

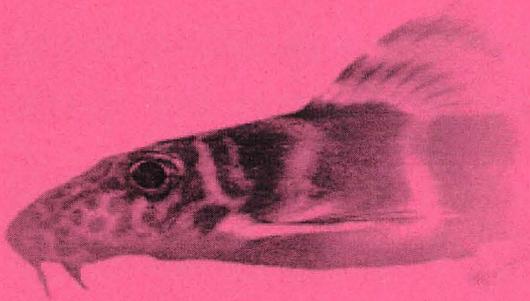
CAT CHAT

The Journal of the Catfish Study Group

Big Tank-buster Debate



Spawning *Corydoras* sp. C120



Spawning *Corydoras adolfoi*

My Trip to Peru Part 2



New Venue for 2010 Convention

**Volume 10 Issue Number 3
September 2009**

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Catfish Study Group

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Where We Meet:

The Group normally meets at the Highfield Working Men's Club, 1 Ratcliffe Street, Darwen, Lancs, BB3 2BZ on the third Sunday of each month from 1pm. The exceptions are the December meeting, which is held on the second Sunday at the usual place, and the annual Convention weekend, held in the Spring at a Hotel.

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From the Chair

Ian Fuller

Due to even more travelling I was unable to attend the June meeting and because of two more overseas bookings I will be missing for the Open Show later this month and again for the meeting in October. Although I am not around for these meetings I will as ever be publicising and promoting the CSG.



The July and August meetings, although not particularly well attended with only twelve or thirteen members at each, were very enjoyable and informative with some well-prepared presentations by our treasure on Catfish migration and setting up Catfish aquariums. Following each presentation some very informative discussions took place, it was a pity that more members did not show up, but as they say it is their loss, those that did attend had a couple of very enjoyable meetings.

In the light of these small membership turnouts, we are looking to change a few things around for next year to try and make our meeting a little more inviting. The

changes will be announced before the end of the year when the 2010 agenda is finalised.

Now is probably the best time for me to announce that I will be retiring as Chairman at the next AGM. I have held the position for the last ten years and have come to the point where I need to stand back and let someone else take over the reins. I haven't exactly run out of ideas that I think will help improve and keep the group moving forward but my energy levels, both mental and physical, have taken a bit of a battering, more so since being promoted to the position of Aquatics Manager at Prestwood Petzone where I now work full time. I also need to give my own fish a little more attention as well as finish a couple of writing projects.

I will however still be very active and, by committee approval, will still be organising the Annual conventions. They are challenging enough on their own but are something I enjoy doing and will be able to concentrate on.

The next meeting that I will be at will be the Autumn Auction, where like many of you, will be looking to bag a bargain or two.

Until next time, happy Catfish keeping.

Ian

Membership Notices & Notifications

Adrian Taylor, Secretary

Hi All.

This is a new section to your Journal, and where, as the title suggests, I will be posting group notices and notifications.

1) Due to a proposal being adopted at the 2009 AGM, the Post of President is now an elected position and, as such, a President needs to stand for election every three years. The 2010 AGM will be the first time that a group President will be elected in this way.

Members are invited to put forward nominations, along with a fellow-member's secondary endorsement of that nomination - a person who they believe would be able to further the aims of and the promotion of the 'Catfish Study Group'.

It is essential that nominees for the position of President must be of good standing within the fish-keeping community so as to be able to vigorously promote the CSG in all its activities, not just at CSG events but also at other fish-keeping-related events outside of the CSG's area of control.

Current nominations for President are:

Mr. I. A. M. Fuller.

Mr. A W Taylor is making this nomination and Mr. R Barton is supporting this nomination

The CSG will be attending the *Scottish Aquarist Festival*, which is to be held Jubilee Community Centre, Glenrothes; on the 11th October 2009. For further details on this event visit: www.scottishaquarist.co.uk

The Group's long-serving Chairman, Mr Ian Fuller, has decided to step down at the 2010 AGM. Our thanks go to Ian for the sterling work he has done in making the CSG the successful organization that it now is.

Members are invited to put forward nominations for Chairman, along with a fellow-member's secondary endorsement in support of that nomination.

Nominations for either position must be sent to the Secretary, at the following address:

Mr. A W Taylor
103 The Uplands, Palacefields.
Runcorn. Cheshire
WA7 2UB
UK.

to reach me no later than the 22nd November 2009.

Editorial

Keith Jackson

As Longfellow wrote “*All things must change to something new, to something strange*” and there are quite a few changes to be reported this issue. After many years of sterling effort, Ian Fuller has decided to take a step back. He will not stand for Chairman at the next AGM and will no longer be working with Adrian Taylor on the Information Sheets. It's not surprising that he should feel the need for a break after putting so much time and effort into the Group for so long and I hope that I speak for you all in thanking him for all he has done. He's still going to be organising the Convention, though, so he's not exactly going to be operating on an easy workload!

With the change in the post of President from life to a three-year term, it has been decided to make an award to Trevor Morris to recognise his many years of service to both the CSG and its predecessor, the Catfish Association of Great Britain (Northern Area Group). The award will be a special CSG badge, a certificate and Trevor's name will be added to the Group's Roll of Honour. Although his health has prevented Trevor from being as active as he would have wished recently, there is no doubt that the Group would not exist today without him. Thank you, Trevor.

There is going to be a slight change in the publication schedule for Cat Chat, starting with the next issue. As things stand, reports of the two big events in our Calendar, the Convention and the Show & Auction, don't appear for three months. It's been agreed that Cat Chat will appear one month later (or two months earlier, depending on your point of view!) than at present, with the new publication dates from Volume 11 (2010) being January, April, July and October. This will mean that you will receive reports on these big functions earlier and, coincidentally, it makes life easier for an incoming Editor who will have ten weeks after the AGM to produce the April issue instead of the six at present - and I don't mind admitting that was a strain for me. The final issue of 2009 will appear one

month early, in November, to make the transition to the new schedule easier. It will include the Show report and a selection of articles from the first year's issues of Cat Chat to round off the celebrations of our first decade.

While we're on the subject of change, there are changes afoot for the meetings next year. Attendance at meetings, other than the Convention and the Auctions, has been poor lately, although the presentations and ensuing discussions have been the usual top-notch quality. To try and improve things we're going to have two meetings - May and August - that will have an outside speaker *plus* a mini-Auction. The Auction will be restricted to five lots, pre-booked in the usual way, to keep within the time constraints of the venue.

Be sure to check out Danny Blundell's report on the new venue for the 2010 Convention. It looks wonderful and will be another step upwards for the Group. Let's make it the biggest attendance yet.

