folks who use salt in their tanks because someone told them to do it that way. They don't know WHY and so they can't explain it to some else." While I find that statement somewhat comical it is also true that a number of people do things and have no idea why they do.

In conclusion Bettas thrive in therapeutic levels of salt. The low levels of salt are a good preventative against protozoan parasites like velvet, ich and costia. A number of new breeders I encounter give me reasons why they should not use salt and when they start to encounter problems try salt and then switch to using salt all the time with Bettas. I have seen what not using salt can do to your stocks, so in the end is it really worth it to risk the health of your Bettas?



# BFD? Oh Big Fish Deal

## Article and Pics by Greg Steeves

Last year I was contacted by a gentleman named Shawn Laffler representing the Capital Cichlid Association that operates out of the DC area. I was honored to be asked to come up and present to their membership at a club meeting. Unfortunately, on the date we had tried to work out, I had a prior commitment and could not do it. Shawn assured me that we could find another date that would work and he would get back with me when he knew what his club had open. True to his word, shortly after he contacted me to ask how I would feel about speaking at their annual convention cleverly named, "The Big Fish Deal". My good friend Dave Schumacher had attended this show the previous year and raved about the great time he had. I instantly accepted and began looking forward to the show.

I had been to the Capital Cichlid Association twice in the past. In 2011 they hosted the American Cichlid Association's annual convention which I attended and later in 2012 I spoke at a club meeting. I've made several great friends from the area in the past and was anxious to get reacquainted. Shawn was extremely accommodating of my travel arrangements and took great care of me.

As the time for travel drew closer, a gentleman named Greg O'Neil had been tasked with picking me up

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at the airport in Washington. When contacting Greg, I had mistakenly given him not only my incorrect arrival time, but also told him the wrong airport! Luckily, he had my itinerary and got me to double check my info. I booked my time off from work and before I knew it, it was travel day.

My flight to Washington went without a hitch. Everything was on time including a seamless connection in Charlotte North Carolina. As I arrived in Dulles, I debarked from my plane and entered the airport proper. As I was preparing to contact Greg and let him know of my arrival, a gentleman intercepted me and asked "Greg?". I said "yes" and was promptly told to "come with me". The inconspicuous man then pulled some security card from his pocket and swiped it on a "authorized personal only" slot. The door opened and we were at the top of a stairwell. As I paused for a moment, trying to decipher what was happening, the gentleman introduced himself as Greg O'Neil. Greg works at Dulles International but I was not aware of that until this very instance! We walked out onto the tarmac of a live runway in one of the busiest airports in the US. He had a waiting truck and we drove to a maintenance hangar. Here he showed me a massive mobile lounge that was part of the uniqueness of this facility. We then exited that building and walked to where his car was parked. After loading up my luggage, we were on our



way to Bethesda Maryland and the beautiful Hyatt Regency Hotel where the Big Fish Deal was being held.

Arriving at the show location, I got checked in, went to drop my luggage off at my room, and went down to register. Immediately I began to see familiar faces including Christine Keys, Pat Kelly and Rachel O'Leary. Upon entering the main room where vendors were set up along with the configuration for the presentations, I immediately spied some of my favorite fish people in Lisa and Martin Hoeber. Lisa and Martin own Super Cichlids. They are incredible supporters of the aquarium hobby and can be seen at many shows or special events along the eastern seaboard. In the lobby of the hotel I ran into Eric Hanneman. Eric was wearing a beret type hat and I was embarrassed that I didn't immediately recognize him. Eric and I had crossed paths at several shows throughout the years and although we were always cordial, we hadn't had the opportunity to spend much time together. This would change over the weekend and I got to know him much better. I really enjoyed his company and think I've made a wonderful friend (I'm not sure how he feels about that however).

While wandering around, I literally ran into two of my most favorite fish people ever. I found Scott and Liz from King and Queen Cichlid. After the usual shenanigans we decided to get a bite to eat. As we were in the hotel lobby deciding where to go, Scott looked into the bar and spotted Willem Heijns. Willem is a renowned central



Greg with friends Liz Napier-Bonvillian and Scott McLaughlin.



