

The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 26

September-October 2007



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BAP Report

August entries contained a month of firsts. Congratulations to Kevin (Sir BlackhOle) on his 1st of species spawning of *Parachromis managuensis*. This is a very large fish and his article on the caring and breeding of this species should be very interesting. Congrats Kevin.

October 10, 2007

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Another 1st of species entry was submitted by Kenneth (Shelload) on the *Dimidiochromis compressiceps*. Kenneth entered the BAP in March and this is his 3rd entry of a 1st of species. Most important was the fact that this was his 5th entry into the program and qualifies him for the Breeders Award. Great work Kenneth on your accomplishments. Although the fry are 2 months old they still may be too small for transporting, but check with him. Kenneth also submitted two more entries, the *Labidochromis caeruleus* and the *Aulonocara hueseri*. Congrats Kenneth on your entries, keep them fry coming.

It would not be a BAP month if we did not hear from Greg (GAS). And he has not disappointed us by entering another 1st of species. Congratulations on the *Ctenochromis horei*, which is a large and aggressive fish. If you're interested in the fry be prepared to have a large tank and plenty of refuge for the females. Congratulations Greg.

Congratulations go out to Dan (dwschacht) on his first entry in the BAP. His first entry consisted of two entries, one was the *Labidochromis caeruleus* and the other was the *Pseudotropheus acei*, white tail. Congrats again Dan on your first two entries in the BAP.

Congrats to all the 1st for August. September will host a 1st for the HCCC with the upcoming FOTAS Convention. Hope to see you there.

Cover Photo:
Archocentrus sp.
 "Honduran Red Point"
 By Dave Hansen

Standings on Page 19.

■ Jim Beck

HCCC Monthly Photo Contest



First Place
Dave Hansen
Benitochromis nigrodorsalis



Second Place
Dave Hansen
Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor
multicolor



Thrid Place
Dave Hansen
Steatocranus gibbiceps

Species Profile:***Xystichromis* sp. "Kyoga flameback"**

The Kyoga Basin in Uganda is a large portion of the Victorian Nile drainage system. Situated North of Lake Victoria, Lake Kyoga is the main body of water with many surrounding shallow bays and isolated finger-lakes. Lake Nawampassa is situated in the south east portion of this region and is separated from the main Kyoga waters by a thin strip of swamp. Lake Nawampassa is home not only to species found throughout the Kyoga Basin, but also to several endemics. Due to environmental fragility, all species from this region are considered threatened. Most of the cichlid lineages found in Lake Victoria have representatives in the Kyoga region and into Nawampassa.

For the hobbyist, the furu from Kyoga are sought after due to their small size, adaptability to captive life and coloration (they are among the most colorful cichlids on the planet). These fish are not regularly seen at your local store so it may take some effort and digging to locate them. One such species is the vibrant *Xystichromis* sp. "Kyoga flameback".

This species was first discovered in Lake Nawampassa by Julian Whitehead (in all probability) and later located by Les Kaufman, who gave this species the cheironym "Kyoga flameback". This may be a misnomer as it is uncertain if the Kyoga Flameback is actually found in Kyoga proper. *X. sp.* "Kyoga flameback" is not to be confused with *Xystichromis* sp. "flameback" that was discovered at Kisumu Kenya in 1989 by Dr. Kaufman. The latter species has a wide distribution within Lake Victoria and sports differing body markings. The Victorian flameback is a smaller species and a generalized feeder as is its Nawampassian cousin. To add to the confusion level, *X. sp.* "Kyoga flameback" is known by the trade name *Haplochromis* sp. "all red" Nawampassa. This cichlid is sometimes confused with *Haplochromis* sp. "all red" from Lake Edward. I feel that to avoid unnecessary misidentifications, one should refer to the fish as *X. sp.* "Kyoga flameback" (the original field name) and drop the other monikers.

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Xystichromis sp. "Kyoga flameback" has an elongated, laterally compressed "haplochromine" body shape. The cranial profile is straight or slightly convex with large eyes and a medium sized mouth. There is a broken and thickened mid lateral black bar running the length of the body from the caudal peduncle to the gill plate. In regards to male coloration, the top portion of the body, includ-

ing the head is scarlet red. The lips and lower portion of the head is blue. The bottom portions of the flanks are lime-green and yellow. The dorsal fin is red foremost fading to blue at the rear while the caudal fin has blue streaks at the base flowing to completely red at the extremities. The anal fin is white-blue becoming red at the outer portion. The pelvic fins are jet-black. There is a straight black bar beginning at the corner of the lips and continuing through the eye. Female coloration is an unassuming tan-brown with the same markings found on the males. The lower jaw protrudes slightly beyond the upper. Bicuspid dentition is found in all but large adult males who show some unicuspid teeth in the outer rows. Wild populations are opportunistic insectivores who diet also consists of plant matter. Both sexes have an adult size of 12cm. These aspects are all consistent with the genus *Xystichromis*. Further research may result in a different or completely new designation, but for the time being, this seems to be the best fit.

