

The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 29

January 2008



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BAP Report

January 20, 2008

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Cover Photo:
Steatocranus tinanti
By Dave Hansen

I would like to congratulate all the members who participated in the BAP last year. It was a very good showing and this year looks to be even better. The Christmas Party was a huge success this year due to the large participation, the great food and the presence of our guest speaker, Ad Konings. The 2007 BAP Awards were presented to those that attended for their achievements and participation in the program. One person who did not receive recognition was Greg Steeves (GAS) who continually stands out with his accomplishments and contributions to the BAP. Greg who has already reached the level of Master Breeder continues to finish each year with the most total points. Greg ended 2007 with 225 points from 11 entries. Congratulations Greg for your participation and support of the BAP. Greg's first entry this year is the *Mbipia mbipi* which is also a "1st of species" and there was a great demand for the fry. Congrats again Greg.

Congratulations to Robert (Rotorboy) on the first entry in December with "his first entry" into the BAP Program. His entry was a "1st of species" report with *Neolamprologus helianthus*. Congrats Robert and welcome to the BAP.

Congratulation to our member from up north, Lisa (Lisachromis) earns big congratulations with her entry of *Melanochromis parallelus*. Being in Canada, Lisa participation is with informative articles on her entries. I can vouch that this is a very interesting article due to the coloration change that takes place as the male matures. Congrats Lisa.

Dan (Dwschacht) entries for December consisted of two "1st of species" reports on the *Thysochromis ansorgii* and *Labidochromis chisumulae*. Dan not only receives congratulations for these but has reached the level of "Breeder Award". This award is presented to any member successfully spawning any five different species with awardable points. Congrats Dan.

2008 BAP Standings	
Name	YTD
Nick	115
Dan	75
Greg	25
Evan	20
Robert	20
Pat	15
Lisa Bo.	15

■ Jim Beck

Species Profile:***Pseudotropheus* sp. "elongatus chailosi"****Background:**

This beautiful fish is found at Chitande Island on the northwestern shore of Lake Malawi. Chitande Island is part of Malawi and is located between Chewere and Chilumba. Comparing

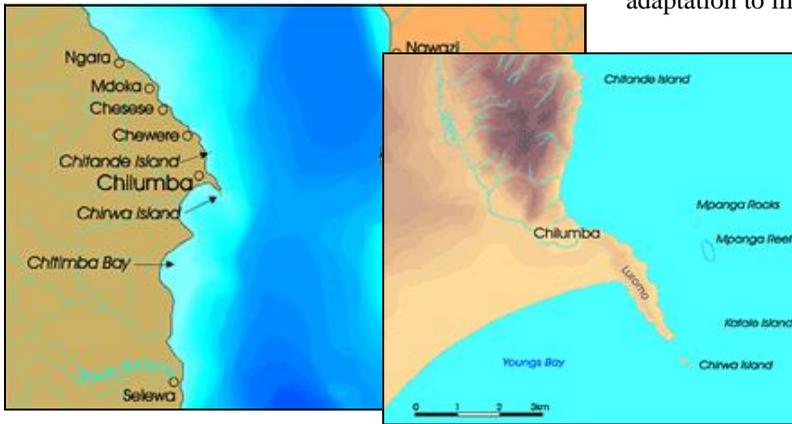
chailosi" would fit into. I would guess that it would be like another neighboring population, the *Ps. sp. "elongatus bee"*, and not fit conveniently into any of the four subgroups. In general, the elongated form is considered to be an adaptation to life spent in caves and clefts

between rocks. The original description of *Pseudotropheus elongatus* was made by Geoffrey Freyer "from specimens collected in Mbamba Bay, Tanzania." [2]

Personal experiences:

I had these on my 'need to get' list for quite a while. About 6 months ago, I received a phone call from Rare Dave that he'd been able to locate some wild

caught specimens. I was a little concerned with their aggressive reputation as only two



Maps copyrighted by Ad Konings and CichlidPress" (www.cichlidpress.com)

them with the much different coloration patterns of their neighbors 10km to the north, the *Ps. sp. "elongatus chewere"*, Konings says, "These two species are apparently so restricted to their particular localities that 10km of open sand is sufficient to maintain such a profound difference between them." [1] The elongatus complex is just that; complex. Konings divides them up into four subgroups; the zebra-like group, the *Tropheops*-like group, the yellow-tailed group and the brown group. He doesn't specifically say which group the *Ps. sp. "elongatus*



