

The Lateral Line

Volume 2, Issue 34

September 2008



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BAP Report

July was not as active as the previous month but still produced some “First Timers”. The very first entry for July was a “1st Entry” for Dan (DanJay). It was a “Class C” entry of *Ancistrus* sp. “Brownie”. Just a few days later, Dan followed with another entry of *Aulonocara jacobfreibergi*. Congrats Dan on both of your entries.

September 19, 2008

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“1st Entry” congratulations to Joseph (JoePhish) with the *Pseudotropheus saulosi*. The fry are still available and being 7 months old already, it would be a very good BAP purchase. Congrats Joseph and keep them coming.

Dan (Dan) adds to his BAP totals with the entry of *Metriaclima lombardoi* (kenyi). This entry also tacked on 5 bonus points to Kenneth Shellload for 2nd generation points. Congrats Dan and keep up the good work.

Congratulations to Greg (GAS) for adding two more entries to his BAP totals. One was the *Aulonocara stuartgranti* from Lake Malawi and the other was an *Astatotilapia defontainii* species. It originates from Tozeur Tunisia and made its way to Greg via Anton Lamboj. Not only is this a “1st of species” but is also a “Class C”. Congrats Greg on a great entry and sorry members, no BAP fry on this one, but the article should be very informative.

The first entry in August honors goes out to Greg with a nice species of *Aulonocara*. Congratulations Greg (GAS) on your entry of the *Aulonocara stuartgranti*.

The second entry congrats goes to Robert (Ripple) on his entry of *Paralabidochromis* sp. “red fin piebald”. Robert donated the fry but unfortunately lost the parents he was also donating. The parent donation would have given him a total of 400 points and put him in the Advanced Breeder category. However, now he is still 5 points shy.

A reminder for all the BAP members that last day for the entries is October 31st.

■ Jim Beck

Cover Photo:

Orthochromis stormsi

By Dave Hansen

BAP totals on page 15

Speaker Profile: Anton Lamboj



Club Appearance:
September 7-9th 2007
(FOTAS).

Anton presents some of the most exciting lectures I've had the privilege to attend. His expertise is only matched by his passion. The latter clearly fueling his drive to-

wards his PhD in 1997 while working full time at the Austrian Railway Company. Along with his dissertation, "A Systematic Revision of the Genus *Chromidotilapia*", many published papers and articles, Anton literally wrote the book we all rely on. "The Cichlid Fishes of Western Africa" (2004) is the most comprehensive volume available today and is a must for seasoned Westie fans and novices alike. You'll see slides taken during his many collecting trips to various locales and hear wonderful stories of his experiences in these sometimes turbulent regions. He is unable to confine his enthusiasm to just pure academics, so he will also share many beautiful slides of the fish he keeps in the 50+ tanks in his basement. His animated discussions cover everything from the natural biotope to advice on maintaining these interesting and beautiful species in our home aquaria.

If you run into Anton before or after the lecture, feel free to ask any questions about Westies, or about plants, birds, reptiles or any of the other things that fall under the umbrella that fascinates him, Life! Remember he is a biologist at heart and

in soul. Many of us were amazed that he used his time between lectures during the 2007 FOTAS convention to field collect several samples of our local flora. I personally was impressed when he rolled up his sleeves and helped the small group of us setting up the show tanks. Anton's zeal has found a kinship in the members of the HCCC, "I've been to many conventions and club meetings, and I've seen a lot of real good ones (especially in the USA, you are doing great things, friends) - but the meeting in 2007 in San Antonio definitely was one of the three best I ever had in my life. It was a great time for me. You've got a fan!"

Have a shot at pronouncing his last name correctly. He won't be offended by mistakes, chances are he's heard it before and takes it all in good humor! "It originally comes from the Scandinavian region, and [the pronunciation] is: The a of Lamboj like the o in "come" and boj like the english "boy". No problem with pronouncing my name wrong, it is very common wherever I go - even in Austria, as it is a more unusual and rare name. In the past I had such things as Lambosch, Lambos, Lambock, Lambay, and some more. So - I will see if the pronunciation part will help (or at least, which new versions it will bring.....?)"

