

A VISIT TO THE STOCKHOLM AQUARIA WATER MUSEUM

By David Marshall

During August 2001, Sue and I spent an enjoyable week in Stockholm, which gave me the chance to achieve yet another ambition; to visit the Aquaria Water Museum there.

Situated on Djurgarden Island and a few minutes walk from the famous Wasser Ship Museum (also well worth a visit), the Aquaria Water Museum houses the largest exhibition of fish in Stockholm. Prior to our trip I had read, in a couple of aquatic magazines and other publications, the words 'this Aquarium is small when compared to many other Public Aquaria on the European mainland but what it lacks in quantity it makes up for in quality'.

As you enter the Aquarium, you walk up a small flight of stairs and into 'Living rain forest'. This is a 'plant lovers paradise' where you are surrounded, on all sides, by lianas and many other plants collected on expeditions to South America. In the middle of this foliage is a very large tank split, through the creation of natural barriers, into four sections.

The first section is home to a variety of large South American fish which include extremely large *Phractocephalus hemiliopterus*, a *Pseudoplatystoma tigrinum* and an extremely bossy Black Pacu. The size and excellent looking quality of these fish was testament to their good care but, in our opinion, they could have done with a little more room in which to move about.

The second contains two very large Arrowana and a shoal of the plumpest *Prochilodus* (Night Tetra) that I have ever seen. An extremely large Plecostomus was also roaming about but it hid away too quickly to be identified.

The third section was very different to anything I have previously seen as it houses shoals of both vegetarian and flesh eating Piranhas swimming around together in perfect harmony. At the time of our visit, Peruvian Ducks occupied the final section.

Just to complete this particular spectacle, a continuous programme, complete with mock thunder and lightning, is in operation and this condenses the 24 hour cycle of light, humidity and rainfall in the Amazon jungle into a 15 minute show.

The 'Living rain forest' passes into 'Mangrove swamp'. This was our favourite part of the Aquarium and we spent a lot of time here literally entranced by this particular exhibit. Basically a shallow kidney shaped pond was dug into a concrete floor. Several roots, the largest of which reached the ceiling, placed at various angles were the only decor.

The brackish water in this pond must have been 'spot on' because the shoals of Archer Fish, Mudskippers, Scats and Arius Catfish (which I think were *A. seemanni*) were really at home here and never have I seen such fish looking and acting so healthily. The way these fish interacted was a spectacle to behold.

Exiting this section brings you into 'Coral reef/The sea'. Here you find the largest tank in the exhibition and this is home to four Black-Tipped Sharks and a large shoal of Blue Chromis. After lingering over this particular display many visitors exit this section and, what a mistake, as the real 'gems' are found in aquaria on the adjacent wall and were the most beautiful Marine Betta I have ever seen.

Finally comes 'from mountain streams' and here you find an assortment of fish and other aquatic creatures found in and around Stockholm. The highlight of this section is the Salmon ladder, which allows its occupants access to and from the surrounding Bay.

Well worth a visit. Please note that once at the cafe area there is no way back into the Aquarium (without paying again) so don't rush through any of the sections thinking that you can return for another look when it is less busy etc.

During our stay we also visited the Aquarium Of The Stockholm Archipelago (to visit this attraction requires a 30-minute ferry ride to the Feather Islands), where one extremely large tank is split into five

sections to display 'local' fish species, and the Skansen Akyariat (about fifteen minutes walk from the Aquaria Water Museum) where, amid some spectacular displays of rainforest primates, you will find ten or so aquaria which are used to highlight the current plight of Australian marine fish.

Although we searched, we were unable to find any aquatic retail outlets or pet centres etc. but perhaps a fellow Catfish Study Group member knows of such places as we hope to make a future return visit to Stockholm.

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