First Place entry in the aquascape contest.



Another Aquascape entry that finished in the prizes.





Lego entry in the the themed tank catagory.



Mike's Cichlid was one of the many vendors in attendance.



Greg with his buddy Lisa Hoeber.

American Cichlid expert from the Netherlands. We asked if he would like to join us for dinner, he accepted and away we went. I had no preference where we would go to eat so it was mentioned that there was an Indian restaurant almost directly across the street. I had never had Indian food before but was up for giving it a whirl. As it turned out, the meal was delicious and the company was fantastic!

After the talk, I hung out with friends and examined all the cool show tanks. There was a well attended hospitality room both Friday and Saturday nights and I popped by for a bit before calling it a night. On Saturday I attended wonderful presentations by Eric Hammeman and Willem Heijns. There was also a retailer's panel moderated by Rachel O'Leary with participation by Mike Szumigala (Mike's Cichlids) Lisa Hober (Super Cichlids) and the incredible Sandy Moore (Segrest Farms). Rachel also did a live aquascaping demonstration which was well attended.

The CCA does their show a little differently than many, which is very cool. They don't have a banquet, instead, later afternoon they have raffles while finger foods are served. This is really popular and a lot of fun. Later that evening, an auction is held of donated fishes with all proceeds going to the Stuart Grant fund. Eric and I gave a short prelude to every lot that was for auction while Michael Mull auctioned them off. NEARLY 100 lots brought in \$4000.00. Our own Dave Schumacher had sent donations up as well and they all went for good money (thanks



Dave!). After the auction it was getting quite late and I called it a night.

Sunday consisted of Something they call "Marketplace". Essentially, this is a giant swap meet. The large convention rooms are transformed to hold the many vendors setting up. I was not able to stay for the Markewt-place but I'm sure it was a huge success.

After saying my goodbyes, I shared a shuttle with Sandy to the airport. We had a wonderful conversation on the 45-minute ride to Dulles and as I sit here on this flying sardine can, I relish in the great memories made this weekend. Maybe, with a little luck, I'll be invited back some day! Thank you to the Keystone Clash (the large fall show jointly hosted by the Cichlid Club of York and the Aquarium Club of Lancaster County) for sponsoring me as a speaker, and the Capital Cichlid Association for a remarkable weekend!

Dinner with the speakers.



Saturday Afternoon Raffle.



A very nice vendor setup.



# Unraveling the Mysteries



# of the Betta Pet Trade

Article by Gerald Griffin

Cover photo by Mo "AquaMojo" Devlin

Zoo Med pictures provided courtesy of Zoo Med



When it comes to hobbies, we find all kinds of people from the hard core to the casual. The Fish Keeping Hobby or Aquarist have been in existence for a very long time. For most of that time people kept ornamental fish in ponds however in the 1800's the creation of the glass aquarium changed our outlook and expanded the hobby of fish keeping. If you talk to Aquarists many feel that it is their right or duty to keep fish. For some it is the ability to create new forms and for others they are last line of defense for species conservation preventing the outright extinction of some vary rare fish, some are already extinct in the wild.

## “Now imagine waking up to a billboard that is an outright attack on your right to keep aquarium fish?”

This is where we are! There is an organization that has the sole purpose of denying your right to keep any animal whatsoever. They have changed tactics when things do not go as planned but they still have their end game in mind. They vary the target and right now aquarium fish are their target. You can imagine my anger when a highly respected magazine publishes a story from one of these “Activists” which is not only filled with complete lies but also takes facts and distorts them to fit their beliefs and their goals. These hit pieces are becoming more common as they try to sway the ill informed and those who are easily persuaded to join their cause.

In the course of creating this article I spent a good deal of time talking to those in the know from the Florida Fish Farms to the Corporate Offices of our largest Pet Stores getting at statistics, policies and operating procedures. I also spent time talking to various hobbyists and did some polling to gather more information. Some of the statistics were eye opening and paint a picture that is far different than what the hit pieces portrait.

