

# The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 28

December 2007



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*Tropheus* sp. "Black" Pemba

*Labidochromis pallidus*

*Melanochromis parallelus*

Member Fish Wish





# BAP Report

Congratulations to all the BAP members who made the 2007 year a success. September started out with Pat (Nascar2) submitting two entries of *Labidochromis* sp. "red top Kimpuma" and *Melanochromis cyaneorhabdos* (Electric blue johannii). He followed up at the end of the month with another entry, with the *Ancistrus* sp. "albino bristlenose". This is a Class "C" species and his fourth entry, moving him closer to the next level. Congrats Pat on all of your entries and hard work.

Greg's (GAS) entry of *Pundamilia* sp. "crimson tide" was 1st of species which now totals 7 first of species entries for the year. Congrats Greg on the *Pundamilia* and keep looking for new species to breed.

Christy (Texastang) soon followed with her entry of *Haplochromis* sp. "flavenentis". The parents were obtained from none other than Greg (GAS). Congrats Christy and pass those fry on and keep them coming.

I was lucky to catch the female and her fry of the *Stomatepia mariae*. This is a very skittish fish and is an endangered species from Crater Lake Barombi Mbo in West Africa.

The month of October included Marty and Melody (Marmel) spawning of *Ctenochromis polli*. Congratulations on your entry. Congratulations to Evan on his first entry into the BAP. Also congratulations on it for a "C" class entry of *Tropheus* sp. Black Pemba".

Pat (Nascar2) has attained the level of "Breeder Award" with his 5th entry. His entry was the *Pseudotropheus* sp. Lime Nkhomo Mbenji, which was a 1st of species. Big congratulations on reaching the second level and for the 1st species.

November began the new BAP year with a "C" class spawn of albino *Ancistrus* species. This is a great "C" class spawn and congratulations to Evan. These fry are always in demand.

December 23, 2007

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Cover Photo:

'*Lamprologus*' *brevis*  
pair

By Dave Hansen

(Continued on page 15)

**Species Profile:*****Tropheus sp. "Black" Pemba***

Like many people, I entered the hobby by keeping community fish as an adolescent. When I returned to the hobby as an adult it did not take long for my attention to shift to cichlid keeping. As my experience level grew, so too did my need to keep more interesting, and potentially more difficult fish. This inevitably led me to *Tropheus*. I obtained twenty-two 2 to 3 inch fish from a fellow club member. Almost from the minute I walked into his house I was amazed by all the *Tropheus* he kept. I knew at that moment that I would be hooked on *Tropheus* keeping.

*Tropheus sp. "Black" Pemba* or Orange Flame, Bemba, is a maternal mouthbrooder native to the rocky shores of Lake Tanganyika, Africa. The surface temperature of the lake ranges from 76 to 82 degrees and native waters for this fish are pH of 8.6 to 9.5. These fish achieve a size of 5 inches and are predominantly black with orange in the middle.

I did quite a bit of research on the optimal tank conditions for this fish and found that there were a couple of schools of thought here. One school was that lots of rockwork would provide multiple territories for more than one male to protect. Another said that having no rockwork in the tank at all would mean that no fish would

be able to easily define a territory to protect. After quite a bit of deliberation I decided to go with the latter. I used an open 70 gallon corner tank with white pool filter sand as the substrate. The tank was filtered by an Eheim Professional II 2028 canister and a Marineland C-360 canister. Since my water has a ph



Photo by Spencer Jack

of 8.1 and 15 dH straight out of the tap I decided that this was close enough and would allow to provide a very stable environment rather than trying to manage the ph up to the high 8's by adding chemicals. I performed weekly 50% water changes. I used fluorescent lighting for a duration of 8 hours each day. I fed the fish Dainichi Veggie Deluxe baby size (1mm).