Xystichromis sp. "Kyoga flameback", is for the most part, a peaceful aquarium resident. Males will become aggressive among each other with the onset of spawning but in general remains rather placid. Despite its size (comparatively speaking) the Kyoga flameback can be easily bullied by other species so care and observation is crucial when choosing tank mates. I have been able to maintain the oral shellers with *X.* sp. "Kyoga flameback" devoid of incident.

These species include *Ptyochromis* sp. "salmon", *Platytaeniodus* sp. "redtail sheller", and *Haplochromis* sp. "Kenya gold". I have tried working *Pundamilia pundamilia* and *Pundamilia* sp. "blue bar" in the mix but I believe these to be a little too boisterous and the *X.* sp "Kyoga flameback" failed to fully color.

To successfully maintain *X.* sp "Kyoga flameback", one should house a colony in a tank of



Photo by Dave Hansen

no less than 40 gallons, preferably larger. A sand or small grain gravel substrate is favored as this cichlid enjoys "scooping" at the bottom while sifting for food. This vertical "head plunging" is a constant leisure activity. I employ some rockwork into all my tanks but this is for pure aesthetics as *X.* sp "Kyoga flameback", when content with its environment, prefers open areas. As with all responsible aquatic husbandries, adequate filtration and frequent water changes are required to keep this fish, as well as all others, in prime condition. Feeding should consist of a high quality

flake containing both protein and vegetable matter although a diet of spirulina flake with frozen or live brine shrimp, daphnia, or the like, is also suitable.

At 6cm, males will begin to display the red coloration for which they are known. This usually occurs at seven months of age. Male coloration indicates sexual maturity so the first attempt at spawning takes place soon thereafter. The act of spawning is typical of the



Photo by Dave Hansen

haplochromines from the region. The males color intensifies while claiming and defending a small territory. This region is concentrated around some object (usually a rock). The male will dart at the ripe female and dance tilted to one side displaying his fully extended fins. She will eventually enter his territory and the two will begin circling each other. The male tilts so that his anal fin is laying on the substrate. The ocelli resemble the female's eggs in both color and size. As she nips at the egg spots, the male

releases milt. She drops a small number of eggs and quickly turns to pick them up into her mouth. This process continues until she has fully expelled. She then leaves the spawning area to find a quiet area in which to brood her clutch. After 18 days (gestation period is dependant on water temperature) the larvae have fully absorbed their egg sac and the female releases her fry for a short spurt, to forage. Over the next two weeks the female releases her brood more often scooping them back into her buccal cavity when she feels they are in danger. The young will eventually be left to fend for themselves. Brood sizes are large and can number in excess of 50. To ensure survival, we raise the fry in a separate tank where they grow quickly on a diet of finely crushed flake and Cyclop-eeze®.

Xystichromis sp. "Kyoga flameback" is rarely seen commercially in the aquarium hobby. If one is interested in obtaining a group to work with, I would suggest seeking a private breeder of commendable reputation. It may well take a lot of searching but the end result will be well worth the effort. These fish are a stand out in any aquarium they inhabit. Maintaining the Kyoga flameback will not only be a pleasure for you the aquarist, but also to the cichlid world in general as you would be helping to ensure the survival of a beautiful creature from a threatened ecosystem.

■ Greg Steeves

Species Profile:***Ophthalmotilapia heterodonta***

This fish was originally purchased as *Ophthalmotilapia ventralis* "Nyanza Lac". I had been on the lookout for a Featherfin species to place in my 180g tank. I was in the process of growing up a colony of Kapampa Frontosa and had seen the Boops and Furcifers. I thought these guys were some of the most beautiful fish I had ever seen. I had also heard stories of their