In one hit piece a supposed undercover sting shows shipping boxes filled with Bettas that died during transport. The simple truth here from the statistics of the Florida Fish Farms is that the rate of death in transport is less than 0.5%. Let us use logic here, if the losses were as high as they claim, then the trade in Bettas would not be profitable. It is just common sense. They also go into how the Bettas are traumatized and how inhumane it is shipping Bettas in tiny bags. Again, pointing to previous evidence there is nothing to support that claim. The fact is that Bettas are labyrinth fish and those tiny bags actually do work for them.

The next attack is on catching fish in the wild. Although this does not even remotely apply to Ornamental Bettas however several Salt Water Species are still caught in the wild. Why this was pointed out in the article makes no sense. Here is the fact, over 95% of Freshwater Fishes are bred and raised on farms. What can be said without any doubt is that the organization that is against Aquarium Keeping uses highly edited footage that is staged and sensationalized. Another attack is levied against stores that keep Bettas in small cups that are filthy which lead to the Bettas dying. In conversations with the corporate offices of these stores, the employees are expected to maintain and care for all pets under their control. In my personal experience I have visited a number of these stores and for the most part the employees do a good job keeping the Bettas in clean water and well cared for. However, the employees at particular stores have an obligation to keep those containers clean. If you see conditions that you think are not right discuss it with the store manager and if you do not see appropriate action report the store to the corporate office.



A single male Betta in the typical store cup. Note the clean water and good health of this specimen. This tends to be the rule and not the exception.

Here are the real figures from the actual fish farms.

**“A typical fish farm in the United States sells approximately 80,000 Bettas a month to between 3,000 to 5,000 stores a month.”**

This equates to between 16 to 27 Bettas per month per store which is in line with what the Corporate Chain stores report. The Bettas at the Farms are imported from mainly Thailand and stay in the custody of the Farm for about 2 to 3 days before they are shipped to the stores. When they come into the Farm all Bettas are placed in new water in new containers. While in the Farms custody the Bettas are checked for possible diseases and other health concerns. If any health concerns are found, they are treated before possible sale to the Pet Shops. If Bettas are held because health issues they are fed at the Farm and their water changed after feeding within 24 hours. The information about the ailments are sent back to the Betta's origin so that the original Farm can check their stocks for disease. Once in the custody of the Pet Shop they are unbagged and placed in the plastic cups with clean water. All the shops clearly indicate that those plastic cups are temporary homes and never intended as a permanent home. On average the majority of the pet shops that sell Bettas have enough general background knowledge to answer basic questions about their care. Petco and PetSmart also have many pamphlets available on care of not only Bettas but most of the animals they do sell. You can also visit their website for more information. I find the information contained in those pamphlets to be relatively correct.



Here is a perfect example of the Betta display at Petco. Every container is pristine and every Betta is healthy. In the number of Petcos that I have visited across the United States I find this to be rule rather than the exception.

## **Appropriate Care of Bettas**

So, what are the appropriate ways to care for Bettas? First off as I mentioned in my care article in Amazonas Magazine, “Size is the not the most important factor, water quality is the most important factor.” That is never going to change! I know I get attacked on this issue a lot. One thing to consider is what are your plans for the Bettas? When looking at an appropriate sized tank one must consider how much care one is willing to commit. There are a number of nanotanks that are perfect for a single male Betta. Some like larger volumes however Bettas have issues with large water flow





This 2 gallon set up from Zoo Med makes a perfect sized home for the typical male Betta

marbles and add a snail. Remember that the one inch per gallon rule was developed early in the aquarium keeping hobby when not only was very little known about filtration and the care requirements of several fish species as well. By the logic of the rule I could put a

will cause damage to their fins. So if choosing a larger tank, make sure the water flow is not too heavy. Anyone that has ever kept a Betta can confirm that in the right environment are inquisitive, alert and can actually be trained. A number of people have this misconception that fish are stupid animals. While fish may have small brains they are capable of incredible behaviors if allowed. If you look at a company called Zoo-Med, they make a lot of products that are totally perfect for Bettas even in small environments. Zoo-Med is also endorsed by the International Betta Congress due to the fact that when Zoo-Med develops a new Betta product Zoo-Med looks for volunteers in the International Betta Congress to test their products.

