

FOTAS

Fish Tales

Volume 9 Issue 3

**FOTAS CARES -
JUST AN AQUARIST**

HANGING WITH HIEP

**WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF
MTS? DOWNSIZING!**

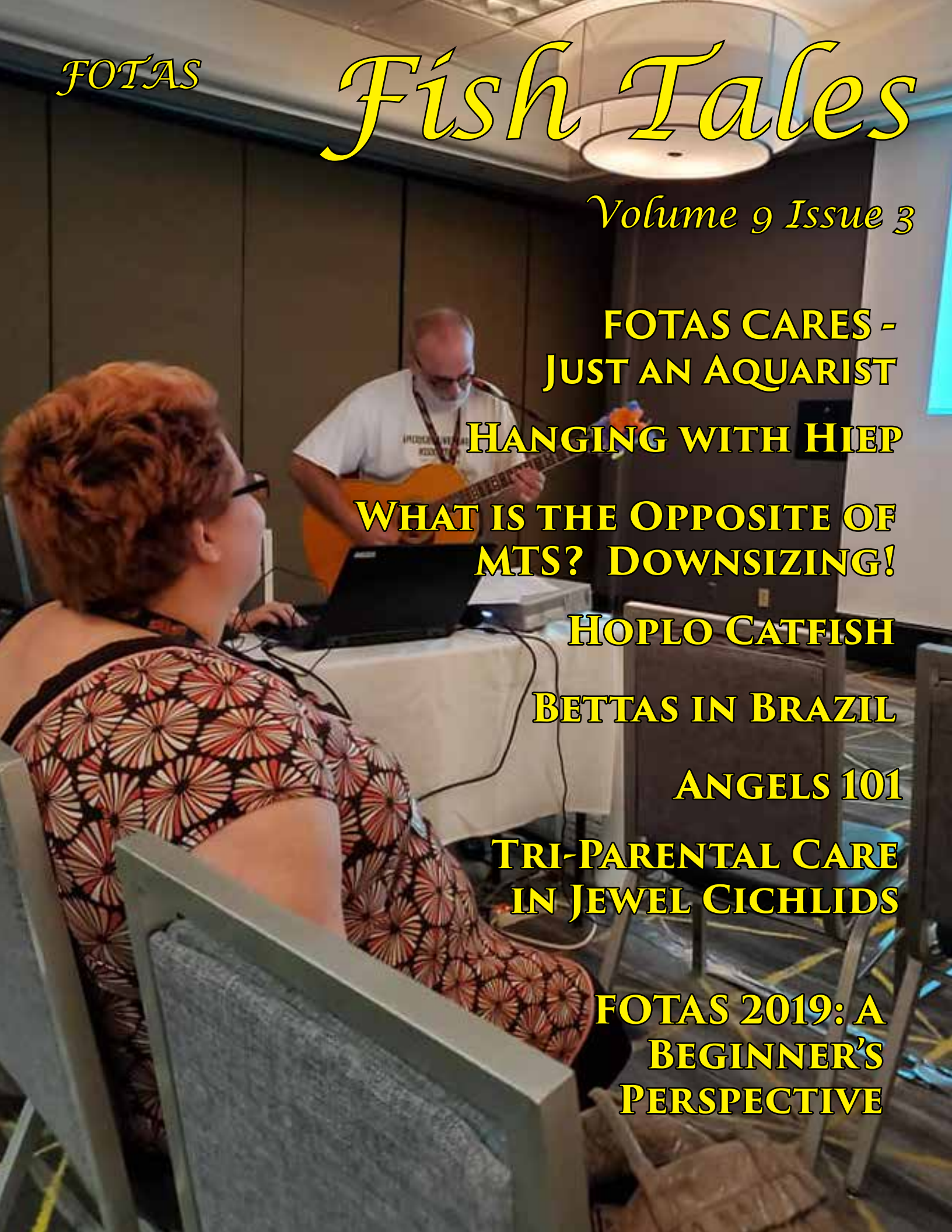
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BETTAS IN BRAZIL

ANGELS 101

**TRI-PARENTAL CARE
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Design and Layout

Gerald Griffin



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Fish Tales Submission Guidelines

Articles and Art Submissions:

Please submit all articles, photos and art in electronic form. We can accept most popular software formats and fonts. Email to 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.

Next deadline.....

December 1st 2019

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President's Message

Passing the Torch!

Greg Steeves



First off, Thank you to the Southeast Louisiana Aquarium Society for an incredible FOTAS convention! Not only was the convention a blast to all who attended, it was so well organized that if something didn't go as plan, no one ever knew. Way to go SELAS. You set the bar very high!

Several years ago (seven I think) Marvin England contacted me about the future of FOTAS. Marvin and Keith Arnold had been ensuring that FOTAS was relevant for years before. Through a series of events, I became president and had a board made up of the very best people I could ever ask for. I would like to thank the following people that were/are either on the Board of Directors, assisted me in an advisory role, or were just there to step up whenever I needed it:

Kyle Osterholt – Vice President

Lisa Hufstetler – Secretary

Chris Lewis – Treasurer

Gerald Griffin – Webmaster/Editor of Fish Tales/Assistance with anything or anywhere needed.

Mike Hufstetler – Technical Guru

Marvin England – Advisor

Keith Arnold – Advisor

These people have made my tenure as president an absolute joy. I am proud of the job we have all done and really excited about the future of FOTAS.

As we got closer to the Annual FOTAS convention in Baton Rouge LA., I began thinking about the future of FOTAS. I knew that I could remain on board and everything would continue on just fine however, I was not convinced that I was capable of adapting to the new generation of aquarists that the organization has to attract in order to be relevant.

For several years I have seen Clay Trachtman grow the SELAS club and become a name in the hobby. It's a very tough mental exercise to do what is best for the organization while keeping your own thoughts and emotions in check. Clay obviously knew not only how to do this but how to reach new aquarists. I was convinced that he was our best choice to lead FOTAS forward. Just as Marvin did for me, I will be there to advise Clay whenever and should ever, needed. So, as I hand the reigns over to Clay, I know he has the best team he could ever ask for and everything needed to succeed.

I humbly step aside to our new president and take my seat along side Marvin in the "Former President's Club" (Marvin, we need to get matching jackets!). I will see everyone in Austin at FOTAS 2020 hosted by the Greater Austin Aquarium Society.

In the words of my friend Pam Chin...

Best Fishes!

Greg

President's Message

Carrying the Torch!

Clay Trachtman



Greetings to all members of the FOTAS clubs throughout Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas! As you may be aware, I was elected president of FOTAS at the annual convention on August 24, 2019.

First, I would like to introduce myself. I was born and raised in New Orleans, and was first introduced to keeping fish at approximately 5 years old when my father got a goldfish aquarium. I have been keeping aquarium fish ever since then. From albino cichlids to zebra plecos, I have kept it and tried to breed it...usually unsuccessfully.

After Hurricane Katrina, I temporarily moved to Houston, TX. It was there that I got my first experience with aquarium societies, going to a Houston Aquarium Society (HAS) Christmas party. Upon returning to Louisiana, I started the Southeast Louisiana Aquarium Society (SELAS). FOTAS 2019 was the first event that I ever really organized myself, and from the vast majority of the feedback that I have received, it was a huge success.

That brings me to one of the things that I want to emphasize during my tenure, and that is making the FOTAS annual convention a "must-see" event for fish keepers throughout our region. The very first "real" fish event that I went to was FOTAS 2011 in San Antonio. It was held in a hotel and focused on CARES (endangered) fish. I was so awestruck, that I don't remember the details of the event itself. I do remember that it was very professionally run and I was extremely impressed.

