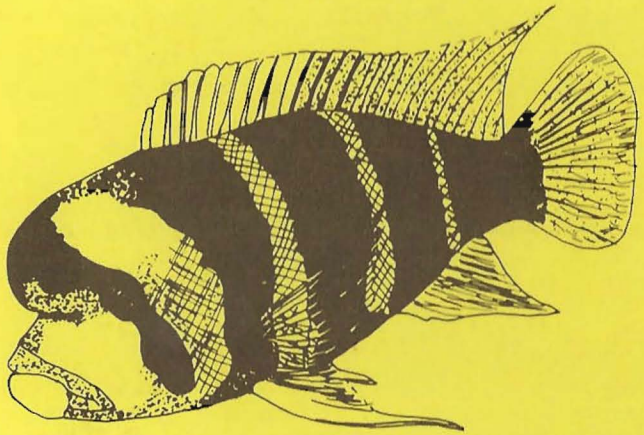
The Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated meets on the third Wednesday of every month (except January)

at Northvale Primary School hall, Albany Drive, Mulgrave

(MELWAYS REF. 80 E9)

at 8.00 pm sharp.



And our friends get together on . . .

AUSTRALIA-NEW GUINEA FISHES ASSOCIATION
June Caughey, 763 2865.

EASTERN DISTRICTS AQUARIUM SOCIETY
4th Friday of the month — Richard Crawford, 232 3968.

MARINE AQUARIUM SOCIETY
2nd Tuesday of the month — K. Gilbert, 739 1741.

WESTERN DISTRICTS AQUARIUM SOCIETY
1st Tuesday of the month — Carmel Dwyer, 372 1538.

VCS

$1 Volume 18, #2,
May 1989

Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated

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the cichlid monthly

contents

Volume 18, #2 — MAY 1989

The Victorian Cichlid Society Inc, formed by Cichlidophiles in March 1972 and thus became the first specialist aquarist group in the State of Victoria. Its aims are: to promote the keeping of Cichlids; to gain and disseminate knowledge of their habits through slides, films, books, lectures, overseas magazines, articles by members and discussion with fellow members or other experts in the field.

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VCS

CICHLID SCENE — 17 May 1989

THE NEXT MEETING will be held on 17 May at **Northvale Primary School hall, Albany Drive, Mulgrave** at 8.00 pm. Supper will be partaken of after the meeting — visitors, as always, are welcome.

MINI TALK: 'Neetroplus nematopus' — **Graham Rowe.**

MAIN TALK: 'Australian Natives' — **Phil Cadwallader.**

DOOR PRIZES: Donated by **Pet & Aquarium Industries.**

DRAW PRIZES:

1. Choice of Tanganyikan or Dwarf Cichlid books.
2. Gift Voucher — **Aquatic Art.**
3. Port.

TABLE SHOW: Americans and Asians (like it says on your planner).

HAVE TWICE THE FUN — BRING A FRIEND!

editorial

DARYL HUTCHINS

Short and sweet — that is what this editorial is going to be — mostly because there is only half a page left to put it on because I finished putting this edition together then found that I had omitted the Treasurer's Report.

A handy error to make as it turned out as I have very little to say (you noticed that already, didn't you?). So if you are reading on to find inspiration and/or controversy — forget it.

The mailman brought me two original articles today from interstate. Too late, unfortunately, for this issue, but they will surely be presented in the June edition. Incidentally, they are from non-members (feeling guilty??).

This is a good time to thank all those who helped me get out Volume 17, something that I was remiss in not doing at the end of that volume. **Peter Petrus** was responsible for bringing the finished product to you. **Hanno van Dijk** screened the few photographs I was able to acquire. You know who the authors were (if this column needs another line I will put their names in). **Graham Rowe** put me onto a few good reprints. The rest was my fault.

My apologies also for the blatant error on page 15 last month. This error occurred because I typeset the two chromide stories together and got a little muddled when setting the caption which should read "Green Chromides — *Etroplus suratensis*". Sorry about that.

MARCH-APRIL 1989 TREASURER'S REPORT

		OPENING BALANCE	549.46
DEBITS		CREDITS	
Postage	50.00	Memberships	378.00
Printing	**.**	Raffle	153.00
Trophies	**.**	Trading Table	70.00
Draw Prize	45.84	Auction	9.00
Trading Table	102.00	Advertisements	45.50
Supper	28.70	Miscellaneous	**.**
Miscellaneous	**.**		
EXPENDITURE	226.54	INCOME	655.50
		CLOSING BALANCE	978.42

Manny Vella

VCS

Our Trip to Africa and South America

By MANNY VELLA

THIS title may be a little deceiving, as we did not really travel to these places. Although, judging by the wildlife, you would have thought we had.

The outing was originally planned to include a much larger group, however, after a few cancelations the "group" consisted of one car load.

We set off from Dandenong early one morning and, despite a minor misreading of the map by "the Mrs", 1½ hours later we arrived at our destination — Hazelwood Pondage.

Immediately, fish were seen.

On went the waders and, net in hand, in I went. By pushing the net through the weeds we soon had some cichlids in the bucket, the fishes caught were Convicts and *Tilapia maria*. The excitement of catching these cichlids "in the wild" was exhilarating.

Meanwhile, the kids had eaten some sandwiches and thrown their crusts in the water, there were soon swarms of cichlids on the surface — so, out came the fishing rods.

Using a very light sinker, a hook with no barb, and the right bait, there was soon a seven-inch *Tilapia maria* on the line. I am a keen saltwater fisherman, but catching a cichlid on the line was just as much fun. Within half-an-hour six large fish were taken.

The color of these two particular species was spectacular. The orange color in the Convict females was brilliant. The *Tilapia maria* had striking underbelly and cheeks.

A good day was had by my family, especially my son. He hooked his first fish ever — and it was a cichlid!

The release of these fishes was a careless, irresponsible act, however, it must be pointed out that Hazelwood Pondage is a man-made, artificial environment which is heated by water from the Hazelwood power station. If this were not the case, there is no doubt that these cichlids *could not survive.*

It was a lot of fun collecting these fishes in as close as possible to "wild" conditions. However, I recommend you do not go collecting fishes with the idea of selling them — shopowners would not want hundreds of *Tilapia maria* and Convicts. But for collecting specimens for your personal tanks it is an enjoyable outing.

A History of the Breeders' Achievement Awards

By Aart Langelaar

THESE systems originated overseas and amounted to the awarding of points for registration of breeding "achievements".

The early systems were most unfair, favoring the affluent hobbyist because, while only one point was awarded for a "common" species, many more points (maybe 20-30) would be awarded for a "rare" fish ("common" and "rare" are NOT synonymous with "easy" and "difficult" to breed — Ed).

Obviously, a fairer system was needed, and it was only a matter of time before improved ones were conceived.

In 1971, Ernie Hicks, president of the Aquarium Society of Victoria, instigated a new system which has since been adopted in one form or another by most aquarium societies in Australia. The main innovation in this new system was that only one point was awarded per species, irregardless of its rarity.

The ASOV, being a general aquarium society, covered all fishes from cold-freshwater to tropical-marine and badges were awarded for the registration of 10, 25, 50, 75 and 100 species.

The 14th February 1972 saw the advent of the Victorian Cichlid Society's "cichlid only" breeder's achievement award.

The VCS committee more or less adopted the ASOV system (one point per species) — its main aim being the preservation and promotion of cichlids.

As the VCS awards were restricted to a single family, and thus far fewer species, the committee decided to add an award for five species bred. The badges (at first not specifically designed for the VCS) and certificates were now awarded as follows:

5 — Green
10 — Yellow
25 — Red
50 — Blue
75 — White
100 — Gold

This system was adopted by the Federation and other societies.

The VCS also added some rules of its own, such as the ineligibility of hybrids and sub-species for registation, and different color morphs (eg *Pseudotropheus zebra* OB and *Pseudotropheus zebra* BB) can not be claimed as different species.

A species which has caused much controversy in this regard is *Tropheus moorii* as there is only one recognised species with what appears to be an unlimited number of color morphs — any of these may only be claimed once. (Although it does no harm to "register" these, and any doubtful species, as they may become valid species one day — another good reason for not intermingling these variants in the first place — Ed.)