**“Zoo Med Betta products are tested and approved by Bettas.”**

I know of no other company that does this with this large of the product line. IBC members will on occasion test foods from other companies but that is as far as the product testing goes from those companies. So, size doesn't matter that much as far as a Betta goes. Even a liter sized container can give stimulation to a Bettas, throw in a java fern, put in a few pebbles or

10-inch Oscar in a 10-gallon tank. Talk about inhumane!

When it comes to water, clean and warm is best. Bettas are not that picky as far as pH goes and will tolerate pH as low as 5 all the way up to pH of 10. They do prefer somewhere between 6 and 8 for best results. Back in the 1980s I visited Gateway Betta Club and the pH in Saint Louis is quite hard measuring up to 10 but the Betta breeders there did breed several show winning Bettas in those conditions. As to temperature Bettas do prefer as close to 80 degrees F however 76 to 84 are tolerable. When temperatures get into the low 70s Bettas become sluggish and it can affect their immune system. There are a number of small in tank heaters that will your Betta warm and cannot stress temperature enough when it comes to the care of your Betta.

If you are going with a larger sized container and want tankmates for your Betta you really are going to try it with trial and error. Part of this due to the fact that Bettas are individuals and have their own quirks about what they like and don't like. Some Bettas like being the only fish while others are fine with almost any other fish as a tank mate. Then you have to be careful of fish that are nippy when it comes to the Betta's long flowing fins. For some species like Barbs their fins can be a tasty treat. Fish like Corydoras would appear to be a good option but they prefer schools. If the species



With many styles of Betta Condos it is hard to not to find one that fits with your home decor.

Heat is very important to the health of your Betta. Bettas should be kept as close to 80° F as possible.

Dial -A-Treat has a great treats that Bettas love. In my experience I have not had a Betta turn this food down.





The Betta Logs are not only great for Bettas but other fish species also enjoy the interaction.



of fish is too small, then they could end up being a meal. So, Betta tankmates can be a difficult proposition. On the flip side sometimes the fish you add have their own personalities and what should be a compatible species might have individuals that are just downright nasty. However, with short finned Bettas this is less problematic. As a rule, look for fish that are not nippy and preferably inhabit the lower strata of the Aquarium. If you search out compatible species there are a number of issues with the listed species. From experience a number of livebearers work including male guppies. Some caution that the male guppies might be attacked because of their flashy colors but this is something I have never witnessed. A number of Rasbora species work well as they are gentler than a number of schooling fish. Some Danios could work but many species can be nippy so that would be trial and error. Avoid shrimp as they could end up as food.

“Therefore single male Bettas are often kept as a single inhabitant in small Betta setups.”

So when it comes to longevity there is the standard information that states that Bettas live about 2 ½ years. This is an average with many Pet Shops stating 3 years as the average. Zoo Med publishes up to 5 years on

These Betta Hammocks are actually used by Bettas to relax near the waters surface.



These realistic plastic plants liven up the decor of any Betta enclosure.



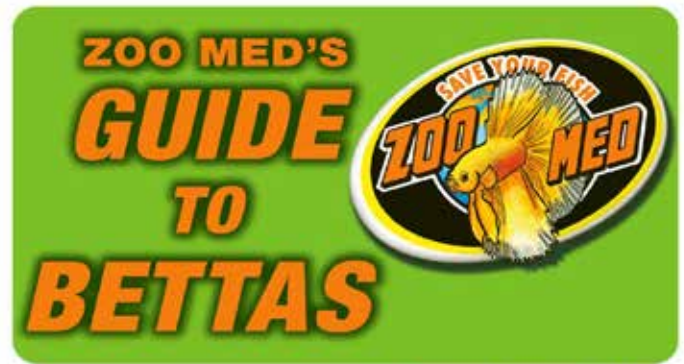


longevity which is also correct. When it came to re-search on why Bettas die in captivity the primary cause stated was fatty degeneration of the organs which parallels with what is happening in the United States right now. In a research study that Walt Mauras quoted, the researchers kept each male Betta in a 5 ½ gallon tank and exercised them each day by chasing it with a net for 15 to 30 minutes a day.