Over the following years, I noticed that the annual conference was not as big of a deal as that first one that I attended. To me, it felt like that the annual conferences were done cheaply. As a club president, I understand why they were done that way, clubs just don't have tons of money to put a large event on, but as a consumer that took off of work and drove several hours to attend, I was disappointed.

Luckily, now it seems that there is a renewed interest in hosting the annual convention and putting on a major event. I am advising the Greater Austin Aquarium Society (GAAS) on what worked well for the 2019 convention as well as working within a budget. It sounds like it's going to be quite the event, with several vendors already signed up.

Not only does FOTAS 2020 sound like it is going to be a huge success, but we already have clubs volunteering to host the annual FOTAS convention in 2021 and 2022. This is really a great sign and I hope it continues to be that way in the future. If each club rotates hosting the annual convention, that allows for clubs to build up a large enough "war-chest" to be able to take care of the up-front costs of hosting the event. I know it took SELAS several years to save enough money to be able to pay the up-front costs for hosting FOTAS 2019.

My saying for FOTAS 2019 was that I wanted the convention to be worth a 10 hour drive. I think that is a motto that all FOTAS convention-hosting clubs should use. Our region is vast, we are not the north east US. It takes a lot of time and effort for many of us to attend these conventions, and I don't think that should be taken lightly.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank Greg Steeves for being the president of FOTAS for the past 7 years. His passion for the CARES program really put FOTAS on the map in the aquarium world as being the premier CARES aquarium organization. Many don't know this, but when Greg took over FOTAS, it was in rough shape. People did not care about FOTAS, let alone the annual FOTAS convention. He took an organization that was on Fish Tales - 4

life support and brought it back from the brink to where we are today! I hope to continue his legacy and expand upon it, making FOTAS a regional organization that would rival any regional organization in the rest of the country.

Thank all of you for supporting your local aquarium club. I look forward to seeing many of you in Austin in 2020.

The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies consist of the following Clubs as of the FOTAS Convention.

GAAS – Greater Austin Aquarium Society

HCC – Houston Cichlid Club

HCCC – Hill Country Cichlid Club

NWAAS - Northwest Arkansas Aquarium Society

OKAA - Oklahoma Aquarium Association

OBBA – Oklahoma Betta Breeders Association

SELAS - Southeast Louisiana Aquarium Society

TCA - Texas Cichlid Association

If you represent an Aquarium Club and want to join FOTAS just contact us for information!





The Casual Conservationist “Just an Aquarist” Gerald Griffin

Few things make my blood boil more than “You are just an Aquarist”. I heard this from the Aquatic Center at the Oklahoma City Zoo when I inquired about obtaining some *Yssichromis argens* so that we could work on conserving them in the Aquarium Hobby. When I saw them in the display I knew they were unique and in the exhibit the females were malnourished from having continual batches of fry and those fry were not being pulled, but stayed in the tank to be eaten by the other fish as was relayed to me by the Zoo staff. When I moved back to Tulsa, I relayed this information to the Tulsa Zoo Registrar, so he called the Oklahoma City Zoo to set up the paperwork for an inter-zoo loan and obtaining some for the Tulsa Zoo so that I could place them into our conservation network. It was then that I found out that the entire population was traded to Moody Gardens in Galveston, Texas and that population was totally wiped out due to Hurricane Ike severely damaging Moody Gardens, destroying the *Yssichromis* display and wiping out the last known population on the planet. Before this point in time they were already declared “Extinct in the Wild”. Who was more irresponsible? The Oklahoma City Zoo or me “Just an Aquarist”. Not only did this fuel my anger, it also inspired me to do more with Conservation of Species. Since then I have worked with a few Zoos and Aquariums on Conservation and I have found that not all of them are the same. However, there are still many who use the you’re “Just an Aquarist” attitude when it comes to the Casual Conservationist. The tide is changing. Now many times the Aquarist are leading Conservation in some species and the mainstream is beginning to pay more attention to Hobbyist Conservation.

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Foot Note: “Right before the hurricane hit, Paul Loiselle was speaking with the curator, Greg Whittiker, about releasing *Yssichromis argens* and *Harpagochromis* sp. “Two striped white lip” to us, but it never happened and then Ike hit.”

So, what can I do as a Hobbyist? Well I have always said in my talks and it was my tagline in my Yahoo email, “No one can save them all, but everyone can save one!” which was how I addressed the Species Maintenance Program of the International Betta Congress. Since I first read “All about Bettas” by Walt Maurus I was in love with wild *Betta* species. Ironically his book was mostly about domestic Bettas but as part of the book it did have a little information on the wild species. In 1986 I obtained my first wild *Bettas* and have kept them and spawned many species since then passing them along in the hobby before I even realized that the “Casual Conservationist” was a thing. If you are keeping fish (and I assume if you are reading this you keep fish) why not keep something a little rare, exotic and in need of Conservation? The thing about fish keeping is that it is something almost anyone can do. So why not help out a species? This is where CARES comes in.

CARES is (Conservation, Awareness, Recognition and Responsibility, Encouragement and Education, and Support and Sharing). I know, a lot of letters. The

program started in 2004 and was designed as a way Aquarium Societies (Clubs) could engage in Conservation efforts to assist in the maintaining of species deemed threatened, endangered or extinct in the wild. How the program works is that experts in the field of various types of fish make recommendations as to which species should be CARES species. The committee then passes on those recommendations and they become part of the CARES list. The reason for the importance of this program is that anyone can join and help the cause of Conservation. This organization is Global and as such you would be working with other people in the Conservation of Specie(s) that you chose to work with. I don't want this to sound like an informational but for just a little time and doing what you are already doing you can help save a species from extinction.

FOTAS (Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies) was an early member of CARES and therefore should have a much larger presence than it does now. What I need from you, the ones that are reading this to check your fish you are currently breeding against the CARES list (https://caresforfish.org/?page_id=40) to see what species you currently have that are CARES fish. Once that is done you can send that information to me at (herpchat@yahoo.com) so you can be added to our Registry. Just a few minutes of your time could help us save a species!

So how can a "Just an Aquarist" help? In my story in Conservation the Tulsa Zoo was having a problem with its *Ameca splendens* conservation effort. The population was suffering from spinal deformities due to excessive inbreeding. When I saw this, I mentioned that I have the same population of *Ameca splendens* and I could introduce new genetic material to offset this deformation. The Tulsa Zoo agreed, and I transferred my stock to the Zoo for crossing into their stocks. Within a few generations their maintained population was normal again. In another incident a "Just an Aquarist" Tracy Hicks was entertaining a friend from the Mexican equivalent of our Fish and Wildlife Service. He had noticed an odd species of fish that I had just given Tracy which was *Xiphophorus couchianus*. The official had noted that one of the waterways where this species was formerly found had its habitat reclaimed and wanted to release specimens back into the wild. Tracy then contacted me for more specimens to be transferred and with that, the fish

were off to Mexico for release into the wild. The details were kept very secret until the population was found to be reproducing. So, this is the power of "Just an Aquarist" can have in Conservation. What is your story? What will your story be? I know there are more "Just an Aquarist"s out there.

So, where do we go from here. As of now, I have taken over the FOTAS CARES program as Greg Steeves takes a well-deserved break. Greg has also been an inspiration for me as well as one of the "Just an Aquarist" I highly respect. In fact, Greg is at the top of my list in Aquarists I respect. Greg like a number of Aquarist went from casual fish keeper to world authority on Victorian Cichlids. His talks are laid back, humorous and very informational. When you talk to Greg, he is very humble and will tell you that anyone can do what he did, you just have to have the desire to study something you care about. To Greg's credit he has written and published books on Victorian Cichlids. For this work Greg's name will always be synonymous with Victorian Cichlids for his hard work and dedication to this group of fish.