This fish were spawning size when I acquired them so spawning behavior was witnessed almost immediately. After spawning, the female holds her eggs in her mouth as is traditional for a maternal mouthbrooder. The mothers continue to care for the young for a short time after she first spits. I allowed the mothers to spit into



Photo by Robert De Leon

the *Tropheus* tank directly. The other fish do not predate the fry although the fry from the first few spawns did not survive more than a couple of weeks. I believe this was due at least in part to the fry being out competed for food by the adults. After losing many fry, I added one small piece of holey rock to the tank and this seemed to solve the fry survival problem. The food drifts into the rock where they alone can get to it. The fry were completely free swimming and without egg sac at the point at which the mother spit them. The coloration of the fry is quite interesting to watch develop. Initially the fry have a dark coloration. When they are about 3/4" they begin to lighten and

develop vertical barring. The barring disappears as the fish grow and they acquire their mature coloration once they reach about 2".

I did not provide any special care for the fry. The female cared for the fry for a brief time after which they were left to fend for themselves. Interestingly, the other *Tropheus* in the colony did not predate the fry and they were more or less allowed to grow peacefully. The fry were big enough that they could eat the same food as the parents. The fry grew very slowly.

*Tropheus* have a reputation for being a very difficult fish to keep but this has not been my experience. I have provided clean water conditions and catered to their dietary needs and I have had very few issues with these fish. In fact, although they are more susceptible to bloat than most cichlids they seem to be extremely durable fish in all other regards. Keeping *Tropheus* is a worthwhile experience and I think I am hooked. I can observe these fish with fascination for hours at a time. Their constant movement and social behavior is a joy to behold. I would recommend that anyone who has not had *Tropheus* try a colony of their own. If you can provide these fish appropriate living conditions you will be well rewarded. My *Tropheus* tank always draws the most attention from guests and frequent visitors despite the fact that I have aquariums all over the house.

**Species Profile:*****Labidochromis pallidus*****General Data:**

I have not been able to track down much information on this species. I tried to locate a copy of the original description; LEWIS, D. S. C. 1982. A revision of the genus *Labidochromis* (Teleostei: Cichlidae) from Lake Malawi. *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* 75:189-265, but it is not available on any of the free download sites I could find; therefore, I am going to have to rely on some pretty heavy quoting from the few references I have available. {If anyone would like to send me a copy of Lewis' work, I'd certainly appreciate it!}

The IUCN list for this species:

D. Population very small or restricted in the form of either of the following:

2. Population with a very restricted area of occupancy (typically less than 20 km<sup>2</sup>) or number of locations (typically five or fewer) such that it is prone to the effects of human activities or stochastic events within a very short time period in an uncertain future, and is thus capable of becoming Critically Endangered or even Extinct in a very short time.

**Threats:** Sedimentation; collection for the aquarium trade; and fishing.

<b>Red List Category &amp; Criteria:</b>	VU D2 (see above right)
<b>Year Assessed:</b>	2006
<b>Assessor/s:</b>	Kasembe, J.
<b>Evaluator/s:</b>	Snoeks, J. (Freshwater Fish Red List Authority) & Darwall, W. (Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment Programme)
<b>Justification:</b>	Endemic to Lake Malawi where it occurs at only two locations: the Maleri Islands and Thumbi West.