“These test subjects lived to 9 years of age with the capability of reproducing. “

I have never seen any such longevity studies repeated in any current literature. However this information does make a lot of sense. Many Betta Breeders have reported longevity of 5 years or longer. In the end the longevity or health of any fish species comes down to the care you are willing to provide to them. So clean water, good food and plenty of exercise and you can enjoy your Betta(s) for a number of years.

This mirror works quite well to give your Betta the exercise they need.



Above: This Betta Guide by Ashley Rademacher is quite accurate and filled with lots of usefull information.

Below: This nanotank by Aqueon is perfect for a single Betta if you coverthe intake with a sponge to prevent damage.



# Introduction to the CARES Fish Preservation Program

## [www.caresforfish.org](http://www.caresforfish.org)

### Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the CARES Preservation Program is to create a base stock of conservation priority species through encouraging hobbyists worldwide to devote tank space to one or more species at risk and distribute offspring to fellow qualified hobbyists, while forming an information network where possible between aquarists, scientists, and conservationists.

### CARES has four major goals:

- 1) to bring awareness to the critical situation of fish in nature, while educating the public and stressing the importance of our roles as responsible aquarists;
- 2) to recognize, encourage, and offer support to hobbyists who maintain species at risk;
- 3) to share fish as well as data and experiences through notes and manuscripts so that others may learn to maintain those identical and similar species; and
- 4) to preserve species at risk for future generations.

We truly welcome you and are so glad to have you as a part of this global endeavor! Should you have any questions, or if we can be of help in any way, please do not hesitate to ask!

Key	Authority Name
KB	Ken Boorman
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CRC	The Cichlid Room Companion
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources Red List:
MH	Mike Hellweg
AK	Ad Konings
AL	Anton Lamboj, Ph.D.
GL	Gary Lange
PVL	Paul V. Loiselle, Ph.D.
JL	John Lyons, Ph.D.
RP	Richard Pierce, Ph.D.
GS	Greg Steeves
ST	Stephan Tanner, Ph.D.
MT	Michael Tobler, Ph.D.
TECM	The Endemic Cichlids of Madagascar — Patrick de Rham and Jean-Claude Nourissat

Refer to this list to see if a species of fish you are keeping is conservation priority at risk and the current status of that species. Enter the species that you are currently maintaining on your club's CARES Registration Sheet along with where or from whom your specimens were obtained, and the approximate date that they were obtained. You may also use this list to search for a species that you are interested in working with in the future.

# Priority list: Anabantidae

Species	Classification	Assessment	Authority
<i>Belontia signata</i>	CWU		PVL
<i>Betta albimarginata</i>	CVU	Mar 09	AL
<i>Betta brownorum</i>	CEN		PB
<i>Betta burdigala</i>	VU	Aug 96	IUCN
<i>Betta channoides</i>	VU	Mar 09	AL
<i>Betta chini</i>	VU		IUCN
<i>Betta chloropharynx</i>	VU		IUCN
<i>Betta coccina</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Betta foerschi</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Betta hipposideros</i>	VU		IUCN
<i>Betta livida</i>	EN		IUCN
<i>Betta macrostoma</i>	VU		IUCN
<i>Betta miniopinna</i>	CR		IUCN
<i>Betta persephone</i>	CR		IUCN
<i>Betta pi</i>	CVU	May 12	AL
<i>Betta rutilans</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Betta schalleri</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Betta simplex</i>	CR	May 12	IUCN
<i>Betta spilotogena</i>	CR		IUCN
<i>Betta tomi</i>	VU		IUCN
<i>Betta tussyae</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Betta uberis</i>	CCR	May 12	AL
<i>Macropodus hongkongensis</i>	CVU	May 12	AL
<i>Malpulutta kretseri</i>	CEN		PVL
<i>Parosphromenus alfredi</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus alleni</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus anjunganensis</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus bintan</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus deissneri</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus filamentosus</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus harveyi</i>	EN	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus linkei</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus nagyi</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus opallios</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus ornatICAUDA</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus pahueensis</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus paludicola</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus parvulus</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus quindecim</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus rubrimontis</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus sumatranus</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL
<i>Parosphromenus tweediei</i>	CVU	Sep 09	AL