We have another addition to the Committee in the form of Mike O'Sullivan, who has joined as a floor-member. There is always plenty of work to be done and, as the old saying has it, many hands make light work. It's a sign the Group is doing well that people *want* to serve on the Committee, something that is not at all common in any organisation. Floor members have no specific duties so can do as much or as little as they can within the time they have available. Please consider volunteering as it's an excellent way to find out, without a long-term commitment, whether you are able to take on one of the main offices.

I was surprised to get some feedback after the last issue. In the absence of criticism I have to assume that I'm not doing too bad a job so to get a positive response from Daphne Layley to the last issue was very gratifying, all the more so when she sent me an article! Thanks, Daphne, on both counts.



The Big Tank-Buster Debate

Daphen Layley

(Illustrations by Danny Blundell)

A colleague of mine who worked for the Environment Agency had a call from a member of the public who, whilst walking their dog, had seen a large strange-looking fish, apparently dying, by the bank of the local canal. My friend and his assistant located the fish, which was dead by the time they reached it. It measured over 3 feet long and eventual identification confirmed the fish to be an *Oxydoras* (*Pseudodoras*) *niger*.



Oxydoras niger & *Pseudoplatystoma fasciatum*

Someone must have bought this large Dorad as a baby, perhaps oblivious to its potential size - they must have fed it well and it just grew and grew. When they finally could not house or cope with it any longer they dumped it into the freezing cold waters of the canal. The fact that such a beautiful and gentle creature should have endured such a slow and awful death does not bear thinking about.

Who's to blame?

Nevertheless it begs several questions –

- 1) Did the customer know how big it would get when he bought the fish?
- 2) Assuming he or she got it from a shop, did the shop's staff warn him of its potential size and check that its housing requirements would be met?
- 3) Did he buy it anyway, assuring the staff that he could provide a huge tank and equally huge filtration system for it? In that case the retailer was duped into believing that the fish was going to a responsible home, and they made the transaction in good faith and could not be blamed.
- 4) Was it just a simple "cash for fish" transaction with no questions asked by either side? In that case the customer was at fault for not asking the relevant questions, but the retailer was also to blame, either through ignorance of his stock or because the lure of a quick profit took priority over the welfare of the fish.
- 5) Did the customer ask all the right questions in the shop, and was he told "Yes – it will live quite peacefully in a three foot long community tank"? In that case the retailer should have his competence as a

pet trader critically scrutinised by the appropriate authority and, if I had my way, his licence would be revoked.

This is just one of many similar instances, but the questions which I have applied to the above scenario could and should be applied to all these cases which we are hearing about. The truthful answers, if only it were possible to get at them, wouldn't make pleasant listening.

As in most aspects of life, it is the few who bring disrepute to the majority, and this hobby of ours is no different. There are many experienced fish keepers out there who love and specialise in large fish (not always but very often large catfish) and who have enormous tanks and tropical ponds and equally large filtration systems to match and I am lucky to count myself amongst them.

Very often, these fish become almost members of the family and are spoilt rotten, becoming tame and living many years longer than perhaps they would in the wild, where they have to run the gauntlet of even larger predators or natives with harpoons and hungry children to feed, or the drying out of their natural habitat if the seasonal rains are late. Some of these species, those which attain a maximum length of perhaps two feet, are often slow moving and sedentary fish who display a certain degree of intelligence or at least learn to recognise and respond to their human keepers, and are reasonably easy for the experienced enthusiast to cope with, provided all the criteria necessary for their welfare are met in a generous and humane fashion.

These slightly smaller "biggies" such as Tinfoil Barbs, Oscars, Jaguar Cichlids etc. to name but a few, can still prove problematical to the unwary novice. These all look really cute in the shop when they are two inches long but they don't stay that size very long, and if you haven't done your homework or if the retailer doesn't warn you, you'll soon have big trouble in little tanks! As I said before, in the hands of experienced fish keepers who have big tanks and filters, these smaller tank busters, and others like them, can make excellent pets, and it is not really these species, or their devoted keepers, that this article is aimed at.

However, we all know our limitations and there are some fish that even the most dedicated and well equipped of us would not dream of trying to keep because it is just not practical and, more importantly, not fair on the fish. There are always exceptions, and there is bound to be at least one lottery-winning reader out there who has a tropical pond the size of an Olympic swimming pool. But for the vast majority of us, some species which are probably best left alone

include Giant Pacu, Amazonian Red-tailed and other massive predatory catfish, Pangasius catfish, some Snakeheads, Arapaima, large Tiger Fish, Alligator Gars, some giant Cichlids, Giant Gouramies, extra large Barbs such as Lemon-fins etc. etc...the list goes on!

Sad egocentrics

However, there are a few sad souls out there who, for a variety of reasons, have the need to keep very large, predatory, dangerous looking animals, fish or reptiles with often exaggeratedly fearsome reputations, in totally unsuitable sized cages or aquariums in their living rooms just as status symbols to impress their gullible friends and to make them think they must be very macho, knowledgeable and well-off to possess such creatures. We all know the sort - if they were dog owners instead, it would be Pit Bull Terriers...

When the friends finally get bored and the novelty wears thin, the poor creature is off-loaded, either by being advertised or offered to a shop (if one can be found that will take it) or, if it's not so lucky, released in a dark place such as the local pond, canal, or woodland at the dead of night (ref: first paragraph). They are the sort of people whose irresponsible and often downright cruel actions spoil things for the rest of us, and they are the sort of people who shouldn't be allowed to buy these animals.

But how can the genuinely concerned retailer be sure which customers are bona-fide enthusiasts and which ones aren't? How can they know if the customer is lying through his teeth and over-exaggerating his facilities? How can they decide to whom should they sell a baby tank buster? More importantly, what can be done about those retailers who don't give a damn, as long as a nice wad of crisp twenties is waved under their noses - believe me, it happens!

These shops are most definitely in the minority, but we must not allow the few to spoil it for the rest. The vast majority of shops are extremely reputable and I know of many who will put a potential customer through an intensive barrage of questions about tank size, filters, etc., and even then refuse the sale if they are not satisfied with the answers they are given. These shops do this voluntarily and are quite prepared to lose the sale of a fish costing perhaps many hundreds of pounds for the sake of the fish's welfare and the shop's own reputation. This is a very commendable attitude but, as I said, it is the retailers' choice - so far the "vetting" of a potential customer by a shop is not the subject of any legal obligation, only perhaps a moral or ethical one!

Dumb questions

I went recently, incognito, into a branch of Maidenhead Aquatics and pretended to be interested in buying a large Red-Tailed Catfish that was on display. Maidenhead Aquatics no longer sell tank busters, but

this catfish had been dumped on them by someone who didn't want it any more.