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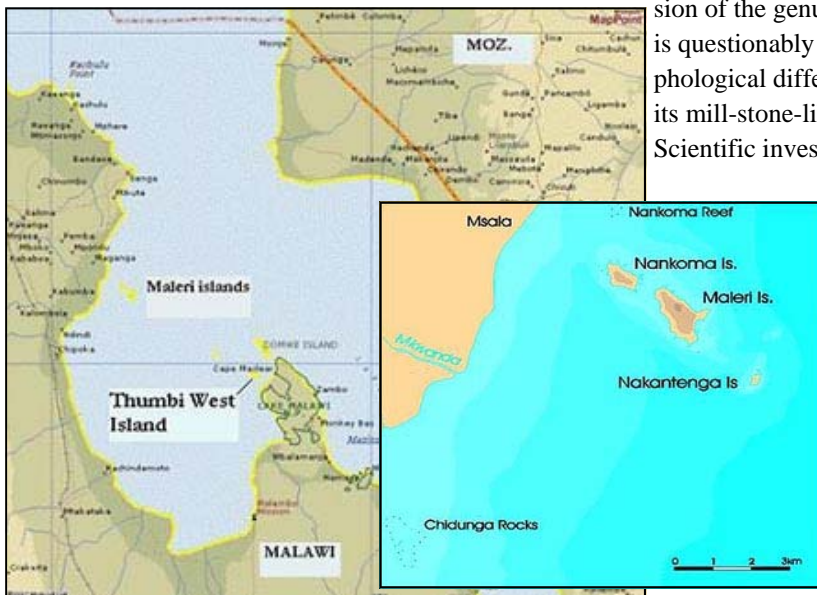
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As noted in the IUCN report; the range of *L. pallidus* is very limited. It is found on the southwestern side of Lake Malawi, around Maleri Island, Nakantenga Island and Thumbi West Island. There has been some discussion on the Thumbi West Island (also known as "The Aquarium") population being an artificial introduction. See the excellent HCCC arti-

cle; *Cynotilapia afra* of Thumbi West Island by Gerard Delany for more details on the ‘importation’ of species to this locale. However, “Ribbink et al. (1983b) do not believe in the purported introduction of *L. pallidus* at Thumbi as it is found all around the island.” [1]



Map copyrighted by Ad Konings and Cichlid Press (www.cichlidpress.com)

I find the threat by “collection for the aquarium trade” interesting as I have so rarely seen *L. pallidus* available in the hobby. They are also seen in the hobby as “Yellow Cap Lab” and

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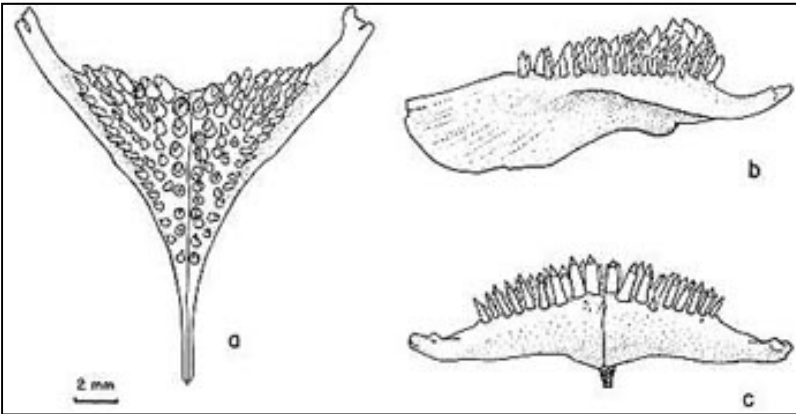
sometimes as "*Labidochromis fryeri*", which is also used on the very similar species found at Mumbo Island, *L. mylodon*. *L. mylodon* and *L. pallidus* “differ only in the size of the pharyngeal bone and it is doubtful whether more than one species will ‘survive’ the next revision of the genus.”[2] “...*L. mylodon* is questionably valid, as its only morphological difference from *L. pallidus* is its mill-stone-like pharyngeal dentition.

Scientific investigation of other *haplochromines* has shown, however, that the development of the pharyngeal teeth is affected by the diet during a critical phase of ontogeny {the course of growth and development of an individual to maturity}, and is thus not to be regarded as species-specific. Whether this applies to *L. mylodon*/*L. pallidus* has not been researched.” [3]

All this talk about pharyngeal teeth and pharyngeal bones is a little overwhelming to the non-scientist (me!). So I decided to see what the talk was all about.

