

# The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 17

December 2006



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# BAP Report

The BAP for 2006 has concluded with the only one entry for October. An accordingly belongs to David with the entry of *Astatotilapia burtoni*. Congratulations David on the spawning and also thanks for donating the parents to Aqua Bid.

December 16, 2006

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**Upcoming Events:**

- Christmas Party Dec. 16th

**Cover Photo:**

*Tropheus* sp. Lufubu  
by Donald Davis

Congratulations to all who makes November started off this year with a bang. First entry honors goes to Greg (Mokkers). Greg's entry was the *Pundamilia nyererei* Python Island. Later on he submitted two more entries consisting of *Tramitichromis intermedius* and the *Cynotilapia afra*. Paul's entry of *Enantiopus* sp "Purple" was a "C" class, 1st of species entry and was Paul's first "C" entry. Greg (GAS) got started with an entry of *Pundamilia nyererei* Anchor Island, along with some additional fry from a *Protomelas steveni* Taiwan Tanzania entry. Dave (Mullet) first entry this year was a "C" class *Orthochromis stormsi*. Two more entries followed with *Pseudotropheus demasoni* and *Neolamprologus brichardi*. It is early but Mullet and Mokkers are tied with 50 points for the BAP year. Again congratulations to all on the November entries.

■ Jim Beck

Current BAP Standings		Current Standings (cont)	
Name		Name	YTD
Greg S.	360	Lisa Bo.	55
Charles	350	Dave H.	50
David D.	180	Robert	50
Jim	120	Greg W.	50
Diane	120	Eric	40
Nick A.	105	Duc	25
Jennifer	90	Walter	20
Nathan	65	Lisa Bl.	15

# HCCC Monthly Photo Contest



**First Place**  
Diane Tennison  
*Triglachromis otostigma*

**Second Place (Tie)**  
Ray Hansen  
*Copadichromis borleyi*



**Second Place (Tie)**  
Greg Gilliam  
*Sciaenochromis fryeri*

Judging by Club Members

**Event:****FOTAS 2006**

FOTAS (Federal of Texas Aquarium Societies) 2006 was sponsored by the Houston Aquarium Society this year and held in Houston. Several of us made the trip down on Friday afternoon for a weekend of fish, fish and more fish. Liz and I caravanned with the Steeves Family (Greg, Lee Ann and Karli) and Jennifer Prince met us from Austin. Dave Schumacher came down Friday as well - but since his parents live close by, he had free room and board and some great "Grandma" food (or this is what he tells us). Turned out, just getting to Houston was an adventure! I followed Greg. For any of you that have ever driven behind the crusty Canadian, you know EXACTLY what I mean... For those that don't - let me just say that Greg drives somewhere between a Student Driver and a Grandma... I would also like to go on record as saying that the Houston drivers we encountered on the Toll Road were NOT very courteous. They apparently don't know what a blinker is... After a few stops - we did arrive safely at the hotel. I owe special thanks to "Gilda" my navigation system narrator. We took the North Beltway exit instead of the South and got into a bit of a pickle. She expertly guided us back to our destination. Lee Ann didn't have too much faith at



first (her exact words were "Well, what does your LADY have to say about this...?") - but she felt better when we pulled up to the hotel! We checked in and then went to hang out in the Hospitality Room for a little while. By 11pm I was done. Jennifer bunked with us and the three of us turned in. I was disap-

pointed because they had a "Mystery Speaker" on tap in the Hospitality Room and Fish Trivia at Midnight. I did learn the next day that they had cancelled Fish Trivia so I didn't feel too bad about being such a wimp!

Saturday was a full day of speakers. Started the day at 9am with Brett Rowley. I really needed breakfast - so I missed most of Brett's talk. However, he ran a bit over so I was able to catch the end. He was talking about Koi. He had a huge calendar with some beautiful

pictures of some of the most famous fish. Man were they gorgeous! But, he told us how 1 fish sold for \$250,000!!! I think we may be breeding the wrong fish... Next speaker was Jeff Senske from Aquarium Design Group in Houston. He did a talk on aquascaping the aquarium. He showed some beautiful tanks and



when he got to the planted tanks - made me wish that I had the patience to try one of those! After a quick break for lunch we sat in on a talk by Heiko Bleher. He talked for an hour and a half on a collecting trip to Central Asia. I'm embarrassed to say that I don't remember the exact name of the country that he went to (I know it was by Kazakstahn and it had "stan" in the name...) but it was some of the most amazingly beautiful country I have ever seen! From what I hear, Heiko made history today... his talk didn't run over!! Rusty Wessel was up next with a talk on a collecting trip to

Mexico. It was very fascinating and I really enjoyed the fact that along with the regular slides - Rusty had some cool videos as well. It's always great to see the fish behavior in the wild. Time for a nap now before the banquet tonight!

