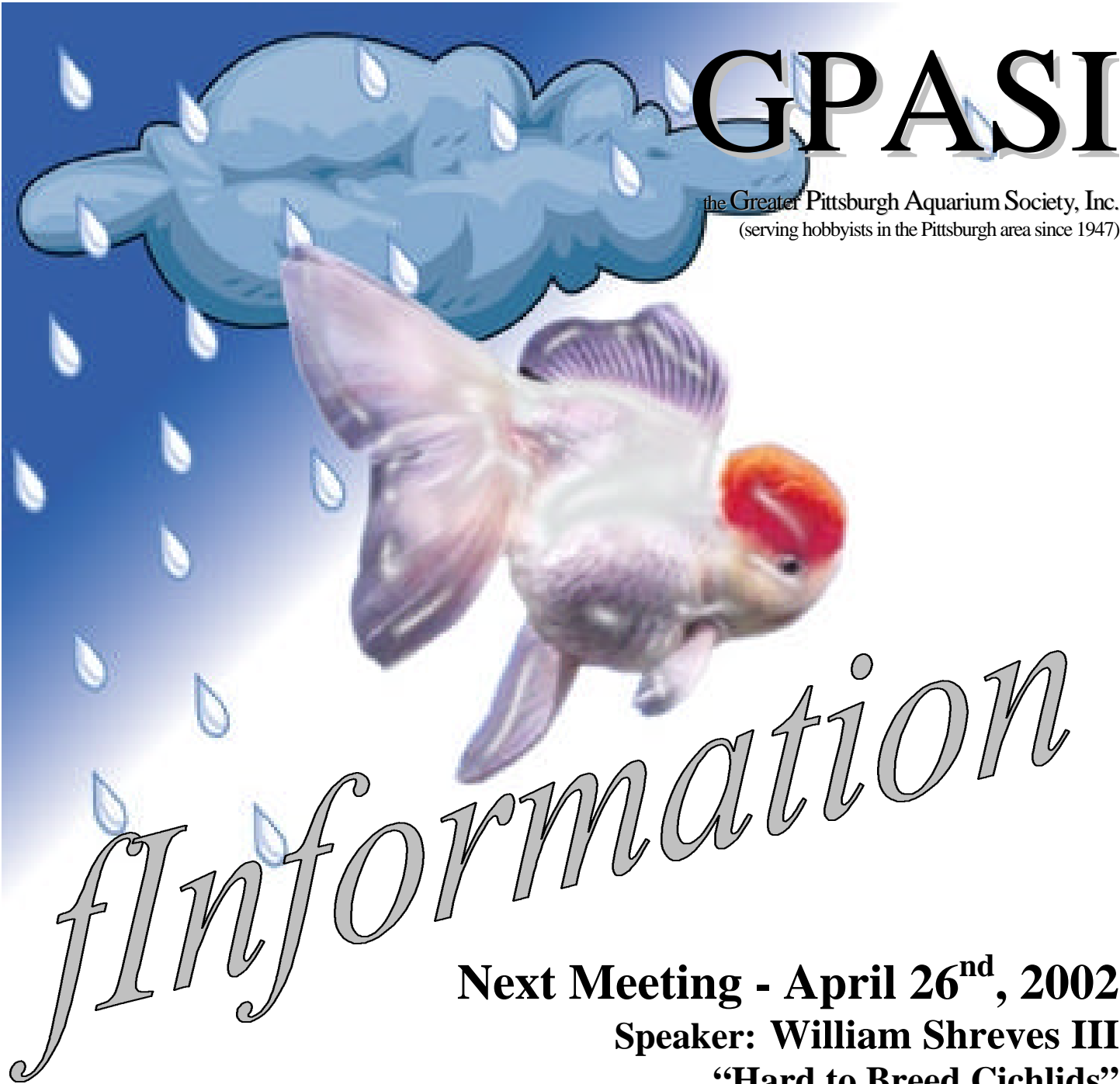


GPASI

the Greater Pittsburgh Aquarium Society, Inc.
(serving hobbyists in the Pittsburgh area since 1947)



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Contact the newsletter.

