

The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 33

July 2008



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Snorkeling in Landa Park

Lake Victoria Cichlids Part II





July 18, 2008

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Cover Photo:

*Xystichromis
phytophagus*

By Lee Ann Steeves

BAP Report

June is turning into a "hot month" for the fish breeders. New fish rooms, new members and new outdoor ponds are having their desired effect. Some of our members have really out done themselves with new fish rooms and filling their back yards with swimming pool ponds. Clear some tanks out because there should be some great fish and great deals as the tanks are dismantled for the winter.

One of the first entries in June belongs to Greg (GAS) with the entry of *Sciaenochromis fryeri*. Not sure if these are from Lake Steeves or not. Congrats Greg.

Congrats to Robert (Ripple) on a "C" class spawning of the *Synodontis lucipinnis*. This is an egg scattering/laying species and a very slow growing fish. Hopefully the fry will be in traveling shape by the time this article appears. Congratulations Robert on "C" entry.

Dan (Dan) earns congratulations on the entries of Jalo Reef *Cynotilapia afra*, *Neolamprologus multifasciatus* and *Neochromis omnicaruleus*. The Neolamps earned Christy (Texastang) 5 extra points for a second generation spawn which were from fry that passed down from Jennifer (Princer7) entry. The *Neochromis* are a beautiful Lake piebald algae grazing cichlid which is a first spawn for the club. Shortly thereafter Dan added 3 more entries consisting of *Neolamprologus caudopunctatus*, *Paralabidochromis* sp. "Uganda fire red" and the *Xystichromis* sp. "flameback". The *Paralabidochromis* and the *Xystichromis* produced enough fry that donated extra listings of fry. Dan was able to get one more entry in June with the entry of *Tramitichromis intermedius*. This "sand sifter" is rarely found in the hobby and requires a large tank and lots of sand because it reaches a length of approximately 6 inches. Dan was able to accumulate a total of 7 entries in June and his point total put him over the 200 point mark which enabled him to receive the "HCCC Advanced Breeder Award". Congratulations Dan on this accomplishment in such a short period of time and for dispersing all those fry and their parents.

(Continued on page 13)

A Snorkel Tale: Landa Park, New Braunfels Part I

When I was much younger, snorkeling was a pastime that I thoroughly enjoyed. The North Atlantic shoreline provides countless beach, marsh and rocky outcrops along with countless other ecosystems to be explored in this manner. For the most part, I had gotten away from my frequent underwater explorations but had never lost the zest for it. I always felt there would be a time that would lend itself for me to get back at snorkeling adventures.

This summer I set up a couple pools in the back yard and populated them with cichlids of course. The fish did extremely well in these artificial ponds and I began to toy with the idea of taking some underwater shots of the fish. I got a disposable underwater camera and figured that I would pick up a snorkel and mask while I was at it. I threw on the equipment and jumped in the water to snap some shots. Almost immediately I got the rush back. All the fun of snorkeling came back at me in my own backyard. To my good fortune, this was all taking place near Father's day. My family gave me an underwater digital camera and this only served to encourage me to spend more time underwater with my cichlids in the pool. My neighbors are certain I have lost my marbles and I have no room to argue with them. Luckily, I've never really been one to worry too much about what other people think so my dives go on.

One of the very first places Lee Ann had taken me to visit when I first started traveling here

was Landa Park in New Braunfels. It is still one of my favorite places to spend time at and I do this as often as I can. The Comal River begins its trip to merge with the Guadalupe River here. For me, this was a logical location to expand on my revitalized interest in snorkeling.



Photo by Greg Steeves

The Comal River flows from springs that flow from limestone shelves at Panther Trail on the north side of the park. The flow here is incredibly strong. Eight million gallons of water jet from these springs hourly. The temperature never drops below 73F and is usually around 80F. This is refreshing on a hot day and warm in the cold (ha!) of winter. Many different environments can be found along the river's 2.5 mile path. Where the water emerges from the hill side and forms the swiftly flowing river, the depth is between 4-6 feet. The bottom consists of rounded river

rock and a species of aquatic plant can be found here that I have not located in any other location. This 250 foot stretch of river is home to an indigenous fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*) as well. It is protected so there is no water entry allowed here.