Above all do not miss an opportunity to attend one of Anton's lectures. You'll be thoroughly entertained and amazed at what information you'll pick up. Since hearing one of his fervent side-discussions during a lecture, I've altered the way I feed my fish entirely! Who knows what tidbit we'll pick up next time!

■ Nick Andreola

Species Profile:***Astatotilapia desfontainii***

Hailing from the North African countries of Algeria and Tunisia is a small, seldom seen cichlid, *Astatotilapia desfontainii*. Relating to its discovery, it would appear that this species was never known in great numbers even within its natural range. Of the five locations in which *A. desfontainii* has been recorded, four (Gafsa,



Photo by Greg Steeves

Tozeur, an oasis near Nefta, oasis En Nehmlet near Tozeur) occur in Tunisia and one unspecified site in Algeria (possibly Biskra) (Regan, 1922). Unfortunately, water extraction from said locations for agricultural purposes has resulted in the expiration of *A. desfontainii* at Gafsa and Nefta. A 2006 expedition was able to locate the cichlid at Tozeur in an irrigation channel which also threatened (Schraml, 2006). As a result of this survey, *A. desfontainii* is included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as endangered. In March of 2007, two Spanish ichthyologists, José L. Blanco Barlés

and Juan P. Campo Fort, were able to collect *A. desfontainii* at a hot springs resort near Tozeur. Here it was found with an introduced *Gambusia* species. From this collection, preserved specimens were sent to Sociedad de Estudios Ictiológicos (SEI) and the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales (MNCCNN) in Madrid Spain. Live specimens were also collected and distributed to individuals in Europe and, to my good fortune, myself in the USA.

In the initial description of the fish, Lacepède used two differing spellings. *Desfontainii* was the first name given followed by *desfontainesi*. Nearly a century later, the well known scientist George A. Boulenger attempted to refer to the species as *desfontainesi* (1899). Although all forms of the name appear over the years, the rules of species description clearly states that the premier name be given precedence thus, *Astatotilapia desfontainii*, whether or not what Lacepède intended, is the proper and accepted name of this cichlid.

Astatotilapia desfontainii is a small cichlid of 15cm. The base color of mature males is an

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unassuming olive-green but each scale along the flank has a small dot of reflective and bright blue-green coloration. This color splash allows the fish to appear totally different depending on the angle positioned to a light source. The body is lined with 7-9 faint black bars. Near the top of the gill slit there is a black blotch surrounded by one or two orange flecks. A straight black bar runs diagonally through the



Photo by Greg Steeves

eye. The mouth is lined with bright blue lips. The dorsal fin has a black edging on the first three rays. The rays are dotted with red specks arranged in horizontal rows. The caudal fin is rounded with the same red flecks as seen in the dorsal. The first three rays of the pelvic fins are black. The remainder is transparent. A small number of ocelli (1-5) are positioned in the mid portion of the anal fin. These eggs spots are orange with a darker well defined orbit. These are located between, and not overlapping, the fin rays.

Aquarium journal:

I obtained my colony of six very small fry (approximately one month of age) in November

of 2007. These were fry from wild parents collected at Tozeur Tunisia in the March 2007 expedition. At this time they were placed in a 45 gallon hexagonal tank filtered by a Aquaclear© 70 and a porous sponge placed over the intake. This was to prevent the small fish from being taken by the up flow of the filter opening. A small number of *Steatocranus* sp. "square head" of similar size shared these quarters. The substrate consisted of fine grain white pool filter sand. There was no heater in this tank and during that time of year the room is 21C. The natural range of *Astatotilapia desfontainii* in North Africa is known to reach temperatures below 18C (Schraml 2006) thus *A. desfontainii* is capable of withstanding lower temperatures than many other familiar African cichlids.

At the end of December 2007, the fry were moved to a 75 gallon tank. The tank was void of any décor. The filtration and substrate was transferred from the previous quarters so that minimal bacterial cycling would be needed. At this point, the young were fed crushed flake with twice weekly supplements of frozen mysis shrimp, brine shrimp or daphnia. The largest of the fry to this point was 2.5cm while the smallest slightly over 1.5cm. At this size, the two largest fry start to show blue speckling

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on the scales indicating that these are males. Males grow larger and at twice the rate of the females making sexing easy. In the bare tank there was not any noticeable aggression or territorial disputes.