The banquet was an event of great food, great people and LOTS of craziness!! Of course, there were no awards given for the rowdiest table - but HCCC would surely have won! The laughs were flying. We were honored to have Rusty Wessel sit with us and I'm glad to say I don't think we scared him off too soon. Jennifer picked up the Best In Group award for her stunning photo of the Lion-Fish. Unfortunately, this was the only award won by HCCC this year. Heiko was the banquet speaker and this presentation was

much more true to form. I think he talked for about 2 ½ hours!! Very fascinating though. He walked us through his trips from the last 3 years. He has been to an assortment of places.

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Must admit that his piece on a trip to Africa had us all in tears from laughing so hard! I can't really go into details about the topic (definitely adult) - but the next time you see me, ask me about the "gourds" and the lip plates....



pick up a bidder card. I brought my baby Mobas into the auction (what good mother would even THINK of leaving her little ones in the car...) - and I was just crazy wanting to get them home to their tank. Dave Hansen (Mullet) and Robert De Leon made the drive

over on Sunday and of course, our beloved Mullet helped out as auctioneer. Finally made it home around 6pm and got my precious cargo floating in their new tank. As I released them into the spacious 75g (temporary home until they get a bit larger) - I sat back and wondered... will FOTAS 2007 be as fun as this weekend...? The answer I gave myself was a confident - YES!! See you all next year...

Sunday topped our day off. Dave Schumacher, Jennifer and I left the hotel to head over to pick up my prize possessions. I snagged a colony of 15 F1 Moba Frontosa from a local hobbyist. Ron invited us in and showed us his amazing F0 colony. Man, were those babies stunning! Of course, my little ones (currently little over 1") will grow up to look just like their parents. I can't wait. I was anxious to get home, but stopped by the auction for a bit. For the first time since my immersion into this wonderful hobby - I sat through an auction and didn't even think about bidding. I didn't even

■ Diane Tennison

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**Species Profile:*****Neetroplus nematopus***

If you are a fish fanatic who is interested in observing some extremely fascinating behavior, *Neetroplus nematopus* would be an ideal candidate. *N. nematopus* are native to Central America (more specifically the Atlantic slope of Nicaragua and western Costa Rica, in the San Juan River drainage, including Lake Nicaragua and Lake Managua). Neets, as they have been nicknamed have also been known as the poor man's Tropheus for their high resemblance to Lake Tanganyika's Tropheus species. Their natural habitat resembles the goby cichlids of Lake Tanganyika with fast, turbulent waters. This should be duplicated in the aquarium environment as well. Their diet also resembles the gobies in that they like to graze off of algae and aufwuchs from rock structures. *N. nematopus* are pretty tolerant as far as water conditions. Be sure to keep it well oxygenated.

I acquired a group of five neets about a year ago. At the beginning, I housed these fish in a twenty high with some flame tetras (*Hyphessobrycon flammeus*) as dithers.

Based on some reading I did, they are fairly tolerant of pH (7.0 - 8.0 pH). My water is quite hard and measured at 8.2 pH. I had lots of cave structures for them to hide in as well as some Anubias plants. I used a sponge filter set on high to resemble their native waters. After a number of months, I noticed that one of the neets was significantly larger than the others (this was the male) and also, they had paired off and took over one of the terracotta caves I had set up. In normal coloration, males and females look the same; however, males

are significantly larger than their female counterparts. Males get about 4.5 - 5 inches and have more flowing fins as well as a pointed dorsal while females are about 3-4 inches. Normally, neets have a grey colored body with a distinct black stripe in their flank. In breeding dress, they go through a color change where their body is black with a white stripe in their flank.



Photo by Duc Nguyen

When I noticed that I had a pair, the female went through the color change so I was expecting to see fry soon; however, the male never went through the change so I just sat back and waited for nature to take its course. Unfortunately, nothing ever yielded from this and eventually, the female changed back to her normal colors. This transition actually occurred a couple more times in the timeframe of me keeping them in the twenty high. I then moved my group into a 29 gallon in hopes that they wanted more space.

