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Upcoming Events:

- TCA Spring Show and Workshop. April 16-18.
- ACA Annual Convention. July 22-25.

April BAP Report

—by Greg Steeves

The Hill Country Cichlid Club's breeder award program is only three months old. This program has been a bigger success than anyone could have realistically imagined. At our third meeting, one of our founding members, Robert De Leon was the first to achieve the "HCCC Spawning Award". At our fourth meeting, four other founding members were awarded the same. They are Duc Nguyen, Dave Hansen, Paul Barber, and Greg Steeves. The race is on to see who will be the first to reach the next plateau, the "HCCC Breeder Award".

Current Standings

Greg	165
Duc	90
Paul	65
Robert	55
Dave	40

Our Breeder Award Program is the result of the much research done by the BAP committee. We studied many other club's programs, took what we thought were the best aspects of them, mixed in a little dash of originality and came up

with what we have today. Full rules, guidelines and even hints to submitting articles are available on both the HCCC website and discussion board. BAP submission couldn't be easier. You can submit your report online, contact a BAP committee member, or print and fill in a paper copy.

HCCC members participating in the program have provided material in the form of articles for both our newsletter and website. Fry donation thus far has generated funds for our club. The members who are

taking part should give themselves a pat on the back for right now you are the life blood of the HCCC. The only thing that could enhance our BAP is members who are not involved to get involved.

We briefly discussed at last meeting

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HCCC Financial Report

The Hill Country Cichlid Club has now been able to generate some funds without collecting dues. As reported by our de facto treasurer, Dave Hansen, we now have \$70.20. Not enough to hire 24 hour security, but it is certainly a good start. These funds have been generated mostly

by the sale of our own donated BAP fish. Dave will be able available to answer any specific questions.

We have other fundraising ideas in the works and we hope to implement them soon. All money generated will go for future HCCC events.

April BAP Report (cont)

(Continued from page 1)

awarding BAP bucks for an approved submission. With accumulated BAP bucks, at the end of the year, members could use these to bid on, or purchase

donated items specifically for this purpose. Look for more to be posted in this section as planning continues.

We on the BAP committee would like to thank all the participating members who have made our program such a success thus far. I hope everyone is enjoying the BAP as much as we are.

Picture of the Month

This issue's Picture of the Month was selected from one of the many photographs donated for our use by Spencer Jack. Spencer will speaking at this month's TCA Spring Show and Workshop in Dallas.

For those of us not familiar with New World fish, the photograph is of a Vieja Hartwegi. This beautiful fish can be found along the Upper Rio Grijalva in Central America. It is an omnivorous fish reaching sizes of 12 inches with broods numbering in the 100s.



Species Profile: Pseudotropheus saulosi

— by Paul Barber

Pseudotropheus saulosi were in the first batch of African Cichlids we purchased. When I was researching our first tank, I was intrigued by their color variety, smaller size, and personality. Males are blue with black vertical bars; subdominant males will be lighter with less barring. Females and juveniles are a beautiful orange. They only grow to 3-4", so they are one of the few mbuna that can be kept in smaller tanks. One of articles I found that helped me solidify my decision was at The Gas Station (www.africancichlid.net), written by Lee

Ann.

My decision was made; *Pseudotropheus saulosi* were going to be the central fish in our new 100-gallon mbuna tank. We purchased 10 unsexed juveniles and added *Labidochromis caeruleus* and *Labidochromis* sp. "SRT Kimpuma" to round it out. Of those 10 we ended up with 4 males and 6 females. They spawned regularly, and often. As time went on, I traded some fish, and lost some through embarrassing, newbie mis-

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takes. We still have 2 males and probably 2 females from that first group. When I had holding females, I would catch them at the 2-week point, and let them release in a nursery tank. After about a week of eating and regaining strength I would re-introduce the female to the main tank. Brood sizes were in the 12-20 fry range.