Photo by Diane Tennison

bower building, so I knew that I wanted to try some. I was told that Boops and Furcifer can be a little rough, so I began looking for *ventralis*. I was finally able to get a lead on a group of Nyanza Lac *ventralis* and purchased 6 juveniles. The fish came in and I was a little "underwhelmed" at first. I brought home my bags of silver fish... Yes, as juvies, they are simply silver fish. I did note that if you put a spot light on them, or photographed them, they had a slight green sheen to their bodies with a rim of yellow over the top portion of their body. I patiently waited for 2 years before I

started seeing any activity from my group. Amazingly, I ended up with 2 males and 4 females! If you are even an inexperienced fishkeeper - you know the odds of those kinds of numbers are rare. I was, to say the least, a bit disappointed in my group as they remained silver fish but got larger. At 2 years, the males were a good 6 ½" and the females were around 4 ½". I would see pictures of other variants of *ventralis* or the other Featherfin species and just sigh. I was finally able to get a look at a photo of this variant and I was again a bit disappointed. The females are silver and the males, when displaying, are charcoal grey. Wow, insert sarcastic smiley here, looked like I had gotten the "dud" variant. While they continued to remain a relatively peaceful fish and loved to hang out as a group, they simply swam around the 6ft tank all day and remained silver...

But, oh what a difference a day makes! I came home one day and noticed a pit in the middle region of my tank. It was towards the back of the tank up against a rock. WOW, was I finally going to get some spawning activity?? The larger, dominant male meticu-

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lously began building his bower. He would spend hours, removing the sand from the middle and piling it up on the sides to create a perfect "bowl" shape. The other tank inhabitants (Frontosa juveniles, a few Peacocks and *Synodontis multipunctatus*) were fascinated by the impression in the sand and were constantly exploring it. The male would allow this for a period of time and then would chase them off. While the bower building was a good sign, I could see no other indication that a spawn was



Photo by Diane Tennison

near. The male would turn a dark steel gray color if he was agitated, but the females seemed to want no part of him. They were, apparently, completely unimpressed with his construction abilities. This went on for months. While I was excited at the first appearance of the bower, this was fast becoming a complete disappointment for me in my term as a fishkeeper.

I should have known from my earlier disappointment with this species, that time is your

friend when dealing with Featherfins (at least with this variant). I came home from work one day and was walking by the tank. Something odd caught my eye and I did a complete double take! The dominant male was almost black. His fins were practically glowing a beautiful dusty blue. WOW! What was going on?? I quickly grabbed my camera and shot some pictures. The photographs were even nicer than what I was looking at in person. I did a quick scan of the tank and found the group of females staying to one side. Upon closer inspection, one of the females was holding!! I was sooo excited. My only disappointment was that I had not been able to witness the actual spawn. Featherfins attract their mates in a unique fashion. The males will swim up to a female and quickly spin around. Then, with fins clamped, they will swish their bodies back and forth and slowly swim back to their bower. After listening to a lecture by Ad Konings, I learned that this behavior allows the scent of the male to wash over the female. This helps her determine that this is a fish that she can spawn with. In the wild, these fish will congregate over the lake bottom and the visibility can be a bit muddied by the constant stirring of the sediment. The males also have very bright yellow tips on the ends of their long pelvic fins. These are like headlights to the females, helping to lure them to the bower. Once inside the bower, the male will release some of his milt to entice the female in. He is constantly shimmying and his color is electric. He will circle around, low to the sand, while actually dragging his long pelvic fins along the top of the sand. The fe-

male thinks the yellow tips are eggs and tries to nip at them. While this is happening, the male will release more milt. The female will then lay her eggs - gathering them in her mouth as any typical mouthbrooder. The male will then circle and shimmy, releasing more milt which she will gather up - thus fertilizing the eggs.



Photo by Diane Tennison

After this process, she returns to the group of females and the dance is over. After 14 days I stripped the female of 10 fully formed fry. They still had a bit of egg sac left so I put them into an acrylic breeder box and floated them in a 30L that contained some juvenile Victorian species. They were quite large for new fry (a good $\frac{3}{4}$ ") and were very active. An unfortunate outbreak of Ick in the 30L killed 4 of the fry leaving me with 7. The remaining fry have continued to grow. They look just like their parents when I first got them, silver fish with a green and yellow sheen in the light.

Amazingly, I only recently found out that the fish I had kept for over 2 years and successfully spawned was NOT *Ophthalmotilapia ventralis*

but was actually *Ophthalmotilapia heterodonta*. Dave (of Dave's Rare Aquarium Fish) directed me to a forum discussion where both species are discussed. Apparently, both species are collected from the same area in the Nyanza Lac region of Lake Tanganyika. They have the same outward physical characteristics, but the coloration is completely different. Where the *ventralis* is the dull charcoal grey color, the *heterodonta* is a steel blue color with intense neon powder blue on the fins. I have not been able to find much published about the differences between *heterodonta* and *ventralis*. I will say that I am really glad that I didn't jump the gun on this beautiful fish. It took some patience, but it was well worth it in the end. I highly recommend this species to anyone who wants to give Featherfins a try. They need a long tank, but do fairly well with tankmates (at least in my experience). There is a bit of aggression in the group, but it amounts to chasing each other around. I did not experience any nipped fins or other wounds and the holding female had no problems remaining in the tank during her gestation.