From here on out I will be sending a reminder every quarter to every fish group in FOTAS asking people who are breeding what CARES fish. If you respond you will be added to registry. I will check the registry yearly for changes. If you wish to no longer participate then let me know and I will remove you from the registry. In the end we only preserve what we CARE about. So, what do you CARE about? Do you have a species that you totally adore and want to see preserved? In closing, I am your new CARES director, welcome to our program!

As a note here, if you have a CARES species that you are totally in love with then write about them! Share your knowledge with the world! Much of what we know about a number of species were observations made by Aquarist keeping a species. Examples are a mouthbrooding Betta that can be Bi-Parental Mouthbrooders. Bi-Parental Mouthbrooding in Victorian Cichlids. You might just make an observation that has never been made before! That is what is so cool about our fish! you just never know!

Gerald Griffin

FOTAS CARES Program Director

Hanging with Hiep

Article By Riccardo Camera

Photo by Pauline Nguyen

It has often been my experience that the most rewarding learning experiences are those that we don't see coming. This excludes of course those lessons that blindsides us like discovering we don't like the way something tastes, or that the water is cold or that that thing we did is actually illegal (who knew?). I am instead thinking about those lessons where we go in expecting to learn one thing but instead learn another more enriching lesson. Something more akin to meeting someone that you think hates you, but they don't or finding out that you actually like Indian food. As advanced hobbyists, here I make the assumption that since you are reading this you have already gone down the rabbit hole that is advanced fishkeeping, we tend to know it all. I don't think I cast too wide of a net when I say that. There are of course some of those among us that are forever humble, always learning, who would rarely admit to being more knowledgeable on a subject than you are. Let's be honest however, that isn't most of us. More often than not, I feel like I head into a club meeting confident in the way that I feel about the topic. Sometimes I am going in to learn more about a subject that is near and dear to my heart, like maybe a fish collecting trip Central America. Sometimes I am dragging my feet to a talk about a subject that I enjoy because it is fish related but isn't in my wheelhouse. (Oh 2 hours on Loaches? awesome.....) Either way I don't expect to learn something that I don't expect to learn....err something like that. In a way or perhaps

very precisely it's an exercise in confirmation bias... if someone were to tell me loaches are like cats and cichlids were like puppies....well that is just confirming what I already thought.

In August (2019) the Greater Austin Aquarium Society hosted internationally recognized aquascaper Hiep Hong. A few months earlier I had seen Hiep and Cory Hopkins perform an aquascaping demonstration at the recently relocated Aquatek here in town. I jumped at the chance of inviting him to a GAAS meeting when I heard club volunteer Dorion Adams was chatting with him. Hiep graciously accepted and his sponsor Ultum Nature Systems threw down a great package for him to work with despite a short turnaround time. Hiep donated the finished tank to the club which ended up making a great fundraiser.

The backdrop for the event was the Austin History Center, an interesting little library building with a meeting room that doubles as a photo gallery. The aesthetics of the building gave the affair a distinct 1950s college lecture vibe. Wood panels, historical photos, a fireplace all juxtaposed against the sleek modern lines of a UNS rimless tank. While introducing Hiep I think it was probably evident that I was a fish guy. I knew that Hiep had done well internationally in aquascaping competitions, but I felt I didn't know enough to give him the introduction he deserved. Essentially, I bowed

quickly and let him introduce himself. Highlights include the fact that Hiep finished 4th in the 2018 IAPLC. If you're also a fish guy or gal don't worry, I got you. The IAPLC is the most prestigious aquascaping contest in the world, and 4th place is the highest placement by any American in history. Like Ron Burgundy... he's kind of a big deal..I mean but he's a real person. I was also happy to learn that Hiep used to be a fish guy and that he's not crazy about learning the name of every plant species. Hiep resides mostly in the visual realm. He walked us through an hour and a half nano tank setup. High level design tips were interspersed with great practical tips which you only get by designing so many tanks. Hiep carries a pack of smokes but he doesn't smoke...and he's got filter floss but its not for water clarity. You'll have to get him to speak at your club to find out why.

Back to learning unexpected lessons. I knew I was going to watch a guy put rocks wood, substrate and plants together in a visually appealing way. To some degree we all do that whether we are putting together a show tank or a breeding tank. We don't haphazardly place things...I don't throw filters from across the room into a tank, I place it with purpose. I wasn't expecting

to learn (crazy right?). I learned a lot though. Hiep walked us through the selection of all the pieces that would make up the tank. He talked about space and flow and what side of a rock looks best and why. Most importantly to me, he made the realization of a beautiful tank accessible. He used low tech plants his hands and some superglue. He showed us the tools, he shared his vision and then put those things together right in front of us. Exactly the opposite of a magician, he completely explained the trick, and I think



Hiep's Presentation draws GAAS largest crowd to date.
Photo by Pauline Nguyen

everyone in the room that was paying attention was better off for it.

I have planted tanks, but they are like fields grown wild, I have been inspired to do at least one show tank that has some sort of vision. Thanks, Hiep. I highly suggest you all make some time to hang with Hiep.



The Master at work!
Photo by Luke Brown

What is the Opposite of MTS? Downsizing!



By Denny Rogers

For the last 28 years I've had a bad case of MTS (multiple tank syndrome). During this time I was running somewhere in the neighborhood of 50-60 aquariums, and close to 2000 gallons of water. We even moved from NW Indiana to NW Arkansas without missing a beat. In 2017 life decided to throw me a curve when Gail and I started talking about possibly moving into town and downsizing our lives as well as being closer to medical services in case of an emergency. We found a retirement community very close to our church and after much discussion, decided to put our name on the waiting list to get into that community. This was going to be a pretty big step for us, but we were thinking we'd probably have to wait about 5 years before our name would reach the top of the waiting list. Imagine our shock and surprise when we got a phone call 2 weeks later asking if we would be interested in a unit that had just become available. Besides all the normal moving bustle, I suddenly realized that the move was almost going to be like quitting the aquarium hobby cold turkey. No more MTS.

After much soul searching and negotiation with both Gail and the people running our community, I was able to figure out a solution which would work for me. Gail and I decided I could have half of our 2 car garage

garage for my fish and turtles, but she had been without a garage for so long that she wasn't going to give up her half this time.

I decided to put the 300 gallon stock tank for my turtles in the middle of my section of the garage. It took up quite a bit of floor space, but did leave space around the perimeter. I had six 40 gallon long aquariums and stands available and decided they would provide the basic structure of my fishroom setup. Since I had been raising mostly African peacock type cichlids, which needed to grow to the 4-6 inch length before I could sell them, the first decision I had to make after positioning the aquariums was what fish I could keep in the garage. They would probably need to be hardier than many of the fish I had kept previously. I wasn't sure if I could maintain an acceptable temperature for tropical fish or turtles in the garage.

The second decision was how big the fish could be that I was planning on keeping. I would be limited on the number of fish I could keep if I only had big tanks. After much thought, I decided to subdivide my tanks, and keep smaller fish. Eventually I divided three of the 40 gallon tanks into four tanks of 10 gallons each, and three tanks into six tanks of 20 gallons each. This

gave me a total of twelve aquariums at 10 gallons, and six aquariums at 20 gallons each.

The next decision was whether I could maintain an acceptable temperature in the aquariums. We moved in December, so my immediate concern was whether I could heat the aquariums to an acceptable temperature. I put heaters in the tanks, and it appeared that I could keep the aquariums warm enough over the winter. Since I had a limited amount of electrical capacity in the garage, I was concerned, but I did have one electrical breaker not being used. I had an outlet put in the garage for our freezer, and it appears that I'm not overloading any of the other circuits at this point. The garage maintained an air temperature above 50 F. even during the coldest months. Gail was not parking her car in the garage at this time because of all the extra fish stuff I had to find a home for, so the door was not raised frequently.