We now keep *Pseudotropheus saulosi* in a species only 55-gallon tank. There are 8 adults - 3 males and 5 females. I found out the hard way that we needed at least 3 males to spread out the aggression. My current methodology of fry rearing is to let the mothers release in the tank. It is heavily stocked with Texas Holey Rock, and a few artificial plants. Initially, only a few fry would survive. But now, it seems that more and more fry from each brood are surviving. Perhaps the mothers have figured out better places to release them; or the smallest fry are following the older fry's example and staying hidden better. All I know is that the number of fry is growing weekly. Of the 5 adult females, it seems that I always have one holding. In fact, as I write this, we have 3 females holding! Before long, I plan to remove all of the rocks, and attempt to catch all of the fry and then let the proc-

ess start over again.

If you can't tell by now, this tank is one of our favorites. The fish are colorful, active, not so aggressive that they stress me out worrying about their survival. They are enjoyable to look at daily to see who's holding now, and to try to figure out how many fry are in there.

I feed them a mixed diet of spirulina flakes and whatever general cichlid flakes I'm feeding in my other tanks. Sometimes they get more spirulina, sometimes they don't. They are algae grazers, so they will supplement their diet by eating algae in the tank. I use tap water with only dechlorinator added. The pH is 7.6-8.1, hardness around 9 kH and 13 gH. I try to keep the temperature between 78 and 80 degrees F. As you can see, the substrate is sand and there is plenty of holey rock.



Species Profile: *Pseudocrenilabrus nicholsi*

—by Duc Nguyen

Pseudocrenilabrus nicholsi or Nichols' Mouthbrooder, is a maternal mouthbrooder native to the eastern Zaire basin in Africa. The climate is subtropical with temperatures in the mid 70's to 80's and native waters for this fish are pH of 7.0. I obtained six 3/4 inch long fish from Aquabid. Males achieve a size of 2.5 inches. *Pseudocrenilabrus*

nicholsi are primarily metallic blue color with ruby red spotting on the scales. The dorsal, anal, and caudal fins are also ocellated with metallic blue and bright red. The head region is a beautiful metallic gold color. Females achieve a size of 2 inches and are unfortunately, like most Haplochromines, the females are basi-

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cally a drab silver-brown color.

The fish bred in a 20 gallon long tank which contained sandy substrate and was planted with *Anubias barterii*. The tank was filtered by a sponge filter and had a pH of 7.5. I performed weekly water changes equal to 20% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 14 hours each day. I fed the fish Tetra Cichlid flakes, spirulina flakes, and live baby brine shrimp.

When spawning, the color of the male intensifies. Females change to a bright yellow and the brown markings fade a bit. The pair cleaned a piece of slate together. Next, the female laid an egg and picked it up in her mouth. The pair assumed a "T" position and the female then bit at the egg spot of the male fertilizing the eggs.



The pair laid approximately 10 eggs. After spawning, the female retreated to a hiding place to avoid harassment by the male. I moved the female to a thickly-planted 10 gallon tank. This tank provided lots of hiding places to make the female feel comfortable. Approximately 7 eggs viable and hatched after 20 days. The fry were a yellow-tan in color and about 3/8 of an inch long and looked very similar to their parents. The fry didn't require any special care on my part. I left them in the 10 gallon tank after moving the female back to the community tank. The tank used a sponge filter for filtration. Once the female released the fry, she did not exhibit

any tendency to care for the fry. I started the fry off on Liquid fry food. After seven days I started feeding crushed flake food. The fry grew slowly.

This is an extremely easy fish to induce to spawn. When I received my first group, they spawned within the first couple of weeks. After re-introducing the females to the community tank, it did not take them long to spawn again. The most challenging aspect of raising these fish is that the fry are very slow growers. Also, behavior wise, the *Pseudocrenilabrus nicholsi* are significantly more aggressive than the *Ps. multicolor*. This was

actually one of the easier mouthbrooders I have bred. As stated earlier, the hardest part is keeping the fry. Typical spawns were about 20-25. While breeding *Pseudocrenilabrus nicholsi* was relatively

easy, I would recommend them to keep with Africans. They are beautiful, if aggressive, fish.

Be prepared to deal with very aggressive males and offer lots of cover both at the bottom and top of the tank. My dominant male beat up both males and females on a regular basis requiring me to remove the injured fish to other tanks to recover. Males will attack brooding females, so it is best to remove her to a well planted tank with some dither fish. Despite these challenges, you should give this fish a try.