# Deciphering the List

## CARES risk classifications

If a species is approved for inclusion on the CARES Conservation Priority List and that species is not on the IUCN Red List or CARES Authorities feel from personal field observation that the species requires a different classification than that assigned by the IUCN Red List, the following classifications will apply.

Key	Classification	Description
CNT	Near Threatened	Species which are close to qualifying for classification to Vulnerable.
CVU	Vulnerable	Species facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium term future.
CEN	Endangered	Species facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future (includes species on the ALA list (2) shown as Threatened).
CCR	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered Species facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future (same as 'EE' used by de Rham and Nourissat).
CEW	Extinct in the Wild	Known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity, or as a naturalized population (or populations) well outside the past range.

## International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classification

If a species is approved for inclusion on the CARES Conservation Priority List and that species is also on the IUCN Red List, in most cases the IUCN Red List classification is used by CARES, with great appreciation to those who place much effort into the IUCN Red List.

Key	Classification	Description
NT	Near Threatened	Taxa which do not qualify for Conservation Dependent, but which are close to qualifying for Vulnerable.
VU	Vulnerable	A taxon is Vulnerable when it is not Critically Endangered or Endangered but is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.
EN	Endangered	A taxon is Endangered when it is not Critically Endangered but is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.
CR	Critically Endangered	A taxon is Critically Endangered when it is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.
EW	Extinct in the Wild	taxon is Extinct in the wild when it is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population (or populations) well outside the past range. A taxon is presumed extinct in the wild when exhaustive surveys in known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate times (diurnal, seasonal, annual), throughout its historic range have failed to record an individual. Surveys should be over a time frame appropriate to the taxon's life cycle and life form.

The full classification criteria for species in risk of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (version 2.3) can be found in the IUCN Red List site.

# Area of Concern: Earth

**Article by: Riccardo Camera**



fish species live in freshwater, and freshwater habitats compromise .02% of available aquatic habitable volume. It stands to reason that even small reductions in the available freshwater habitats can cause a huge decrease in freshwater species.

The time for a realignment of priorities is now. As participants in CARES we possess a unique ability to make a connection with the hobby at large and share fish that are endangered or threatened. It is not merely biomass that we must share though, it's knowledge, it's empathy, it's passion that we must share.

For new hobbyists it is extremely hard to make a connection between a *Maylandia estherae* specimen and the over-fishing and pollution of lake Malawi. For some this is a lack of concern but I would posit that for most this is just a lack of knowledge. As a collective we possess a lot of that knowledge that might spur our fellow hobbyists into action.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists six major threats to freshwater habitat. Listed on the Freshwater Fish Specialists Group website, they are Habitat modification, Invasive Species, Overfishing, Environmental Pollution, Forestry Practice and Climate Change. Just thinking about this list conjures up feelings of dread, impending doom and hopelessness. There is a silver lining though, all of these are byproducts of humanity's abusive relationship with Mother Earth. I know, I know...it doesn't sound like a silver lining, but it means that with some adjustments to our priorities and our attitudes we can at least stem the tide of destruction.

Per Leveque et al., 40% of all described

In future issues I hope that you the readers of this magazine will contribute first-hand reports of the state of freshwater habitats around the world. I know that just this year we have had members visiting the rift lakes and one member has a planned trip to some unique freshwater habitats of Mexico.