■ Diane Tennison

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HCCC Event: F.O.T.A.S. 2007 Recap

My first big aquatic convention was in Houston at FOTAS 2003. I had been to a couple auctions before but the cichlid hobby wasn't the attraction in the Maritimes as it is here. Shortly after relocating to Texas I met two other cichlid hobbyists in Robert De Leon (ripple) and Paul Barber (paul). Lee Ann had been a member of CASA (Cichlid Association of San Antonio) but this club had dissolved before I could become involved. It didn't take long for us to have a "fish get-together" at which time our beloved Hill Country Cichlid Club was formed. As I remember, there was no doubt that we had enough interest to form a club, at the time, the conversation centered on what we would call it. Sue Barber came up with the name and immediately was agreed upon by all in attendance. I digress.

Being a loose group of friends sitting around and talking about fish was fantastic, but when I learned of a convention only three hours away, Lee Ann and I were packing for Houston. We found the hotel on the south side of town right on the gulf, registered and did a walk about. It was here that I first met Charles Jones, the Englands, Kathy Stearns and others that I consider great friends now. Spencer Jack and I

had corresponded prior to my move to Texas but had never met. Luckily, he, Jeff Cardwell and Heiko Bleher were the scheduled speakers. The Houston Aquarium Society does everything with class and the weekend was fantastic. It was here that I learned a little bit about FOTAS during a dinner talk by Hal Collins. At this time there were only three societies in the FOTAS and the Fish Judges Registry. Our club joined FOTAS shortly



Photo by Greg Steeves

after this and we were added to the bottom of the FOTAS host convention list. This put our kick at the can in 2007. It seemed like a world away then but how time flies!

As 2007 drew closer, and we began to loosely organize things, it became painfully evident

that this venture was going to take a considerable investment by the HCCC. Fortunately, our membership was either in agreement with hosting the convention or complacent with club goings on. Whatever the rational, we began fund raising and cutting back on club activities that required spending of club funds. Not only did the HCCC flourish during this lean time, we also grew. It is obvious that, although great activities are a big attraction to any organization, ours is dependant on the friendships and camaraderie of the members.

I am not going to mention every person that contributed to FOTAS because that would encompass an article of its own, but I want to mention that one individual in particular contributed his time and energy on everything from securing a location to choosing a caterer. Jim Beck went way beyond what would be expected of anyone and I just can't think of where we would have been without him. I am going to forego the planning of the event and get right to the actual Convention.

The Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies 2007 convention was held in San Antonio Texas at the Marriot Springhill Suites. Upon entering the hotel, across from the front desk was the registration table manned by HCCC volunteers. Here you could also purchase an official FOTAS 2007 shirt made by our own Virginia Dockwiller. Every registrar received a bag of goodies provided by club supporters. The American Cichlid Association also provided free copies of the Buntbarsche Bulletin, their official publication. This was most popular with the fish heads in attendance.

For most folks, the step after registration was to check out the showroom. Here there were over 100 tanks of both competing show entries and vendors who were offering their stock for sale. This was a popular room with many stories and tales flying. The laughter and chuckles emanating from this area clearly displayed that the weekend was off to a great start.

After a little schedule juggling, the speakers began their presentations. First up was Juan Migual Artigas Azas. This was a very special engagement for Juan because he brought his mother with him. This was the first time she



Photo by Nick Andreola

had the opportunity to hear him speak. Juan is a fantastic lecturer and of course the authority on Central American cichlids. He spoke on *Herichthys* species.

Next up was our own Dave Hansen. Everyone was really looking forward to Dave's pho-

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tography talk and he did not disappoint. He spoke to a full house on aquarium photography. In true Dave style, he managed to get a couple zingers in (at Rob Teague's expense). Getting up during his lecture is like sitting in the front row of a George Carlin show. It is NOT where you want to be!

Saturday morning started with a nice breakfast that was provided by the hotel. First up on the speaker lineup was Spencer Jack. He spoke on a collecting trip he took to Surinam while still in his Sponge Bob pajamas. I'm not a morning person either.

After Spencer's talk Anton Lamboj spoke on West African cichlids. His talk was also packed. Anton had arrived in San Antonio the week before FOTAS so a few of us got to know him really well. He's a wonderful speaker and a great person. I'm quite sure that we'll be seeing him in Texas again.