Lower pharyngeal bone (fused fifth ceratobranchials) of *Exochochromis anagenys* (200 mm SL holotype), a Lake Malawi endemic *haplochromine* cichlid of the "Hap" flock, in (a) occlusal (anterodorsal), (b) left lateral, and (c) posterior views. A cichlid feeds by first

obtaining a food item, such as a small fish, with its jaws. The fish then passes the food back into the throat where there is, in effect, a second pair of jaws — the lower pharyngeal bone (seen in this drawing) in the floor of the throat, with teeth pointing upward, and the upper pharyngeal bones in the roof of the throat, with teeth pointing downward. In cichlids, unlike most other fishes, it is this second pair of pharyngeal "jaws" that actually chew the food. [From Oliver, 1984.]



Wow! Talk about learning something new! Here's another thing to check out:

What's that in the Cichlid Press Logo?

Okay, had a little fun—now on with the article! “Both *L. pallidus* and *L. mylodon* can be distinguished from *L. caeruleus* by the bicuspid teeth in the outer jaws. *L. caeruleus*, like most other



*Labidochromis*, has conical teeth.” [4] There are differing opinions on the validity of either species;

“The white mbuna in the southern part of the lake (*L. mylodon* and *L. pallidus*) should probably be regarded as geographic variants of *L. caeruleus*.” Pages by G.F.Turner, Professor of Evolutionary Biology and Biodiversity Department of Biological Sciences, University of Hull, HU6 7RX, United Kingdom

[from the internet]

But, when in any doubt, you all know whose opinion really matters to me. Observations in the lake indicate that all three (or both!) of these species have similar behavior i.e. non-territorial insectivores. They also appear to share the monomorphic coloration pattern as well. Mine are not fully mature yet at 2.5-3”, but based on

available information, I only expect them to grow to 4-4.5” in the aquarium environment.

**Personal experience:**

I acquired a group of 12 juvie/subadults some

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months ago. I really had no interest in keeping this species and had to be talked into raising this group until the original owner sorted out his home tanks. I'm incredibly glad that that person was so persuasive!

The group is housed in a 75 gallon tank with a breeding group of *Cynotilapia afra*. The male *afra* is the dominant fish in the tank, but there have been no conflicts between the two species. The territorial male *afra* tolerates the *L. pallidus* in his chosen corner except when he is 'occupied' with a female. The tank is lightly aquascaped to facilitate removing holding females. Nothing special is done to the water; just basic city tap water. Food is not an issue as this species will readily accept various flake and pellet foods. In fact, stand back or be prepared to be splashed when dropping the food in. These guys hit the floating food with plenty of gusto! They are active, curious and just a joy to watch as they swarm and school throughout all levels of the tank. They some-



Photo by Nick Andreola

times appear to play 'follow-the-leader' as they all swim through the various tunnels in



Photo by Nick Andreola

the holeyrock one after the other. At other times they'll explore as a group or school, each individual moving in perfect symmetry with the others. The female *afras* will sometimes join in the fun. When food approaches, the message is sent out through some sort of fish style ESP and all of them are in the corner where food is normally dropped as fast as lightning.

The coloration is really hard to describe and is equally hard to capture clearly in photographs. The body is generally blue-white overall, the color derived from a staggered blending of blue and white on each individual scale. Different individuals show a varying degree of yellow in a patch above and between the eyes. Some individuals have the yellow extending across the back along the dorsal fin as well. The color patterns in their fins is quite variable as well; from all fins being blue/white to having black leading edges on the lower fins and a faint black sub-



marginal band in the dorsal. I have never noted any barring across the torso, even when the fish are in display mode. The most attractive feature, and probably the hardest to catch in a picture, is a very nice bluish pearly opalescence on the lower half of their face from the mouth



Photo by Nick Andreola

extending back across the gill covers. Every time they turn and catch the light just right it glows like a neon light and is brightly visible across the room.