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Membership Info:

DUES are \$20 a year per family or street address.
<http://gpasi2002.tripod.com/>

Want to become a member? Write to us or see Steve Gibbs at the next meeting.

2002 Meeting Dates:

Jan 25 • Feb 22 • Mar 22 •
 Apr 26 • May 31 • Jun 28 •
 Jul 26 • Aug 23 • Sep 27 •
 Oct 25 • Nov 22

General Meetings are held at the **Pittsburgh Civic Garden Center** in Mellon Park at the Corner of **5th and Shady** Avenues.

DOORS OPEN AT 7 PM

The Board of Directors meets the at 7pm at Elmer's Aquarium in Monroeville. Dates for 2002 are: Apr 1, May 6, Jun 10, Jul 8, Aug 5, Aug 26, Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2
All members and suggestions for discussion are welcome.

Contact a board member for meeting confirmation.

***** PLEASE READ *****

The FinFormation newsletter is now available on-line at
<http://shene.killi.net/gpasi/Finformation.html>

>> Cover Art by:
Kathy Bintrim

UPCOMING GPASI EVENTS

NEXT MEETING: April 26, 2002

April Meeting: William Shreves III "Hard to Breed Cichlids"

Get there early and grab a good seat. This one should be fun. For the accidental hobbyist and die-hard aquarium keeper alike, you are sure to learn something from this guy.

May 10th, 11th, and 12th

"GPASI's 55th Anniversary Show and Auction"

Palace Inn in Monroeville, PA

For info, call 412-571-2418

Open to the public: vendors and sponsors welcome

May Meeting: Sallie Boggs

"Breeding for BAP"

A streamlined approach to maximizing your efforts to earn points and complete classes.

April Speaker: William Shreves III

At only 16 years of age, William Shreves III has accomplished more than most of us will do in our lifetimes. He is a member of: YATFS, ASHCO, OCA, NOKA, and GLCS Awards: Master Breeder from the Youngstown Area Tropical Fish Society, Numerous F.A.A.S. awards for Fish Spawning Articles, F.A.A.S. Junior Show Person of The Year, a F.A.A.S. award for spawning the most Brackish/Marine fish in 1999, and many others.

William will be talking about breeding and raising fry of easy and hard to raise fish. The species featured will include *Brachyogobius doriae*, *Nannostomus beckfordi*, *Ancistrus dolichopterus*, and others. There will also be brief discussion on raising and transporting show fish and ending with an explanation of how he sets up his fish and showing the unique layout of his fish room.

*Editor's note: Last month's newsletter featured an article on *Ancistris dolichopterus* by Jason Clester. Make sure to check it out before you come to the next meeting.*

A Story of Poor Breeding

by Jaclyn Mueller

What is a person suppose to do with a blind fish? Kill it and spare it the rest of a sad life? Give it to a person out of the hobby to have for a short while? Or should I keep it out of the reminder that breeding isn't everything?

This is a story about one blind fish.* * *

I got her at a pet store as I normally do with Betta Splendons. She was beautiful and sort of rare, she was yellow bodied with bluish-black markings. After seeing the colors of the 2 females I decided which one I would get.

When I brought her home I floated her in my community tank where I had a few young angels and 1 pair of young rams. As I had expected she was docile so bothered none of the other fish, no problem. But the more I watched her over the next couple days the more peculiar her action seemed. She didn't know any plants but I assumed it was just because her breeder didn't have any in her tank, no big deal. Next morning I got the chance to watch her again, seeing the same disorientation and even her bumping the plants and other fish. That seemed strange but I didn't think much of it and so I gave them their food.

Then I noticed something even stranger after three days in the tank and she didn't eat the flake food. Ok so I got out the pellets, no response. That was when I decided to take a look at this situation a little closer, I had a young unsociable rare colored fish who didn't want to eat. Now I started to put it together and I believed I had gotten a blind or partly blind fish.