After Anton's talk we broke for lunch. Diane and I had to attend the annual FOTAS meeting but this was nice and short (thanks Marvin). After the meeting we broke for lunch. Hernan Lopez-Fernandez and his girlfriend Karen met us at the hotel. Hernan, Anton, Spencer, Karen, Lee Ann and I went across the street to Jim's for lunch. While we were waiting for the light to change the angle of the crosswalk looked to me like the cover of the Beatles Abbey Road album. Without hesitation we reen-

acted the famous scene.

When we returned from lunch the Babes in the Cichlid Hobby (B.I.T.C.H.) had set up their silent auction. Proceeds from their fundraisers go towards cichlid research and they had a successful drive on this weekend. In attendance were three of the original

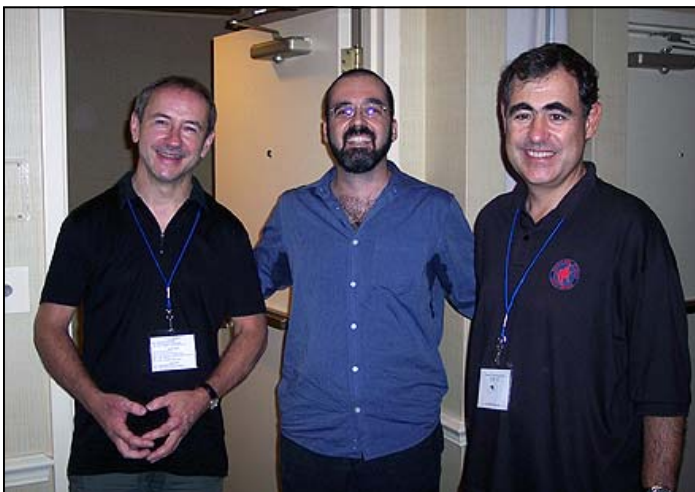


Photo by Greg Steeves

BITCHES: Caroline Estes, Pam Marsh and Pam Chin. I think that they made our own Duc a BITCH here as well.

We returned to catch Juan's second talk on Central American Rheophilus Cichlids. This was a packed house once again. Juan has to be the nicest guy in all fishdom. I really wish I could have had more time to spend with my friend but the weekend was quite hectic and spare time was at a premium.

Spencer then gave us another talk on collecting in Uruguay. He displayed photos of cich-

lids never before seen and even brought some to the show. They were all quickly taken of course so I'll have to wait until our club members breed them. The talk was very interesting but seemed to me to be half devoted to the cichlids he collected and half to insulting Jeff Cardwell. Regardless, there were lots of laughs (most at Jeff's expense).



Photo by Greg Steeves

After Spencer finished up everyone was shoed out of the lecture room because it was soon to become the banquet hall. The show room was closed for judging and people hung out in the lobby or went to their room to prepare for the banquet.

If there was one glitch in the entire weekend it was the seating arrangements at the banquet. As people started piling in it became painfully evident that I had misjudged the room size vs. the number of attendees. After a few major adjustments and people being squeezed together like sardines in a can, we somehow

managed to get everyone seated. As a testament to fish folks in general, very few comments were made about the cramped quarters even though there was more than enough reason for complaint. The meal was fantastic. There was lots of great food. Jim really picked an incredible caterer. After eating, Dave Hansen emceed our evening. He hosted

a contest where each speaker wrote a question that was relevant to their talk. The first to answer the question was given a FOTAS shirt. This was of course, all a set up. A few days before, I had taken Anton to Gruene. He was doing the tourist thing. While there we visited a music store that sold only material from Texas artists. It was here that I learned that Anton had a Kris Kristofferson collection. At this store he had found the cds he was missing to complete collection. I'm thinking that he had maybe seven or

eight cds but was shocked to learn that he had 25 or so! So anyways, at the banquet we took the question Anton made up and discarded it. Dave asked if there was anyone who could name five Kris Kristofferson albums. Everyone kind of looked at each other like "what???" and then Anton raises his hand. After he rung off five titles, he suddenly realized that he had been punked. No one else knew what had just happened but Anton, Dave and I got a good laugh.

Dr. Keith Arnold then started the Braz Walker auction. There were three items donated this

year and they all did very well. I did not get an exact total of the money that was made but thanks to Rob Teague, it had to be in excess of \$300.00.