I deliberately asked some pretty dumb questions after which I found myself being comprehensively interrogated by a member of staff who eventually said that they would not consider the sale, until one of the staff had paid me a house-visit to inspect the aquarium and filtration system which I proposed to use for the fish. I was so impressed by this responsible attitude that I contacted the manager and congratulated him on his policy. Another shop with exemplary ethics regarding the sale of tank busters is Wharf Aquatics in Nottinghamshire who also have much more thought for the welfare of the fish they sell than they do about laughing all the way to the bank. These are just two of the vast majority of our shops who do the right thing, but we all know a few who don't - let's hope some of them are reading this!

Eats cats, dogs and small children

So, I have talked about the rights and wrongs of the customer and also of the retailer but there are other factors to be considered. For instance, what happens when a retailer orders certain fish from the wholesaler's list only to find, upon delivery, that the ordered fish are out of stock and have been substituted by another species?

For example, I know of a shop that recently ordered some small Asian *Mystus* catfish only to find that they had been replaced with another Bagrid, the Giant Indian River Catfish, *Sperata* (*Aorichthys*) *aor*, a voracious predator with a potential length of over seven feet. What would we expect the retailer to do in such a case? Well, jump on the telephone to the wholesaler of course, but that does not help the fish, does it? Assuming that the fish, (however unwanted by the shopkeeper) had been in the bag for several hours and were already stressed, should they be sent back to the wholesaler and endure another several hours of stress and perhaps arrive back dead or dying?

Or should the retailer try and make the best of a bad job and put them on display in the shop with a warning note to customers saying that "When mature, this fish will be seven feet long, and it will be capable of eating cats, dogs and small children"?

Perhaps, on the other hand, the retailer is in a hurry to deal with his shipment and is not familiar with the slight and sometimes superficial differences, (which may or may not always be evident) which this species exhibits compared to the ones that were originally ordered. After all, at 3 inches long, these are all greyish brown with barbels at one end, and a habit of hiding under any bog-wood or other hardware in the tank. What if a customer buys one, thinking it will only get to 4 inches? We might just find ourselves with the same scenario that started this article.

In this case, you might be forgiven for saying that the wholesaler should take some blame but, what if the

supplier who supplies the wholesaler, only lists the available species by common name, as is often the case? We all know that the same common name can be applied to several different species, which is why scientific taxonomy - however tongue twisting to some fish keepers - must be the definitive.

But that does not help the wholesaler when he is hurriedly scanning the list of available species. In that case, perhaps we might feel that sometimes the suppliers are to blame for not having some sort of standardised naming system, but is that really practical when new species and zonal variations are being discovered all the time?

If there were legislation to restrict the import of certain species, how would it be enforced? Could the relevant authorities employ enough people having the specialised knowledge to enable them to identify and distinguish one small brown fish from another, within a bag of many similar ones, as they are unloaded off the plane? Definitely not. Even if they could, what would happen to the illegal species in the shipments? - our zoos and public aquariums are already overstocked. Would the confiscated fish have to be killed - after all, they could hardly be sent back, could they?

Closing the stable door after the horse has bolted

There is yet another angle to this - many of the largest and most spectacular species are becoming rare in their natural habitat, some to the point of near extinction. There are many reasons for this - deforestation to make way for roads, crops or grazing land for farm animals, dam building, pollution and the aquarium trade to name but a few. The indigenous peoples have caught and eaten these fish for thousands of years but they only take what is needed for the cooking pot and they realise the importance of preserving some adult breeding stock. After all, one does not kill the goose that lays the golden egg!

The aquarium trade however, did not seem so concerned with maintaining the status quo and the indiscriminate capture of, for example, sexually mature Amazonian Red Tailed Catfish a few decades ago, resulted in the disappearance (from some areas) of the really large specimens that used to breed there. Eventually the authorities realised their mistakes and many species are now being artificially bred in Europe and the Far East from where today's aquarium specimens come.

Surely this is like 'closing the stable door after the horse has bolted'. If there had not been such a demand, twenty or so years ago, for this species of tank buster (and others like it), perhaps more of those big mature females would still be breeding out there in the Amazon. I must hold my hand up and admit to buying an eighteen inch long specimen three decades ago and, thinking back, it was obviously wild caught.

But hindsight is a wonderful thing, so they say, and if my actions in those days, along with others like me, contributed to the decimation of that magnificent species in the wild, then I can only say how much I regret it now and wish that I could put the clock back. Thank goodness, in a way, that they can breed them artificially now - at least the species will not die out completely - but instead of supplying the world's aquarium trade with thousands of 3 inch long baby Red Tailed Catfish, (which will doubtless grow up to be the



Phractocephalus hemiliopterus

next generation of unwanted tank busters), I would like to see some of them be restocked back into the Amazon from whence we took their predecessors, all those years ago. Maybe there are projects like that already happening - I don't know but I'd like to think so.

Public aquariums

And so we go round in circles - even if legislation were applied to limit the import of certain tank busters, some specimens would always sneak through in the guise of something smaller and more community-compatible, although others, more easily identifiable, would be lost to true enthusiasts forever.

As a lifetime devotee of big catfish, I know I would be cutting my nose off to spite my face if I campaigned to stop these tank busters being sold completely, but I would like to see their sale controlled, and perhaps limited to zoos, public aquariums, and to individuals who were licensed and approved by an authoritative body. That is not as daunting as it sounds - I hold a DEFRA licence to keep certain species of coldwater fish and it cost me nothing but I had to prove that I had adequate facilities and a sound scientific reason for wanting to keep the species concerned.

I realise that this is a very emotive subject and there will be strong views from both sides of the divide, but I feel that it had to be said, and it's long overdue.

In conclusion, if this article helps to prevent yet another unwanted and beautiful fish from being dumped in a freezing canal, it will have gone a small way to achieving its aim.

© - Daphne Layley 2004. *Originally printed in an abridged form in Practical Fishkeeping and titled "Enough is Enough". Subsequently published in its entirety on ScotCat Website.*

New Venue for CSG Convention 2010
 Danny Blundell.



The Prince of Wales Hotel

Following the success of our ‘Anniversary Convention 2009’, the Committee is now working on ‘Convention 2010’. We have used the Convention Centre in the Britannia Hotel Wigan for the last three years, building up a successful relationship with this hotel group. We were subsequently offered the opportunity to hold Convention 2010 in their flagship hotel in Southport at the ‘Prince of Wales’.

This magnificent Victorian Hotel is situated in Lord Street, which is in the heart of Southport’s shopping and entertainment district.

The second picture shows the largest room of the three-room International Suite, - note the integrated bar.



Two Photos of the Second Room



Annexe off the Second Room



Largest Room of the International Suite

The third and fourth pictures show the left and right ends of the second room and the last picture shows the annexe room off the above.

The Convention will be held from **5th-7th March 2010**, see you all there?





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My Trip to Peru - Part 2

Kim Matthiasen.