The spawning date and authenticity of the species, as well as the survival of at least one fry have to be verified by a member of a recognised aquarium society.

In the early days of our society the literature and our knowledge of cichlids were nowhere near the standards of today — some strange-sounding applications were lodged eg: "Red-faced Haplochromis" or "Blue-finned Cichlasoma". Although these early applications were valid at the time, they would, under the present rules,

be rejected (or, more precisely, "put on hold" — Ed) as the spawning registration form requires a scientific name.

Just because a hobbyist purchases a colony of fish labelled as *Haplochromis moori* "affinis" in good faith, does not make the fish eligible to be claimed as a new species. Proof of the claim's validity rests with the breeder — NOT with the source of purchase NOR with the VCS's officer-in-charge of the breeder's achievement award.

"Suspect nomenclature" in claims happens more often than need be. Doubtful claims will be accepted but they will be kept in the "case pending" file and the breeder will not be credited with the spawning until the question is resolved.

Our award system was further revised in 1987. It was then decided to redesign the badges and certificates to inelude the society's logo. The awards are now as follows:

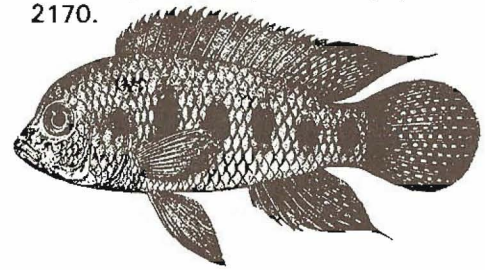
5 — Green
10 — Yellow
25 — Red
50 — Blue
75 — White
100 — Gold
125 — Gold with red stone inset
150 — Gold with blue stone inset
175 — Gold with white stone inset
200 — Gold with diamond inset

Another addition to the award system — the first VCS-registered spawning award — came into being on 1st April 1988. This is a certificate issued to a member for being the first (within the VCS) to have bred a particular species — certificates only being issued for first spawnings which have occurred since 1st April 1988.

AN EVER-INCREASING DILEMMA

By Ocker Oscar

FROM 'CICHLID CIRCULAR' (Vol 8, #2) JOURNAL OF THE NSW CICHLID SOCIETY INC, Box 163, Moorebank, NSW 2170.



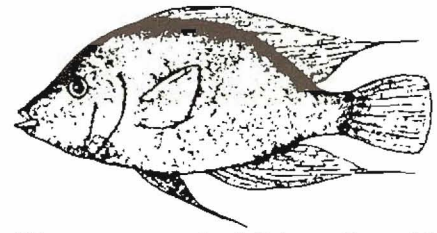
The general apathy and attitude of cichlid breeders these days never ceases to amaze me. I have heard it said a million times over — "It's not worth my keeping it if I can't get $XXX for it.

This is what I have been saying all along. Hobbyists and breeders alike, could not care less about the species in question, only how much they can milk out of that particular species. And, when they have exhausted all there is to get out of it, they generally sell the fish for another species, which may be more profitable, even though the same situation will occur with that species in the months/years ahead.

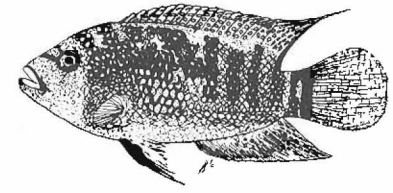
An example of what I am saying is the recent fob-off by breeders of all the adults and fry of *Trematocranus jacobfriebergi.*In other instances I have seen breeders dispose of species like *Cyrtocara similis, Chilotipia rhoadesii, Cyrtocara electra, Cyrtocara venustus,* Regal Peacocks, Port Acaras, Jack Dempseys, Jewels, Red Devils, etc — this would seem to be a backward step. (Anyone in Melbourne who wants to fob-off any *C. rhoadesii,* please let me know — Ed).

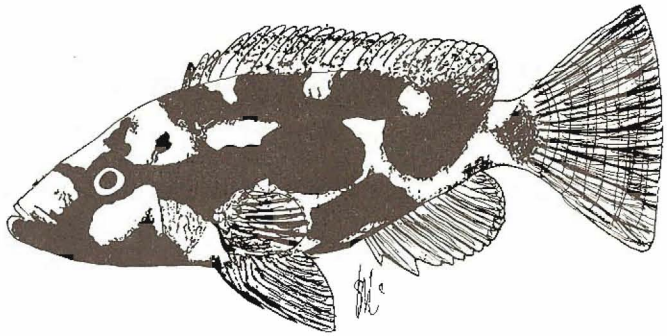
Any species of cichlid is worth breeding, even if all you can get is $1.00 each, for if that species is not bred by anyone it will end up like many other species that are now no longer available to the hobby. For instance, when was the last time you saw large numbers of *Cyrtocara polystigma, Cynotilapia afra, Cytrocara annectens, Cyrtocara epichorialis, Cyrtocara linni, Cyrtocara ovatus, Labidochromis caeruleus, Hemichromis thomasii, Aequidens tetramerus, Aequidens paraguayensis*? I could go on and on.

There are, however, species which are so exorbitantly priced (Orange Chromides for example) that in the very near future — within six months of this article (Feb.89) — you will see them drop considerably to a more realistic selling price, rather than the high price of $95 being charged only a few months ago.



What most people fail to realise with these fish, particularly the mouthbrooders, is that they breed so readily and often that sooner or later (in most cases it is sooner) that species becomes much more readily available than it was some months earlier. All of a sudden (and this has proven to be happening quite a lot these days) that species **dries up** and very few juveniles are available. The reason for this is that most breeders have stopped breeding them because they can not get their $2.50 or $3.00 each for the fish in question as the going price has dropped to around $1.00 to $1.50.





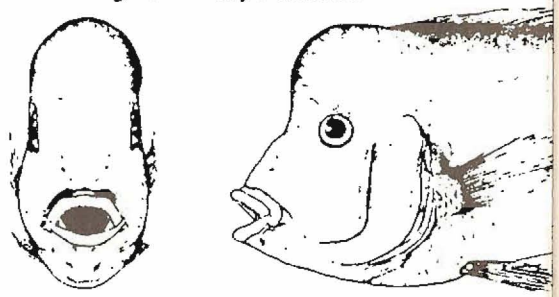
Having bred almost 100 species of cichlid officially whilst in this society over the past five or six years, I know that it does not cost a great deal to grow up any of the African cichlids as they are generally saleable within three months of becoming free-swimming — presuming enough water changes and ample food. The disposal value (minimum $1-$1.50) would be far more than the actual cost of raising the fish and any amount above this figure would surely be a bonus to the breeder. However, this fact is not even considered by breeders these days!

All that breeders seem to be concerned about is how much they can get from a particular species. This is a great pity, as one day soon, many species will disappear from the aquatic scene due to this ever-increasing greediness on the part of various breeders from all walks of life.

With American cichlid species, the minimum price obtained for each species could be somewhat lower than Africans due to their fecundity and how common they are in the trade at the time. A large spawning of, say, 600 Red Devils (at three centimetres) would end up costing very little (per fish) to raise, provided enough space, food and water changes were made to accommodate such a spawning. As these fish happen to be Red Devils they would not fetch too high a price anyway due to their aggressive tendencies and slow selling rate. However, a large spawning of, say, 250 *Geophagus surinamensis*, would take considerably longer to reach three centimetres and would therefore sell for a much higher price.

Each breeder tends to cost into the brood the time spend on raising and keeping such fishes. To me this is wrong. It is only a hobby to the breeder and supplementary to his/her basic income which is earned from an employer, and as such, should not be included.

Other costs, for example electricity and gas, food and possible excess water bills should be included, and when these are realistically charged (in proportion to their usage in your hobby) you will see that a minimum of $1-$1.50 per fish is a more correct figure in many instances.



A hobby should be just that — a hobby. It was never meant to be a money-making concern. The taxman certainly does not consider it as a money-making proposition, otherwise many breeders would be paying tax on their hobby by now.

I hope that this article will straighten-out some peoples' thoughts on this matter, although I am sure there will be many who will completely disregard this advice and continue to try and charge prices for some cichlids that are well outside the correct price for such species — one can only live in hope.