February 15th artificial plants were added to the 75 gallon aquaria. An albino *Ancistrus* species was added as well. Five of the six fish are growing rapidly while one has remained smaller than the others. The blue spangling on the two largest fish is becoming more pronounced. The largest female has several small nips out of her anal and caudal fins. I have not witnessed any aggression thus far at all. The largest male is two inches TL whilst the smallest *A. defontainii* is not yet an inch. The diet consists of freeze dried mosquito larvae, small general pellet food and the occasional feed of frozen brine shrimp and daphnia. Anton Lamboj also has fry from the same brood as mine and reports no breeding activity yet. His colony seems to be male heavy so it will be interesting to see if co spec aggression will play a role in their survival. I believe he maintains his colony with at least one other species of cichlid.

March 15th 2008 all six *Astatotilapia defontainii* are doing well. They have grown considerably in the past month. I am yet to witness signs of spawning activity. There is no noticeable co spec aggression. I find myself comparing these cichlids to the Lake Victoria *mbipi* that I have experience with. When young males begin to color, which is a sure



Photo by Greg Steeves

sign that spawning is soon to occur. The *A. defontainii* males have got a blue luminescence to the scales on the flanks however there are no noticeable and distinct coloration changes. The cichlids are still an overall shiny silver with faint patterning in the dorsal fin. The anal fin of the largest male has one distinct ocelli marking. The smallest of the colony is perhaps, 1/3 the size of the largest yet there appears to be no aggression directed at this individual, or any other member of the group. I am sure that the large tank size in comparison to the size and small number of fish has a lot to do with this.

March 30th 2008 the largest *A.*

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defontainii is a definite male and has colored up nicely. The pelvic fins are black while red highlights can be seen in the dorsal, caudal and anal fins. The overall body coloration is olive green with the scales along the flanks tinged in blue and red. The largest male has been displaying to the smallest fish. This is done through a series of shimmies in an open area in the center of the tank. All fish are very active



Photo by Greg Steeves

and spend a lot of time sifting through the sand. The other *A. defontainii* do show the same gleaming scales as does the dominant male. The only thing lacking is size and the black

pelvic fins. This cichlid is active but docile with co specs. No damage or deformities to any of the group.

April 29th 2008. The *A. defontainii* spawned for the first time tonight. Last night the 2nd largest fish, obviously female, was very gravid with an ovipositor clearly protruding. Although I suspected spawning was near, I did not witness the male claiming a breeding territory or courting the female. The spawning site was under a decorative tree root. A small depression was made in the sand but it is unclear if the male excavated this area or the pit was created by the circular rotation in the act of spawning. The eggs are very small and opaque in color. The female expelled many eggs (est. 40) and the typical haplochromine-type spawn lasted for 35 minutes. After spawning, the female retreated to the top back corners of the tank and so far has not been overly harassed by the male. I am still unclear at what sex ratio I have with the six fish, only that there is at least one male and one female. I've decided to allow the female to hold in the community tank. If she is overly beleaguered I will move her to a brooding tank of her own.

May 13th 2008. I had decided to leave the

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Astatotilapia defontainii
spawn

Photos by Greg Steeves

holding female in the community tank she spawned in. The male did not overly harass her (infrequently he would take a run at her as he did to every other fish in the aquarium) as she spent the majority of her time hovering towards the top of the tank along a short side. Not knowing the gestation period, but assuming it was the same as most other haplochromine type I have had experience with, I decided to strip her on May 13th, exactly 2 weeks after spawning. I had a tumbler ready to incubate the fry that I had expected to still have a yolk sac. I easily netted the holding female and gently pried open her mouth with a loop in the mesh of the net. She spat 10 fry. I flushed her mouth gently with a turkey baster and one more fry gushed out. The tiny fry are free swimming and had no yolk sac left. They were placed in a 20 gallon high tank and the mother was returned to the main tank. This one small spawn nearly tripled the number of *Astatotilapia defontainii* in the US now. Hopefully another spawn will occur soon.