In order to test my theory I put her in a two and a half gallon tank and let her adjust to it. A day later I came back with mosquito larva and a few other live foods. Next time I fed her I did so in different ways, an eye dropper, a plastic spoon and by a few other ways. Each time I fed her over the next few days I did it a little different, and no matter where or how I put the live food in she would find it. Then I realized it was only when it moved could she feel the vibrations in the tank and locate it after a few bites in its direction. Here is my whole point and my plea, I ask that everyone consider what happens to a deformed rejected fish. Now I understand that there are always going to be those fish that breed quite unexpectedly in conditions that don't follow the pattern, but that doesn't happen all too often. Being of a society that loves fish, for what ever reason, I feel that it is our responsibility to see that we do not create flawed fish by our want to breed. This is a small job but it may make a great deal of difference in the long run. Breeding of a fish should not come before the health a fish.

I thank you for your time. As for the Beta I have decided to keep her in my care for the rest of her life. And if this is read and taken to heart by at least one person I deem her sacrifice of sight an important reminder of how life is supposed to be. And for those who say *weed out the weak from the strong like nature does*, well they aren't in nature and they are our responsibility.

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From the President (that's Mike Solito for those of you asleep at the wheel)

Please remember that the 55th Anniversary Aquarium Show banquet is on May 11th at the Palace Inn and Wayne Liebel will be speaking. The tickets for the banquet are due at the end of April. Please make sure we get your \$22 for dinner this week at the meeting.

May Show Speaker Bios

Here is a quick look at some of the individuals that will be speaking at this year's (that's in three weeks in case you weren't paying attention) show. Make sure to tell your friends and relatives that are interested in the hobby about this event. This even is expected to be the highlight of the year for all area aquarium enthusiasts so mark May 10th thru the 12th on you calendars now and meet us at the Palace Inn in Monroeville.

Mike Schadle: "Collecting in Brazil"

Mike has been seriously involved in the aquarium hobby since his grade school days. Although interested in all aspects of aquarium keeping his chief interests lie in livebearing species and the cichlids of the Americas. A member of most national specialty societies, he has served several in a number of administrative positions, including the editorship of the American Livebearer Association's journal for eight years and a term on the American Cichlid Association's Board of Trustees. Mike runs a business specializing in aquarium literature, and he and his books can often be seen at fish shows in the Great Lakes region. He also is frequently called on to judge these shows, and is one of the area's most sought after auctioneers.

Collecting Fish South of the Border: An entertaining travelogue detailing Mike's experiences collecting livebearers in Mexico. A good look at a variety of livebearer habitats, and the perils they face from the encroachment of "civilization."

Randy Carey: "The Art of Characins"

Randy Carey remembers his first tank the same way he remembers his first girlfriend. But unlike that failed relationship, the aquarium hobby still holds his passion. Today his aquaria room contains over 60 tanks, most being aquascaped displays. His aquaria exhibit a collection of rare tetras, barbs, rasboras, and dwarf cichlids.

As an active member of the Minnesota Aquarium Society since 1991, Randy has written numerous articles and has bred over 180 species - most being small, soft-water species like Apistogramma, tetras, and barbs. He has served his club as president, treasurer, and show chair. In '98 Randy decided to cut back from club responsibilities so that he could put more time into the hobby itself and write about it. A few months later TFH offered him a quarterly column, The Art of Characins. He still writes for the magazine today.

Because the hobby is a visual hobby, Randy has been investing in digital cameras and learning how to use them for aquarium photography. His web site, Randy's Aquaria at www.characin.com, has become an outlet for his journaling, articles, and digital photos.

Randy is on a quest to be a better aquarist. To him the hobby is an art - a skill that is developed through time and practice. For instance, he prefers trying to spawn species that require planning, conditioning, and effort. Investing such effort makes one a better aquarist and brings more satisfaction upon success.