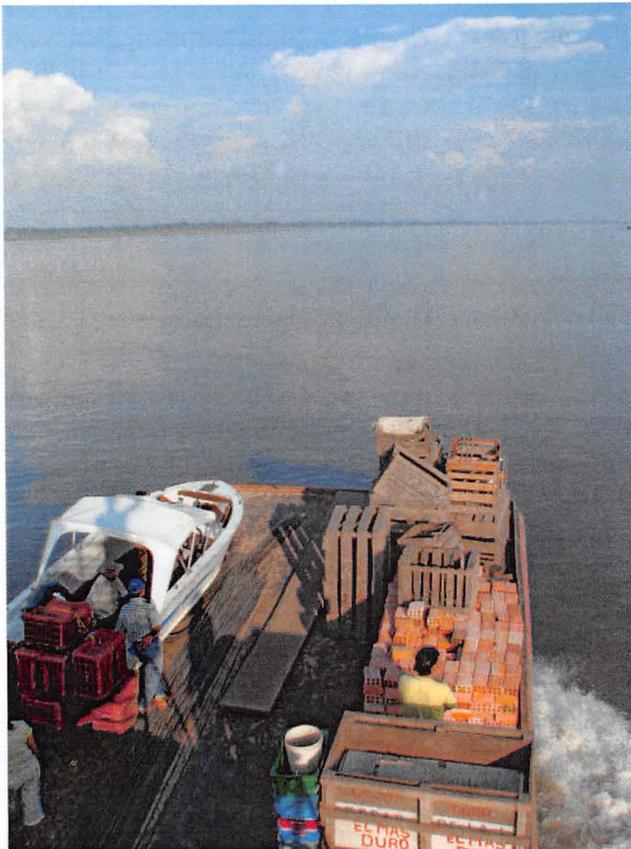
After our trip to Rio Itaya we took a day off to decide our next move. Erlend had gone back to Norway, so it was just the three of us. We had two options: we could go to the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve or we could go to Rio Ampiyacu around Pebas. We chose Pacaya. The plan was to take a ferry from Iquitos to Requena at the confluence of Rio Tapiche and Rio Ucayali. From there we should go in Fransico's speedboat to Bretaña, a town outside the reserve at the mouth of Rio Pacaya.

Next morning one of Fransisco's people sorted out the speedboat and gasoline and got it all on the ferry. The only thing we needed to do was meet our translator at the hotel and buy some food for the ferry-trip. Our translator turned out to be a little guy named Fernando. He wasn't ready for our jungle trip at all! Originally he was from Lima and had only been in Iquitos for 3 months and he'd never been in the jungle... The only things he brought were sneakers, a pair of jeans and a pair of bathing shorts! When we told him we were going to be in the jungle with snakes, spiders and swampy streams and ponds he sort of turned pale - but he came along anyway.

At the ferry we met Pablo, the driver of the speedboat. He was an older guy and he only spoke Spanish, as did most other people we met. He was a really good guy to have with us on the trip, especially because Fernando was very insecure on how to negotiate ticket

prices for the ferry and things like that. We rented cabins on the upper deck so we had a place to keep our things and where we could lock the door, as there were some very spooky looking people on the ferry.

It was a great experience to sail on the Amazon itself, even if the river at Iquitos is nowhere near as wide as it is further downstream in Brazil. There were a lot of sunken trees and branches along the banks; great L-number biotopes, I'm sure! During the afternoon we passed the confluence of Rio Maraon and the Rio Ucayali and next morning we arrived in Requena. During the morning we had made several stops at small villages to pick up rice, bananas and other goods. When the ferry landed in Requena it was complete chaos; people went on and off the ferry carrying all sorts of things so we stayed on the top deck until the worst traffic had ended. We went down to Pablo who had got the speedboat off the ferry and we bought some Inca cola (some sort of lemon soda) and water before we took off further up the Ucayali and a smaller river until we arrived at Bretaña, where Markos, our local guide, awaited us.



On the ferry to Requena



Chaos at Requena

In Bretaña we bought bananas and live chickens for our trip into the reserve. Bretaña is a relatively large town with 1500 citizens, concrete roads for driving the three-wheeled taxis and small stores and hotels even. After our shopping we took the speedboat across the river and up the Rio Pacaya. We made a short stop at the Reserve's office to fill out some paperwork and show our passports before we were allowed to enter. After an hour or so, we came to a lake named Cocha Shaitu where there were loads of pink dolphins. We'd seen a few from the ferry and on our trip up the Rio Pacaya, but not these massive numbers. They were everywhere! And still, they were very difficult to photograph because every time we pointed out camera at some, they were gone and showed again in the opposite direction. We stayed for a while and



Heron at Pacaya Samiria



A River Dolphin

continued up a canal called Caño Yarina. It was narrow with low vegetation on both banks and islands of Pistia and other floating plants. We arrived at a concrete house where we should stay for the night. We were welcomed by two guys maintaining the house and the local dog and cat they were supposed to keep rats and snakes away.

We put some of our equipment in the lodge and took a short trip before it got dark. The canal went into Lake Yarina Cocha, where we managed to catch some Piranhas on rod and reel. Great fun! After a couple of hours we headed home as it was getting dark fast.



A Wild Oscar

In the lodge there were regular wooden beds for us to sleep in, although we would have preferred our hammocks instead so we were off the ground. Even though there were mosquito netting covering all windows, there were loads of large spiders, cockroaches and other nasties crawling on the walls and floor. After a late dinner consisting of fried bananas and potatoes, we went down to the canal with our flashlights. In the margins we could catch 25 cm. *Astronotus ocellatus* with our handnets and we could see Arowanas further out. After a while we got bored with the *Astronotus* and went to bed, not that we got much sleep! The lodge turned out to be infested with mice or rats; squeaking noises and little feet on the floor through the entire night! Sometimes you could feel something climbing in the mosquito nets over the beds. I hated that place!

The next morning the mice or whatever they were had gone and we got up to a fantastic day - bright blue sky with high sunshine and almost no wind. The plan for the days was fishing for Piranha and *Cichla* sp. in Yarina Cocha and then we should go searching for *Corydoras* sp CW18. After we had eaten the chickens, we should spend some time in the forest and, in the afternoon, we should try to catch an Arapaima on my fishing rod. In the evening we should catch crocodiles with our bare hands.

We ate some bananas on the short trip to the first fishing spot in the lake. Casting small Bomber wobblers into a lake with pink dolphins and catching exotic fish is quite a way to spend time; I could get used to that! We only caught small *Cichlas*, up to 1½ kilos, but it was great fun. We kept some for Pablo and Markos to eat as they would rather have fish than chicken. We also caught a few *Hoplias* sp., which we put back.