“When spawning, the color of the male intensifies. Females change to a bright yellow and the brown markings fade a bit“

“Be prepared to deal with very aggressive males and offer lots of cover both at the bottom and top of the tank“

Species Profile: Mbipi lutea "spotbar"

— by Greg Steeves

Mbipi lutea "spotbar" is most definitely one of the most beautiful fish I have ever seen from the Lake Victoria region. I do not have a lot of information on this fish but can tell you they are a distinct species and not a mix of two different furu species. Spotbars (as I am calling them) breed true. The second generation fry



have retained the coloration and barring patterns of their grandparents. I am convinced this is a true species of cichlid. It is the name I have applied that I am not so sure about. How did I arrive at this name? Here's the tale:

While on a visit to New England in 1998, I met with Alan Wagonblott and toured his fishroom. Al had been one of the first hobbyists in New England to concentrate most of his fish keeping efforts on Victorian rock cichlids. The fish in his tanks were foreign to me. I had never heard their names, never seen any pictures of them, and knew nothing about keeping them. Suddenly I had to have some!

He directed me to a tank of about 55 gallons. In it was a group of these beautiful critters. They looked as if they had been painted. Knowing full well he would

never part with his breeders, I asked if he had gotten any spawning from them. In a 10 gallon tank were a couple of dozen small fry huddled together in a corner.

Al had told me that he had acquired these fish from a member of the Michigan Aquarium society, who in turn had gotten them from a wild-caught shipment the club had arranged. These came from a region known as Yala Swamp. The contact in Michigan had called them Haplochromis sp. "crossbar".

I parted with a half dozen F1 fry. As the fry began to grow in my tank, they developed the color I had been waiting for quite early. I had no photographs at the time to pass around for identification so I did the best I could explaining the fish to Dr. Les Kaufman at Boston University. Dr. Kaufman is the authority on the Victorian species flock as far as I'm concerned, and I pestered him for information on this fish.

I explained that the dominant male had a lime green body dotted with six black spots along the lateral line. The tail, anal, and dorsal fins are lined with bright red. The fin



"I did the best I could explaining the fish to Dr. Les Kaufman at Boston University."

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rays emerging from the dorsal and tail fins are radiant with bright blue. The region of the head from the gill plate up, is a dull blue with a prominent eye barring that extends around the snout, through the eyes, and tapers out towards the lower jaw.

Kaufman explained to me that the name "crossbar" was nothing that he was familiar with, but the fish did sound a lot like one he had dubbed *Haplochromis* sp. "spotbar" that was indeed from the Yala Swamp region. I conferred with Al about this information and asked him if he thought there was anyway that the name could have gotten mixed up as the fish was passed to him. Of course it was possible.

Since that time, I had done quite a bit of digging for information on these beauties, and finally concluded that they had been described in 1996 as *Mbipi lutea*. There are several 'locale variants' of this species from the Yala Swamp, including the "spotbar" and "porthole", a very similar fish that lacks the barring and spots when fully colored.

We were fortunate enough to also acquire a group of the "portholes", and managed to get quite a few photographs of them before they met a most untimely demise (have you ever noticed that the

only tanks that break are the ones with irreplaceable fish in them?).

These fish are very undemanding. They will subsist fine on basic flake food and eat anything else offered as well. *Mbipi lutea* have a medium temperament when it comes to aggression as compared to most other Victorians. They seem to sit



somewhere in between *Paralabidochromis* sp. "rock krib" and *Haplochromis* sp. "44", both which they will coexist nicely with. The *lutea* is extremely prolific and large spawns from small females are normal. I have had a female *lutea* under two inches release 40 fully developed fry.

Fry are easily raised on crushed flake and grow rapidly. Maximum size for *Mbipi lutea* seems to be near three inches. It's a shame these colorful little fish are so rare in the hobby because they make ideal aquatic residence.

Species Profile: *Aulonocara stuartgranti* Maulana

— by Dave Hansen

Aulonocara stuartgranti Maulana is a beautiful peacock with a blue body and a band of yellow that runs behind the head and into the pectoral fins. There is also some yellow mixed into the tail as well. The dorsal, anal, and pectoral fins all have a white edge to them. This is one of

my favorite peacocks. It also goes by the name of Bi-Color 500. The Bi-Color part is obviously because of the dominant blue and yellow in the fish. The 500 comes from the fact that it was item number 500 on Stuart Grant's African

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Diving LTD price list.