This quest to practice this art of aquaria sustains his passion.

***Editor's note: Randy's Aquaria was featured in the Nov 2001 issue of the Finformation. If you didn't keep your issue, look for it on-line at <http://shene.killi.net/gpasi/Finformation.html>*

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~ THERE CAN BE NO CLUB WITHOUT ITS MEMBERS. IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO DO FOR GPASI, JUST LET ONE OF US KNOW, WE'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU AS PART OF THE TEAM. ~

Dr. Wayne S. Leibel: "Aquarium Hobby History"

Dr. Wayne S. Leibel has kept fish as a hobby for over 40 of his 48 years: he has always had cichlids in his tanks. He has written over 150 articles in the past 15 years published variously in TFH, FAMA, AFM, Buntbarsche Bulletin (BB), Cichlid News. These include a monthly column (Wayne's New World: (TFH), a series on South American Cichlids (Goin' South: Cichlids of the New World; AFM), and most recently a column for young aquarists (FishKidz; AFM). He has written two beginner's books; Fishkeeper's Guide to South American Cichlids (Tetra/Salamander) and Cichlids of the Americas (Bowtie Press/Fancy Publications) and is currently finishing a larger and more advanced book for TFH entitled Cichlids of South America.

Leibel's involvement in the organized hobby includes three terms on the Board of Trustees of the American Cichlid Association where he is currently Chair, and 7 years as the (former) editor of their bimonthly publication Buntbarsche Bulletin - he continues on with BB as an Associate Editor for South American Cichlids and as Technical Editor. He was elected a "Fellow of the ACA" in 1993 for his contributions to that society. In addition Leibel has been a frequent speaker at national and regional Workshops/Conventions and has spoken before aquarium societies all over the country over the past ten years, most recently via the ACA/Marineland Speaker's Program.

His specialty in the hobby is South American Cichlids, and he has traveled several times to both the Peruvian Amazon and Venezuela in quest of rare and unusual fish. As a 'wet aquarist', Leibel's forte has been the breeding and photographing of rare cichlids, including many geophagine types, and he has a number of "first time" and "only time" spawnings to his credit. He is also a collector of antiquarian hobby literature and paraphernalia and a student of the history of the American Aquarium hobby.

GPASI Marketplace (the place for members to buy, sell, or trade our goods)

	Who	What	Where/How	
	Sell	Steve Gibbs	5-Gal Buckets w/ lids	pghmarine@AOL.COM
	Sell	Walter Roth	African Cichlids	724-449-9651
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Allotoca maculata	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Ted and Linda Neill	Angelfish (many varieties)	(724) 368-3050 or tneill@zbzoom.net
	Sell	Jim Herman	Aquariums: 10, 29, and 55-gal (many)	mr_bigfish2000@yahoo.com
	Sell	Michael McHugh	Blackworms ("live" food)	hobbyistx7@aol.com or 412-381-7037
	Sell	Jason Clester	Cichlids (various)	(412) 856-7265 Jacitaly@aol.com
	Sell	Walter Roth	Fancy Goldfish	724-449-9651
	Sell	Walter Roth	Flake Foods	724-449-9651
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Gambusia Luna	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Guppies - H/B Leopard	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Guppies - IFGA Snakeskin	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Buy	Jim Herman	Halfbeak (1 male)	mr_bigfish2000@yahoo.com
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Haplochromis sp(#44) bright tail reds	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Ross Cronkhite	Killifish (various)	(412) 233-0996 lauross@libcom.com
	Sell	Bill Shenefeld	Killifish (various)	(724) 864-0582 wshenefelt@att.net
	Sell	Mike Chappell	live/dry foods, livestock, digital equip	www.threeguysaquatics.com and chippell@sgi.net
	Buy	Jim Herman	Long-fin Rosy Barb (1 male)	mr_bigfish2000@yahoo.com
	Buy	Marlene Sholze	Montezuma Swordtails	412-682-2711
	Sell	Walter Roth	Plastic Bags (6"x12" and 10"x20")	724-449-9651
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	Poecilia sulpherophilia	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Chuck Bialon	<u>Poeciliopsis turneri</u>	412-487-2378 - evenings and weekends
	Sell	Kathy Bintrim	Protomelas spilonatus Liluli (adult pair)	ilshadows@excite.com
	Buy	Marlene Sholze	Sailfin Mollies	412-682-2711
	Buy	Marlene Sholze	<u>Salvinia auriculata</u> and <u>S. cucullata</u>	412-682-2711
	Buy	Marlene Sholze	<u>Utricularia vulgaris</u> and <u>U. exoleta</u>	412-682-2711
			Call / email to put your items here !!!	