After the Braz Walker auction Dave, Jim and I presented the show awards. The place was such a tight fit that we couldn't even have people come up and receive their awards. We had to pass them to the recipients. The results were as follows:

Division A1:

- 1st *Archocentrus panamensis* Marvin England
- 2nd *Tahuanpinsuyo* *nacantzatza* Duc Nguyen
- 3rd *Gymnogeophagus balzanii* Dave Hansen

Division A2:

- 1st *Viaha regani* Kathy Stearns
- 2nd *Cichlosoma* sp. Charles Jones
- 3rd *Chuco godmanni* Dave Schumacher

Division A3:

- 1st *Symphysodom* sp. Jim Smith
- 2nd *Symphysodom* sp. Jim Smith

Best of division A:

Viaha regani Kathy Stearns

Division B4:

- 1st *Ctenochromis horei* Greg Steeves
- 2nd *Tropheus dubosi* Kathy Stearns
- 3rd *Eretmodus cyanostictus* Robert De Leon

Division B5:

- 1st *Ophthalmotilapia nasuta* Diane Tennison
- 2nd *Cyprichromis pavo* Dave Schumaucher
- 3rd *Paracyprichromis nigripinnis* Diane Tennison

Division B6:

- 1st *Neolamprologus cunningtoni* Dave Schumacher
- 2nd *Julidochromis marlieri* David Andrews
- 3rd *Lepidolamprologus lamarii* Dave Schumacher

Best of Division B:

Neolamprologus cunningtoni Dave Schumacher

Division C7:

- 1st *Melanochromis labrossus* Marvin England
- 2nd *Labidochromis hongii* Pat Malinger
- 3rd *Pseudotropheus pulipican* Dave Hansen

Division C8:

- 1st *Aulonocara maleri* Diane Tennison

Division C9:

- 1st *Protomelas taeniolatus* Jim Beck
- 2nd *Protomelas taeniolatus* JB Edmundson
- 3rd *Copadochromis borelyi* David Andrews

Best in Division C:

Protomelas taeniolatus Jim Beck

Division D10:

- 1st *Pundamilia* sp. "red flank" Greg Steeves
- 2nd *Paralabidochromis* sp. "red fin piebald" Greg Steeves
- 3rd *Pundamilia* sp. "blue bar" Greg Steeves

Division D11:

- 1st *Thysochromis ansorgii* Marvin England
- 2nd *Benitochromis nigrodorsalis* Dave Hansen
- 3rd *Thysochromis ansorgii* Dave Hansen

Division D12:

- 1st *Orthochromis stormsi* Dave Hansen
- 2nd *Etia nguti* Dave Hansen
- 3rd *Steatocranus gibbericeps* Duc Nguyen

Division D13:

- 1st *Katria kartia* Jim Beck
- 2nd *Stomatepia pindu* Jim Beck

Best in Division D:

Orthochromis stormsi Dave Hansen

Best in Show Cichlid:

Orthochromis stormsi Dave Hansen

Division E14:

- 1st *Synodontis decorus* Keith Arnold
- 2nd *Synodontis angelicus* Lee Ann Steeves
- 3rd *Synodontis nigrolineatus* Kathy Stearns

Division E15:

- 1st *Anaspidoglanis macrostoma* Marvin England
- 2nd Species unknown Charles Jones

3rd *Ancistrus* sp. "bristlenose" Phil Tucker

Best in Show Catfish:

Anaspidoglanis macrostoma Marvin England

Division F16:

1st Photo *Xystichromis phytophagus* Dave Hansen

2nd Photo Beauty of Cichlids Book Dave Hansen

3rd West African Poster Dave Hansen

Division F17:

1st Quilt Virginia Dockwiller

2nd Necklace Paula De Leon

3rd Bracelet Paula De Leon

Peoples Choice Award:

Protomelas taeniolatus Jim Beck

The show judges were Spencer Jack and Nick Andreola,, Malawi and Tanganyika cichlids, Juan Migual and Dave Dockwiller South and Central American cichlids, Anton Lamboj and Rob Teague handled Victoria and West African cichlids. Caroline Estes judged catfish and Pam Chin judged photography and crafts.

After the banquet we took a brief break so the room could be cleaned and then reconverged to listen to Anton's talk on collecting in the Congo. The fish he discovered made everyone want to book a flight to Brazville but hearing his story about getting taken hostage and held captive for a number of hours made everyone glad to be in Texas.

The next morning while the show room was being torn down, the auction was being set up. This ran from 11:00 am until about 6:00pm and had nearly 500 items. There were some great deals to be had and rare finds as well. Charles Jones and Dave Hansen shared the brunt of the auctioneering (as they usually do) but Robert

De Leon filled in for a time as did Dave Schumacher who made is auctioneering debut. Diane and Stuart worked the front all afternoon without a break! During the auction I went out to the lobby for a quick break and laughed when I seen mullet fast asleep on a chair. It was well deserved as he hadn't stopped running all weekend. Of course JB and I had to take advantage of the situation to get an embarrassing photo of him drooling. The auction wore down and we all packed up. It was hard to believe that FOTAS had come and was ending so suddenly. It has become tradition that after an auction, a bunch of us go have dinner together to just hang around and laugh. This is really what the club is all about. Charles, Marian, Prosper, Lee Ann and I all went to Tom's Ribs for a farewell supper. We were all so exhausted that it's a wonder we didn't fall asleep at the meal. It was nice to reflect on the weekend but seemed unfair (and at the same time a relief) that it was over. It'll be a long wait until the TCA spring show but, as the saying goes, absence makes the heart grow fonder. I guess this is all a prelude to when we host the ACA in 2012.