Photos by Greg Steeves

A small gazebo stands at the point where this small stream opens to a beautiful lake. Pelican Island splits Landa Lake and is surrounded by water lilies and hyacinth. The small island contains some large trees that are always filled with many different birds. The current is still surprisingly swift in this enlarged area and it is here that enjoyed my first exploration of the sub aquatic life of the Rio Comal .

I entered the water 20 feet down stream from the previously mentioned gazebo. The water here is about 3 feet deep when you step off the bank. Once in the water I was immediately engulfed by long leaves *Vallisneria gigantean*. Thick stands of this val reach to near the surface and harbor an incredible array of both native and non native species. The prominent fish

here is the lively little livebearer *Gambusia affinis*.and it is everywhere. It's a truly incredible sight to see these large reeds being pushed by the current while the bright sun scallops drifting streaks of light through the water. This is really something that has to be seen in person to be appreciated. If you look closely at the long leaves, clear ghost shrimp can be seen grazing on the growing algae. The odd bright crimson crayfish climbs these leave as well quickly jetting backwards if your hand approaches too close. Both trumpet and rams horn snails are abundant here.



As the steady current pushes along, the *Vallisneria* spreads and separates. Looking down at the base of these plants, silver Mexican tetras (*Astyanax fasciatus mexicanus*) dart. Drifting

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along, the *Gambusia* school in large groups all turning together with the precision usually reserved for birds and open water fish species. Suddenly male mollies (*Poecilia velifera*), shimmering their bright blue tails at prospective females, appear ahead. In the distance, a large bass skims the top of the waving plants. Drifting along, a small opening in the reeds expose a pair of tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) guarding a rock. These fish can be aggressive when there are eggs or fry being protected so I let the water push me by.

Water movement creates tunnel-like pathways in the *Vallisneria* that change direction as you move through them. Every now and then I look up out of the water to get my position. I want to follow the shore so when it is time to emerge from the water, I won't have a long swim. Just as this massive jungle seems to be getting thicker, it suddenly opens up to a sandy bottom plant less area. Swimming into this is stunning as you travel from one environment to another in the blink of an eye. The large strands of *Vallisneria* form a moving wall here and the bright sun creates shadows at the base of these plants. In this dark area large tilapia and bass patrol. The open sandy areas harbor a couple species of sunfish along with the fish I came to see, the Texas cichlid (*Herichthys cyanoguttatus*). I was able to see perhaps 5-6 pair of these cichlids and they were just beginning to formulate nesting areas. The fish had not yet taken on the contrasting black and white pattern that spawning individuals demonstrate. I spend a lot of time in this area taking photo's of what I'm seeing wishing I had others with me to enjoy the sights.

I make my way towards shore and emerge from the water just before the lookout that jetty over the water. This entire effortless drift takes five minutes and is better than any carnival ride I've ever been on. Once on the bank, I let a sigh of exhilaration and then quickly make my way back the gazebo to do this amazing ride once again.



Photo by Lee Ann Steeves

This adventure only explores a minute portion of the diverse Comal River. Perhaps the next adventure will be to snorkel the *Lugwigia* or *Hygrophilia* beds. One thing is certain; there will be a part II. I only hope it will include sharing the wondrous sights with others.

■ Greg Steeves

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From Seattle to Uganda via St. Louis: Seeking and Finding Lake Victoria Cichlids, Pt. II

Where is Lake Nawampasa and is that Cichlid really "Extinct in the Wild"?

May 15, 2008

In part one of this article, I told you about my first trip to Lake Victoria in Uganda and then my second trip to the satellite lake called Gigati, about fifteen miles from the small town of Pallisa in northeast Uganda. Because Nile Perch weren't introduced into most of the satellite lakes, their cichlids are said to have escaped the ravages of that big predator and maintained a greater degree of diversity. We got lucky and found a lot of diverse and beautiful cichlids in Gigati, but I had read that there were even more species in a lake called Nawampasa. The trouble was that we couldn't find anyone in Pallisa who had even heard of Nawampasa. Later that night a local shopkeeper named George Ouze told us he'd made some inquiries and, although he wasn't sure, he thought he

now could find Nawampasa. So we set off early the next morning with George Ouze, in the dark and pouring rain in our old Toyota Land Cruiser.