As summer approached, I kept an eye on the temperature since even tropical fish don't do well if it gets too hot. On the hottest days I saw that the air temperature was running close to 90 F. Ideally tropical fish should be kept between 75 and 80 F. It is very difficult to find fish which can survive and thrive at both extremes.

I spent a lot of time trying to figure out if I had any viable options for my heat and cold problems. I couldn't come up with a list of acceptable (to me) fish for these conditions. I didn't have any windows in the garage so I couldn't consider installing a window air conditioner, and I didn't think building an enclosure around the fish area was



40 gallon long subdivided into 4 - 10 gallon tanks



300 gallon stock tank for my turtles



40 gallon tank subdivided into 2 - 20 gallon tanks

acceptable. Eventually I started thinking about the possibility of tapping into one of the HVAC ducts in the attic above the garage, and just dumping some heat in the winter and cooled air in the summer into the garage. I wanted to eliminate the high and low temperatures without increasing the expense of operating the HVAC system, so I wasn't concerned about any cold air return piping. I presented my idea to the manager of our community, and after conversations with an HVAC technician, he agreed that it wouldn't noticeably affect his energy costs, and approved my idea. In practice, I've been able to maintain air temperatures around 80 F in the summer, and and between 70 and 75 F in the winter. I do have to keep track of the temperatures in the spring and fall when neither the heat nor air conditioning are running in the house. The temperatures in the garage are not quite as consistent at those times. Heaters are pretty much able to eliminate any temperature fluctuation problems during the winter, but the excessive heat in the spring or fall could still be somewhat of a problem.

Fortunately, I have a water faucet in my garage, so I'm going to set up a storage barrel to age my water. Since our previous houses have had a well for supplying our water, I've not had to worry about removing chlorine or other chemicals from the water for years. Since we are now connected to a municipal water supply I will have to take municipal water treatment into consideration. Our water is much harder here than previously, but that hasn't seemed to affect my fish's ability to survive and grow. The hard water may affect my breeding success, but that is still to be determined.

Generally, my aquariums are filtered by sponge filters in bare bottom tanks. I could have set up a central filtering system, but decided I probably didn't need the extra complexity with the smaller set up. I have hang-on-the-back and canister filters available if I find they are needed. I am going to have to get rid of the clutter around my tanks to make water changes and other maintenance a little more practical. I've still got a lot of assorted fish "stuff" around, and it's hard to get rid of it.

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I just know that at some point in the future I'll have a need for it, but from experience, if that time does come, I probably won't remember where I've stored it anyway. I need to change my outlook and decide if I need something in the future, I'll just have to buy it at that time.

Only time will tell whether the modifications I've done will work, and allow me to continue breeding fish and turtles as I would like, but even working through the project has been interesting and challenging. Fish people do seem to be problem solvers with a lot of imagination.



Hoplo Catfish

By Jack Dannels

Megalechis thoracata is a species of catfish of the family Callichthyidae. *M. thoracata* is found east of the Andes in the Amazon, Orinoco, and upper Paraguay River basins, as well as in the coastal rivers of the Guianas and northern Brazil. Recent introductions were recorded in the upper Paraná River drainage.¹

I sometimes refer to these interesting creatures as armored catfish because of their thick looking scales and their ability to survive many living conditions and tank mates. In my house, mine currently share tanks with Red Devils and Giant Gourami. One of the cool things about them is that they can live with a diverse group of tank mates. Honestly if they fish can't or won't eat them and they cannot eat the fish they are in with, they are good to go. They will eat about anything you feed your other fish and they sometimes occupy areas of the tank that other fish may not. Kind of makes them a special kind of fish.

I have kept these fish since I was a kid. Basically, if I see them and I have some room in my tanks, I buy them. They are not overly common as in I do not see them in the fish shops every time I visit one, thank goodness. In the past couple of years, I have seen them in Marbled albino form which I had to have some. My big disappointment with the albinos was that they were not as hardy for me. I set mine up in a 30 gallon tank to themselves and about the time they were close to adult size they all died off. I was very disappointed because they were far from inexpensive and I had

high hopes of maybe spawning them. I always want to spawn the fish I buy, it is an addiction for sure.

Other than the albinos, I have found the other color varieties of the Hoplo cats to be very sturdy and long-lived fish. My dark brown ones are over 10 years old. I guess the dark browns are called Hoplo cats and the other lighter colored ones are the Marbled. The other pair I currently have are probably 5 or 6 years old now. Mine are probably 6 to 8 inches long or so. They as I said before can live with about any kind of fish and look cool in a planted tank. They have not been destructive to plants in my experience but I have heard they like to incorporate plants in their nests when they spawn.

Spawning would be my one disappointment with these guys. Mine have not. I have had many of them and kept them inside in tanks and outside in pools. I have not been fortunate enough to have them spawn. I hear they make a large bubble nest and tend the eggs and fry much like Bettas do. I have not given up on having that experience but as I said, it has not happened in my house.

In conclusion, I would say if you have not kept Hoplo catfish why not give it a try. They are not generally expensive fish and they might add a little something to your tank and/or fishroom.

¹ Citation from Wikipedia

Bettas in Brazil!

By Gerald Griffin



From left to right: Michael Chang, Larissa Williams, Osvaldo Lorando Assis, Vanessa Zara Garro, Daniel Legnaro, Leandro Macedo and Gerald Griffin.

There are times when things just come together, and you get to do something totally awesome. For me it was my trip to Natal Brazil to give a talk on Bettas and help open the International Betta Congress Area 4 which is South America. Bettas are nothing new to South America and they have been having Betta shows but they were not IBC. This was our chance to have the IBC become active in South America. My trip was sponsored by Aquarismo through the Universidad Federal Del Rio Grande Do Norte through a professor there, Paulo Faria. With my trip sponsored I was able to convince the IBC to cover air fare for a couple more Judges so joining me on this expedition was Michael Chang from Australia and Larissa Williams from California. This trip started like a number of trips; with me not understanding what I was getting myself into. I had bought power converters as in Brazil you never know what type of power situation you would find yourself in. I did not take the laptop but instead took my wife's surface to limit what I was taking (not a good idea). So with that I boarded the plane and was off on my adventure. All in all the trip itself although tiring was not bad. The worst part was the leg from Dallas to Sao Paulo. That leg felt like an eternity but luckily for me, there were not a lot of people on that leg so I was able to stretch out over 4 seats. At this point the worst I had seen was an American complaining that the deportees on the plane were

being treated like passengers. The stewardess stated in a very loud voice "these people are passengers and will be treated like all other passengers, you don't like it you can find another airline". I was not expecting to hear that especially since this trip was to South America. Upon landing I was warned that I had to go through customs again and then for the final leg from Sao Paulo to Natal. Customs here was far easier than in the US. I was right through in a couple of minutes once I found someone who could speak English and tell me where I had to go. The bus ride from the Natal airport to the resort we were staying at was a bit shocking. Near the airport were hundreds of abandoned vehicles, road-side stands, numerous abandoned buildings and then finally as we approached the resort beautiful houses, buildings and beach as far as they eye could see. This was one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen.

After arriving at the Resort, we had time for a nap, a quick shower then off to the event center for the introductions of the speakers and the first talk. The world Pet Trade and Brazil's role in the Market. It was a very informative talk which showed which countries import what species, which ones they actually farm themselves and the over all costs and sales. The actual data was quite astounding. I wish I was able to tape it. I did get a number of screen shots but those were all destroyed when my cellphone was damaged beyond repair.