August 10th 2008. Another *Astatotilapia defontainii* spawn. The male brilliantly colored for the past three days as he excavated sand from three different areas around the tank. The male frantically displayed to the obviously ripe female for days before she finally succumbed to his advances. Spawning occurred in the period of about half an hour. I removed the male after this spawning due to incessant chasing of the female (wanting to continue spawning). Spawning occurred in each of the three pits the male had dug.

August 13th 2008. Once the male was sepa-

rated, the holding female took over as alpha fish of the tank. She is quite aggressive to the other *A. defontainii* that come near her as well as the other inhabitants including *Limbochromis robertsi*, *Steatocranus* sp. "square head" and a dozen young *Ancistrus* sp. She is still holding what looks to be a good brood. I will be setting up a tank inside for the fry.

In conversations with Dr Lamboj I was saddened to hear that he had lost all but a lone female to his *Astatotilapia defontainii* colony. I hope that I will be successful enough with these cichlids to return some offspring to him. I feel that once I have enough young to distribute to HCCC members, the horribly bleak future of this cichlid will be much brighter.

References:

Blanco, José Luis. Field notes from expedition to Tunisia, 2007.

Schraml, E. 2006. *Haplochromis desfontainii*. In: IUCN 2007. 2007 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <www.iucnredlist.org>

■ Greg Steeves

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Club Project:**Rejuvenating the HCCC ESP**

"Grandpa, what is a cichlid?" a tiny voice asks.

"You mean, what was a cichlid," you reply.

"They're GONE? All of them?" the tiny voice exclaims, "Why? How?"



Photo by Dave Hansen

Now there is a conversation that I hope never has to take place. Wouldn't it be a tragedy for future generations not to get to see these beautiful fish. Imagine that was your grandchild asking that question. How would you like to answer? Although it is probably not likely that all the cichlids will become extinct, there is an alarming number of species that are at severe risk. Even more alarming are the number of species that are reported as extinct by researchers. No one can account for the disappearance of any undiscovered species, so the real number that are gone is even greater. Seeing so many in the fish stores makes one assume that they are in bountiful supply so the wild popula-

tions must be thriving. Right?

Unfortunately, that is as far as I took the thought for many years. I shudder to think how many species have disappeared from the lakes since I first entered the hobby. Even more disappointing is knowing that I could have been playing an active role in the survival of my favorite fishes all that time but did nothing.

I'm not talking about setting up camp on the shores of Lake Victoria and propagating fish, although that would be awesome. I'm talking about the HCCC Endangered Species Program. The ESP is really cool and anyone can participate. You need not be a paying club member, just a registered HCCC forum user. Many already have colonies setup in the database and have recorded journal entries and posted photos. This is an excellent program that needs some rejuvenation. Since my fish room contains a good number of species on the ESP list, I've decided to dedicate myself to this project and it's

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expansion. I have the time available to do quite a bit with the program and here are a few things I hope to accomplish:

1. Distribute a regular newsletter on the program. It will highlight some species, notify of new colonies added, notify of any species added to the list, notify of conservation efforts related to ESP, etc.
2. Keep an active journal on my endangered species colonies.
3. Write species articles for the program documenting the hopeful spawning of my colonies.
4. Post some good shots of my fish, both male and female.
5. Create downloadable content for the ESP participants. Maybe a journal log you could print out to record events in the fish room and take to the computer to update journals would be handy. How about a Water parameter log? I'm looking to create things that would make recording the data to post easier.
6. Develop some sort of way to recognize your efforts. An award of some sort maybe. I'm not really sure what we could do but I'm looking into it further.

I'm also looking for any ideas that anyone may have for making it easier to participate or anything that you think would be helpful to the program. I'll look into every idea and see what can be done. Just log on to the forum and PM me. One of the biggest

things you can do to help is to register your species and keep an active journal. In doing so you will help all others who are interested in starting a colony and are seeking info on keeping the fish.

There has already been a huge amount of work done by others to get the ESP off the ground. They should be very proud of their efforts as should all who participate in the program. All I want to try to do is take this to the next level. The mission of the program has not changed nor would I dream of trying. It is a most worthy cause. That is not to say that it should not evolve. There are already some exciting things brewing that I don't have enough information to report on, but it will bring the HCCC some more national attention as a club that cares. So go update your journals and register your colonies now. You don't want to be left out when all eyes are on the HCCC's ESP!