It is no surprise that this fish is a mouth brooder. I have found it to be one of the most peaceful of peacocks in my experience. I have kept it with *Protomelas*, *Placidochromis*, *Otopharynx*, and other *Aulonocara* with absolutely no problems at all. It spends most of its time close to



the sand and sifts often through the sand. In the wild it is a micro predator and I am pretty sure that is where this behavior comes from. I feed New Life Spectrum as the staple food. I also use Omega One African Cichlid Flakes and frozen brine, mysis, krill, and plankton.

I had my male and female in a 55 gallon with various other fish including a male *Aulonocara Rubescens*. I noticed that both males seemed very interested in her, which is not surprising as peacocks are notorious cross breeders. I decided to separate the Maulana pair from the tank and into a 20 long that I had empty. I did this and kind of left them alone for a while. I put a few rocks in the tank for her sake but I am not sure if it was totally necessary as he has never been hard on his female at all. I peeked in a couple of days later and noticed that she was hold-

ing. I pulled the male out and returned him to the main tank. He seemed to have a bit of an extra strut in his step.. I threw some food in with the female occasionally but she never gave it a second look, so I decided to let it run its course and left the tank alone. Once in awhile I would turn on the light just to make sure she was still holding. About 3 ½ weeks

later I noticed a couple fry swimming around and was kind of disappointed. I was thinking is that it????? A couple of days later she released the rest and totaled 19 fry. One died pretty quick and 3 days later I am at 18 and holding strong.

I have always loved peacocks and have kept quite a few, but this is the first brood I have actually ever kept successfully. Normally I would stress the female out trying to catch her after she was holding and moving her. Other times I had no room and would let the release happen in the main tank and let nature happen.

This is a great fish that I think everyone should have the pleasure of keeping.

“It spends most of its time close to the sand and sifts often through the sand



Species Profile: *Paracyprichromis nigripinnis*

— by Roberto De Leon

Paracyprichromis nigripinnis or Blue Neon is a maternal mouthbrooder native to the rocky areas of Lake Tanganyika where caves and other hiding places are found. The surface temperatures of the water range between 78-82 degrees and 70 degree at deeper levels. The pH of the lake ranges between 8.6 and 9.5. I obtained seven full grown adults from George Martinez. *P. nigripinnis* is an elongated fish with a dull orange color and iridescent blue horizontal stripes. Males achieve a size of 4.5 inches. Females achieve a size of 3.5 inches and have the same colors as the male although the blue striping is less intense.

The fish bred in a 75 gallon tank which contained pool filter sand and Texas holey rock. The tank was filtered by an AquaClear 500 and Filstar XP3 canister and had a pH of ~7.8. I performed weekly water changes equal to 15-20% of the tank volume. I used fluorescent lighting for duration of 10 hours each day. In the wild, *P. nigripinnis* feed on zooplankton, but I fed them brine shrimp flake, Cyclop-eeze and HBH pellets.

I did not observe the spawning, but these fish will generally spawn on a diagonal rock allowing the eggs to roll down until picked up by the female. The brood consisted of 6 fry. After spawning, the female retreated to a hiding place to avoid harassment by other fish. To protect the fry, I moved the female to an empty tank until she release. The total numbers of eggs were unknown but spawns are generally small (3-10 eggs).

The fry were release about 20 days after spawning but since I did not observe the spawn, I am not exactly sure how long

she held. The fry were brown/grey in color and of pretty good size at about 1 cm. They were free swimming with no yolk sack and began feeding immediately.



The fry tank uses a small power filter for filtration. The mother showed no care for the fry. She was returned to the main tank the day she released. I started the fry off on Cyclop-eeze and crushed flake which they eat well. Growth rate is yet to be seen.

It is best to keep these fish in a large group. These fish are a wonderful addition to a community tank. They aren't aggressive and are very beautiful. A side-effect of having them in the tank is that normally very shy fish feel more comfortable when they venture from their hiding places. I would recommend this fish to anyone with at least a 3 foot tank. Tank mates should not be very aggressive. These fish are also very sensitive to stress. I lost one of the adults when I first obtained the group. Care should be taken to keep stress to a minimum.