Posing with the "Little Mermaid" and Flounder



Our first morning after making the trip was meeting back at the event center. This was a major All Species show and the largest in South America. This event had fish judges and speakers from all over the world. The closest type of event to ours was the International Fancy Guppy Association show which had judges from China in attendance. I ran into other people I knew from the United States as they were also there for other fish shows. Some of them I met at the IBC Convention in San Jose the previous year. The set up was similar to any type of IBC show except for the containers. In Brazil it is cheaper to have the little tanks made of real glass then to import the plastic Beanie Containers we use in the US. Our actual show area was large and over 600 containers were at our disposal. We ended up using close to 500. Other show areas were as large or larger than ours. During the set up someone noticed a spider on a shelf. Since I know something about spiders I had to see. The spider turned out to be an *Avicularia* which I identified the genus however I had to look up the species since I was not familiar with Brazilian Pink toes. I was able to have time to explore and talk with other fish people from all over the world on various topics. One of the most memorable was a discussion of fish nutrition which I have learned a lot about that topic. I also talked with several the other Betta

people there as well as Guppy people. After a quick discussion Larissa volunteered/voluntold that she would do the initial training as she was already well versed in training new judges. We spent several hours in a side room where we covered the first two seminars in the Judging Program. When it comes to fast tracking Judges, some think it is a very simple process that robs the participants of the actual experiences from the Apprenticeship Program. This could not be farther from the truth. What participants get is a 3-day crash course in all things Betta and it is a very intense event. We must give them the full experience in a very short time. The entire time

as we go through looking at the fish, we are quizzing the "Apprentices" on things contained in the Judging Standards. After the first day I had to go back to the Hotel and get some sleep while everyone else went out to enjoy the night life. I guess that part sucks about getting old!

The second full day was on the show room where the Apprentice crash course was in full swing. First job was making sure all the classes were totally lined up in order and reclassing those that were classed incorrectly. From here we let apprentices go through all the fish and then we used the fish for testing. We set up several classes and they would rotate through our stations. We had 4 apprentices and three Judges. After a few hours

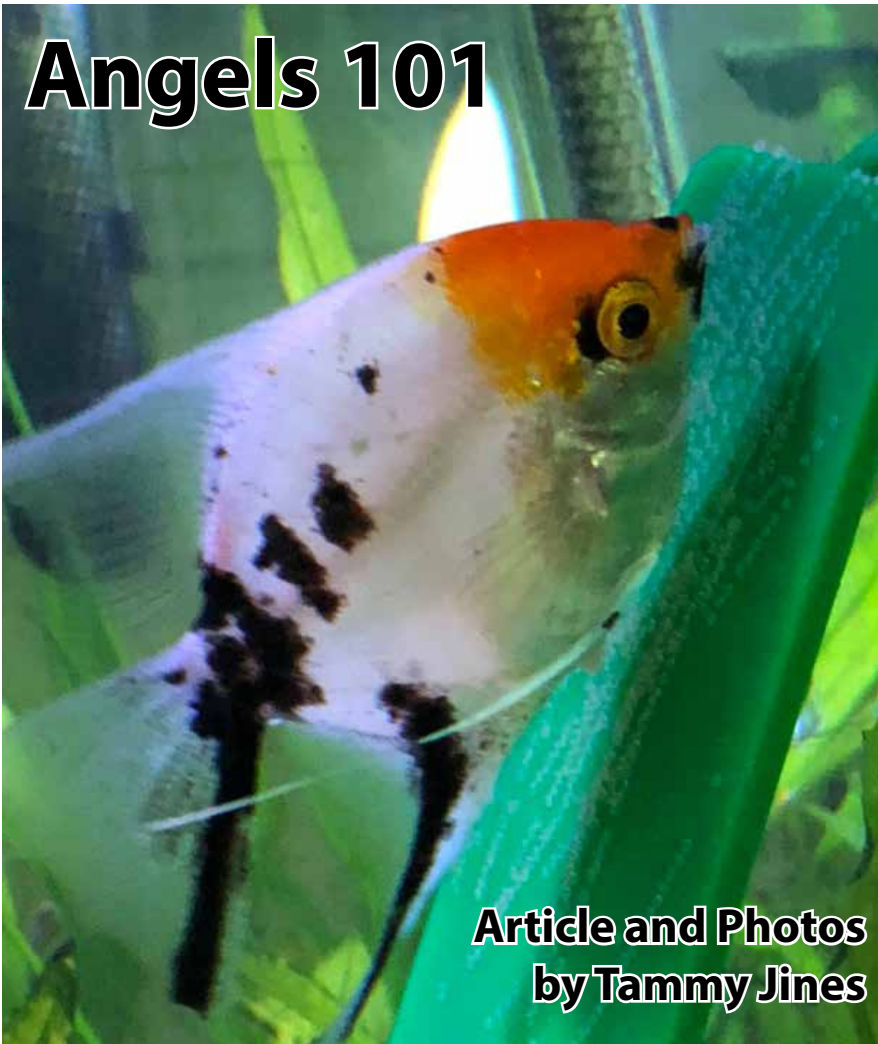
Judging the Betta Show!



of visual testing we then engaged in several discussions and looked at areas of contention with the application of the Judging Standards verses their feel for the fish. This I found enlightening as some of the Apprentices took the Standards so literally that anything that did not match it they wanted to disqualify. I had to do some correction and lead them through that if something is not in the standards, it does not mean disqualification, but you must try to use the standards on what fits the classes the best. This was especially seen in the Crowntail standards were a few of the newer forms were not listed. It was during the reclassing that water hit my body from the containers and because of the design of the Moto Z Force it ended up right in the power connector. Any other phone would have laughed it off and in fact my earlier Moto Z was also in the same pocket and nothing happened to it. The biggest issue was the language barrier as only one of the Apprentices spoke English, the other 3 only spoke Portuguese. Even so, the event center provided translators and working through them we were able to get things worked out. During this time, I was interviewed by what turned out to be the largest TV News Show



Angels 101



**Article and Photos
by Tammy Jines**

When you start feeding, you should start small careful daily water changes. To clean your tank you should use a turkey Baster to suck up the bottom dirt. Be careful so you do not suck up the babies. I empty the baster into a small bucket to double check for babies.

By the time they get their dorsal fins you should be mixing in crushed flake food when feeding brine to switch them over to flake.

Make sure you have an idea of what you are going to do with the juvenile angels because if you are successful you can have 100 or more baby angels.

If you are not successful the first time do not worry as you will have another chance in about 10 days when they lay again.

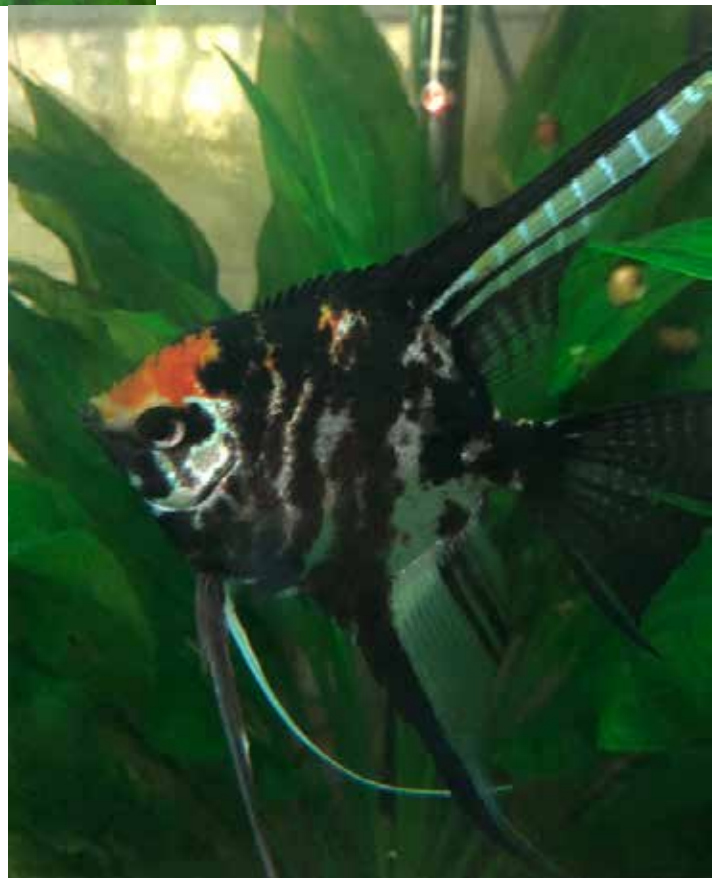
If you don't already have angel fish that have paired up purchase around 6 young angels and they will pair as they become adults.