It's so hard to recap the events at FOTAS. I know that everyone has their own stories and special memories of the weekend. I want to thank everyone who came together to make this convention one of the most enjoyable fish happenings I have ever been a part of. The rest of the Texas aquarium community got to see first hand the special group we have here at the HCCC.

■ Greg Steeves

Species Profile:

Stomatepia mariae

Cichlids are a favorite of many hobbyists enjoying tropical fresh water species. Areas of interest range from North America to South America and everything in between. African cichlids and those from Asia are also included in the vast list. If you mention African cichlids, the rift lakes are a mainstay to the hobby. These lakes include Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika, and the Lake Victoria Basin. These three lakes are well known for being home to some of the favorite cichlids, but Africa has more to offer. Scattered along the Atlantic coastline of West Africa are several dormant crater lakes. "They cover an area of 4,200 square miles and include Barombi Mbo, Bermin, Dissoni/Soden, Benakouma, Kotto, and Mboandong. They are very small and with an area of less than two miles (5 km)." (NationalGeographic.com)



The Lake Barombi Mbo was formed over a million years ago (Cornen et al 1992). "Lake Barombi Mbo is a small lake only 2.5 kilometers wide, but 110 meters deep. As there is no large current to turn the water, only the top portion (40 meters) contains acceptable oxygen levels to harbor vertebrate life. Still here, a rich mostly endemic group of cichlids (and other fish) have evolved." (Steeves, 2003) This tropical lake where temperature ranges from 25 - 27 C / 77 - 80.6 F is home to several types of fish including those that are endemic to this lake. "The incredible cichlid fauna composed by 17 species, 12 of which are endemic to the lake, seven of those endemic species are classified in four en-

demically genera (*Konia*, *Myaka*, *Pungu* and *Stomatepia*) (The Cichlid Room Companion).

My first species from the lake was the *Stomatepia pindu*. (Trewavas, 1972). Its predatory shape, long and sleek, and solid black coloration, enticed me into purchasing them and also the fact they were on the endangered species

list. Thus my interest in the Lake and my attempt to help preservation led me to the *Stomatepia mariae* (Holly, 1930) which is listed as critically threatened on the IUCN red list (Critically Endangered (CR) (B1+2c) (Ref. 36508)). Human population growth, deforestation of the region and predation by other species are leading factors threatening its existence. (IUCN Red List)

I presently am helping to preserve the *Myaka* species, one *Konia* species (*eisentrauti*), and two of the *Stomatepia* species (*pindu* and *mariae*). Of these four species I only have two that are currently spawning. And it happens to

be the *Stomatepia pindu* and *Stomatepia mariae* (Holly 1930), which are housed together in a 55 gallon tank. Along with the five *S. pindu* and five *S. mariae* is a pair of *Limnochromis auritus* (Boulenger, 1901). San Antonio's water comes from the Edwards Aquifer and is very hard and very suitable for these fish. Water temperature is maintained at 80 degrees F. Small gravel base supports four rocks and two live plants; both are *Aponogeton fenestralis* "West Coast Madagascan Lace". Water changes of 20% to 40% are a weekly occurrence, and filters are routinely inspected and cleaned as required.

I acquired my *S. mariae* in February 2007 from a local fish store, "Dave's Rare Aquarium Fish" which has been very helpful in assisting me in my quest for species from Barombi Mbo Lake. I am currently raising two groups of fry from the *S. Mariae*, but more on this later.

General information list the common name for *S. mariae* is Nsess. Stats show that males will reach a max size of 12.0 cm (4 ½ inches). I believe I have 2 males and three females. The alpha male has attained a length of 7.6 cm (3 inches) while the other male and females are slightly smaller. The males and females are light copper or light bronze with a solid black horizontal band running the entire length of its body. The gill plates are transparent enough to see the pink gills. They are sleek and slender with a pointed head which allows them to be an excellent predator. They have the same body shape as the *S. pindu* but not as bulky.