1989 CICHLID CONVENTION
20/80 AUCTION

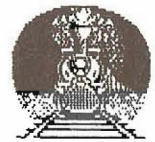
DATE: 12th June 1989 at 10.30 AM.

VENUE: Manny Vella's residence at 33 Bemersyde Drive, Berwick.

FOR INFORMATION ON LOTS TO BE AUCTIONED RING 707 1073.

Some of the species already promised are:

T. jacobfreibergi
L. tetracanthus
A. mylandi
T. caninus
T. moorii
H. spilonotus
H. ericotaenia
H. ahli
H. triaenodon



AND MANY MORE ARE WANTED.

Lots are restricted to limit numbers of individual species.

DON'T FORGET, ANY ENQUIRIES RING 707 1073

All raffle books MUST BE HANDED IN to John Reeves (or any committee member) by the MAY MEETING.

(The conference is *before* the June Meeting.)

VCS

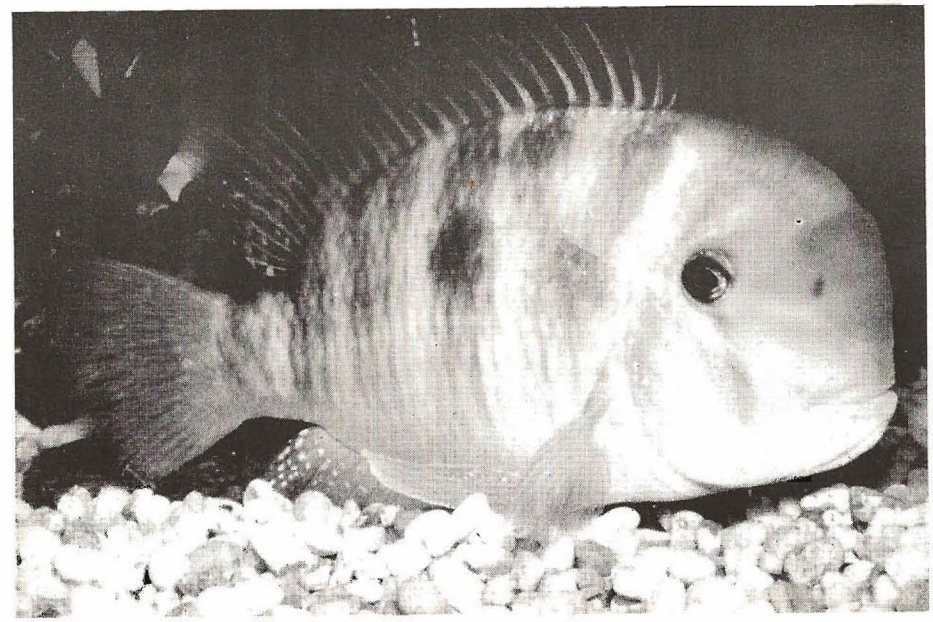
A Reconsideration of the Genus *Gymnogeophagus*

Wayne S. Leibel
Department of Biology
Lafayette College
Easton, PA 18042

Introduction

The genus *Gymnogeophagus* was erected by Ribeiro in 1918 to accommodate the new species *cyanopterus* (= *balzanii* Perugia 1891). The generic nomen translates to "naked Eartheater" and refers to the character used by Ribeiro as a diagnostic for his new genus; the absence of cheek scalation. Although Ribeiro's genus was disregarded by subsequent cichlid systematists (eg. Fowler, 1954). Gosse (1976), in his revision of the genus *Geophagus,* embraced Ribeiro's taxon, and added three additional species, *australis, rhabdotus,* and *gymnogenys,* all formerly placed in *Geophagus,* to it. Gosse (1976) redefined the genus to include two skeletal characteristics of dorsal fin insertion that occurred along with unscaled cheeks: the absence of supraneurals, and the presence of a forward-directed spine on the top of the first dorsal pterygiophore (see figure 2). Pterygiophores connect dorsal fin rays with the neural spines of the vertebral column and supraneurals are pterygiophore-like elements which precede the dorsal fin (and pterygiophores) but which do not articulate with dorsal fin rays. *Biotodoma* species have two supraneurals, *Geophagus* species have one, and *Gymnogeophagus* species have none, while the two former genera have no forward-directed spine on their first pterygiophore (Gosse, 1976). (In fact, the antrorse spine is unique to *Gymnogeophagus* among the Neotropical Cichlidae.) Obviously, these diagnostic characters cannot be eyeballed on living specimens and fall the esoteric provenance of professional ichthyologists who seem compelled to take dead fish apart in an attempt to confer order on them.

A recent paper by Reis and Malabarba (1988), *Revision of the Neotropical Cichlid Genus Gymnogeophagus Ribeiro, 1918, with Descriptions of Two New Species (Pisces, Perciformes),* Revista Brasileira de Zoologia *4* (4): 259-305, enlarges the genus *Gymnogeophagus* to include 7 species, four old, two new, and one resurrected from synonymy. Further, new descriptions of all 7 species, including life colors of newly-collected specimens of 6 of these, are given which again throw into doubt previous assignment of the nomina *australis, rhabdotus,* and *gymnogenys* to living fish in the hobby. In this short essay I hope to share the results of this revision as they apply to fishes currently in the hobby and to fishes which may well be imported in the future from the Argentine-Paraguay-Southern Brazilian (Rio Grande do Sul) axis along with staples from this area like *Gg. balzanii, Aequidens (Laetacara) dorsiger,* and *Cichlasoma (Heros) facetum.*

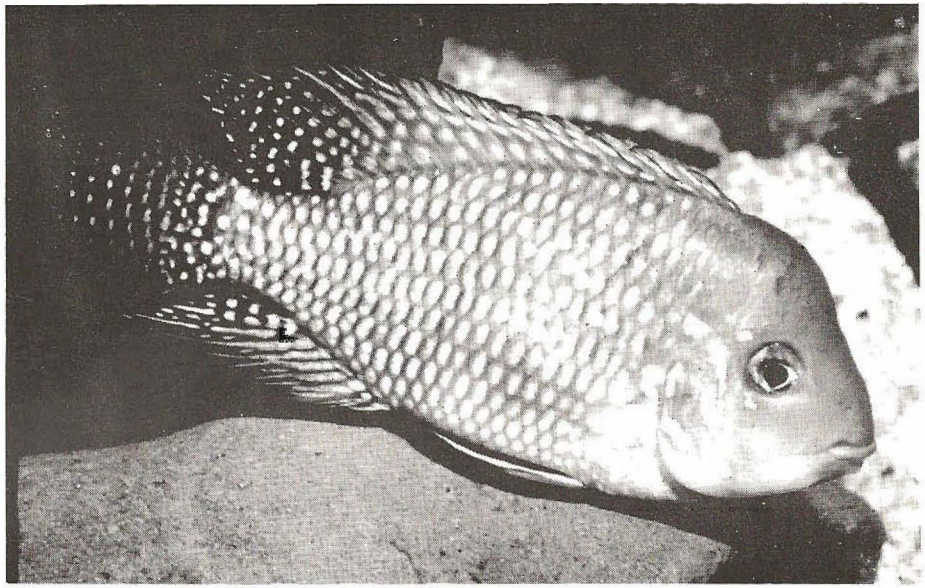


Gymnogeophagus balzanii, male. Leibel photo.