After a half hour, we came to a town called



Photo by Lawrence Kent

Namatuba and tried to buy a jerry can so we'd be prepared to collect lake water for future water changes. None of the little shops had any to sell, but we found a helpful man who said he would go home and get one he could sell us. He was desperately poor, barefoot and wearing a stained and shredded old shirt. I bought his jerry can, and we headed east on another dirt road that had become muddy and slippery in the rain. We passed dozens of tiny groupings of mud houses with thatched roofs, cassava fields, and barking dogs. At each intersection, we'd

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stop and ask "Which way to Lake Nawampasa?" but our question would generate only confused responses in local languages and finger pointing. No one seemed to really know. We kept going. Past Kaliro, Nawaikike, and Irundu. At one point the road was blocked by a small van that had slid sideways and become stuck in the mud, half on the road and half off. As we tried to squeeze by, our car also slid off the road into a ditch, its wheels spinning in the mud. I thought it might roll, but our driver, Sanyo, was able to drive up onto an embankment while maintaining momentum, and then crash through some bushes to stabilize the car.

We got to a place called "Nawampiti" and



in Uganda, and this wariness was one of its legacies. So we followed him on his bicycle, a couple of miles down to the shore of a shallow, reed-lined lake. The area in which it was located was called Wampala but there was some ambiguity about the actual name of the lake. It was probably a branch or "finger" of Kyoga. The Nile River actually flows through



Photos by Lawrence Kent

Lake Kyoga on its way from Lake Victoria to Lake Albert in Western Uganda, and then continues through Sudan and eventually to Egypt.

The rain stopped just as we parked the car, right on cue. We got out and were soon sur-

asked the locals about Nawampasa. We'd been driving for almost four hours, so when they said they didn't know, but told us of another lake nearby, we decided we'd try it. One of the locals offered to guide us there, but was afraid to get into our car, because it was painted military green. There's an ugly history of forced conscription by both rebels and official armies

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rounded by fifteen young men and boys. We showed them my minnow seine and the pictures of cichlids in the Barrons book on "Lake Victoria Basin Cichlids." Five minutes later,



Photos by Lawrence Kent

some of them dragged the seine through the mucky shallows and dropped the contents into the flooded bottom of an old canoe for us to pick through. There were lots of young tilapia and unidentifiable, tiny haplochromines - nothing very interesting - so we gave up on that and headed further out into the lake in one of the canoes, armed with a local cast net. It was a beautiful lake, with lots of pied kingfishers hovering above and water lilies and hyacinth floating here and there. Unfortunately, the local man throwing the cast net caught only a couple of tilapia. The mesh was too big to catch the haplochromines I was after. We headed back, closer to the shore, and a few of the locals agreed to try the seine again, but this time in deeper water - about 5 feet deep. The area had

a lot of underwater vegetation and small fish that I could see from the canoe. They caught a lot of little silvery and bluish haplochromine juveniles, but nothing too interesting. Somebody noticed a Nile crocodile in the water about 50 feet away. We decided it was time to give up on that locale and continue our quest to find the real Lake Nawampasa.

I paid the requisite tips and we drove on. After a couple more hours of driving, fol-



lowing seemingly random directions from locals who hadn't heard of our lake but were willing to point in different directions, we were getting frustrated. It was 3 p.m. and the

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only thing the three of us (the local driver, George Ouze, and I) had eaten all day were the five granola bars that I had packed, which we had to share, and the drinking water, which was running very low. Our driver, Sanyo, seemed



Photos by Lawrence Kent

particularly keen to throw in the towel. So we gave up on our quest for the holy grail of Nawampasa and instead settled for another local landing spot that someone told us had some of the fish pictured in my book.

This papyrus-filled lake was near a traditional village called Buyuba, so there were plenty of boys willing to help us. It was probably another branch of Lake Kyoga but nobody seemed sure, and the language barriers were formidable. Some of the boys dragged the seine and caught scores of bright yellow Dwarf Victorian Mouthbrooders, *Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor victoriae*. Others headed out into the lake with hook and line and came back with about twenty beautiful haplochromine adults. Looking

these over, I faced the same problems with identification that I had confronted at Lake Gigati the day before; nonetheless, I think some were *Haplochromis* sp. "ruby" with dark sides and orange backs, separated by a blurred

yellow stripe, with red fins and blue lips. They were gorgeous! The dark blackish-blue ones -- glistening in the sunlight -- with bright red caudal and anal fins were probably *Astatotilapia nubila*.