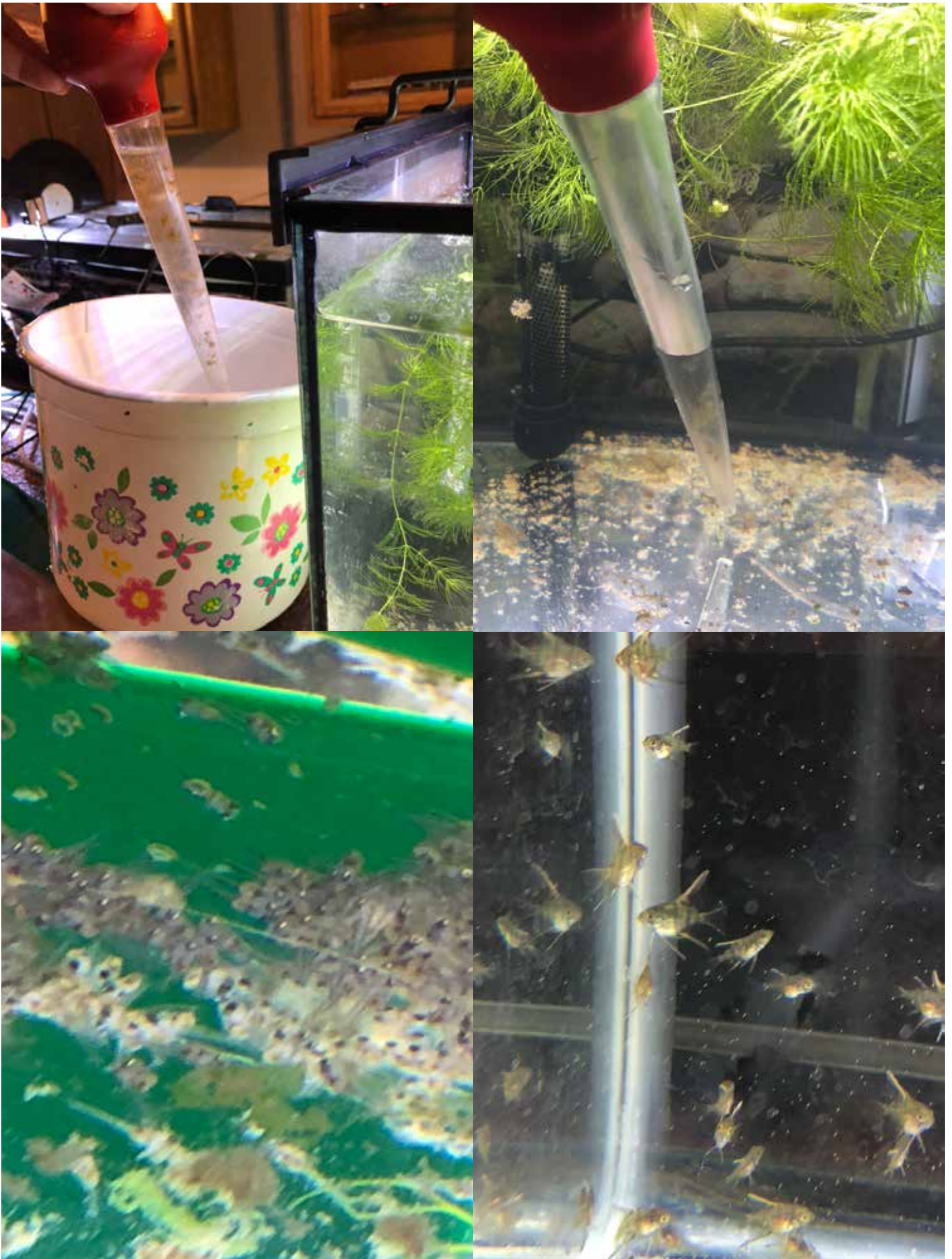
You should keep your aquarium a little warmer around 80 degrees and provide live plants and a breeding slate for them to lay eggs on.

When they are done laying eggs pull the slate or pinch the leaf off careful not to expose the eggs to air. Use a small 5 to 10-gallon bare bottom tank with a sponge filter and air stone for circulation. It is best to use the same water as they came from because the eggs are very pH sensitive. Keep the water at same temperature. If the eggs are on a leaf, make sure it is securely underwater. Some eggs may turn white but if they all do it's time to try again. You should already have a bigger tank set up or cycling for when they get bigger.

By the time you see the little eggs wiggling you should start a batch of brine shrimp. They need good food to encourage them to eat.

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Tri-Parental Care in Jewel Cichlids

Article by Karen Haas
Photos by Mike Wickham



This past spring I brought home 5 bright red, adult jewel cichlids from the Aquarium Club of Lancaster monthly auction. Four of them appeared to pair up with a pair defending a territory at each end of the tank. The odd man out was stuck in the middle. After rehoming one of the pairs, the remaining pair spawned every couple of weeks. I never saw any fry. I figured the other fish in the tank ate them. Then I brought home another jewel cichlid labeled as a male *Hemichromis moanda*. Into the community tank he went. This male is similar looking to the regular aquarium strain of jewel cichlids but it has a yellow belly. The new male took a liking to the lonely jewel and spawned several times with her. I never saw any fry.

In May I wasn't paying much attention to the tank and had neglected it. In June I noticed that three jewels were spending time together on the left side of the tank. I thought that maybe one had died, and I just didn't find the body. I finally got around to doing a

water change and noticed a huge cloud of fry swarming around the jewel trio. The *H. moanda* male decided to switch sides and spawn with the pair on the left. The trio defended their fry for the next month from the convicts and other fish in the tank. They were successfully defending the entire left half of the tank. The trio would congregate the fry to the upper half of the tank at night and encourage them to graze along the gravel during the day. The fry were light in color with a black horizontal stripe running the length of the body. As they grew bigger, the stripe gradually disappeared leaving the traditional two spots on the flanks. When the fry started to develop their more recognizable pattern they also seemed to enter a teenager like stage in their personalities. They weren't listening to their parents' body language and it was difficult for the adults to keep the group together. By the time all the fry gained their traditional jewel cichlid coloration, the trio bond broke down and reverted to the traditional pair bond with the *H. moanda* male and one of the original jewel cichlids.



I still have more questions than answers right now. Did I originally have two females spawning together and that's why I never saw fry? I can't tell the difference between the *H. bimaculatus* that I originally brought home. They are all bright red all the time. Or, were they a male female pair and the male was sterile? Or, did it just take three parents to successfully defend

the eggs and fry from the other Cichlids in the tank? Why did the *H. moanda* switch sides? Could he have been frustrated with the lack of fry with the first female? Or did he realize the left side of the tank was more defensible position than his original spawning spot in the middle of the tank?