CW018 Biotope

We continued further along the bank until we reached a place where we could enter the jungle and search for CW18. After a short walk we reached the exact spot where Tom Christoffersen had collected the fish for the first time in 2006. Was I excited! We concentrated on a puddle that had been cut off from the main stream

and we caught loads of fish with our small hand nets. Hatchet fish, *Copella* sp., *Copeina guttaua*, twig catfishes, *Apistogramma cacatoides* and a lot of *C. elegans*...and 3 small fish that could be CW18 with a bit of luck. Now, back home, they actually turned out to be CW18. I have two of the three left, hoping they will turn out to be a pair. If not I think I'll go there again sometime to collect more.



Catch from CW018 Biotope

We fished another stream without any luck so we returned to the boat and sailed across the lake to a small house owned by a local guy. We were allowed to use his fireplace behind the house for preparing our lunch, consisting of chicken for me, Bard, Fernando and Kristoffer and fish for Markos and Pablo. Markos did most of the job while me and Bard were fishing for small fish in the margins. There were lots of small cichlids and we even saw some angels under a canoe but they were too quick for us. During the meal, we saw some small monkeys in some bushes close enough for us to photograph, which we were told is very rare when you're outside the normal tourist areas.



Spot the Monkey!

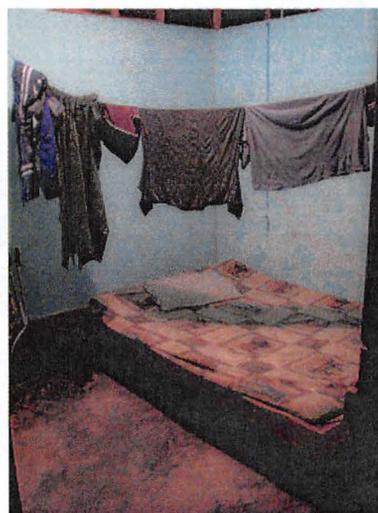
After finishing the meal, we asked Markos if we could go for a swim, as we were soaked in sweat even from sitting still in the shadow. He said it would be alright, but we had to move away from the area because we'd fed the leftovers from the chicken to the Piranhas. So, we sailed about 200 metres away and he said it was OK to go in! In we went and after having out leg hairs

pinched by "Sardinhas", which were small silvery tetras, we took a walk in the forest to dry up. Markos showed us a few plants for medical use when suddenly it started to get a bit windy. Soon the wind picked up further and branches and other things started to fall down from above and we went under a root from a very large mahogany tree to be safe. Then it started raining. Not a silent rain as we know from back home, but heavy, extreme rainfall as we had never imagined half an hour ago when we were swimming in the lake under a blue sky!



Mahogany Tree

After a while things stopped falling down and we hurried back to the boat through the rain. On the way back to the lodge we discussed what options we had. The Arapaima fishing and crocodile hunting were not going to happen under these conditions so we decided to pick up the things in the lodge, head back to Breña and dry up in a hotel there. Markos said he knew some ponds there we could fish in the morning if the weather got better. Said and done!



What luxury!

We went out of the reserve and Markos found a luxury hotel for us in Breña: raw concrete walls with a wooden bed and a primitive table but it was dry and there were absolutely no rats and bugs. We took it! After hanging our stuff to dry we went out in the night in search for a place with cold beer and fried chicken. We found a place called

Signos Bar and it was perfect. After two beers we were almost sleeping in our chairs, so we decided to call it a day and went to bed.

Next morning it was nice and cool, with no rain but it was still cloudy. Markos looked like he was going to the north pole, dressed very warm, as he thought it was very cold.

killis have proven rather easy to breed back home and we have narrowed them down to being *Rivulus rubrolineatus* or something very similar. The *Apistogrammas* were some very nice *A. cacatuoides* that we also took home.



A Cool Morning in Bretaña



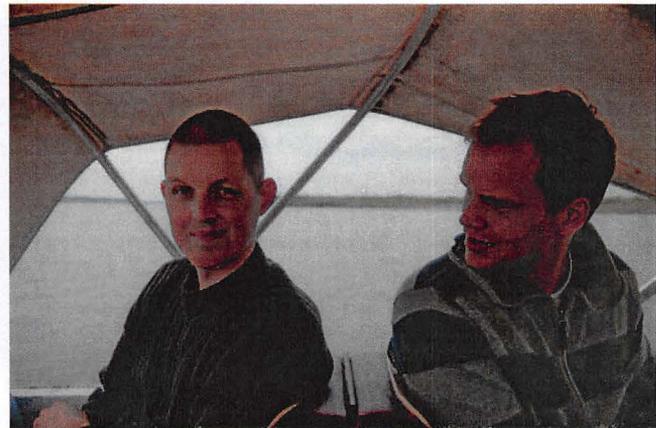
Killis and Apistos

We went through the local banana plantation to what looked like a puddle of rainwater on the edge of the forest and a small field. Just 10 cm. of water and a lot of leaves on the bottom but there were fish!

After fishing the puddle for an hour we had around 40 killis and a handful apistos, so we went back to the town and picked up our things. After a couple of hours in the speedboat we were back at the ferry and had a nice trip back to Iquitos.



Bretaña Biotope



The Ferry to Iquitos

Every time we dragged a net through the leaves, we had killifish and sometimes *Apistogramma*. Later, the

An Update on the *Aspidoras* C035 Article

Allan James

Since the publication in the last issue of CatChat (Vol.10, Issue 2, June 2009) on the issue of the so-called condition, "Whirling Disease" in the original C035 parents, I was contacted by our Vice – President and Aquatic Consultant, Dr Peter Burgess, and he kindly gave me his thoughts on the subject. Here are his comments:

damage brain function, leading to uncontrolled swimming and spiraling That wouldn't necessarily explain the change in head shape of the female Aspi., or it could be due to a hitherto unknown parasite, perhaps one that is similar to *Myxobolus*. Whatever the cause, with a bit of luck it was one of those one-off incidents. But I think you are wise to steer clear of live Tubifex."

"I think it's doubtful whether your Aspi's died of classical (salmonid) whirling disease as this parasite (*Myxobolus cerebralis*), as far as we know, affects only salmonids. It could be that the affected fish contracted a systemic bacterial infection - some species of bacteria produce toxins that can

In hindsight I had a loss of a female *Corydoras venezuelanus* with the same symptoms sometime after this but there has been no outbreak in the last 7 months, so, as Peter states, this has maybe been a one-off incident. *Acknowledgments to Dr. Peter Burgess.*

Breeding *Corydoras* sp C120

Presented for the CSG B.A.P by Ian Fuller.