**** Do you have something that you want to buy or sell? Contact Terrence (tstrasatti@aol.com or 724-239-5042) with the info to have your name listed above. ****

Aquatic Horticulture Award Program

Recent AHAP Submissions (Congratulations to all the propagators)

Member Name	Species	Class	Points	Comments
Cavan Allen	Glossostigma elatinoides	J	15	
Tom Connors	Cryptocoryne usterriana	D	15	
Ted Neill	Alternanthera reineckii	G	10	
	Anubias barteri var nana	D	15	
	Echinodorus "ozelot"	E	15	
	Salvinia rotundifolia	A	5	
	Vesicularia dubyana	K	5	
Cliff Zigler	Cryptocoryne wendtii	D	15	

Please contact Cavan Allen with any questions regarding AHAP submissions. Millsman7@yahoo.com

Breeders Award Program

Recent BAP Submissions (Congratulations to all the breeders)

Member Name	Species	Class	Points	Comments
Eric Bodrock	Trematocromis intermedius	7	10	*
Brian Carson	Gambusia spp. punctata?	1	5	
Jason Clester	Corydoras melanotaenia	11	20	
Jason Clester	Labidochromis sp(Zebra)	7	10	*
Scott Graner	Corydoras metae	11	20	
Hank Marzina	Ilyodon amecae	1	10	
William Montgomery	Pterophyllum scalare	8	10	angelfish
Robert T. Timmins	Aphyosemion primigenium	9	10	
Richard Wiley	Neolamprologus pulcher	7	15	sp(daffodil)

* denotes first time spawn by any current BAP participant

Please contact Chuck Bailon with any questions regarding BAP submissions.

Hm: 412-487-2378

cbailon@telerama.com

Wk: 412-434-2073

cbailon@ppg.com

Special Notice - members that have not turned in any spawns this year or last year will be dropped from the monthly totals listing - next month. (Totals are listed daily on the GPASI web site at <http://gpasi2002.tripod.com/> and are published in the newsletter annually.)

Aquarium Photography

by William R. Kenney

Aquarium photography presents almost all the problems normally encountered in other aspects of photography, such as small subjects, low light levels, moving subjects, camera-shy subjects, troublesome backgrounds, and insufficient depth-of-field. In addition, it poses some special problems of its own. The presence of glass and water between the photographer and his subject is a pitfall for the unwary. The coloration of aquarium fish is composed of both pigments and structural colors, and the aquarium photographer must master the technique of striking a lifelike balance between these two in the final image. Together, these problems make aquarium photography one of the most challenging realms of the photographic hobby.

The solution to these problems begins with the application of good aquaristic technique. Aquarium water, which is kept clean by means of adequate filtration and regular partial water changes, is far less likely to interfere with the photographic process. Old water, even that which has become imperceptibly yellowed, will result in serious degradation of the image and improper color balance. Similarly, aquarium glass is the cause of photographic



gremlins. It never ceases to amaze me that the most imperceptible film of algae or bacteria growing on the tank walls will cause flare and reduce contrast. Every speck or water drop on the outside of the glass seems to be located immediately in front of your subject when the photos are returned from the processor. Every brine shrimp cyst catches light from the flash and throws it back at the film with unprecedented vehemence. The regimen required to avoid these pitfalls consists of (1) never feed brine shrimp nauplii in a tank you intend to use as a photo tank; (2) several hours before a photo session, clean the inside of the aquarium glass scrupulously; (3) about a half hour before the session, clean the outside of the tank equally assiduously. This timing allows the detritus which has been stirred up by the cleaning process time to be picked up by the filter; it also allows your fish time to recover from any fright they may have incurred during the cleaning.