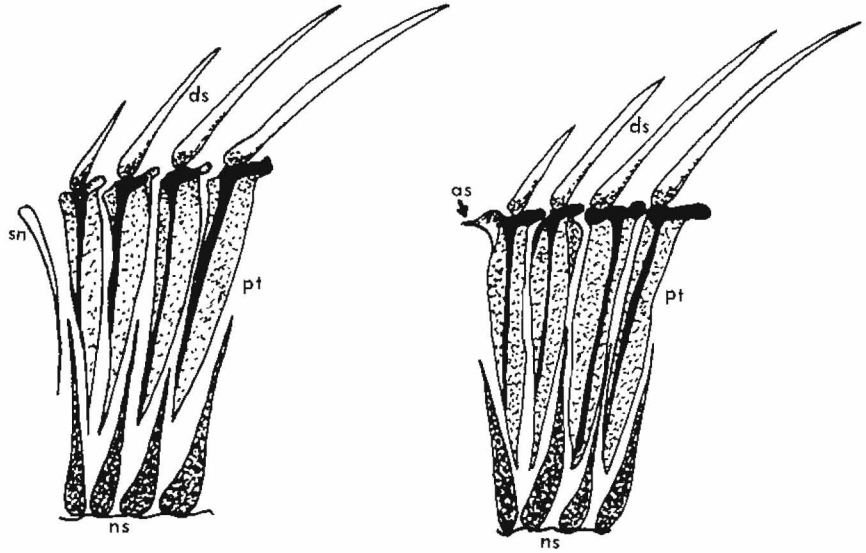
Species of the Genus *Gymnogeophagus*

Gg. balzanii. The identity of only one *Gymnogeophagus* species, *Gg. balzanii* (=*duodecimspinosus* Boulenger 1895, and *cyanopterus* Ribeiro 1918), is unambiguous and secure in the hobby. Reasonable photos exist throughout the hobby literature (see Leibel, 1983 for a listing) and the species is sufficiently distinctive in appearance, particularly the huge nuchal crown of reproductively-active males, that there is no reason for confusing this fish with any Geophagine yet in the hobby. *Gg. balzanii* is a harem-spawning delayed mouthbrooder whose reproductive behavior has been exhaustively documented (Richter, 1973; Leibel, 1983, 1984) since its initial importation in 1973 (Paraguay; Socolof 1974) and again in 1981 and thereafter (Argentina). The fish has proven relatively easy to breed and pond- or tank-reared stock is routinely offered by wholesalers and dealers these days.

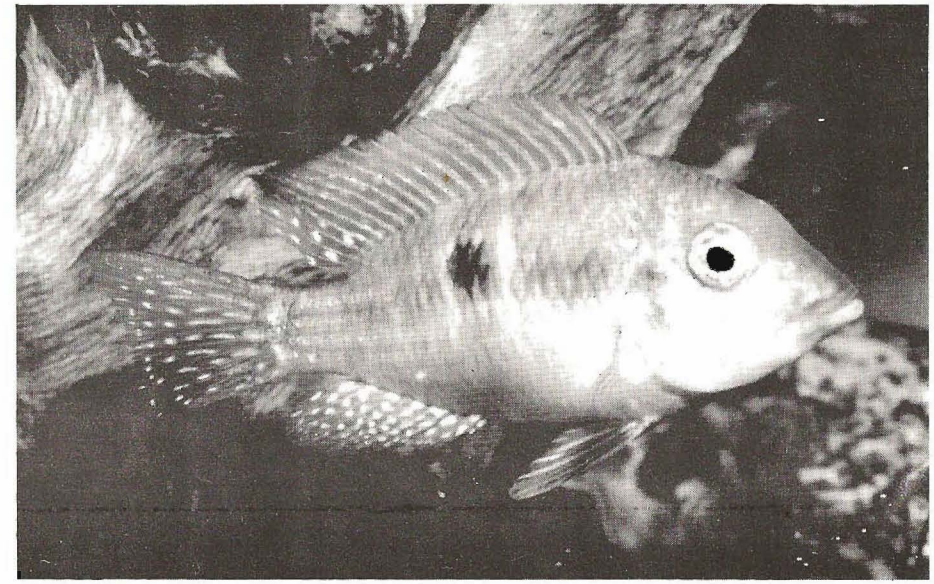
Gg. gymnogenys. *Gymnogeophagus gymnogenys* is, historically, one of the first of the Geophagines to have been imported (along with *Cichlasoma (Heros) facetum)* and bred around the turn of the 20th century. Sterba (1966) cites 1900 as the initial importation date of this fish into Germany and line drawings, some colored, appear in the early literature (eg. Holly et al., 1932, Peters 1935). Our classical interpretation of what *Gg. gymnogenys* (Dunklen Perlmutterfisch: "dark mother-of-pearl fish) is, a somewhat elongate *Geophagus brasiliensis* (Perlmutterfish) lookalike from the La Plata basin often with a pronounced nuchal crest, would seem to be erroneous in view of the Reis and Malabarba revision. I, among others, am guilty of propagating misidentification of this fish. In 1984 I received and maintained a fish I believed to be the



This fish labeled *Gg. gymnogenys* in the ACA Slide Set (#62-1) is actually a *Geophagus brasiliensis* morph. Leibel photo.



Schematic showing antrorse spine (as) on dorsal pterygiophore (pt) and position of supraneural(s) (sn). *Geophagus* on left, *Gymnogeophagus* on right. (ds, dorsal spine; ns, neural spine) After Reis and Malabarba (1988).



Gymnogeophagus meridionalis, sp. nov. Leibel photo.

real *Gg. gymnogenys*. Superficially, the fish resembled *G. brasiliensis* in coloration (typical blue pearl spangling), however the male was more elongate than what I had previously kept or seen as *G. brasiliensis,* he developed an impressive nuchal knot at about 5 inches TL, and expressed the diagnostic black vertical eyeband that Gosse (1976) had figured. The female remained much smaller than her consort (c. 3 inches TL) and when they spawned, they were typical non-mouthbrooding substrate spawners. Photos of these fish were circulated as slides #62-1 (male) and #72-2 (female) in the ACA Slide Series (see figure 3). Recently, photos labeled *Gg. gymnogenys* have appeared in the DCG (Germany) Deutsche Cichliden-Gesellschaft (K. Stieglitz, *Gymnogeophagus gymnogenys ist Maulbrauter*, December, 1987 Vol. 18 (12): 238-243) and in the new Stawikoski and Werner (1988) book, *Die Buntbarsche De Nuen Welt.* The fish so depicted matches exactly the drawing in Gosse (1976) and the photo in Reis and Malabarba (1988). Furthermore, the "German" *gymnogenys* is reported to be a mouthbrooder which is confirmed by Reis and Malabarba's capture of a female with a mouth full of fry.

After seeing the DCG article, I promptly purchased a large number of rather expensive tank-raised *"gymnogenys"* juveniles imported from Germany only to discover, upon grow-out, that these were **not** the fish in question: I'm not sure why I was surprised. Anyway, the **real** *gymnogenys* reaches standard lengths of at least 5 inches (125 mm largest recorded in Reis and Malabarba 1988). The fish do resemble a very elongate *G. brasiliensis* with eight rows of small nacreous blue spots (pearly scale centers) on an olive-colored to yellowish background.

LaCorte strain "Rainbow Eartheater, G. *(cf.) rhabdotus.* Leibel photo.

Like *brasiliensis,* there is a large, black mid-lateral splotch. Unlike *brasiliensis,* there are a series of 5-6 transverse **double** dark cross bands on the flanks which are a part of the stress pattern, and, in my photocopy, a dark transverse band just behind the nuchal crest (also in DCG photo) which, in reproductively-active males, is relatively huge (much larger than any I've seen in *G. brasiliensis*). The females are very elongate, have a convex head profile and look nothing like female *brasiliensis* (Stieglitz, 1987 photo). It is a lovely and distinctive fish and one can only hope that the European exporters will eventually see fit to send the **real** *gymnogenys,* or that the fish will turn up as a contaminant in an Argentine shipment (it has been collected in Uruguay, Argentina, and Southern Brazil). Don't pass up juvenile "*brasiliensis*"-like fish that come in mixed with wild *Gg. balzanii, Ae. dorsiger* or *H. facetus* from the La Plata drainage: check for the "double bands" when stressed.

Gymnogeophagus gymnogenys may, in fact, prove (as suggested by Reis and Malabarba) to be a species group. Several distinctive populations were collected that varied in body proportions and coloration. More to the point, one of the new *Gymnogeophagus* species, *lacustris,* and the old species *labiatus* removed from synonomy with *gymnogenys,* are clearly closely related and probably constitute a species complex.