Photo by Nick Andreola

pairs were available and there was only room for them in one of my over-stuffed tanks. But, because of that 'need to get' status!, I brought them home and placed them in my 72BF with it's existing population of Rustys, Yellow Labs and *Cyno. afra*. The Chailosi have fit in perfectly with this relatively calm group of mbuna. The subdom of the two males maintains good color; he just doesn't get to breed with the females. The dom male isn't overly abusive to



Photo by Nick Andreola

either the subdom nor the females. He and the dom *Cyno. afra* and the dom Rusty tolerate each other quite well and seem to have worked out a comfortable pattern of only claiming/defending a territory when their particular females are ripe. The males are about 4" long and the females just a 1/2" shorter. They all are vigorous feeders and eagerly accepted the flake/pellet diet standard for that tank's population. The females appear to have about a two month cycle, which gives them plenty of time to re-

plenish their reserves before holding again. There are about 25 fry per brood. The fry are quick to go for crushed flake and grow quite quickly compared to other many other mbuna fry. They've tended to begin to color up at a much earlier age than common as well.

Conclusions:

I've been very pleased with the addition of this group to my ever-expanding collection. They have a unique blend of blue/yellow/black that is quite attractive and their behavior is not in line with the typical elongatus-like territoriality and aggression I was expecting. This is a species I expect I'll be keeping for many generations. I suspect they are going to be very suitable companions to many of my *Tropheops* and/or *Cynotilapia* groups.

Reference:

All quotes from Ad Konings, Malawi Cichlids (3rd edition.)

[1] pg 163

[2] pg 63

■ Nick Andreola

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Species Profile:***Astatotilapia calliptera***

Astatotilapia calliptera occurs amongst vegetated areas in shallow waters of the Lake Chilwa, river system. It is also found in and around Lake Malawi, Chiuta; Lower Zambezi, Buzi, Pungwe and Save River waterways. Distribution is contained between Lake Malawi and the southern portion of Lake Victoria. The diet of *Astatotilapia calliptera* consists of invertebrates, algae, plants, small fishes and plankton. In captivity this cichlid does well on a diverse diet of common prepared food.

Male coloration varies from olive green to bright yellow in courting males. The anterior of the dorsal is edged with black fading to red at the posterior. The caudal fin is translucent blue along the fin rays and also edged faintly in red. In keeping with the *Astatotilapia* designation, the anal fin is adorned with true occuli in a single row. The anal fin is attractively adorned with red edging on a light blue base. The pelvic fins are black with a light blue/white edge to the first fin ray. A distinctive black line runs from the corner of the mouth through, through the eye, and ending at the top of the eye socket.

The lips are bright blue. Faint vertical body bars number between 6 and 8. Female body coloration is olive green to yellow. Fins are mainly colorless.



Photo by Greg Steeves

Native name translates to "Eastern Happy". This is a misnomer in my experience as on my first attempt with this fish, I found this haplochromine to be among the more aggressive of *Astatotilapia* species, especially between conspecifics. With the onset of sexual maturity (at a length of about 4 cm) *Astatotilapia calliptera* savagely tear each other apart. I attempted to introduce *Auloncara stuartgranti* to the colony of *A. calliptera*. The *Auloncara stuartgranti* were virtually ignored and the slaughter continued. I was left with two individuals, a male and a female. After a couple infertile spawns, the growing male turned on his mate and killed her as well. Other hobbyists have relayed experiences of *Astatotilapia cal-*

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liptera being a model resident in the aquaria.

My second attempt with *Astatotilapia calliptera* occurred when Spencer Jack brought me a box from his Florida fish farm. He had told me how brilliantly colored the fish were but seeing is believing. This strain had a much more vibrant yellow base as opposed to the olive green I had been accustomed to. The fish were fairly small at about 4cm. It happened that at the time I was converting a 125 gallon tank into



Photo by Spencer Jack

and mixed Malawi/Victoria community. The occupants consisted of *Paralabidochromis* sp. "red fin piebald", *Cytocara moori*, *Astatotilapia calliptera*, *Paralabidochromis* sp. "rock krib" and the dwarf Tanganyika catfish *Synodontis lucipinnis*. In this larger aquaria, *A. ca;liptera* has been a much more peaceful resident. It may well have been that my first attempt was made in a tank that was too small. Feeding consist of my own home mixed flake. The cichlid has maintained it's vibrant yellow hue.