After a few months of staying in the 29, again, there was a definite pair formed and they took over the same terra cotta cave. This time, the female went through the color change and the male stayed by her side for the entire time chasing away anyone who comes close. This went on for approximately a week and the drastic change occurred. One by one, the pair started going after



Photo by Duc Nguyen

the other neets. They eventually killed off the remaining three. I tried to take them out before they killed the last two, but unfortunately, I was too late. After this occurred, I started to see tiny fry venturing out of the cave. A typical spawn would be 50 or so fry; I had approximately ten or so fry. Another observation I made was that during this time, the female was always in breeding dress; however, the male never changed to breeding dress till he was in proximity of the fry. And even when he did change, it was very faint (in relation to the intensity of the female). I believe the intensity in coloration is relative to how

threatened the fish feel to the predation of their young. Since there were few threats to the fry, the male never felt extremely threatened. These fish are extremely good parents. I have them housed with a single *Pseudotropheus saulosi* and a clown loach in the 29 gallon. The parents won't let them get anywhere near the fry and they seem to be doing fine. I feed them a variety of brine shrimp flakes, spirulina flakes as well as baby brine shrimp. According to what I've read, the parents will continue to watch over the fry for about three weeks and their protection will start to wane off. Also, neets will not spawn again if they are currently guarding a group of fry.

As far as looks, these fish are pretty mediocre, but in breeding colors, I think they are stunning to see. Also, their interesting behavior more than makes up for their looks. Neets are notorious for being very aggressive, especially towards conspecifics. Other tank mates are tolerated except during spawning, where they're chased off if they get close to their spawning site/fry.

If you are looking for a 'neet' little fish from Central America, give these guys a try. They're not a fish that's commonly available; however, they're definitely worth it when you find some.

■ *Duc Nguyen*

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**Club News:****BAP Year in Review**

Congratulations to David (Dockusan) for earning the “Breeder of the Year Award”. He accomplished this with 180 total points. David has a total of 22 entries since entering Breeder Award Program and had 9 entries for this year, 2006. The 9 entries included 8 “B” and 1 “C” class fish with 5 of the entries being 1<sup>st</sup> of species. Congratulations again on BOTY Award, David, and we will have high expectations from you for next year!

The Breeders Award Program for the 2006 was a very successful year. There were 88 total entries from 20 members. The entries included 70 “B” class, 17 class “C”, and 1 “A” class species. There was also 2<sup>nd</sup> generation spawns which totaled 8.

Congratulations to the following members on their accomplishments in the BAP this year.

**Spawning Award:** This award is presented to any member’s first spawning from any category with awardable points.

— Jennifer Prince (Princer7) 2. Eric Forman (EAKF) 3. Walter Niedzielak (Cedar Tree) 4. Greg Ward (Mokkers) 5. Lisa Blair (LKBlair)

**Breeder Award:** This award is presented to any member successfully spawning any five different species with awardable points.

— Jennifer Prince (Princer7) 2. Nathan Currie (Vaderjedi)

**Advanced Breeder Award:** This award is presented to any member upon reaching 200 points.

— Dave Hansen (Mullet) 2. Jim Beck (Bristlenose) 3. Diane Tennison (Gryhouse) 4. Lisa Boorman (Lisachromis)

**Master Breeder:** This award is presented to any member upon reaching 1000 points with at least three entries in class “C” or higher.

— Greg Steeves (GAS) 2. Charles Skillern (Tangfish23)

**Breeder of the Year:** This award is presented once yearly to the BAP leader for that year.

— David Dockwiller (Dockusan)

■ *Jim Beck*

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**Species Profile:*****Haplochromis* sp. "blue obliquidens"**

Makobe Island located in Speke Gulf Tanzania, is rich in cichlid fauna. *Haplochromis* sp.

"blue obliquidens" is found in the shallow protected surf zone around the island. It is particular in its choice of habitat. *H.* sp. "blue obliquidens" inhabits near shore areas containing reeds and grasses. These locations are protected from surging waves by rock formations (breakers) located between the shoreline and open waters (Seehausen 1996). Other fish that share this biotype include species of *Xystichromis* and *Neochromis* lineages. *Haplochromis* sp. "purple yellow" also frequents this biotype.

*Haplochromis* sp. "blue obliquidens" is an opportunistic feeder. Examined gut contents contained diatoms and blue-

centered on and around a flat stone. In between defending the area they have claimed, males will join the females in grazing upon algae encrusted rocks.