### **Conclusion:**

*Labidochromis pallidus* is a welcome addition to my tanks. A non-aggressive, non-territorial species to mix in with some of my oppositely tempered species is always a blessing. Just watching this fun-loving group is a blessing all on its own! I can't tell you how many times I've walked past the tank with a clear objective in mind "--- and ended up glued to the tank for long periods just watching the antics of this active group! I highly recommend this fish for its

unusual looks and its fun behavior. Time will tell, but I am seriously considering using groups of this species as dithers in many of my hyper-aggressive species tanks. To lessen any risk of damaging or depleting the wild populations, I'd recommend that we search for nice strains from reputable breeders for our aquarium groups. And I mean GROUPS! The behavior is just too much fun and way too enjoyable to keep just solitary individuals or pairs.

[1] Malawi Cichlids in their natural habitat; 3rd ed., 2001 Ad Konings (pg. 43)

[2] Malawi Cichlids in their natural habitat; 3rd ed., 2001 Ad Konings (pg. 131)

[3] African Cichlids I Malawi Mbuna; 1998 Erwin Schraml (pg. 8)

[4] Malawi Cichlids in their natural habitat; 3rd ed., 2001 Ad Konings (pg. 131)

■ *Nick Andreola*

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**Species Profile:*****Melanochromis parallelus***

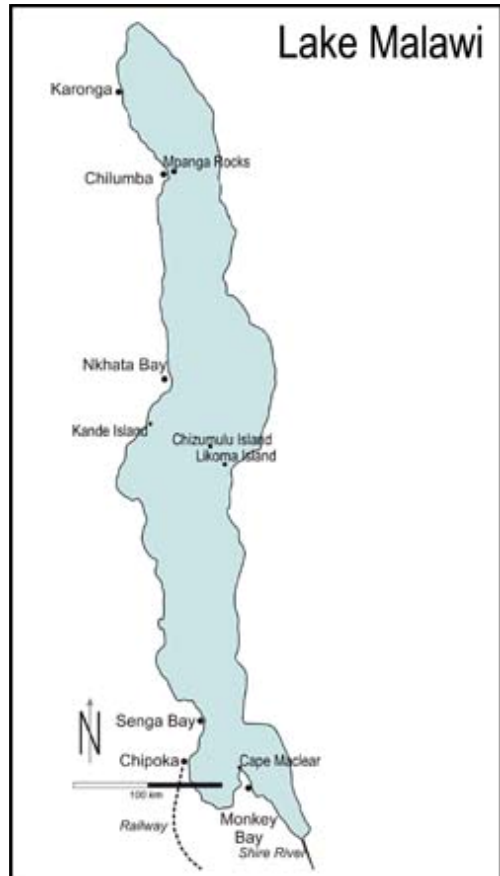
Burgess & Axelrod (1976)

The common name of this Malawian cichlid is a good example of why the fish got its scientific name. *Parallelus* is taken from the Greek "parallelos". Taking the meaning of parallelos further, it's literally from "para allelois" which means 'beside one another' (para "beside" + allelois "each other,"). Females and juveniles of this fish have 2 symmetrical black horizontal lines running down the length of its body. The bottom line runs approximately at mid-body and the top stripe is almost at the top of the body. All of the unpaired fins are edged in black (though the markings on the tail are not continuous). The body color itself is generally white. Males seem to almost reverse their coloration, except in that the females are black and white, the males are black and blue. Where the female is black, the male is blue. Where the female is white is the male shows black. Adults range in size from 11-13 cm (4 ½-5").

This cichlid occurs on the northwestern part of the lake from Kande Island to Mpanga Rock; from Mara Point to Lutura reef; Likoma Island and Chizumulu Island in Lake Malawi. It's been introduced to Cape Maclear, Lake Malawi. They tend to occupy a niche 2-28 m.(6-92') deep.

*Melanochromis parallelus* is omnivorous in the wild, generally dieting on invertebrates but on occasion unusual feeding habits appear. This is remarked by Ad Konings in one of his books

and I've quoted it to fully explain the behavior.