Gg. labiatus. Hensel (1870), in the same paper in which he described *gymnogenys,* also described *Geophagus pygmaeus* and *G. labiatus.* Both species were synonymized with *brasiliensis* by Steindachner (1874) and later placed in synonymy with *Gg. gymnogenys* by Gosse (1976) following his reexamination of the type specimens, but the former, *pygmaeus,* is retained as a junior synonym of *gymnogenys* by Reis and Malabarba (1988) while the latter, *labiatus,* was judged by them to be sufficiently different to warrant resurrection of this taxon. Interestingly, two further *Geophagus* species described by Hensel (1870) in the same paper, *bucephalus* and *scymnophilus,* have been synonymized with *labiatus* by Reis and Malabraba (1988). Kullander (1981) originally suggested that this fish should be granted valid species status by virtue of several characters, predominant amongst them the huge orange lips that are quite consipicuous in the photo offered by Reis and Malabarba.

Gg. labiatus resembles *gymnogenys sensu* Reis and Malabarba (1988) in most details of its appearance excepting the hypertrophied lips. In addition, the species sports 9 double, dark cross-bands which are quite distinct in the photo of what I presume to be a female (SL 101.8 mm, largest examined was 138.3 mm SL) offered by the authors. No mention is made of a prominant nuchal knot even though many examples of many size specimens from many localities were examined ("Predorsal profile convex, often with straight segment above eyes. Body contour at dorsal fin base gently arched."). The reproductive behavior of this fish is apparently not known. The fish was collected from southern Brazil in a region which is not commercially collected so, unless zealous amateurs or sympathetic ichthyologists collect and introduce live specimens to the hobby, *Gg. labiatus* most likely will not grace our aquaria anytime soon.

Gg. lacustris. A third species, perhaps referable to a hypothetical" *gymnogenys* complex", is *Gg. lacustris,* newly-described by Reis and Malabarba (1988). The fish was collected from Southern Brazilian coastal lagoons, hence the specific nomen meaning "of a lake." The standard length of collected material ranged from 48 to 146 mm. The body is very elongate and, in my photocopy, the holotype, presumably a male of 136 mm SL, sports a huge nuchal hump not unlike that of *Gg. balzanii.* Again, live specimens express 9 double dark cross bands and a dark nape-eye band. The flanks are pearl spotted and the lips of large nuptial males are deep orange. The unpaired fins sport white-bluish bars and/or dots. Additionally, *Gg. lacustris* is apparently a mouthbrooder: a live specimen was observed buccally-uptaking young in the wild. Again, regrettably, the occurrence of this species is limited to areas not normally collected by commercial exporters so the future availability of this species in the hobby seems unlikely.

While the three species seem, to me, closely related in terms of appearance and reproductive behavior, Reis and Malabarba's (1988) cladistic analysis indicates that *labiatus* and *lacustris* are closely related and split from *gymnogenys/australis* because the former share deep-orange lips and the latter share a broken nape-eye-cheek band (the nape band, present in *labiatus/lacustris,* is absent in *gymnogenys/australis*). It is, however, true that no **live** specimens of *australis* were collected or observed (see below) and, for my money, *gymnogenys, labiatus,* and *lacustris* form a natural species complex.

Gg. rhabdotus. Now we come to the crux of the hobby-related problem, the identity of fishes circulated as *australis* and *rhabdotus.* In a recent article (Leibel, 1987) I took Loiselle to task over his choice of the specific *australis* as the name for the fish being circulated in the American hobby as the "Rainbow Eartheater." In that essay, I suggested that a newly-imported European fish, traded under the name *rhab-*

dotus was, in fact, the true *Gg. rhabdotus*, that the LaCorte strain "Rainbow Eartheater" was most likely also *rhabdotus*, and that the gray, somewhat non-descript congener tagged *"rhabdotus"* by Loiselle (1980; see page 25 there, or Axelrod (1985), page 354) was probably *australis*. It would appear that I am both right **and** wrong.

The "Rainbow Eartheater" and the European *"rhabdotus"* are apparently the true *Gg. rhabdotus*. In anointing the LaCorte strain "Rainbow Eartheater," Loiselle (1980, 1981), in part, based his assertion on the pair of narrow red-orange submarginal bands that grace the upper and lower margins of the caudal fin which had never been mentioned in color descriptions of *rhabdotus*. In the Reis and Malabarba (1988) revision, the *Gg. rhabdotus* "color in life" entry describes "caudal fin sometimes with roundish marks and often with both superior and inferior red edges." Additionally, while all specimens exhibit "about eight longitudinal bright-blue stripes laterally on flank," the specimens from the Rio Grande do Sul coastal lagoon system "may demonstrate a few small roundish bright-blue marks on soft dorsal and caudal fins, while the specimens from the headwaters of Rio Negro, near Bage, RS, have a very strong longitudinal striping." The apparent colorational polymorphism in the European vs. LaCorte strain fish is, thus, accountable. In addition, the specimen photographed in the paper is a dead ringer for the European *"rhabdotus."* So, the Rainbow Eartheater **is** apparently *Gg. rhabdotus*.

Gg. australis. What of its less-colorful congener? In my essay (Leibel, 1987), I suggested that this fish (*rhabdotus sensu* Loiselle) was, in fact, the real *Gg. australis* or at least *cf. australis*. It seems that I was both right

and wrong. I mentioned an apparent discrepancy in the size of the largest of Eigenmann's *australis* types, 145 mm SL (c. 5.7 inches) and the maximum size of aquarium-reared fish (c. 4 inches TL). I concluded that either *australis* shows considerable geographic variation or that *cf. australis* is a new, undescribed species and the true, six-inch *australis* had yet to be imported into the hobby. It would seem that the latter is the real situation!

Eigenmann's (1907) types, collected from Buenos Aires, Argentina, have been lost, but 3 existing paratypes from that collection were examined by the authors: regrettably, no living material was collected or examined so no life coloration description or photograph is available here. A photograph of an 110 mm SL paratype is included, but it is "presently quite discolored" (having been stored in alcohol for 100 years). Eigenmann (1907) wrote: "dark area across back in front of the dorsal; bases of some of the scales of the back frequently very dark brown; side with about six cross-bands, each of these on middle of side composed of double dark lines with a band of light of equal width between them; no dark spot on side; pectoral light; ventrals blue-black; dorsal dusky, with ascending light stripes which are largely replaced by light spots on the soft dorsal; caudal dusky, with round hyaline spot on the rays similar to those of soft dorsal; anal with similar but smaller and less distinct spots; no spot or ocellus on the caudal." I add the following observations on the appended photo (with additional comments by Reis and Malabarba): the fish is considerably elongate but high-bodied compared to the *rhabdotus* immediately below it and the head rises steeply though angularly over the eye ("body slightly elevated and robust, laterally compressed. Predorsal contour elevated and strongly steep. Body contour at base of dorsal is gently arched."). If I didn't know better, I'd swear it was a badly-discolored *G. surinamensis*. It certainly - and emphatically - does **not** resemble either the Rainbow Eartheater **or** its drabber congener.

Gg. meridionalis. The latter apparently is a newly-described species, *Gg. meridionalis* Reis and Malabarba (1988), named after its southern distribution. According to the authors, this new species is the only *Gymnogeophagus* species found south of Buenos Aires. The range of standard lengths in the collected examples was 39.3 to 88 mm. A synopsis of their comments on life coloration include: six transverse, inconspicuously double bands with a dark midlateral splotch on the third band, just below the upper lateral line, a dark nape-eye band, 7-8 longitudinal blue stripes on flanks, abdomen yellowish to deep-orange, and light blue small roundish dots on reddish unpaired fins. The appended photo of an 80 mm specimen looks identical to the fish whose photographs appear with my essay (Leibel, 1987). The authors comment: "This species has been frequently misidentified as *Gg. australis* by some authors (Iwaskiew & Sendra, 1981 and Gosse, 1976). Besides aspects of color and body proportions, *Gg. meridionalis* may be readily distinguished from *Gg. australis* by longitudinal scale count." So, Gosse (1976) was wrong too! I have exhumed several of the preserved corpses of *cf. australis* and find that they have 24 scale rows: *australis* = 27, *meridionalis* = 23-25, mode = 24 (25 of 36 specimens). Apparently, *"rhabdotus" sensu* Loiselle (1980; and Axelrod, 1985) corresponds to *Gg. meridionalis*. As their covergent coloration and general appearance might suggest to the average aquarist,