There were also some fish with bright red on their backs, cheeks, faces, and caudal, dorsal and anal fins, with some gray barring and hints of yellow and green on their flanks. Greg Steeves later told me these were probably *Gaurochromis* sp. "cobalt" or maybe *Xystichromis* "Kyoga Flameback," although he wasn't sure. By looking at the photos I emailed him, Greg helped correct

many of my initial mistaken identifications. He's the Regional Coordinator for the American Cichlid Association's Conservation Priority List for Lake Victoria. My friend from St. Louis - champion fish breeder Mike Hellweg -

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put me in touch with Greg, who's been extremely helpful. Mike also helped identify fish in my photos by looking at Ole Seehausen's book on Lake Victoria's cichlids. That book is out of print and I don't have a copy.

We also found and photographed another unusual haplochromine-shaped fish at that spot. It had orange-pink blotches on its gill covers and lower anterior flanks, a dusty reddish stripe along the lateral line, yellow-green on its lower posterior flanks, a violet patch right above its anal fin and into the caudal peduncle, a blotched violet back, and red unpaired fins. The blend of shiny but subtle colors on that fish gave it an overall "mother of pearl" appearance. Neither Greg



Steeves nor I could identify it.

From there we started to head back towards Entebbe, where I'd booked a hotel room. But first I wanted to stop in Jinja, a small city located at the "source of the Nile" where the great river flows out of Lake Victoria. I wanted to visit the Ugandan Fisheries Research Institute there to try to get some more informa-

tion. I'd read about this institute in an article by Lee Newman available on the web. He'd reported that the Institute housed several exhibit aquaria with local fish. We raced to get there before its staff went home for the night. But by the time we arrived, the guard with the



Photos by Lawrence Kent

key to the aquarium room had left so we couldn't get in. One of the staff told us "there's not much left in there to see anyway" and then provided some identification tips on the more common haplochromine species, suggesting that many were *Xystichromis*. He also told me we had gone totally the wrong way in our quest for Nawampasa: "My goodness, why did you

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go all the way to Pallisa? You should've just taken the Kamuli road from here. Next time, come see me first." He also said he might be able to take me out to some nice rocky islands in Lake Victoria to catch more species, if I would pay for the boat's fuel. Sounded like a good deal to me. I hope there is a next time.

From Jinja it took another four hours to reach



Photo by Lawrence Kent

Entebbe (traffic when passing through Kampala) so I didn't reach my hotel until about 10:30 that night, dehydrated, filthy, starving, but pretty happy. Luckily the cook made me some spaghetti.

Five days later, after many work meetings on agricultural issues, it was the weekend again, so late Saturday afternoon I took a motorcycle taxi down to the Bugonga waterfront to look for the fishermen who had helped me seven weeks earlier during my first trip. I asked them to round up some "nkedge" (haplochromines) and they said they would do so early the next morning. That Sunday I got up early, went to

church, then headed back to Bugonga to find my fisher-friends. One boy had a couple of dozen fish swimming around in the water on the floor of his canoe, but nothing very interesting. Another canoe arrived on the beach filled with freshly caught Nile perch. There were about twenty of them and a group of women gathered around to buy these delicious fish. The women were (food) fish traders. Then I bumped into Bernard, the old Ugandan fisherman who had taken me out in his canoe the first time I visited. He recognized me and told me to get in again. We paddled out a few hundred yards and he pulled up a jerry can full of fish he'd been storing underwater. When we got back to shore he spilled its contents onto the floor of his boat, and we started looking at the species.

Most seemed to be Rock Kribensis, although I'm not really sure. They were about 4 inches in length, grayish-blue, with bright red caudal and anal fins. Some were yellow with six dark bars crossed by two lateral stripes, generating a checkered appearance. They also had some reddish orange in all of their fins. Maybe a yellow race of Rock

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Kribensis? Maybe an *Orthochromis* species?

I found two more species of note, both of which I was able to get home to Seattle. The first was a gray-bodied fish with black bars, blue lips, a red-edged tail, and a bright, metallic blue dorsal fin. It looked just like *Pundamilia pundamilia*, although none have been reported previously from this part of the Lake. The second was a long snouted cichlid with a yellow-green base color, dark bars, a dark greenish stripe along the lateral line, red-edged fins with blue rays, and rosy patches straddling its gill covers. Greg identified it from a photo as *Lipochromis parvidens*.