“these fish will generally spawn on a diagonal rock allowing the eggs to roll down until picked up by the female”

Paralabidochromis sp. "rock krib"

— by Greg Steeves

The rock krib is a Victorian cichlid. Scientifically I do not know much about these fish, I don't know what the wild population status is for certain, and as of yet, this species has not been taxonomically classified.

I obtained my first colony of *Paralabidochromis* sp. "rock krib" in March 1997. The original group I had seemed to be of a different variant than the colony I have now. I believe these fish at one time had a lake wide distribution and the dark variant was likely from north in Ugandan/Kenyian waters, while the lighter colored rock krib hail from the Mwanza Gulf region.

On a related note, another Victorian cichlid in the hobby that is commonly seen, *Paralabidochromis* sp. "half crimson", is though by many (including myself) to be a rock krib variant as well.

I had much rock work, crushed oyster shells mixed in the substrate of river gravel, and an AquaClear 300 for filtration of the tank. Due to their small size, I placed a sponge block over the intake to prevent the little critters from being sucked up. This I've learned the hard way! After acclimating the fish to the water away they swam, I didn't see too much of them for the next week... the rocks in the substrate were bigger than they were. Eventually they would appear at feeding time. They were given crushed flake and an occasional treat of brine shrimp. After they got acclimated, the rock krib really started to put on weight. They grew to one inch in two months. Within a year they reach their adult size of around three inches.

These fish are brilliantly colored. The females have a metallic orange body with black vertical barring. The males are basically the same but with so much more! The head turns a metallic blue, the body sports a red patching on the belly, and the dorsal, anal, and tail fins are all bright red.

Males grow faster and larger than the females, and these fish are not nearly as aggressive as other Victorians I've kept.

Spawn sizes have varied from under ten fry in young fish, to over thirty in more experienced breeders.

I have kept this species in tanks varying in size from 20 to 100 gallons. So long as there is rock work that the rock krib can retreat to for refuge, there should be no problem at all in their keeping. They mix well with some of the striped Victorians such as *Haplochromis* sp. 44 or *Astatotilapia nubila* as well with some of the lesser aggressive malawians. The *Paralabidochromis* sp. "rock krib" is a particularly good tank mate for most of the *Auloncaras* as well.

Paralabidochromis sp. "rock krib" does not grow large, gets along with most other species, is not a finicky eater and breeds readily. They also sport rather beautiful coloration. What's not to like about them?



Need More Tanks!!!

— by Dave Hansen

I have a dilemma. The formation of the HCCC and the BAP program really got me excited about trying to keep some of my fry. I currently only have 2 tanks. A 55-gallon for my Malawi fish and a 20-gallon for the Tanganyikan shell dwellers that I keep. Every time a fish would spawn I had nowhere to go with the female and/or fry. I tried breeder nets but the big fish would always peck at the fry through the net and kill them. So I got to the point where I was just letting the release happen in the main tank.

We live in a small house. Having two boys pretty much has us at capacity. We have 2 living rooms and one of them is being converted to a playroom for the boys. A 6 yr old and a 6 month old is not what I want around the tanks, so in the playroom was not an option. We recently changed our other living room around and I have the 55-gallon in there right now. My wife has no problem having tanks, just doesn't want them all over the house. So what I decided to do was build a custom finished stand for the living room that would hold a 55-gallon, 20 long, 40-gallon breeder, and several 10 gallons depending on how I turned them.