At 9 cm, *H.* sp. "blue obliquidens" is not a



Photos by Greg Steeves



green algae as well as may and caddis fly larvae. Plant matter and Bryozoa were found as well (Seehausen 1996). Both sexes appear in equal frequency with males claiming territories

giant by any means. The body shape is typical of a Lake Victoria *haplochromine*. It is laterally compressed somewhat with a convex cranial profile. The curved forehead is not a prevalent in younger fish but becomes pronounced as the fish ages. Between 6 and 8 vertical bars line the flanks. Upper and lower jaws extend equally with very little premaxillary indentation. The outer teeth are bicuspid with a blade-like structure. The distinct dental structure is also found in *Hap-*

*lochromis* sp. "purple yellow" and *Enterochromis* sp. "red back scraper". Females have nondescript grey-silver body coloration. Males have a copper hued blue coloration. A black bar runs from the corner of the mouth, straight up to the left side of the eye. It then extends at a 45° angle through the eye, around the forehead, and continuing down the other side of the face. There are two bars crossing the muzzle between the primary bar and the mouth. Another wide bar extends up on the gill plate. The front of the dorsal fin is bright blue while the rear portion is dotted with red blotches. A red borders extends across the top of the dorsal. The caudal fin is crimson red. Pelvic fins are black with the first ray extending beyond the others. The anal fin contains between 4 and 6 yellow ocelli with clear orbits. The base of the anal fin is blue fading to yellow-orange. Pectoral fins are clear.

As noted by the field name, this species is thought to have a close affinity with the *Haplochromis obliquidens*. Superficially, *H. sp. "blue obliquidens"* shares a similar body pattern to *Astatotilapia sp. "thick skin"*. It differs from *H. obliquidens* processing smaller eyes and smaller, more deeply embedded chest

scales (Seehausen 1996). *Astatotilapia sp. "thick skin"* has differing dentition, a straighter forehead slope and more vibrant body coloration. So far as body shape and pattern similarity, *H. sp. "blue obliquidens"* shows a strong resemblance to *Enterochromis*



Photos by Greg Steeves

*sp. "red back scraper"*. Similar tooth structure is found in both species.

In the confines of an aquarium, *Haplochromis sp. "blue obliquidens"* is a social but aggressive species. The key to successful maintenance is providing enough space so that multiple males might have the room to develop and hold territories of their own. As in the wild, flat stones placed at intervals throughout the tank will allow these cichlids to display at their best. Males of similar size will continually defend their borders with open mouths and flared fins but actual contact is rare. Without these areas to defend, male coloration dulls and breeding is not frequent. Strands of *Vallisneria sp.* aid in reproducing the grassy strands preferred in the wild. The substrate

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should be natural colored sand or small grain gravel. Suitable tank mates include members of the *Neochromis* genus such as sp. "madonna", *rufocaudalis*, or *omnicaeruleus*. The Lake Tanganyika catfish *Synodontis petricola* is a lively little species that meld well with *H. sp.* "blue obliquidens". The reproductive



Photos by Greg Steeves

process is typical of Lake Victoria *haplochromines* with the species being a maternal mouth brooder. Breeding does not seem to come as readily as in other fish. When it does occur, the fry are hearty and grow quickly reaching maturity in 10 months.

No special food requirements are needed for

this cichlid. It will accept and prosper on commercial flake, pellet, frozen and live sources. A variety of the fore mentioned foods will help replicate the varied diet ingested in the wild.

The status of wild populations of *Haplochromis sp.* "blue obliquidens" appears stable. Its preferred habitat of sheltered planted locations may have helped protect it from the predatory *Lates niloticus*. Limited range makes this species venerable to environmental pressures that have hampered many other areas of Lake Victoria. Hopefully pristine areas will remain protecting *Haplochromis sp.* "blue obliquidens" for years to come.



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### **References:**

Seehausen, Ole; 1996; "Lake Victoria Rock Cichlids"; Verduyn Cichlids

■ *Greg Steeves*

**Species Profile:*****Xystichromis phytophagus***

When the club came out with the Endangered Species Program, I decided to participate. As it turns out, the only space I had for a new species was in the tank in the living room. Unlike the other tanks in my office, fish that go into the living room tank need to be visually appealing (this is part of the pact I had to go into in order to have a living room tank).

*Xystichromis phytophagus*' common name is Christmas Fulu due to its coloration. Originally from Lake Victoria, it can now be found in Lake Kanyaboli Kenya. I don't know much else about the background of the fish but recommend reading Greg Steeves' article on the species published in the March 2006 issue of the Lateral Line for more information.