I first acquired this species while visiting Hans-Georg Evers in Hamburg in 2004. We had been working for many hours on the 'Identifying Corydoradinae Catfishes' book and before my return home we went on a tour of the fish shops of Hamburg. It was in one particular shop, the name of which totally eludes me, where the tanks were filled with plants and to see all the fish that were in them took a little time. It was in one of these plant packed tanks that I spotted what I first thought were some very nice *C. trilineatus* looking fish. Without drawing the attention of the shop owner I had a quiet discussion with Hans and he told me that these fish were in fact the undescribed species C120. Needless to say I then purchased all they shop had, which turned out to be a very nicely balanced group of three males and three females.

On returning home from Hamburg the group were placed into a 45 cm x 25 cm x 20 cm high. This particular tank had been fitted with a full width 4.5 cm 'Hamburg' filter across the back of the tank, the rest of the furnishings were two polyester spawning mops and a clump of Java moss. It was not very long, only a matter of five months, before I saw the first action from these fish. It all started after a seventy percent water change, when all the males became very agitated, rapidly swimming up and down the tanks sides and chasing the two females all around the tank. At first the females were not in the slightest bit interested and tried keeping away for the males by diving into the Java moss. This activity lasted for a couple of days. It was later on the second day when one of the females seemed to succumb to the attention of the males and started notice one in particular, she very obliging for me, decided to accept the one particular males offer to mate, when he positioned himself in the typical quivering, arched, sideways on stance. Unfortunately this was one of those times when the camera was still in the house and way out of reach, so no mating pictures were to be had. Most of the mating took place out of sight behind the mops or Java moss, but several were observed in relatively clear areas.

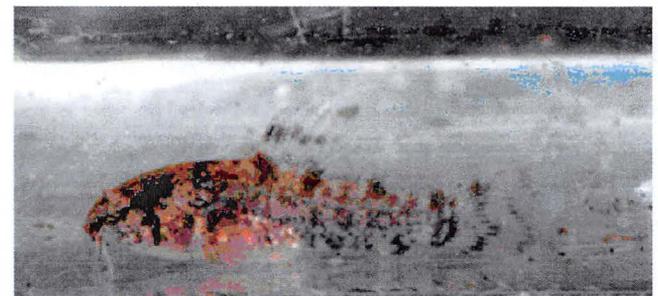
A total of fifty-three eggs were laid by the one female, with the other females did not take any part at all and in fact seemed to be totally disinterested in what was going on. The eggs, which measured 1.6 mm in diameter and had an adhesion factor of 6 out of 10 were deposited evenly between the two spawning mops and the silicone in the left front corner of the tank. Once it was obvious that there was not going to be any more mating activity I decided to remove the eggs. I carefully picked the eggs from the mops and the silicone and place them into a three-litre plastic food container, which I had half filled with water from the spawning tank; two Alder cones and an air stone were also added to the container. The Alder cones were used to protect the eggs against fungal attack, it is the leaching tannins from the soaking cones, which puts a protective coating on the eggs and the air stone provides water movement, which keeps particles from settling on and causing damage or infection to the eggs.

The eggs all proved to be fertile and hatched after four days and the fry took a further two days to become free swimming. It was the day after they were free swimming that a small amount of micro worm was given as their first food. For the following few days their diet consisted of micro worm

alternated with soaked crushed Tetra Tabimin. Eighty percent water changes were made daily in the late afternoon before the evening feed and as the fry grew larger foods were given in the form of grindal worm and finely grated frozen bloodworm. After six weeks the fry were large enough to be moved and were placed into a 45 cm x 22 cm shallow tank where they grew out to become mature adult fish.



at 7 days. 6.5 mm SL



at 1 month. 9.5 mm SL



at 2 months. 13.5 mm SL



at 3 months. 18.0 mm SL

What's New?

Mark Walters

This article presents information for five recently published scientific papers for which further details are available.

L M Sarmiento-Soares, P Lehmann A. & R F Martins-Pinheiro, 2009. An exciting description of an existing aquarium species known as *Parotocinclus* sp. 'Minas Gerais' has been made. *Parotocinclus arandai*, a new species of the hypoptopomatine catfish, is described from small creeks in the upper rios Jucuruçu and Buranhém basins, at the border of Brazilian States of Bahia and Minas Gerais. The region is home to at least 5 other species of these small-sized catfish. One characteristic to distinguish *Parotocinclus* from *Otocinclus* is the presence of an adipose fin. The excellent paper (in English) presents some interesting geographical information on the distribution of *P. arandai* along the Atlantic coast and some great images.

A second paper on *Parotocinclus* has been published by **H A Britskii & J C Garavello, 2009**, redescribing *P. bahiensis*, another species inhabiting the Atlantic coastal stream systems.

C S Pavanelli & A G Bifi, 2009. A new species of *Auchenipterid* or wood cat is described from the lower rio Iguaçu basin, Paraná State, Brazil. *Tatia jaracatia* has a distinctive pattern, distinguishing it from other members of the genus, including the more commonly encountered *T.*

aulopygia, *T. galaxies* and *T. intermedia*. *T. jaracatia* appears to be endemic to the rio Iguaçu above the falls. The rio Iguaçu above Iguaçu Falls has been described by several authors as 'relatively sparse in overall fish diversity, but high in fish endemism, presumably due to isolating effects of the falls'.

E Vreven & L Milondo, 2009. A small *Synodontis* has been described from west Africa. *S. punu* is described from the Nyanga, the Niari (Kouilou) (Republic of Congo) and the Ogooué (Gabon) basins. Specimens collected were less than 45 mm SL.

Ng, HH & M Kottelat, 2009. A new species of *Mystus* has been described from Myanmar. *M. cineraceus* is described from the Irrawaddy River drainage in northern Myanmar. Issues surrounding the identification of *M. bleekeri*, a species from India similar to *M. cineraceus*, are also discussed.

If you have any sightings you would like to share or would like to track down a paper featured, contact me for the full reference: mark.walters100@yahoo.com.

Acknowledgement is made to Planet Catfish, Practical Fishkeeping and the All Catfish Species Inventory (ACSI) database for the original source of information on papers.

Breeding *Corydoras adolfoi*

Presented for the CSG B.A.P by Mark Walters.

My first groups of *Corydoras* catfish were purchased at a CSG auction in the autumn of 2005. At the time I picked up 3 young *C. adolfoi*, probably no more than 3 months old.