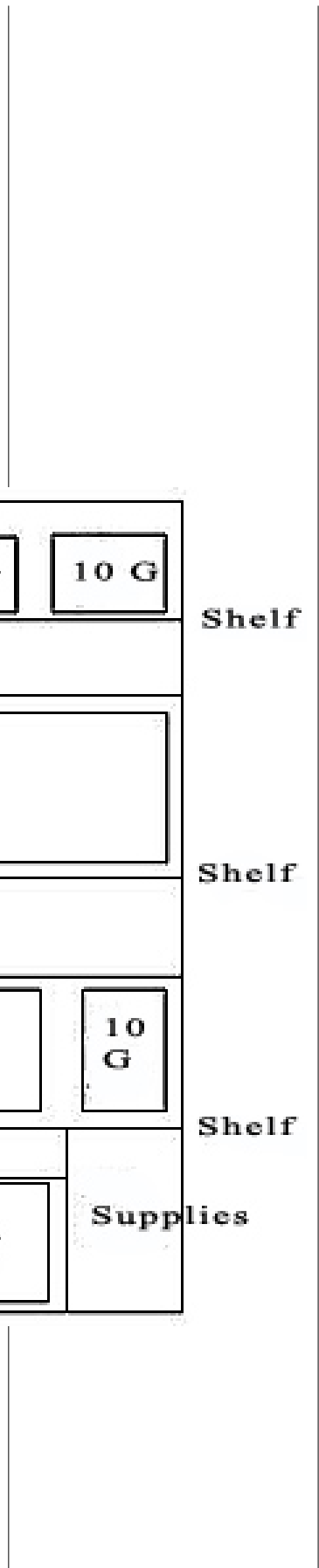
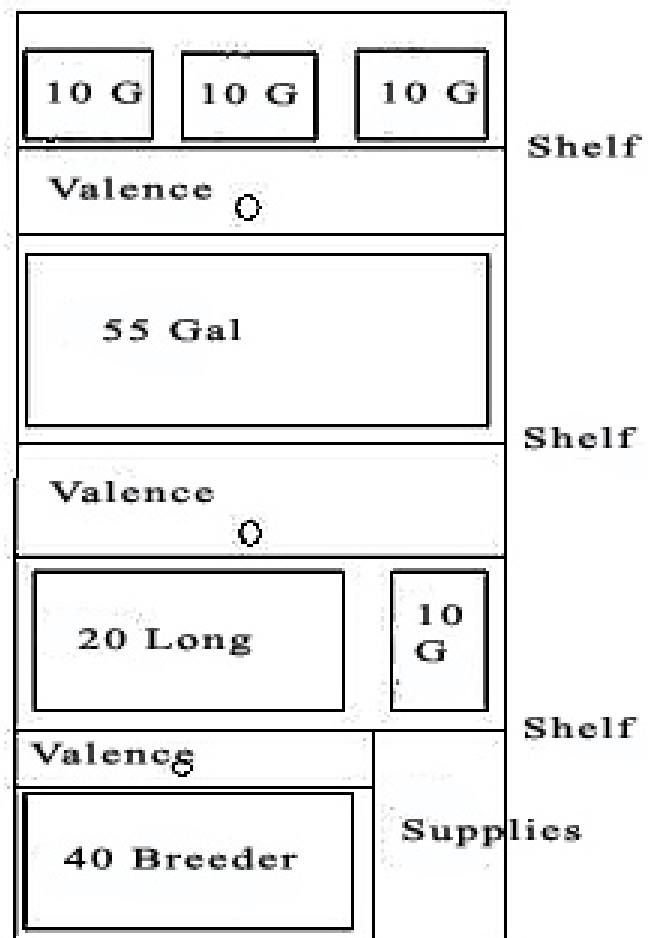
Before I even thought about the layout of the stand I needed to look at the power requirements. With Robert Deleon's help I determined I was in good shape and the power required wasn't even close to being an issue. Then I turned to the weight issue. I added up all the gallons and determined the weight and did some research and I will have no problems there either. We had a 2500 lb piano there before and the stand setup will weigh less than that I am sure. Now,

how was I going to filter?? At first I considered central filtration but that would take up valuable space in the stand. I want fish not equipment to look at. I will filter each tank separately. The most important part to my wife is what is this going to look like when finished. It will be a finished stand. All wires and equipment will be hidden. Each shelf will have a small panel that will hide the airspace between the top of one tank and the next shelf. I decided to go with 8" as the space between top of tank and shelf. That should give me plenty of room for maneuvering around inside the tank and accessing filters etc.

On the left is a rough drawing of what the stand will look like.

The wood has been purchased and building has started. Hopefully by the next newsletter I can have the second part of this article that shows the final project!