**“There is certainly a role for all of us in conservation whether it be the breeding of threatened species, the care of them or the sharing of knowledge.”**



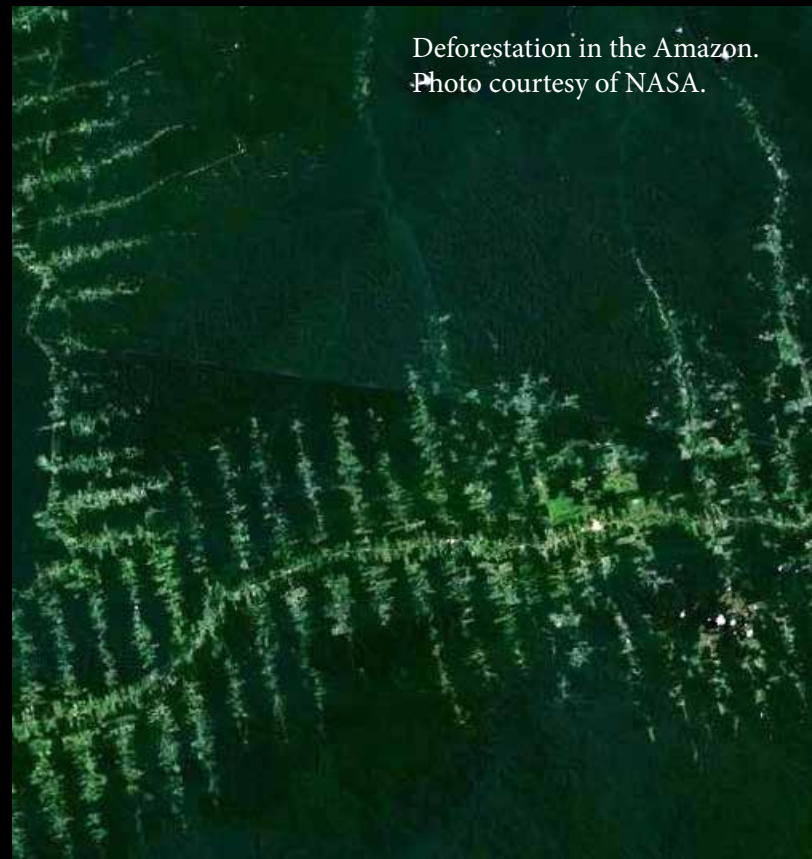
I hope that in some small way this new incarnation of the Exchange can facilitate the passing of knowledge and become a source of inspiration.

I hope you will join me in the effort to spread the word and spread the fish. If you are wondering if the time for action is now, I will leave you with these facts:

“Fewer than 70 of the world’s 177 longest rivers remain free of man-made obstructions.” - WWF

“Reasonable estimates project that future increases in extinctions will range from 53 to 86 species by 2050.” - Bioscience re: the extinction rate of North American freshwater fish.”

“About 40 percent of the fish species in the world live in freshwater biomes, and in the past 20 years, freshwater fish populations have declined by over 20 percent.”  
- Sciencing.com



Deforestation in the Amazon.  
Photo courtesy of NASA.



# **FOTAS Event Calendar**

**April 14 Texas Cichlid Association Auction  
Irving Texas**

**May 5 SELAS Auction  
Metairie, Louisiana**

**May 23 - 26 American Livebearer Association  
Louisville Kentucky**

**June 20 - 23 International Betta Congress Convention  
Irving Texas**

**July 18 - 22 American Cichlid Association Convention  
Cromwell Connecticut**

**August 23 - 25 SELAS Hosts FOTAS Convention  
Baton Rouge Louisiana**

# **TCA 2019 Auction**

## **Sunday, April 14, 2019**

**Hilton Garden Inn DFW South**  
**2001 Valley View Lane, Irving, Texas 75061**  
**(972) 313-2800**

As usual 3 different things will be taking place – somewhat simultaneously.