Photo by Dave Hansen

There are many ESP species that meet the "visually appealing" requirement, but few do it better than *Xystichromis phytophagus*. Fortunately I was able to obtain a group from Greg Steeves. Since the objective of the ESP program is to breed the fish, I was concerned about the group for a couple of reasons which I will address later.

When I first went to pick up the fish, I immediately noticed two things that concerned me about being able to breed this group. The first thing was the ratio of males to females. With 5 males and 3 females, I would need to remove the excess males. More alarming was the size of the fish. My experience with Victorians has always been that although very prolific, they tend to do it early in their adulthood. The females were very large and definitely past their prime.

First order of business was to pick out the "stud" for the group. I wanted to make sure that the male had nice coloration and no deformities. The obvious choice might have been the dominant male as it had beautiful coloration. However, I was concerned that he may be too old as well. I opted for the smallest male. It looked just as nice as the largest male, only smaller and hopefully frisk-

ier. I took 3 of the males to Dave's Rare Fish and I believe they have been sold for the FO-TAS fundraiser. I kept another male as a backup in case something went wrong with the young stud. The extra male was moved into a smaller tank with some other odds and ends.

Now to the other part of a successful breeding group; the females. They were very large and a couple had needed some mending from all the males they had been kept with. They recovered quickly but weren't plumping up as I had hoped. I decided to supplement their spirulina based diet with some NLS pellets and some frozen Cyclop-eeze. After a couple weeks I notice that the smallest female was getting fat. I had my fingers crossed.

For anyone keeping these fish, you should know that the male, even though he was not much bigger than the females, is very hard on them. He would constantly chase them around and usually kept them in the corners of the tank or hiding behind rocks. The females are also very aggressive toward each other. The group was kept in a 4-foot, 72 gallon tank. I would not recommend anything smaller for these fish. Make sure you have plenty of hiding places.

The smallest female finally bred with the male. It happened when I was not around to see it

take place. Originally I had planned on keeping the female in the tank until 3 weeks and then stripping her. It didn't take long for me to realize that would not be a good idea. Not only were the other females chasing her out of the best hiding places, but the male was relentless. He would not pass up an opportunity to beat her. I moved her to a tank by herself where I planned to keep her until she re-



Photo by Greg Steeves

leased. Plans changed as the second smallest female spawned and the male resumed his aggressive behavior.

I had to strip the first female as I was sure that two holding females could not share a tank. The eggs were almost fully developed but not ready to be out on their own. I put them in an egg tumbler until they are ready to be feed. Eventually I did the same to the second female. Now I have about 40 fry from both females. The largest of the females shows no indications of developing eggs. Hopefully she

will eventually have one brood left in her.

If you are interested in breeding these fish, here are my recommendations (from my experiences with these fish):

- A 4 foot tank. 55 gals should work.
- One male and at least 2, preferably 3 females. The male is very rough on females and they are rough on each other.
- Spirulina based diet with some “meaty” supplements to condition the females.

- Lots of rocks and other hiding places.
- No other “competing” species in the tank. Large and/or aggressive males of other species may interfere with X. phytophagus comfort level.
- For maximum fry output, make sure you get them while they are still young.

■ Robert De Leon

## Event Calendar:

# Upcoming Events in Texas

*This is a new feature we hope to include periodically in future issues of the Lateral Line. All of the information has been obtained from other club's websites. I have not confirmed any dates and times. Please check with each club if you plan to attend any of their events. This list may not be complete so don't assume every event is included here. If anyone has any input or knows contacts from other cichlid clubs in Texas, please let me know. I would also like to include contact information for each club.*

## December:

*December 16th*

*Time: 5 P.M.— 9 P.M.*

**Hill Country Cichlid Club** Christmas Party. Our year end bash. We will be holding it at the

same place as last year (Bracken United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall). Open to club members and their families only.

## January:

*January 20th*

*Time: 7 P.M*

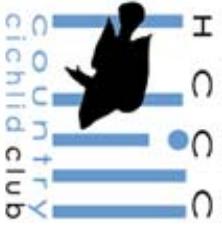
**Texas Cichlid Association** regular monthly meeting at the Clarion Hotel DFW South in Irving. Officer elections will be held.

## February:

*February 17th*

*Time: 7 P.M.*

**Texas Cichlid Association** Regular monthly meeting at 7:00 pm, location TBD.



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