FOTAS 2019 : A Beginner's Perspective

Article by
Dorion Adams

After ending my two and a half year aquarium hiatus in May of 2019, I decided I really wanted to go to a fish convention. I had originally heard of FOTAS back when I lived in Mississippi before I moved to Austin but I never cared enough to attend.. When moving to Austin, I only kept fish for a short while before my hiatus. When diving back into the hobby in May, I went in full speed. I quickly became involved in our local club here in Austin called Greater Austin Aquarium Society. After learning that Riccardo (President) had signed up G.A.A.S. to be the host club for the annual convention in 2020, I knew that I had to attend for multiple reasons.

The planning thus ensued. Once I heard the convention was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, I knew that the trip would be relatively inexpensive since I have a lifelong family friend that I could stay with. With my dad jumping back into the hobby with me, we immediately bought our admission tickets. After speaking with Clay, I knew the banquet was a must see. So we bought our tickets to the banquet as well.

Friday morning rolls around and we depart Austin, Texas about 7 AM. Since dad and I are passionate about our desires to be more involved in aquascaping, we made it a goal to stop by Aquarium Design Group Fish Tales - 22

on the way through Houston, Texas. After walking through the door, my jaw dropped. Even though seeing pictures or videos online was amazing, nothing does this place justice. Tank after tank, scape after scape, I was simply astonished. The amount of art and skill that went into each individual aquarium made me feel insignificant. However it sparked a desire in me to become very talented. The fish selection and equipment selection was also fantastic. We unfortunately weren't able to get access to the infamous warehouse in the back. If anyone has the opportunity, you should definitely go out of your way to visit the Aquarium Design Group.

As the trek continues, we venture through more of Houston to a local landscaping yard for my brother to pick up some large Black Lava Rock that is not available to us here in Austin. After getting out of Houston through minor traffic and a few rain storms, we began making good progress. We arrived in Baton Rouge at our friend Mike's house around four pm. Mike then prepared us a little dinner before we hit the road again. Before heading over to the venue we decided to stop by Louisiana Fish Store which was just across the street.

I remember when Louisiana Fish Store had barely opened their front doors back in November of 2016.

This was when my wife and I first moved to Austin. So we had stopped by there on the way to Austin during our move. While at Louisiana Fish Store this time around I noticed they had greatly improved their store front from when I had last seen it. I was pleased with their amount of hardgoods and aquascaping materials. Their fish and plant selection also seemed good but I didn't look too hard knowing that I could not buy any fish since I had traveled so far and it was only the first day. After leaving the store, we went right across the street to the FOTAS venue.

When arriving to the venue, we were welcomed with open arms in the registration room. We quickly got our badges and swag bags and went over to the Fish Show. It was still being setup but there were quite a few really nice fish, shrimp and plecos already there. We headed over to the vendor room to immediately see a ton of fish being bagged and vendors setting up. The vendor room turned out to be a big hit and well worth the time spent there. Meeting friends and people I've only ever spoken to through the internet was really fun. I spent quite a few minutes at every booth and

held back from spending too much money. I spoke to Jay Wilson of Fritz Aquatics quite a bit and gained a ton of knowledge of the events he's been to and how they are operated. Going into the convention, I desired to learn about the hobby and fishkeeping itself but also to learn about how to throw an event like this successfully since I am part of the host club for 2020.

The first presentation on Friday night was from Mr



**Bill Allen singing
Water Change Blues**

Bill Allen on the topic of Livebearers. Although this specific topic for the presentation wasn't my cup of tea, Mr Allen was extremely knowledgeable and even brought out a weird twist to the night with a little live music. After the presentation was over we went home to get a good night's rest.

Saturday morning came quickly. We quickly left the house and headed for a local coffee shop to get some coffee and famous Louisiana Beignets. After stuffing my mouth full of powdered sugar, we went to hit a few more of the local fish stores. Our first stop was Aqua Hut just outside of Baton Rouge. This was a saltwater only store. Even though I have only tiptoed through



FOTAS Show Room

**Greg Steeves discussing
the History of FOTAS**



that part of the hobby, this store was one of the most organized, clean and well put together stores I have personally been in. The coral frags and colonies along with dry goods were extremely well priced. The employees were extremely attentive and constantly scrubbing algae. Overall I would rate the store 10/10. If you are a saltwater enthusiast in the same state, it would most certainly be worth the trip.

We stopped for lunch for some seafood since fresh seafood is so hard to come by at home in Austin. After lunch, we got back into Baton Rouge and went over to Reef Coral. I didn't ask many questions on our drive, so I assumed this too was a saltwater only store. Upon arrival, I quickly realized this wasn't the case. When walking in, we were greeted with big smiles and lots of items! The store had a ton of dry goods.

Although their fish selection wasn't as great as I had expected, their freshwater and saltwater display tanks were fantastic! Their dry good selection was great and they had a nice sale going for fish food. Needless to say, I spent way too much money here.

After leaving reef coral, we went over to to a local Black and Gold New Orleans Saints store to grab a little merch since it's hard to come by in Cowboys' territory. After leaving here, we headed to the venue. Since we wanted to visit the LFS and grab some food this

caused us to miss out on the morning presentations. I heard Dr. Marsuka spoke on cichlids and also Dr. John Hawke spoke on fish diseases. I hate I missed out on this part of the convention.

After the lunch break, presentations resumed with a tour through Aquarium Design Group. As soon as I heard what the topic of the presentation was, I was a little shocked. Mr Senske did an excellent job on presenting the aquariums they have throughout their store. This was particularly cool since I had just been there less than 24 hours before. So everything he spoke about was extremely relatable and fresh on my mind. Mr. Senske was very knowledgeable and answered many questions from the audience.

To end the presentations for the day, John Armbruster

**Gerald Griffin giving
out the FOTAS Fish
Tales writing Awards**



presented on his trips throughout Guyana and Venezuela. I am a little disappointed I didn't take notes throughout his presentation. The data collection of species, even unidentified ones, and everything he has been a part of is truly remarkable. The pictures he shared during his presentation showed his adventures throughout untouched land so this was very cool to see. It was a great way to end the presentations for the day before the banquet began.

During the break it was nice to be

able to chat with Andrew Senske about his history throughout aquascaping along with his accomplishments and goals in the industry. Some of the ideas and philosophies he has for the hobby are very cool. I cannot wait to see them available to us all. After getting a few drinks the banquet was about to begin. Before I went to the banquet I caved in and bought a few raffle tickets in hopes to win the complete 75 Gallon Marine-land Setup. Without ever going to a banquet, I had no idea what to expect. And boy was I not displeased.

What a night to remember.

The banquet began so we stuffed our faces. Then the awards ceremony began and many awards were handed out. After the awards were handed out, the winners of the raffle were announced. There were a few things you could win. So the first ticket drawn was for the 75 Gallon Setup. Clay then calls the numbers and BOOM!!! Winner Winner Winner. I couldn't believe it. After going nearly the entire event without buying tickets, I bought some at the last minute and WON!!! But wait, there's more! Clay then announced some more winners and then BOOM!!!! Winner winner winner again! I also won a fee one year subscription to the Amazonia Magazine! Needless to say, my night, heck, you could even say my entire trip was made at the banquet so far.

Then the fundraiser auction began where the attendees raised a ton of money to pay for scholarships so this was really cool and heartwarming to see. The funny money auction then ensued. Some fun trivia was part of the funny money auction that I didn't actually know about. This brought some spice to the party as you could get more fake money to bid on items in the auction. A few guys at our table were only saltwater enthusiasts and happily split their money with those of us at the table. With that being said, I was pulling in item after item. I got so much stuff that I had to have a



Gerald Griffin receiving an Award from Greg Steeves

hand to take it out of the building. I even considered a bodyguard at one point. The night quickly ended. I got home and could barely sleep over all the excitement.