While we were sorting through the fish on the beach, a local came up to show us a big *synodontis* catfish he'd caught, about nine inches long, probably *Synodontis victoriae*. Another guy came by to show us a big elephant fish, probably 20 inches long, probably *Mormyrus kannume*. Then Bernard said "this one is different" and pulled a three-inch haplochromine from his boat. He showed me the unspectacular grayish fish with the torpedo-shaped body of a *harpagochromis*. It had two black stripes and some subdued barring. I snapped its photo, and thanked him.

When I got back to my hotel room, I looked at that photo more carefully and compared it to the photos in the Barrons book. It matched the photo of *Harpagochromis* sp. "Two Stripe White Lip." But the text explained that this species is "extinct in the wild."

"Wow" I thought, "either my identification is off, or this species really isn't extinct, which is great news." Maybe the Nile perch haven't gobbled them all up yet.

Once home, I shared the photo with Greg Steeves, and he said: "Maybe. It's definitely a *Harpagochromis* species but I can't tell if it's a



Photo by Lawrence Kent

Two Stripe. We need to share the photo with more experts and collect their opinions."

Greg's doing so through the internet. If this newsletter publishes the photo, take a look, and share your opinion with me (lawkentnorton@yahoo.com). In the meantime, I'm hoping for the best.

God bless you, and your fish.

■ Lawrence Kent

BAP Report (cont.)

Mike's entry of *Tropheops* sp. "lilac" was second generation spawn which boosts Nick's point total up 5 points. Mike had another submission with *Cynotilapia afra* and then followed up with an entry of *Xystichromis* sp "dayglow". These entries are Mike's "First Entries" in the BAP and earn him the "HCCC Spawning Award". Congratulations Mike and it won't be long before you reach the next level.

If you have kept up with the BAP you know that Nick (Nick A) has a favorite species which is the *Cynotilapia*. His latest entry is a "First of Species" with "Axelrodi" from Nkhata Bay. Then he entered another favorite species *Cynotilapia* sp. "Hara" which is also a "First of Species" entry. Congratulations Nick, keep those Cynos coming and keep up the good work.

One of our new members made his mark in the BAP with his "First BAP Entry" of the *Cynotilapia* "Cobue". Congratulations Drew (Subsailor) on your first report and getting your feet wet in BAP waters.

As our club grows, so does our endeavors to help promote the care and breeding of Cichlids. This includes the endangered species and with that in mind, the BAP has begun to offer bonus points to any member donating ESP fry to other members. Plus the donating member can choose whom to give the species too, but that member has to enter them in the ESP before points are awarded. Members are already utilizing this not only to receive more points but to help preserve the species.

■ *Jim Beck*

2008 BAP Standings

Name	YTD
Dan	225
Nick	205
Pat	90
Greg	60
Mike	45
Robert D.	40
Duc	25
Jerry	25

2008 BAP Standings (cont.)

Name	YTD
Evan	20
Robert T	20
Drew	15
Ed	15
JB	15
Lisa Br.	15
Christy	5
Jim B.	5

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

July 17-20th

ACA 2008 Convention in Atlanta Georgia.

Check out the ACA 2008 website for more details. www.aca2008.com

July 20th

Houston Aquarium Society— Summer Live Fish Auction. American Legion Post #490.

Visit www.houstonaquariumsociety.org for more information.

August

August 2nd

Hill Country Cichlid Club— Monthly Meeting. North Village Branch Library, 2139 W. Anderson Lane., Austin. Lecture on South American Cichlids by Marcus Whittle.

August 16th

Texas Cichlid Association— End of Summer Pool Party, 3:00, at the home of Diane and Mike Stewart, 1025 Granite Lane, DeSoto

September

Sept. 14th (Date Changed)

Hill Country Cichlid Club— Cichlid Day auction. Location and time TBD. Visit www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com for details as they become available.

Sept. 26- 28th

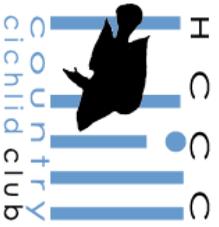
Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies— 2008 Annual Convention, 25th Anniversary. Hosted by the Texas Cichlid Association in Irving Texas. Visit www.texascichlid.org for more information.

National event:

ACA Convention 2008



This year's American Cichlid Association convention will be hosted by the Atlanta Area Aquarium Association. For more information visit www.aca2008.com or www.atlantaaquarium.com/



The Lateral Line

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