rhabdotus and *meridionalis* are most closely related to each other as Reis and Malabarba's cladistic analysis suggests.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, Reis and Malabarba's (1988) revision of the genus *Gymnogeophagus* has considerable impact on the cichlid hobby. For starters, *caveat emptor* when it comes to purchasing *gymnogenys:* most, if not all are poseurs, really *Geophagus brasiliensis* morphs. The **real** *gymnogenys* does look like *brasiliensis* with its conspicuous pearl spotting, but, one placed in traction for several weeks. Additionally, it sports 5-6 transverse **double** dark bands, at least in its stress pattern, that no *brasiliensis* I've ever seen exhibits, and ripe males have a **huge** nuchal knot with a dark vertical band just behind it. If you're fortunate enough to propagate them, they are mouthbrooders. Now that I know what I'm looking for, I hope to bag and photograph the **real** *gymnogenys*. The Rainbow Eartheater (Loiselle, 1980) and the European "*rhabdotus*" (see Leibel, 1987) are apparently both *Gg. rhabdotus*. However, the drabber gray congener once called "*rhabdotus*" (Loiselle, 1980; Axelrod, 1985) and *australis* or *cf. australis* (Leibel, 1987), is the newly-described *Gg. meridionalis* while the **true** *australis* has not yet been knowingly imported. Coming, as they do, from Buenos Aires, it would seem collection of the **real** *australis* would be highly possible for the dedicated amateur so-inclined (Hmmm). Regrettably, such would seem not the case for either *lacustris* or *labiatus* because of their limited distributions. And, of course, *Gg. balzanii* is *balzanii* - a delightful, readily available Geophagine whose visage regularly graces the editorial masthead of this publication and one of this editor's favorite cichlids.

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FROM JANUARY-MARCH 1978 TCMs

THE TANGANYIKAN CLOWNS

By Peter Dedrick

Many writers have described the Great Rift Lakes of Africa, not as lakes, but as vast inland seas. It is therefore not surprising that, as Fryer and Iles point out, species endemic to the Rift Lakes have taken on the characteristics of species which fulfil similar roles in the oceans. The "clowns" of Lake Tanganyika, while being members of the cichlid family, exhibit characteristics associated with the marine gobies that inhabit the shallow rocky coastal waters.

The origins of the clowns are uncertain but they are believed to be descended from the Haplochromis group and related to the Telmatochromis, Julidochromis and Lamprologus genera.

KNOWN SPECIES

While my own experience, and consequently this article, is confined to *Spathodus erythrodon,* three other species are known to exist. *Eretmodus cyanostictus* is presently being maintained in Melbourne and save that it is possibly a little more aggressive, its requirements do not differ greatly from those of *Spathodus erythrodon.* The other known species, *Spathodus marlieri* and *Tanganicodus irsacae* have not been offered for sale in Melbourne — although, in one shipment of *Spathodus erythrodon* there were a number of specimens the color of which was darker and which appeared to have a number of vertical bars.

Whether or not these specimens were a different species, I can not say with any certainty. They could be color varieties of *Spathodus erythrodon* or simply exhibiting a "fright pattern". However, in 1976, on an expedition to Lake Tanganyika, Heinrich Scheuermann discovered what he considered to be a new color variety of *Eretmodus cyanostictus.* Although the fish looked like something inbetween *Spathodus eretmodus* and *Eretmodus cyanostictus,* he considered that it belonged to the latter genus. Perhaps this is the fish in question.

DESCRIPTION

Clowns are very unlike any other cichlids known to the hobby. Mature specimens reach seven to eight centimetres in length and are goby-shaped rather than a traditional cichlid-shape. Body color varies from a fawny pink to a dull grey-green, possibly depending on the place of origin, and provides a background for innumerable irridescent blue spots which make the fish very pleasing to the eye. The lower lip is blue and the head carries a blue pattern similar to that of *Lamprologus brichardi.* The dorsal and caudal fins have a blue sub-marginal band which underlies a bright-red edging. Pectorals are orange-red and the teeth are also red.

The teeth of *Spathodus erythrodon* are set well back behind rubbery lips, rather like Julidochromis species, and are designed to allow the fish to pick out insect larvae and crustaceans from the algae on which it browses.

It is interesting to note that in the dorsal fin the clowns have fewer soft rays (4-5) but more hard rays (23-25) than other Lake Tanganyika cichlids. As the species spends its time hopping from rock to rock rather than swimming through open water, numerous soft rays have become unnecessary. The numerous spiny rays are doubtless defensive and are used by the fish to wedge itself into crevices when danger threatens.

Evolution has also left the clowns with a swim bladder that is less developed (or atrophied? — Ed) than in the case of other cichlids — the clown's lifestyle does not require it to swim in normal cichlid fashion.

SEX DIFFERENCES

Juvenile specimens are impossible to sex without reference to the genital pore. That of the female will be found to be rounded, while that of the male will appear as a slit. In adult specimens, however, some differences do exist. Males are generally deeper in the body and have a higher forehead — females having a more pointed snout. There do not appear to be any differences in finnage or coloration that can help in distinguishing the sexes.

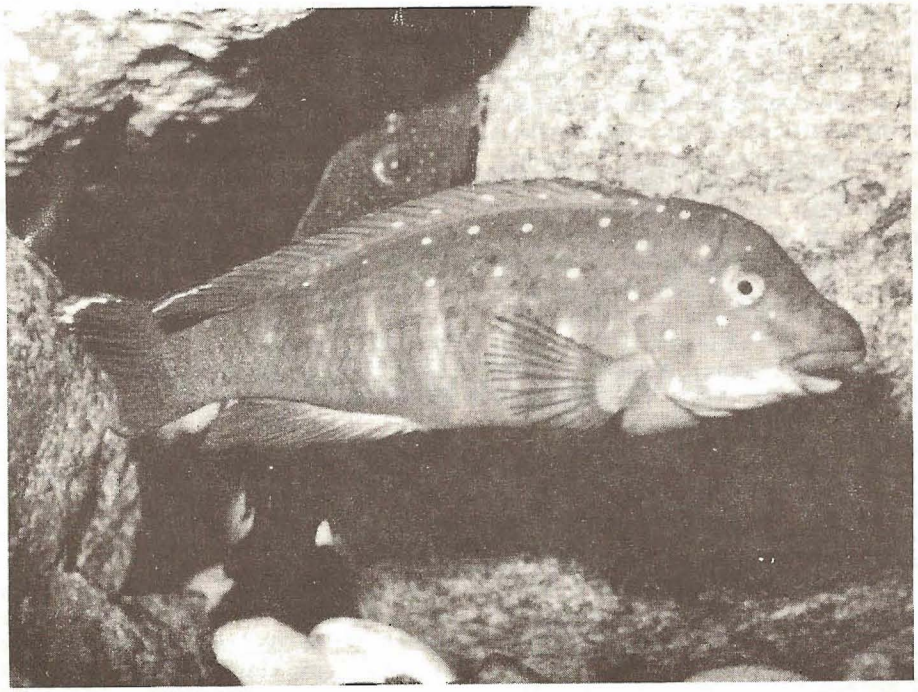
HABITS AND MAINTENANCE

Tanganyikan clowns are generally not aggressive and do not require large tanks or intricate rockwork for their well being (they enjoy it just the same — Ed); they do not appear to exhibit the same territorial instincts as other Rift Lake cichlids. Perhaps the most appealing feature of these fishes is their habit of darting around the tank and hovering in mid-water in search of food. Most of their time is spent perched on rocks and it is only rarely that they rise to the surface to accept flake food or the like.

Until their death, my trio of one male and two females was maintained in a 22" x 12" x 16" aquarium containing very hard, alkaline water, about half-an-inch (13 mm) of black gravel with a fairly high shellgrit content and several pieces of a broken terra-cotta flowerpot.

Temperature was maintained in the range of 72-76°F and the tank was filtered with a box filter containing shellgrit as a filter medium. The tank was left undisturbed save that every so often it was topped-up with fresh water to replace that lost due to evaporation.

I have recently read, however, several articles by American authors who have found that regular water changes of up to 50% using fresh water induces spawning. When I get some clowns I will investigate this point further, but at this stage I am



Eretmodus cyanostictus. ACA Archives.

unable to comment further save to say that it differs from the general rule for Lake Tanganyika substratum spawners.