Live Auction	Live Fish, rocks, tanks, equipment, etc.
Silent Auction	All Plants must be sold in the silent auction. Other items can also be sold this way.
Buy It Now Table	This option is not available at this auction.
The Raffle.	Buy tickets at registration table at \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00.

8:30 AM	Latest arrival time for TCA members to arrive to help with setup.
9:00 AM	Registration will be open for sellers only.
10:00 AM	Registration Table will be open for buyer registration. No buyers allowed in until after registration.
11:00 AM	Live Auction will begin.
??	The auction will end when the last item has been sold
??	Final raffle will be conducted after the auction ends. You must still be present to win.

<http://www.texascichlid.org/auctions/auction-rules/>

<http://www.texascichlid.org/auctions/silent-auction-rules/>

Map of Auction Location





# CINCO DE MAYO

**SELAS Auction**  
**Sunday May 5, 2019**  
**Knights of Columbus Hall**  
**4021 Trenton St. • Metairie, LA • 70002**  
**Doors Open at Noon**



**\$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**

**Pizza and Soft Drinks will be Provided**

**Visit [www.SELAS.us](http://www.SELAS.us) for Official Rules and Forms**





# IBC Convention 2019

June 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>

Hosted by SCUBA

Atrium Hotel & Suites

DFW Airport South

4600 W. Airport Freeway

Irving Texas

972-513-0800

Room rates are approximately \$89 for double and \$99 for King

Shuttle to and from DFW International Airport

Shuttle is provided to locations within 2 miles of the hotel.

Free parking

FULL CONVENTION PACKAGE INCLUDES:

3 Breakfasts with Registered Hotel Room. Offsite registrations are not eligible for the Free Breakfasts.

2 Dinners (includes Awards Banquet)

President's Reception/Hospitality Suite

All workshops, (including Judging Seminars)

Convention T-shirt

Show collectible

IBC General Membership Meeting (members only)

Open Executive and Judging Board Meetings

Convention Auction

PACKAGE PRICING:

FULL PACKAGE \$150.00

MEALS ONLY \$125.00

BANQUET ONLY \$ 60.00

WORKSHOPS ONLY \$ 50.00

HOSPITALITY ROOM \$25.00 FOR ALL CONVENTION

CLASS SPONSORSHIPS \$20.00 PER CLASS

PRICE WILL INCREASE \$10 AFTER MAY 1, 2019

PAYMENT CAN BE SENT TO

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Talala, OK 74080

OR PayPal [herpchat@yahoo.com](mailto:herpchat@yahoo.com)

# Holy Grail Cichlids: The Search Continues

2019 ACA Convention

July 18-22

Cromwell, Connecticut

Red Lion Hotel Cromwell



Hosted by the New England Cichlid Association



**American Livebearer Association**  
**2019 CONVENTION**  
May 23-26, 2019

**Our Speakers:**

- ~ Sandy Moore
- ~ Horacio Dominguez
- ~ John Lyons
- ~ Dr. Omar Dominguez
- ~ Les Wilson
- ~ Dr. Michi Tobler



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FOR MORE INFORMATION [LIVEBEARERS.ORG](http://LIVEBEARERS.ORG)

HOSTED BY



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# FOTAS 2019

Holiday Inn South  
Baton Rouge, LA  
August 23-25, 2019

## Events

- Guest Speakers
- Banquet Dinner
- Funny Money Auction
- Large Fish Show
- Vendors
- Huge Auction

## Speaker Sessions\*

- Bill Allen – Livebearers
- Jon Armbruster – Plecos
- John Hawke – Fish Diseases
- Karen Maruska – Cichlids
- Jeff Senske – Planted Aquariums
- Greg Steeves – History of FOTAS

Visit [WWW.SELAS.US](http://WWW.SELAS.US) for more information.



\* Speakers subject to change



**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 8 Issue 3*

*A Visit to Coast Tropicals*

*Is Fishkeeping Ethical?*

*Alcolapia alcalicus*



*To Cull or not to Cull;  
That is the Question!*

*Caring for C.A.R.E.S.*