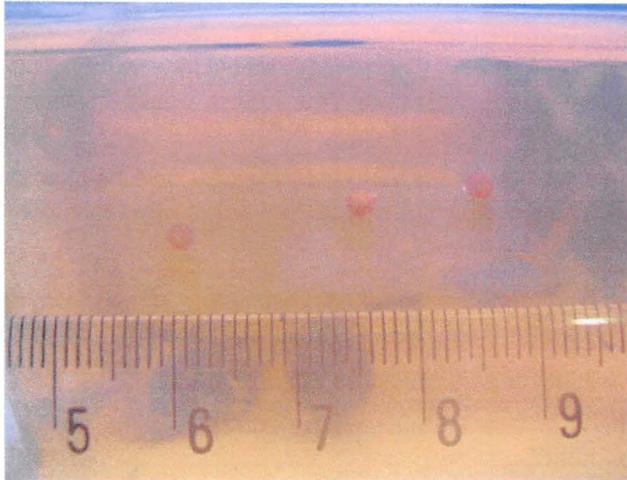
The first spawnings were witnessed in April 2006 and recorded for the Breeders Award Programme in March 2007.

Corydoras burgessi is one of a group of similarly marked catfish from the Rio Negro in Brazil. The similarly patterned *C. duplicareous* is often mistakenly sold as *C. adolfoi*. *C. adolfoi* tends to have a narrower dorsal band, although it is reported that *adolfoi* can exhibit a broader band also.

For the purpose of this breeding report, the group of *adolfoi* had grown from previous breeding attempts to 5, comprising 2 males and three females. The females had reached 40mm TL, the males slightly smaller.

The fish were housed, along with a group of *C. metae*, in a 60cm x 45cm x 30cm tank. Filtration was provided by an air-driven, biofoam filter and furnishings were typically sparse, with a light substrate of sand, a piece of bogwood and some Java

moss. The temperature was relatively cool at around 74°F, the pH was between 5.5 and 6.5 and the water had low hardness. No obvious spawnings triggers were employed, although 50% water changes every 7-10 days were often followed by active courtship behaviour. The *adolfoi* were quite secretive, only really showing themselves for twice daily feedings of frozen bloodworm and either Tetra Prima or soaked flake food.



48 hours after a routine water change, using 50% rainwater and 50% treated tap-water, a single male was witnessed pursuing a female. Shortly after, a single egg was seen clasped in her anal fins, which was pressed against the glass. Only 5 eggs were recovered, some on the glass, and others buried deep in the java moss. The eggs were very large, in comparison to other *Corydoras* species, being over 2 mm in diameter. The eggs were removed and reattached to the side of a one-litre tub, with aeration and an alder cone to reduce fungal growth.

After 4 days, the eggs hatched, although the fry struggled to free their heads from the egg case. A pipette was used to help them hatch fully. The fry were much larger than other *Corydoras* fry and were feeding on microworm after 3 days. I mixed in some fry from another species, and this seemed to help the *adolfoi* 'learn' to feed quickly. It is possible that they are stimulated by the activity of other fry to compete for food at an early stage. Previous experience had shown that keeping just a few fry was not as successful.

After about four weeks, the fry were large enough to be returned to the parent tank where growth accelerated,



no doubt helped by the abundance of food and improved water conditions in the larger tank. After this time, the fry were around 15 mm, mottled in pattern and dark in colour, no doubt serving an effective camouflage

By 3 months, the youngsters resemble mini adults and measure a good 25mm, as can be seen in the picture to the left.

Overall, *C. adolfoi* proved a low fecundity species with an average egg production of 10-15, every 3-5 weeks. The survival of the fry was good, no doubt helped by the large egg size and egg-sac reserves.



I have passed on my breeding group of *adolfoi* to make way for more species but still regard it as one of the most beautiful *Corydoras*, perfectly suited to a warmer show tank.

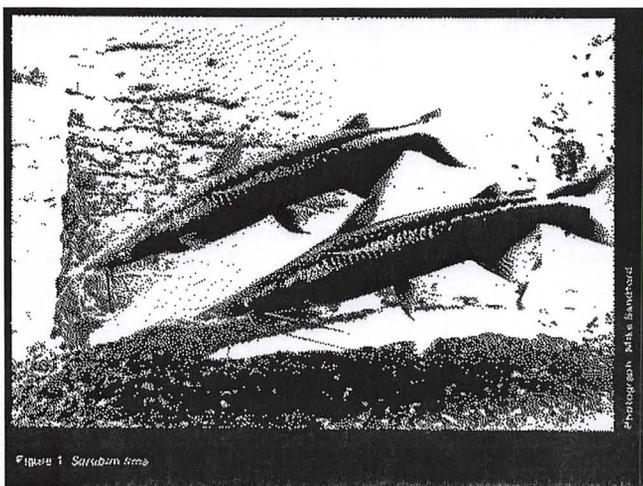


Observations on *Sorubim lima*

C E Bailey

(reproduced from the CAGB(NAG) Journal Issue 1/1985)

Many fishkeepers have often seen this sleek gentle giant of the catfishes with an immediate desire to have this species in their home aquarium. Its attractiveness, body shape and unusual daytime/nocturnal habits, make it one of the popular scaleless catfish from South America along with the 'giants' in the catfish world, i.e. *Sorubimichthys planiceps*, *Pseudoplatystoma fasciatum* and of course (it seems every catfish owner's desire!) *Phractocephalus hemiliopterus*. Its size, however, is much more suitable for the average aquarium than the others mentioned, reaching approximately 18 inches in length, although naturally the bigger the tank the better.



As more and more of these catfish are being imported, I think it may now be an appropriate time to shed some information and observations I have made on this popular catfish so that fellow hobbyists can successfully keep this fish as well.

Let us first look at the *Sorubim's* environment, so often neglected in literature I feel. South America has an abundance of river systems, in fact the largest in the world and, not surprisingly, most of the families of catfish. Indeed most other types of fish come from these estuaries also. *Sorubim* are found in most river systems where the current of water is fairly fast. This accounts for its streamline body and spatula-shaped nose, giving its common name of Shovelnose Catfish. Being fast-running the rivers contain many dissolved minerals and the water is very much acidic and slightly soft. It is hardly surprising then that this fish, previously swimming in those currents in an 'ocean' finds a 4, 5 or even 6 foot aquarium minute in contrast. I'm not advocating that you start waterproofing your living room with a wave machine fitted to recreate the catfish's natural environment, but naturally a large tank is essential to keep this fish healthy.

One of the major obstacles in keeping a fairly large South American catfish is to buy a healthy one. This is very much dependent upon your local supplier. When I purchased my two I asked to see them eating; a small netful of *Daphnia* is all that is needed. After a few

minutes you can quickly see the healthy *Sorubim* with their stomachs extended with food. Finnage is another sign to look for when purchasing; if there is any sign of splitting check whether there is a start of disease. Remember they have travelled many thousands of miles and must have seen a lot of water differences before you have seen them. These may seem like extravagant methods but the last thing you want is a dead specimen on your hands within a week.

I wonder how many fellow colleagues have purchased this fish, placed it in the aquarium only to find that after a couple of days:

1. It's completely off all types of food.
2. A form of mucus starts to shed from its body.
3. It starts to swim in a nose-down position.