Knowing we had to leave on Sunday after the auction, we spent the morning with friends. We made it to the auction as it started and browsed around for a while. Once the auction started we took our seats and I had to make dad take my bidder card from me. There were so many items and fish that I was interested in but I made it out relatively unscathed. I only bought one bag of fish and a couple dry goods. I attempted to get a few bags of shell dwellers but got quickly outbid. I would have pushed my wallet a little harder, but knowing that the tank they were going in had no heater and wasn't even cycled yet, it was a little hard to make that deci-

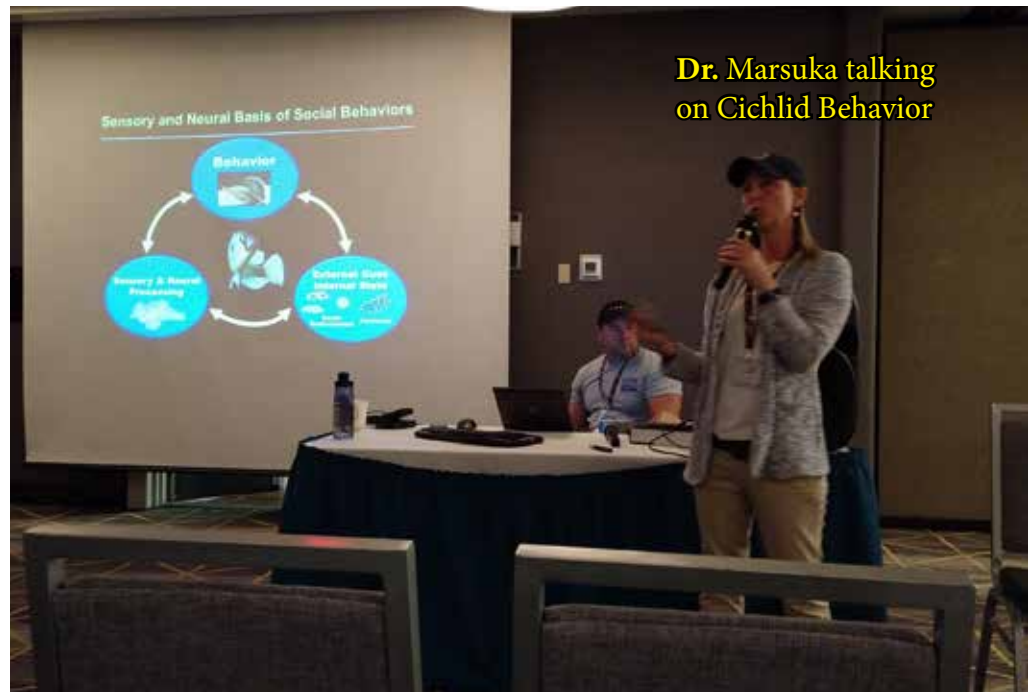


Dr. Armbruster talking on Piscine Pathogens

sion.

I said my thanks to Clay for putting on such a fantastic event and loaded up to head home about midway through the auction. After making the normal Louisiana to Austin stop at Buccees, we made it home around 9:00 PM. I grabbed all my gear and went upstairs. Since the fish i bought didn't have a home, I had to put them in a bucket with a heater and sponge filter until I could get their new tank ready throughout the week.

Overall, my experience at my first ever fish convention and FOTAS was amazing. I enjoyed myself thoroughly and would recommend it to anyone considering it. The friendships I have gained along with the knowledge and goods made the trip totally worth it. The venue, the speakers, the vendors, the people, the auction and everything else was just fantastic. I can't really put it into words. Huge shoutout to Clay and SELAS for putting on an amazing show and setting the standard for the FOTAS conventions. I can't wait to throw a great convention here in Austin. For more information and details on the FOTAS convention in August of 2020, please visit gaastx.org. See you all soon!



Dr. Marsuka talking on Cichlid Behavior



Seachem sponsor having fun in the show room



Louisiana Fish Store offered discounts and assisted where needed in the Show Room



It's a Saints Bye Week Tradition...



SELAS FALL AUCTION

Sunday November 3, 2019

Knights of Columbus Hall

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Doors Open at Noon

\$3 Cover Charge or \$5 Bidder Card

Bidder Card Necessary to Bid

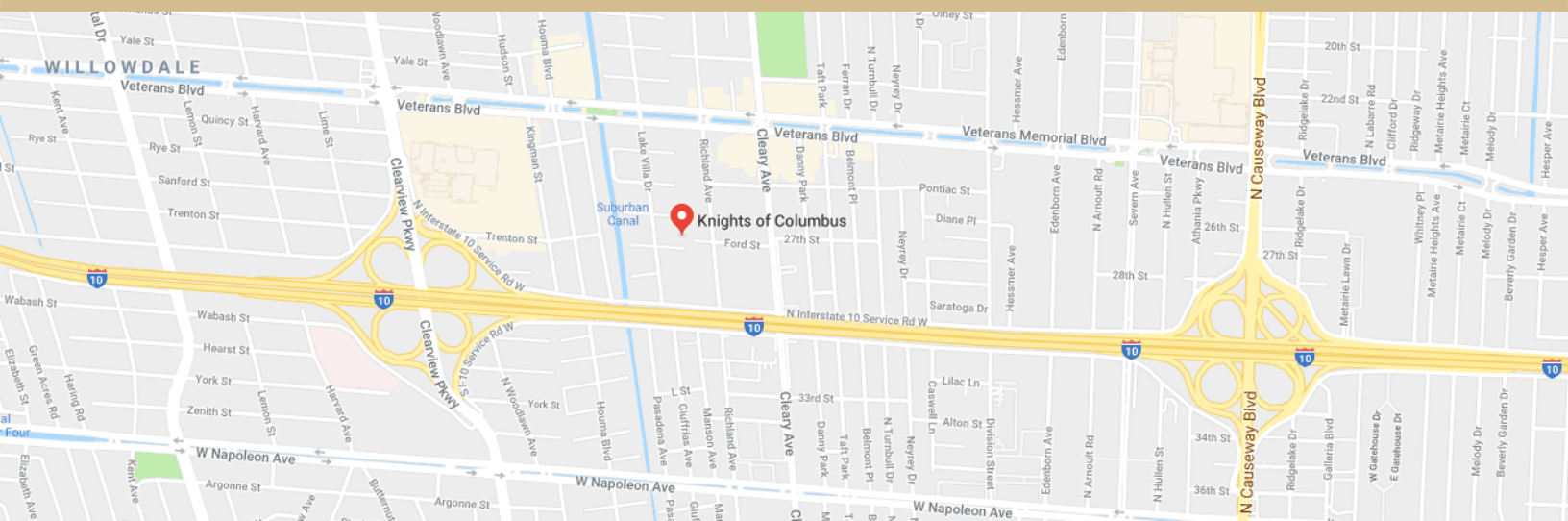
Final Value Fees: 1st Dollar Goes to SELAS, then

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 for Official Rules and Forms



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a celebration of fishkeeping

August 21 - 23, 2020

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Fish + Shrimp Show - Aquascaping

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Hill Country Cichlid Club Presents:

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For more info:

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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!



FOTAS

Fish Tales

Volume 9 Issue 2

Duckweed Food

**Mycos: That Dreaded
Fishroom Nuisance
Part I**

Stomatepia pindu

Xenotoca lyonsi

Mystery Snails

**FOTAS
Convention
Preview**



**Fishroom Hygeine Maintaining
a Sterile Envronment**