Spathodus erythrodon can be maintained quite happily with other Rift Lake cichlids. It has been suggested, however, that the species is happier when maintained in groups of six or more. While this may be the case, there are numerous reports of spawnings that have been obtained from individual pairs. Impecunious aquarists (My kind — Ed) should therefore not despair.

It is also alleged that clowns and Julidochromis species do not cohabit peacefully. While my clowns lived quite happily with a five-centimetre *Julidochromis marlieri* for some months, I can only suggest that if you propose to keep Julies and clowns together then they should be watched carefully.

Feeding presents no problems and as with all cichlids, as wide a variety of food as possible should be offered. Live brine shrimp is a favorite food, but at 50 cents a teaspoonful they can learn to survive and reach breeding conditon quite well on the usual range of dried, frozen and live foods.

Beefheart should be treated with caution. Most Rift Lake cichlids, clowns included, are not equipped to digest fatty tissue. If the fat is not separated properly from the heart before feeding a build-up will occur in the fishes' intestines, eventually leading to blockage and death. (Better just to avoid the stuff — Ed.)

Some algae or other vegetable matter should be made available to satisfy their demands in this direction and if the tank is in a position where algae grows naturally, so much the better. Some writers have suggested that tubifex worms **must** be fed to bring the fish to breeding condition, but I have not found this to be the case.

BREEDING PROCEDURE

Spathodus erythrodon is a maternal mouthbrooder and the first indication that spawning has taken place is usually a bulge in the throat of the female. This bulge tends to "throb" and a female perched on a rock with a mouthful of eggs looks rather like a frog sitting beside a pond.

After about three days the bulge decreases in size. At first it may appear that the spawning has been lost. What in fact has happened is that the embryos have begun to develop and have started to consume the yolk-sac. In my experience these fish tend to care for the eggs, however, in articles I have read concerning *Eretmodus cyanostictus,* it is said that they are very prone to eat their spawn. I also know of one Melbourne cichlidophile who found *Eretmodus cyanostictus* females less reliable than *Spathodus erythrodon,* but I am unable to say whether this is a difference in behavior between the two species, or a peculiarity of the females concerned.

While I have not done so, some breeders take the precaution of removing the female to an incubation tank five days after spawning — I do not favor this procedure. First, because the extra handling may cause the female to eat her eggs if she is that way inclined. Second, the presence of other fish in the tank has been found, in the case of Lake Malawi mouthbrooders, to foster the mother's protective instinct and induce her to retain her brood.

The incubation period is from 30 to 35 days. By the 25th day, however, the fry are usually fully developed and can safely be removed from the female's mouth. The female is caught in a net which is immersed in a half-gallon icecream container filled with water from the breeding tank. Then comes the interesting part — the mouth is small and often difficult to locate behind the big rubbery lips. Using a cotton-bud, the mouth is opened and the fry are shaken out.

Fry show a marked reluctance to leave and, even when shaken out, tend to rush back in at the first opportunity. It is often useful to hold the female out of the water for a few seconds to let air accumulate in the mouth. When replaced in the water she will endeavor to expel the air-bubble and, with luck, will expel a couple of fry with it.

If all else fails and the fry refuse to leave, isolate the female and wait until she expels them naturally.

From 10 to 20 fry is considered a good spawning of clowns. When the fry have been released the female can be returned to the breeding tank without fear of damage by the male. The fry should be given ample aeration and the water level kept low. They will accept brine shrimp as a first food and are not difficult to raise. In common with other Lake Tanganyikan species, the fry are very slow growers and although reaching 1-1/2 cm fairly quickly, at three months of age they are barely three centimetres.

An interesting point concerning the fry is their ability to change color, from light pink, to dark grey-green, almost at will. In my first spawning, which totalled 20 fry, I was convinced that I had 10 "albinos"; I looked again later and I had 20 white ones.

In conclusion: I know of no-one who has made a fortune breeding Tanganyikan clowns, but then again, I know of no-one who, having kept and observed this delightful little "odd-ball", who has not fallen completely in love with it.

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Wanted — preferably alive

SPECIES MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

GROUP ONE — Lost to the hobby (within Australia).

Biotodoma cupido
Chromidotilapia guentheri
Cichlasoma alfari
Geophagus daemon
Haplochromis horei
Haplochromis linnii
Haplochromis niger
Haplochromis straelini
Haplochromis trimaculatus
Haplochromis woodii
Limnochromis auritus
Nanochromis dimidiatus
Simnochromis diagramma

GROUP TWO — Existence doubtful.

Cichlasoma ellioti
Cichlasoma motaguense
Haplochromis epichorialis
Haplochromis johnstoni
Labidochromis fryeri
Limnotilapia dardenni
Pseudotropheus lucerna
Pseudotropheus aurora

GROUP THREE — Extremely rare.

Cichlasoma aureum
Cichlasoma psittacum
Cichlasoma sieboldi
Cichlasoma septemfasciatum
Cynotilapia afra "blue"
Hemitilapia oxyrhynchus
Haplochromis grandeosus
Haplochromis quadrimaculatus
Lamprologus brevis
Lamprologus moorii
Lamprologus sexfasciatus
Lamprologus walteri
Melanochromis vermivorous
Steatocranus tinanti

GROUP FOUR — Very rare.

Cichlasoma champotonis
Cichlasoma oblongum
Aequidens tetramerus
Aequidens paraguayensis
Haplochromis labrosus
Haplochromis annectens
Lamprologus cylindricus
Melanochromis chipokae
Melanochromis parallelus
Melanochromis brevis
Cynotilapia afra "yellow"

GROUP FIVE — Rare.

Aulonocara maylandi
Haplochromis fenestratus
Haplochromis fuscotaeniatus
Haplochromis polystigma
Haplochromis rostratus
Haplochromis brownae
Haplochromis ornatus
Haplochromis erieotaenia
Haplochromis livingstoni
Haplochromis spilonotus
Lamprologus calvus
Pseudotropheus elongatus (all varieties)

GROUP SIX — Threatened by inbreeding. This group is of especially great importance as genetic problems have caused far more trouble than rarity.

Acarichthys geayi
Cichlasoma trimaculatum
Cichlasoma umbriferum
Haplochromis incola
Petrotilapia tridentiger

GROUP SEVEN — Endangered. At present no fishes qualify for this group.

GROUP EIGHT — Allowable import, but rare. This group will now consist of the reeently published (March '89 TCM) Allowable Cichlid Import list. While the fishes on this list are allowable imports, it does not necessarily follow that they will be either imported or plentiful.

FOOTNOTES:
The sub-committee welcomes suggestions/information and constructive criticism in written form that would further enable this program to develop for the benefit of all VCS members, our interstate friends and the fishes themselves of course.

For further information, write to, talk to, or ring one of the members of the sub-committee:

SCOTT HAYMES 898 4870
AART LANGELAAR 783 5386
JOHN REEVES 233 8736

STOP PRESS

Due to protracted negotiations at government-level by our interstate friends, it is anticipated that the following three species will be added to the 1990 Allowable Cichlid Import List. The seal of approval comes when the species are listed in the Government Gazette.

Cyathopharynx furcifer
Eretmodus cyanostictus
Tanganicodus irsacae

CICHLID CONVENTION

WANTED

PEOPLE TO BOARD INTERSTATE VISITORS ON QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND — JUNE 1989.

PHONE DAVID AND HELYNA THORN
763 5576
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!!!