I have had my young females hold fry in the

125 numerous times but due to the hassle of taking all the rockwork out to catch them, I've let them hold and release in this tank. It is doubtful that any of the fry survived the other tank inhabitants. I finally managed to catch a holding female that was dazed when I first powered up the lights on the tank. She was placed in a 10 gallon tank where she could finish brooding in peace. Somewhere around day 20 of her gestation, she began releasing her clutch of 5 fry. She briefly let them forage close to her and then scooped them back up into her buccal cavity. As the releasing became more frequent, the fry were allowed to wander further away from their mother. Eventually I relocated the female back to her 125 and left the fry in the 10 gallon. They have grown slowly but I believe that this is due to the temperature in the fish hut this time of year. It is around 70F now but raises to 85+F in the summer months. The fry are being fed the same flake formulae as the young adults are only crushed into a fine powder. I'm also sure that as the fish grow, more sizeable spawns can be expected.

All in all *Astatotilapia calliptera* is a beautiful "haplochromine" species. I am very glad I gave it a second chance.

■ Greg Steeves

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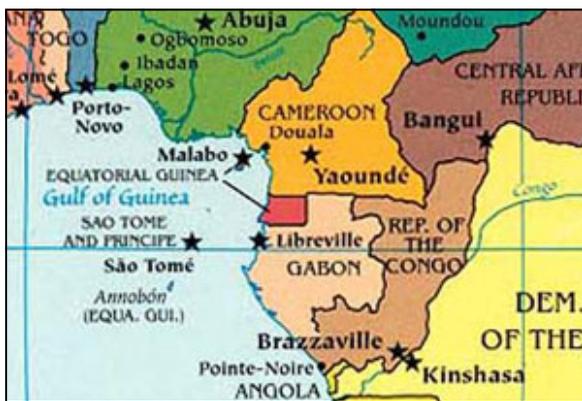
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Species Profile:

Steatocranus: A Genus Review

Even before I began to get excited about the Cichlids of West Africa, I was always intrigued by the genus *Steatocranus*. I have always had a soft spot for rheophilic fish. Rheophilic is a term that refers to fish that live in fast moving water. Most cichlids of this type are slender



and elongated to enable them to thrive in the quick moving bodies of water. All members of *Steatocranus* are rheophilic species. In addition, all species have reduced swim bladders to varying degrees. They will sink like a rock when the stop swimming. The vast majority of their time is spent on the substrate.

As of this moment there are 9 described species and 2 undescribed species. All of them except for one can be found in the Congo River system. The type species happens to be among my favorites and that is *Steatocranus gibbiceps*. The described species contained in the genus currently are *Steatocranus bleheri*, *S. casuarinus*, *S. gibbiceps*, *S. glaber*, *S. irvinei*, *S. mpozensis*, *S. rouxi*, *S. tinanti*, *S. ubanguiensis*.

The undescribed species are *S. sp. "red eye"* and *S. sp. "square head"*.

Let's discuss their appearance now. I would classify the genus as a small to mid size animal. The most unique characteristic they share is the large mouth and thickened lips. In addition, some male specimens can grow some very impressive humps on their head. Males also get larger than the females and tend to have more elongated dorsal and anal fins. This is one of my favorite traits. I have some males with dorsal fins that flow well past the end of their tail. Pelvic fins have a rounded appearance due to the longer middle rays. *Steatocranus* can be seen propped up on these pelvic fins constantly. Members of the species have very stout and strong caudal peduncle that powers a large caudal fin. The dorsal fin maintains a low profile along the length of the body and flares a bit near the end of the fin. Normally the coloration is the first physical trait that is mentioned when describing a species appearance. *Steatocranus* will never be called a colorful group of fish. As they mature most of them are a dark gray or

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muddy brown color. Juvenile coloration can be a bit more varied. The color is not what makes this an exciting group of fish to keep. It is there unique shape and wonderful personality.