Peace.

■ *Troy Vetrop*

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Speaker Profile:

Greg Steeves pt. 1



Greg Steeves, originally from New Brunswick, Canada, resides now in San Antonio, Texas, is one of the founding members of Hill Country Cichlid Club. Greg is well known in the state

as a cichlid specialist when dealing with Lake Victoria cichlids, speaker, photographer, and extremely gifted writer of many local articles. Greg's spends his time divided among his family, work, and friends and of course cichlids. (I believe the fish get their share of the attention, if you have ever seen his "fish room").

Jim: *Greg, I wish to thank you very much for granting me this interview. To start, since you are originally from Canada did your interest in aquarium fish originate there or after you made your residence in the United States. And what was in your first tank?*

Greg: I've been a hobbyist for as long as I can remember. I went through a spell in my teens where I would keep native maritime fish like brook trout, salmon parr, chubs and sticklebacks (still a favorite of mine). It was with seven spine sticklebacks that I got to see first hand how incredible and varied the reproductive strategy of fish were. I went through the normal guppy, molly, barb, tetra thing early on

but outgrew that rather quickly.

Jim: *When did you migrate to the US?*

Greg: Lee Ann and I began my immigration process in 1999. After three years of bureaucratic insanity, I was given my visa in 2002 and moved here Memorial Day weekend of that year.

Jim: *How many tanks and what species did you amass before coming to the US?*

Greg: At my peak I had somewhere in the area of 100 aquariums at about 2000 gallons and kept exclusively cichlids. I had a lot of Mbuna simply because that was pretty much all that was available up north at the time. Lee Ann would come up to visit fairly frequently and always bring me a crate or two of cichlids. At that time she was doing some work for Armke's Rare Aquarium Fish so I was keeping a lot of fish that had not been even brought into Canada at that time.

Jim: *How many tanks do you have now?*

Greg: We've scaled back a bit but still operate nearly 100 tanks and pools. The insanity continues.

Jim: *How and when did you become avid aquarists and was Cichlids your first attraction or was it fish in general?*

Greg: Early on, my initial interests were all fish. Usually anything that caught my eye at the local aquarium shop. I really enjoyed the unusual such as African butterfly fish, eels, and creatures that were "different". I eventu-

ally found my way to cichlids in the form of *Hemichromis bimaculats* (the common jewel cichlid). These normally brown fish one day turned bright red and much to my surprise, I found a pair guarding a rock that was covered with eggs. After that experience, I was hooked on cichlids. After discovering the diversity within this family, my aquarium collection went from three or four tanks to a full fledged fish hut with over 100 tanks. The stories of fish keeping in an out building, when it was -40F for weeks at a time, could fill a book.

Jim: *Greg, you are one of the founding members of the Hill Country Cichlid Club which is govern by a Leadership Group that has been very successful in its first four years of operation. Could you tell me something about the club?*

Greg: I consider the Hill Country Cichlid Club to be one of the finest organizations I've ever been involve with. We were no more than a few friends who eventually met together at our house as just a get together. I think that was in November of 2002. It was immediately evident that, because we had such a great time, that we would have to do this on a regular basis. This was the early formation of our club. There have been other aquarium clubs in this area in the past but unfortunately all eventually dissolved because of personality conflicts. We decided that if we wanted long term success that we would have to try something different. The seven people that were part of that first meeting eventually became the leadership group. In this manner, no matter how many others joined our club, there would always be a core group that would keep things going even

if it meant some turmoil threatened breaking it up. This has evolved over time as leadership members have come and gone (these members become club elders) but the idea of a core group has remained. That is not to say that the average member has no say in club affairs, in fact, quite the opposite. All HCCC members are encouraged to take part in every aspect of our club. Another wonderful decision made early on was not to run the club as a business but rather keep the social family oriented aspect to things as best we could. We have had ebbs and tides of activity but I feel we have a very strong organization with a wonderful membership.