This is in fact due not to incorrect feeding, but to two possibilities:

- a. Shock - some fish take a lot longer to recover from this than others.
- b. Incorrect pH values and water requirement.

In the London area water tends to be very hard so adjustments have to be made. I have found that a pH of 6.5 - 6.6 is about right. If adjustments have to be made whilst the fish is in the tank, naturally make them gradually.

As a nocturnal fish it will spend the daylight hours either perched vertically on some plants or resting nose-down (not to be confused with shock or incorrect water quality), occasionally changing positions, but generally stationary.

When dusk approaches it will be seen to be slightly more active and start to swim horizontally in search for food.

One the way it uses its maxillary barbels to look for food and assesses the distance of food to the mouth, whereas the mandibular barbels move constantly over obstacles and rocks (and other fish) searching for food in general.

Feeding presents very little problem as most types of meat are readily eaten. Chopped beefheart, earthworms etc. I have found accepted, but recently I have been providing horsemeat mashed with spinach. Keeping this fish with other fish can present problems to the aquarist who has never had this type of fish before. I have heard many a tale at fish shows where the owner after purchasing his *Sorubim* placed it with his prized guppies and barbs! When returning to the tank the following morning two of the barbs had found their way into the stomach of the Shovelnose. This has happened time and time again. Most people seem unaware that this fish is predatory, but only if a fish is small enough to be eaten whole. Guppies, barbs or tetras will fall prey to its quite deceptively large mouth, therefore fish of comparable size are the most suited as tank companions. To conclude,

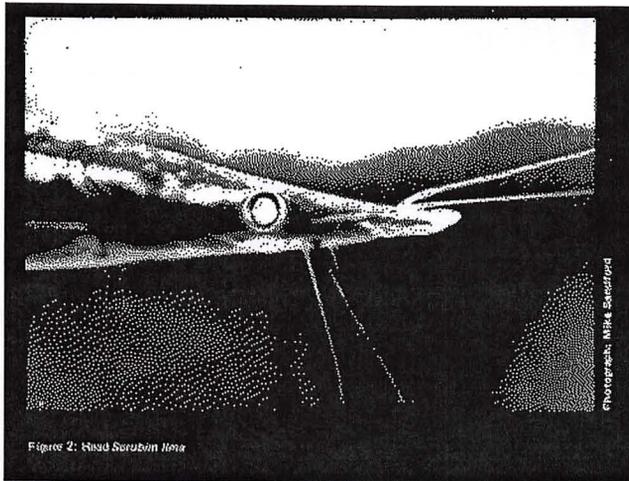


Figure 2: Head Sorubim Ima

1. The water conditions are maintained at a temperature of 72-74°F and the pH value of 6.5 - 6.6 (slightly acidic).
2. The aquarium has plenty of tall growing plants (giant vallis etc.) so that it can rest during the day and plenty of space for swimming at night.
3. It is fed with Doromin, meat (either chopped beefheart or earthworms) etc. (I have found that the *Sorubim* will only feed during dusk hours).
4. Before purchasing make sure that you buy a healthy specimen,
5. Keep with fish of comparable size, e.g. Hypostomus species, Oscars, etc.
6. It is well aerated (I have found internal power filters excellent, plus they create a current).

the *Sorubim* is easy to keep for many years in a large aquarium (a 6 foot being ideal) providing:

Although there is still a lot to learn about this catfish, if given the proper care and water maintenance, it should make a very attractive addition to the aquarium for many years.

Breeders' Award Programme - August

Mark Walters, BAP Secretary

The summer months appear to be a lean time for catfish breeding. There are only four new registrations from CSG members to report.

A few participants are knocking on the door of awards, with Adrian Taylor close to a silver award and Dave Penney breeding his 14th species of *Corydoradinae*, although needing another genus and a few more points to get a bronze award.

Despite breeding a number of challenging species, the BAP Secretary is stuck on 8 genera with potential breeding groups of *Callichthys*, *Pecoltia* and *Megalechis* holding the key but proving stubborn breeders!

Here are the latest reports and table of points accumulated to date.

A lifetime catfish breeding achievement award will be presented to our President, Trevor "JT" Morris, at the September show and auction.

To remind members of the targets:

For a BRONZE award a total of 500 CSG BAP points must be gained and species bred must be from at least three Catfish Genera.

For SILVER award a total of 1000 CSG BAP points must be gained and species bred must be from at least six Catfish Genera.

For GOLD award a total of 2000 CSG BAP points must be gained and species bred must be from at least ten Catfish Genera.

DP12	12/06/2009	Corydoras sp 132	Dave Penney
DP13	19/06/2009	Corydoras gossei	Dave Penney
DP14	27/06/2009	Corydoras sp CW08	Dave Penney
MW25	23/07/2009	Chypancistrus zebra	Mark Walters

Breeders' Points to Date

Ian Fuller	1065
Mark Walters	1840
Dave Penney	440
Adrian Taylor	895
Keith Jackson	220
Eric Bodrock	80
Frank Falcone	20
Allan James	100

Dates for Your Diary

2009

October 18th	Plants for the Catfish Aquarium
November 15th	Autumn Auction (Pre booking David Barton 01942 248130)
December 13th	Christmas meeting - not to be missed :-)

2010

January 17th	Annual General Meeting
February 21st	Meeting - topic to be arranged
March 5th-7th	Annual Convention, Prince of Wales Hotel, Southport
March 21st	Spring Auction (Pre booking David Barton 01942 248130)
April 18th	Meeting - topic to be arranged
May 16th	Speaker & Mini-auction (Pre booking David Barton 01942 248130)
June 20th	Meeting - topic to be arranged
July 18th	Meeting - topic to be arranged
August 15th	Speaker & Mini-auction (Pre booking David Barton 01942 248130)
September 19th	Annual Show and Auction
October 17th	Meeting - topic to be arranged
November 21st	Autumn Auction (Pre booking David Barton 01942 248130)
December 12th	Christmas meeting - not to be missed :-)

Members are invited to attend any Committee Meeting as observers. Committee Meetings are held after Group Meetings, with the exception of the Convention and the Christmas Social. Please contact the Secretary if you would like to attend.

Magazine Closing Dates

Normally the 1st of the Month of Publication. From 2010 (Volume 11) January, April, July and October

Please note: When submitting articles, if you supply all the images as separate files it makes them much easier to import into the software so that they display to their best advantage in Cat Chat.

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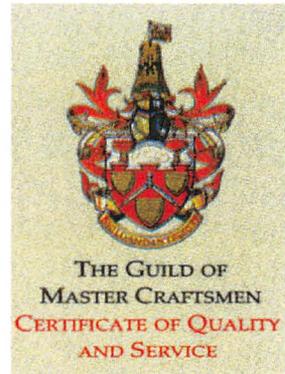
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