Then the hardest part comes after that.... what fish to put in all my new tanks.



Claude's Easy Egg Tumbler

— by Claude Radley

Parts:

1. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " plastic fluorescent light cover tube.
2. Sponge (fish safe)...experiment with thickness to suite your air supply.
3. Plexiglass, any thickness...I use 1/8".
4. Glue or silicone.

Tools: Scissors, Skill Saw and Drill

Construction:

1. Cut plastic tube to desired length.
2. Cut circular piece of sponge slightly larger than tubing.
3. Cut plexiglass to inside diameter of tube.
4. Drill holes in plexiglass for escaping air and airline tubing access.
5. Glue or silicone plexiglass to inside top of tube.
6. Insert sponge in bottom of tube (If having the sponge unsupported makes you nervous you can fasten it into the tube any number of ways...e.g. pierce a hole completely through the tubing and sponge and fasten in with wire or whatever).

Easy Syno Spawning Chamber

— by Greg Steeves

This is a cool breeding trick that Dave Ball taught me.

Step one: Condition your Synodontis petricola with some small type of live worm...black worms, blood worms...whatever. Use the usual caution in knowing you are not getting a contaminated source. In actuality, ours have spawned on a diet of flake food.

Step two: Gather the following items:

1. Clay flower pot with drainage tray to fit. The size of the flower pot should be in the 6"-9" range. The flower pot should, when flipped upside down, rest on the drainage tray perfectly.
2. Enough marbles to fill the clay drainage dish. Dark green marbles are preferred as this is my favorite color.
3. A piece of rigid plastic tube that will fit the drainage hole on the bottom of your flower pot. This will have to be large enough to stick out of the water.
4. A small plastic or PVC 90 degree elbow to fit the above mentioned tube.
5. An airpump and airline tubing.
6. A small gauge mesh breeding trap. One of those ones with metal clips that bend to fit on the edge of a tank works best.

Step three: Assemble everything!

1. Cut or chip a small hole at the rim of the flower pot. Make the hole large enough so that your petricola can get in. When you have made this door, ensure the edges are sanded down so your *Synodontis* don't scrape themselves against it. At this point you should have a clay flower pot that when flipped upside down rests on the clay drainage tray. You should have a small porthole for the petricola to enter safely in.
2. Snuggly squeeze your piece of tubing through the hole at the top of your cave (this is the drainage hole on the bottom of the flower pot which should now be the roof of your spawning chamber). Push it down until it hits the drainage tray which is the bottom portion of your spawning chamber. If your tubing is snug, you are fine so far. If it is loose, you may have to add a bead of silicon around the outside edge. Once everything is fitting correctly, cut three small V's at the bottom of your tube. The idea is that the eggs will pass through these openings and up the tube. I've found that melting notches with a wood burner makes this very easy.
3. Cut a small hole in the tube extending out of the spawning cave large enough for your airline tubing to fit in. The cut should be made close to the point where the tube enters the top of your spawning cave. There is some give to the airline tubing so ensure you don't make this hole too big. It should also fit snugly.
4. Place the unit at the bottom of your spawning tank. Cut the top of the tubing about an inch above your projected water level. Fix the elbow to the top of your tube.
5. Remove unit from it's base (clay drainage tray) and fill the clay base with marbles (preferably green). Place net breeding trap on the side of your tank. The breeding trap should be on the inside of the tank! Replace the top to your breeding cave on the marble filled base. Hook your airline tubing up to an airpump. Adjust your breeding cave so that the water coming out of the top of your tubing falls into your mesh breeding trap.
6. Yer done! Grab a beer and get comfortable in front of the tank.

Given the opportunity, *Synodontis* will almost always use this cave for spawning. The idea is that they enter the cave, scatter their eggs, the eggs fall between the cracks in the marbles (preferably green ones) and get sucked up the tube by the current your air bubbles create. The eggs then get dumped into your breeding net where they can be hatched. Some minor adjustments may be necessary or even your own modifications, but this method of securing the eggs from a petricola spawn works very well. When you consider that hundreds of eggs can be released in a single spawning, the potential fry amounts make this contraption more than worth a try.



For more information about the HCCC,
visit our site at www.xdeleon.com/hccc