Jim: *Did you belong to any fish clubs before you began the Hill Country Cichlid Club (HCCC) here in the US or Canada?*

Greg: I was lucky enough to visit here many times before I actually moved to Texas and as such, I was able to attend a couple CASA (Cichlid Association of San Antonio) auctions and although Lee Ann and some of my southern friends were members, I was not. I was a member of CRLCA (Canadian Rift Lake Cichlid Association) which sadly turned out to be a scam organization and later was a director with the CCA (Canadian Cichlid Association).

Jim: *Besides HCCC, ACA, HAS, TCA, what other organizations are you affiliated with?*

Greg: A couple of years ago I had the good fortune of meeting up with Claudia Dickin-son. She is fantastic author and ACA members know her as editor of the Buntbarsche Bulletin. Through her I've gotten involved

with the C.A.R.E.S. (Conservation Awareness Recognition Encouragement Support), preservation program. Presently I've become involved with a cichlid conservation project centered in Kenya called the Lake Victoria Conservation through Education Project. This involved providing aquariums for schools around Lake Victoria. Here they maintain their native cichlids. This shows the students the treasures in their backyard. We are networking these efforts with schools in the US so even though the project is still in its infancy, progress has been very exciting. I am hoping that in the near future that time will permit me to assist with FOTAS (Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies) operations further than being an HCCC delegate.

Jim: Does your family share your passion for fish, and do they participate?

Greg: My wife, Lee Ann is well known to HCCC members. She is as much a participant in the aquarium hobby as I am. Of our children, Karli, Stuart and Erin, it is Stuart that I think will take an active roll in aquatics. Karli has been around my fascination with cichlids all her life, its old news for her. Stuart got to spend a little time with Ad Konings and Anton Lamboj and has read their books from cover to cover. They were both a very positive influence on him. He really enjoys going to the fish lectures and works with Diane at the front table of HCCC auctions. Erin has not shown an interest in cichlids yet but I hope that will change. I don't want to force this on them but you bet I will encourage any enthusiasm that they might show.

Jim: Greg you are well known for your knowledge of Cichlids especially Victorians and for your writing skills. Just recently you ventured in to producing some video clips. Would you tell us about your equipment and interests?

Greg: I do enjoy writing on subjects that there is very little information available on. In some way I hope that writing about my experiences with a cichlid species might help someone else down the line. It was evident to me shortly after meeting Dave Hansen that I was not going to be able to capture my fish in the manner his photographs do. I will leave the picture taking to him and others. I decided to try and capture video footage as a way of getting these fish out there. I've still got a lot to learn but I do love the interactive aspect of video. I have a Sony digital camcorder that will be upgraded to a digital HD camera eventually. I built a computer system specifically designed for converting raw video to a format that I could share with others on the web. This has been a lot of fun for me. I'm getting a little better at things with each capture. Lee Ann and the kids gave me an underwater camera for father's day this year as well. I've been having fun getting footage of my pond fish and I'm really enjoying getting back into snorkeling. There are so many excellent spots around here for that and being able to film what I see underwater is a huge added bonus.

Continued next issue.

■ Jim Beck

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

September 26th—28th

Federation of Texas Aquarium Societies—Hosted by the **Texas Cichlid Association.**

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South, 2001 Valley View Lane, Irving, Texas.

Featured speakers include Ad Konings, Jeff

Cardwell, Gary Lang and Barbie Fiorentino.

Visit www.texascichlid.org for more information.**October**

October 11th

Texas Cichlid Association—Regular monthly meeting, 7:00 pm at Alan Young's house, 1201

Brookvalley in Arlington (817) 467-9739.

October 26th

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Aquarena Springs trip. More details as they become available - www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com.**December**

December 6th

Hill Country Cichlid Club—Christmas party. Special Guest Anton Lamboj. For more information visit www.hillcountrycichlidclub.com in to coming weeks.

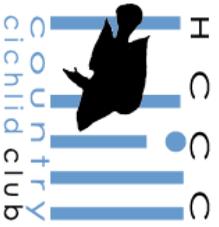
December

Texas Cichlid Association—Christmas party. Date and time to be announced.**2008 BAP Standings**

Name	YTD
Dan S.	275
Nick	230
Pat	90
Greg	75
Mike	45
Robert D.	55
Dan I	35
Duc	25
Jerry	25
Evan	20

2008 BAP Standings (cont.)

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



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