TABLE SHOW REPORT
April 1989

TANK	SPECIES	ENTRANT
1	*Lamprologus* species 'Daffodil'	M. Neath
2	*Hemitilapia oxyrynchus*	A. Langelaar
3	*Tropheus duboisi*	M. Vella
4	*Telmatochromis caninus*	D. Smith
5	*Pseudotropheus lombardoi*	P. Petrus
6	*Etroplus maculatus*	J. Shields
7	*Haplochromis quadrimaculatus*	D. Genovese
8	*Lamprologus leleupi*	J. Staude
9	*Aequidens rivulatus*	J. Mitchell

JUDGE'S REPORT

Tank	Cond *(max 30)*	Fins *(max 30)*	Shape *(max 20)*	Scales *(max 10)*	Age *(max 10)*	Total
1	25	30	17	9	7	88
2	29	28	20	10	8	95
3	26	29	20	9	7	91
4	25	28	17	8	10	88
5	28	30	19	10	6	93
6	27	30	17	10	6	90
7	25	29	18	10	10	92
8	29	29	19	10	7	94
9	26	29	18	7	5	85

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

1. Nice young adult, a little hollow.
2. Good specimen.
3. Scale damage on head.
4. Good adult, needs a little more food.
5. Young adult.
6. Young fish.
7. Lovely fish, a little thin.
8. Nice fish.
9. Nice young fish.

RESULTS

1st A. Langelaar. 2nd P. Petrus 3rd J. Staude.

Popular Choice: Danny Genovese's *Haplochromis quadrimaculatus.*

Many thanks to Scott Haymes for his judging.

Glenn Briggs

A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours.
— Milton Berle

116 Wednesday 26 April 249

VCS

March Minutes

The meeting was opened by the president at 8.12. He welcomed all 29 members and seven visitors present. Minutes of March meeting were taken as read on a motion moved by Danny Smith and seconded by Martin Criddle.

The treasurer's report was read by Manny and received on a motion moved by Helyna Thorn and seconded by Bill Foreman.

Correspondence:

Australia Post	receipt for Category B registration.
Dave and Maria Rowland	membership renewal.
Tracey Spain	membership application.
Christina Jacobs	membership application.

Graham defeated Manny in quiz (after five tie-breakers) and won a can of food. Daryl Hutchins thanked (booed, hissed, etc actually — Ed) for questions.

Steve Butcher then spoke on the Fish of the Month — *Lamprologus pleuromaculatus.*

Apologies were received from: Sue Smith, Steve and Maryanne Stevens, David Thorn (late) and Judy and Dianne Parbury.

After a short break, the president welcomed back Don Olney. Charlie Mitchell was presented with his outstanding February draw prize.

David Thorn then spoke on conference — space needed for visitors. After discussion it was decided the auction will start later and be 20/80. If you can help with catering please see Helyna. More topics needed. If you wish to return raffle tickets and money before the next meeting you can do so at Heinz's shop.

Main talk — Panel, consisting of Heinz, Colin and Steve Butcher answered questions about members' problems. Panel thanked for their participation. The mini auction was then held.

Draw prize:

Draw prize:	1st	Hanno van Dijk	2-foot set-up.
	2nd	Dave Thorn	**Rayonne Aquarium** gift voucher.
	3rd	John Reeves	Plant.

Table show results announced by Glenn. Door prizes of fish food (courtesy of Pet and Aquarium Industries) were presented to: Sylvia Gilbert, Mark Neath, Craig Blitz, J. Halley and J. Ubrich. Amanda Genovese and John Reeves were not hungry and declined their portions (sic[k]).

Membership reminded home show entries close at next meeting. Any queries see John Reeves. Meeting adjourned for supper at 10.28 pm.

Do you keep Cichlids?

Would you like to share your knowledge of cichlids and learn of other people's experiences as well?

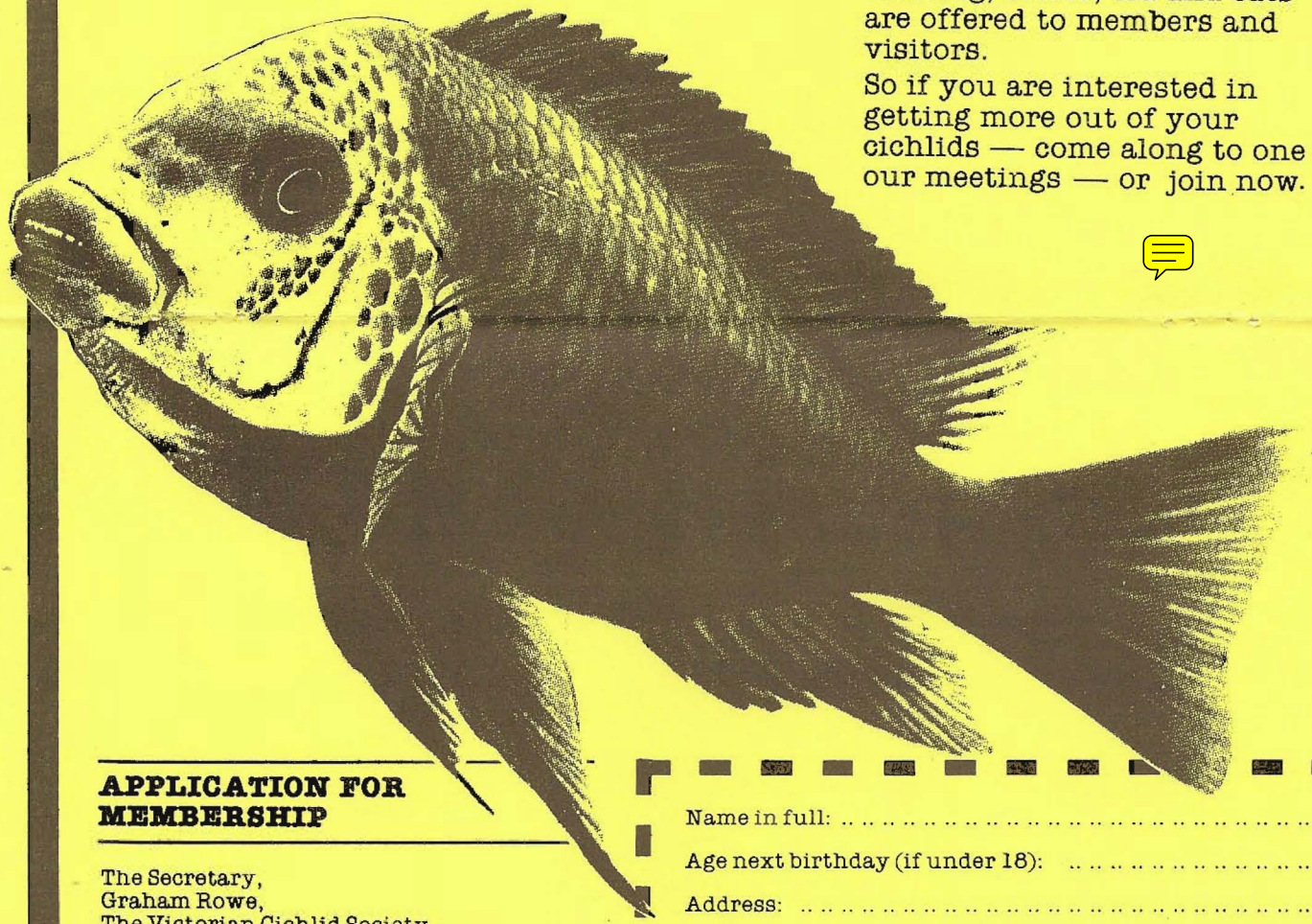
Then why not join **The Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated**? The society meets at 8 pm sharp on the third Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Northvale Primary School hall, Albany Drive, Mulgrave (Melways 80 E3).

Come along and share our experiences, successes and cures. Every month we have two main talks, usually aided with slides or live fish where possible.

Also, we have a table show at every meeting where nominated categories of cichlids are judged with 1st, 2nd and 3rd-place ribbons awarded for the best fish each month, with trophies awarded at the end of the year.

At the conclusion of each meeting, coffee, tea and eats are offered to members and visitors.

So if you are interested in getting more out of your cichlids — come along to one of our meetings — or join now.



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Secretary,
Graham Rowe,
The Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated,
23 Mangana Drive,
MULGRAVE, AUSTRALIA 3170.

Dear Graham,

I wish to become a member of the Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated. Herewith I have included the required information, and I enclose a cheque for the correct amount.

Ordinary and Family memberships $15 and $18 respectively (joining fee $5); Junior $7; Overseas $A15 (plus handling charges).

Name in full: .....

Age next birthday (if under 18): .....

Address: .....

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Postcode: ..... Telephone: .....

Date: ..... Signature: .....

Area/s of interest: .....

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