*M. parallelus* and *M. vermicorus* are both found in the sediment-free rocky habitat and show distinct sexual dichromatism. These two species, although more numerous than the previous one, are likewise omnivores which

feed primarily on invertebrates but nip from the biocover as well. When plankton is abundant they also join with other mbuna in feeding in the water column. A diver may attract several of them when debris is stirred up by his fins. Both species feed opportunistically, but I have observed another, most remarkable type of feeding behaviour in *M. parallelus*. Eccles and Lewis (1976) describe the cleaning behavior of juvenile *Docimodus evelynae* which feed on the



Photo by Lisa Boorman

fungus and parasites attached to larger haplochromines. After the rainy season, which is an important breeding period for many species, several larger haplochromines have damaged fins or scales. These wounds are covered with fungus which prevents rapid healing. On several occasions I have observed adult females of *M. parallelus* picking fungus from larger haplochromines. In all instances the wounded fish approached the cleaner and made clear, by lying on its side or hovering in a slanting, head-up position, that it would like to have a treatment. In all cases the dorsal fin was presented first. The female *Parallelus* then picked vigorously at the fungus and tore it off. Al-

though it visibly hurt the client it remained in the typical position. When all its wounds were cleaned, which might take more than a minute, the larger haplochromine would resume its normal position and disappear. Cleaning stations, as seen in marine fishes, were not observed: after the job was done the female *Parallelus* would disappear from the scene as well. George Turner (pers. comm.) once found a juvenile *M. auratus* with a cleaning station based around a small rock at the edge of a breeding colony of a *Copadichromis* species. Several utaka and rock-dwelling species have been observed being cleaned, but in all instances these were large haps, never mbuna. - Konings, A. 2001. Malawi cichlids in their natural habitat. 3rd ed. Cichlid Press page 99.

Aquarium keeping of *M. parallelus* is not too difficult if a few things are kept in mind. This fish is NOT for beginners to Malawian cichlids. You will need a large tank that has a lot of hiding places in it. It is highly aggressive, especially to its own kind. Even the females can be very aggressive to each other. For this reason, you should keep a fairly large group (5-6+) of these cichlids together. The best arrangement is 1 male and all the rest female. Dominant males will chase and harass subdominant males.

I received these young fish from Spencer Jack at the 2005 ACA in Chicago. I purchased 10 juveniles that were around 2" SL long. I originally kept them in a small tank to get

some size on them. Once they reached about 3" SL I felt they were big enough to go into my large 225g cichlid tank. They fit into the tank quite well. Even at this size there was no differentiating any sexes on these fish. I expected

noticed a completely obvious male there was no gradual color change on the males. One day it seemed was a white and black fish with blueish tints on it, the next a blue and black fish!



Photo by Lisa Boorman

some sort of color change soon since my *M. johannii* had gone through their transformation at around this size.

I kept waiting for signs of what sexes I had. Instead all they did was chase each other around and all kept looking like females. It took over a year before I noticed any color changes in them. I suspect it was the fact that they were the smallest fish in the tank rather than anything else that kept their color change from happening any earlier. Finally I started seeing a few of the *paralleus* showing hints of blue on their sides. This process seemed to take forever as well. From the day I started noticing a little bit of blue on a couple of fish until I

I was excited now since I knew for sure that I most likely had both sexes available in the big tank. Now it was just a matter of waiting. And wait again I did.....

Finally about 2 years from when I got them I got a good-sized spawn of fry. I stripped the first female that I saw holding. Within days of that event there was another female holding. Since I already had more than enough fry from the first female, I did not bother saving the fry from the other female. These fry were placed into a 10 gallon tank to start their life. They were kept with a few *Haplochromis* sp. 'blue back' fry and some King Tiger plecos I'm growing out. I was a bit worried about the Hap fry but so far they've been safe (even with the size difference). They were fed crushed flake mainly along with treats of bbs and microworms. They grow fairly quickly. I have placed them into larger quarters until I can pass around the fry. I enjoyed these fish even if they did take forever to spawn. They are a very distinctive color and you cannot miss them in their tank. If you have the room, and have a little experience with Malawians, why not give them a try?