Photo by Dave Hansen

I have bred a few of the species, but not all of them by a long shot. They are a cave spawning and pair bonding cichlid. I have always started with 5-6 juveniles of a species and let them sort it all out to obtain a pair. Pair bonding compared to many species is relatively peaceful. I never witnessed the raw brutality of some cichlids. It is very easy to see with even minor observation who is going to pair. There will be some chasing that is exhibited. Once a pair is identified it is a simple matter of pulling the rest of them before any carnage takes place. In a couple of instances I have had a male tolerate two females in the tank, but he would only breed with one. In one case, the dominant female died and it looked like he bonded with the second female. Eggs were laid several times, but I never achieved any fry from the attempt. A clay breeding cave has been the most popular choice so far for

a breeding site. I have also had pair choose a group of rocks as well that formed a cave. There can only be one entrance though into their sections of the rocks. If there is any way for a backdoor entry, they will move onto another site. Once they have spawned and the fry are free swimming the female will guard them. The male doesn't actually guard the fry, but patrols his territory and defends anything in his space, which happens to contain the female and fry. The young fish will stay very close to the spawning site for an extended period of time. Often I have no idea how big a spawn took place till weeks after the spawn and the fry begin to explore their surroundings. In addition, the parents and juveniles will tolerate multiple generations of broods. I have discovered the hard way that the parents do not defend very well against catfish picking off fry. I have a habit of keeping catfish, mostly *synodontis*, in all my tanks. I do this for two reasons. I like the job they do of keeping the tank clean of any food, and I love catfish. I no longer keep any in a tank with *Steatocramus* though.

I would like to share some thoughts on the tank environment when keeping these cichlids. First let me mention that I would never



Photo by Dave Hansen

mix species in a single tank. I keep them in 30-gallon long tanks. I imagine a bonded pair could be kept in a 20 long, though I have not tried this myself yet. The substrate is always dark brown pool filter sand. I keep lots of rocks for hiding and perching spots. I have found that they will live at multiple levels. I also keep lots of plants in the tank. Most of them are tall plants that will reach the surface and help subdue the lighting a bit. An overly bright tank will not let them be too comfortable. Water parameters are not real important and they tolerate higher pH and hardness very well. Though they are a riverine fish, it is not necessary to recreate their natural environment



with excessive water movement. They have developed their body shape to stay out of the rapids. They do need well-oxygenated water. The method that works best for me is to have a slightly oversized filter for the tank. I will place a tall rock below the output of the filter. The flow of water will hit the rock and disperse the energy of the water throughout the tank without overpowering the fish or blasting substrate everywhere.

Feeding these fish is very easy. I mix a combination of spirulina and kelp, brine, and garlic flake into a container and feed this to them. I also feed NLS flake to them as well. I would not recommend feeding them pellets myself. I lost several specimens when I was



Photos by Dave Hansen

in a phase of feeding only pellet. They appeared to struggle with processing the pellets. Occasionally I will feed live mosquito larvae as well. They attack these with much enthusiasm.

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Despite their appearance I have found them to be excellent community inhabitants. I will usually keep them with another West African cichlid. They have been kept successfully with *Anomalochromis thomasi*, *Benitochromis nigrodorsalis*, *Orthochromis stormsi*, and *Pungu maclereni*. I almost always try to keep a West African barb or tetra in the tanks as well as dithers. In addition, I think they are beautiful fish as well.



If you are interested in West African cichlids then the members of *Steatocranus* are an excellent choice to add to your tanks. It always one of the more fun tanks that my family and I enjoy observing. They are charming whether they are propped up on their fins staring at you or darting and scooting around the tank. They are not a shy cichlid and seem to be as interested in us as we are them.



References:

Lamboj, A. 2004. "The Cichlid Fishes of Western Africa." Bergit Schmettkamp Verlag, Bornheim.

Photos by Dave Hansen

■ *Dave Hansen*

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Event Calendar:**Upcoming Events in Texas****January**

January 22nd

Time: 6 P.M.

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Special monthly meeting with Les Kaufman as a guest speaker. To be held at Greg and Lee Ann Steeves' house in Canyon Lake.

February

February 9th

Time: Noon

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Winter Cichlid Day auction. Located at Bracken United Methodist Church just north of San Antonio. Visit www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com/events.php for more information.

February 16th

Time: 7 P.M.

Texas Cichlid Association— Regular monthly meeting. At David Andrew's house in Fort Worth. Visit <http://home.flash.net/~tcichlid/index.html> for more information.

March

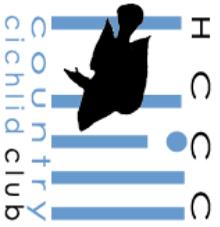
March 16th

Time: 11 A.M.

Houston Aquarium Society—Spring auction. Located at the American Legion Post in Houston. Visit www.houstonaquariumsociety.org for more information. There WILL be steak dinner available!

If you are a club supporter and know well in advance of an upcoming sale or special event at your business, please let me know so I can include you in this listing.

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