My feeding ritual is once daily late at night, around 10 pm. There is a 30 minute grace

period after feeding before the tank lights are turned off and 15 more minutes before darkening the room. I do not alter my feedings before during or after spawning. I feed a mixture of HBH® Seafood Lovers and HBH® Graze Vegetable flake. I feed this same mixture to the fry except in a finely crushed form.

Spawning of the *S. mariae* has been an interesting learning experience. The information I had gathered indicated they were a substrate egg laying species. Since I have not been privileged to the actual spawning due to the fact it is occurring behind rocks and the fact that the only way I know that they have spawned is observing the female "holding" fry. The information and my observations were conflicting and was not resolved until I received a reply from Joerg Albering in Austria: "Concerning *Stomatepia* species: all three *Stomatepia* are ovophilic maternal (although once I also observed a male carrying the larvae) mouthbreeders. It takes 10-12 days from spawning to free-swimming of the fry - depending on the water temperature." This may be the reason I have not observed my *S. pindu*, spawn, because they are also hiding. The norm for my *pindu* and *mariae* is 16 days

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when they are "stripped".

I mentioned earlier that I have two groups of fry working at this time and I am only successful because of my trial and error with the *S. pindu*. It appears that the *Stomatepia* species are all very skittish and are easily frightened. All of my fry have been ejected the moment the female has been netted. This is an automatic "stripping" as they spit out the fry every time when they touch



the net. This makes retrieving them very hard. I have to remove all decorations very slowly and pause during the removal. Once the tank is clear of obstacles, I attempt to net the female, which is also a slow process to be successful. Once she is netted, she will release the fry, if not then, the moment she reaches the surface, she will definitely release. The one time that I hurried led to the fry being let go in the tank and were soon gone. The *S. mariae* started spawning at about 3 inches and has had a total of 5 spawning attempts of which only two were successful.

S. mariae tolerates other species in the tank and show some aggressiveness toward co-specs which does intensify during spawning. Another

interest observation is that just before spawning begins, approximately 2 or 3 days prior, all of the females turn a black color as the *S. pindu*. This includes the sub-adult male although he does not turn as dark. And it does not matter if it's the *S. pindu* or *S. mariae* that are about to spawn, only the *S. mariae* alpha male remains his light color. So I try to be watchful when they darken to try and catch a glimpse of the spawning, but so far I have not been successful. I also pay close attention, to make sure there is no cross breeding. It does not appear to be a problem, even with the *S. mariae* turning darker.

If you intend to breed any of the *Stomatepia* species, do yourself a favor and plan ahead. Research will help cut down your losses and improve your fry count. A large tank to give ample swimming area to reduce stress and damage during spawning and plenty of places for refuge will acceptably house this species. *S. pindu* requires a high protein diet. If one is fortunate enough to have a spawn, I can not stress enough that careful removal of the female is necessary.

■ Jim Beck

References and Acknowledgements:

- Editor and consultant: Greg Steeves
- Steeves, Greg. (2003) Insight on Barombi Mbo, Cameroon -Originally published in The Lateral Line, the official publication of the Hill Country Cichlid Club
- The Cichlid Room Companion
- IUCN Red List of Endangered Species - Critically Endangered (CR) (B1+2c)(Ref.)(Ref. 36508) <http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/20866/all>
- Joerg Albering, Austria
- NationalGeographic.com

Event Calendar:

Upcoming Events in Texas

October

October 13th

Time: 1 P.M.

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Monthly meeting in Austin. Speaker—Marcus from Aquatek

October 20th

Time: Noon

Texas Cichlid Association—Fall auction in Irving. Visit www.texascichlid.org for more information.

Bracken Fellowship Hall in North San Antonio. Visit www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com for more information when it becomes available.

Date: TBD

Time: TBD

Texas Cichlid Association — Annual Christmas Party and Crazy Santa Gift Exchange.

Visit www.texascichlid.org for more information when it becomes available.

November

November 4th

Time: ???

Houston Aquarium Society—Fall auction in Houston. Visit houstonaquariumsociety.org for more information.

December

December 8th

Time: ???

Houston Aquarium Society—Holiday Party at Glen’s House. Visit houstonaquariumsociety.org for more information.

Date: TBD

Time: TBD

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Christmas Party and pot luck.

Current BAP Standings		Current Standings (cont)	
Name	YTD	Name	YTD
Greg S.	205	Christy	35
Jim	130	Lisa Bo.	30
Kenneth	130	Dan	30
Diane	105	Paul	30
Dave H.	90	Duc	25
Greg W.	85	Eric	25
Marty	50	Lisa Bl.	20
Doc	50	Pat	15
Kevin	45	Nick	5



The Lateral Line

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