■ Lisa Boorman

**Fish Wish:****“All I want for Christmas is...**

This club has always been about helping out. Whether it is a retailer helping the club with a donation or members helping each other or even members helping club supporters, we've been here for each other whenever possible.

So, for this year's December issue I thought I would get various member fish wishes. If you can help a member with some extra fish or point them in the right direction, please PM them directly. I've used forum usernames so even if you don't know the person with a fish wish, you can still contact them.

Don't assume that the member's fish wish needs to be a freebie. We all know to what extent we are willing to go for that special fish.

**[jb1edlover]** ...to get my hands on a large Clown Loach (5+ in) that can handle being in a tank with large frontosas”



**[Lisachromis]** ...one of two fish - Pelvicachromis sp. blue fin, or Apistogramma sp. 'maulbruter' (the one that actually mouthbroods it's eggs/fry). Pretty tough narrowing it down to even those”



**[theyeti76]** ...Aulonocara sp. 'Rubescens' and Cynotilapia afra Cobwe 'Orange Back'“

**[Bristlenose]** ...any fish that could be raised and bred in 20g tank (I have limited tank space)”

**[Gas]** ...Schwetzochromis neodon and Yssichromis pyrrocephalus”



**[princer7]** ...for my tropheus to spawn :(“

**[Mullet]** ...Orthochromis machadoi and Schwetzochromis neodon”

**[dwschacht]** ...Champsochromis caeruleus, Tropheus sp. 'Red' Chipimbi, Astatotilapia latifasciata Lake Kyoga 'Zebra', Platytaeniodus sp. 'Red Tail Sheller'“



**[Evan]** ...Nanochromis transvestitus”

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In an effort to spur member creativity, this page was left blank. Think of it as a clean canvas to create a cichlid painting, sketch or any type of artistic creation. It would be nice to use it in an upcoming cover and who knows, maybe for other club related stuff. Feel free to use whatever media you like; pencil to paper or completely electronic. Send over whatever you come up with.

**Continued:**

## BAP Report

Another class C that created a lot of interest on the board even before being posted in the BAP was the spawning of *Limbochromis robertsi* which is very rare and hard to find in the hobby. Congratulations to Dan (Dwschacht) for sharing the fry on this rare 1st of species spawn and hopefully there will be more readily available in the future.

A beautiful Lake Victoria cichlid found its way into the November BAP by the courtesy of Pat (Nascar2). Congratulations on Pat on the spawning of the *Paralabidochromis* sp. "Uganda fire red".

Six big congratulations goes out to Nick (Nick

a) on your great start for the new BAP year. Five congrats are for his entries: *Cynotilapia* sp "lion" and the variants from "Mara Rocks". Another entry is the *Pseudotropheus* sp. "elongates chailosi" which is a 1st of species entry. The *Gephyrochromis moorii* was another that was also a 1st of species entry. Another 1st of species entry was the *Labidochromis pallidus*. And the 6th congrats is for achieving the level of "Accomplished Breeder" with a 440 point total. Way to start off the BAP year and it may be a hard act to keep up with, but judging from the plans with your new fish room, you may have a very good start.

■ *Jim Beck*

2007 BAP Totals	
Name	YTD
Greg S.	225
Jim	165
Kenneth	130
Diane	105
Dave H.	90
Greg W.	85
Pat	85
Marty/Melody	65
Dave D.	50

2007 BAP Totals (cont)	
Name	YTD
Christy	50
Kevin	45
Lisa Bo.	30
Dan	30
Paul	30
Duc	25
Eric	25
Lisa Bl.	20
Evan	20

2008 BAP Standings	
Name	YTD
Nick	105
Dan	30
Evan	20
Pat	15



**The Lateral Line**

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