Almost everybody who has used a flash attachment to try to photograph subject matter behind glass has had the unpleasant surprise of having his efforts completely obscured by the glare of the glass. Polarizing filters have been suggested as a solution to this problem but anybody who has actually tried them knows this doesn't work. The true solution to the problem lies in the knowledge of the optical law of reflectance: the angle of incidence of the light always equals the angle of reflectance. With this in mind it is always possible to construct a lighting arrangement which will not be conducive to this particular pitfall.

Electronic flash attachments come in two basic flavors: top-mount and handle-mount. Top-mount flashes are cheaper, less powerful, and are designed to be attached to the camera. Handle mount flashes tend to be more powerful, and lend themselves to being used at a location remote from the camera. Depending on your flash's capacity for being used off-camera.

If your flash must be used on-camera, you cannot shoot directly at the glass. Instead you will have to shoot at some angle. The exact angle is mathematically determinable if you know the focal length of the lens, but when you have used your outfit a little you will quickly get a feel for what's safe and what isn't. If the flash is used off-camera, and you shoot at some angle, then the flash can't be positioned at the opposite angle. A popular arrangement is a pair of flashes electronically coupled ("slaved") to one another so that they fire at the same time. This does such a good job of filling in the shadows that the resulting image sometimes looks "flat," or lacking in three-dimensional effect. The fish receives light from a high angle, as it would in nature, and the

resulting shadows on the underside gives the fish a three-dimensional or “round” look. This lighting arrangement also results in a pleasing balance between the rendering of pigment colors and structural colors. When lighting strikes a fish at its own level, the structural colors often predominate to the detriment of the pigment coloration. When lighted from directly above, the structural colors are not seen, and the resulting dominance of the pigment colors causes the image of the fish to lack sparkle.

Getting Started in Aquarium Photography Let’s assume for the moment that you’ve stuck with me this far and you are determined to launch yourself into the challenge of aquarium photography. Let’s further assume that you don’t currently own an SLR camera. If you’ve followed my advice so far you haven’t actually bought anything but a book that describes the system of your choice. You’ve read it, and from it you’ve determined exactly which lens you need. In spite of my lack of emphasis on the choice of a camera body, you have found one that you feel you can live with. You have also chosen just the right flash attachment. Now you can run down to your dealer and pick them up, right? Hold it. You may be missing your big opportunity to save money. Before you drop the many hundreds of dollars the above list of equipment represents, do yourself a favor and swing by the local magazine stand and pick up the current copy of either “Popular Photography” or “Modern Photography” magazine. Look through the mail-order house ads in the back. Now you know how much the equipment really costs. Now you can go down to your local dealer armed with this knowledge. You may be surprised to find out how high his markup really is. Mail-order houses can allow you to realize a savings of 30 to 50% on the items you intend to purchase. They are a dangerous option if you don’t know exactly what you want, but if you do (and you should by now), you will probably save enough in the long run to more than make up for the occasional time one of them rips you off. Just remember that if you deal with them in a businesslike manner, sound confident, and act like you know what you’re buying, you’ll be less likely to be victimized. So you’re the type who’s too impatient to wait for a mail order delivery? Fine, then buy locally, but remember you’re paying extra for the privilege.

So you get your new camera and buy a bunch of film and run off to your tank and take a whole bunch of pictures, right? Wait-slow down. Your goal at this point should be to reduce as many variables as possible. By standardizing as many things as possible you will reduce the amount of chance involved in obtaining successful photos. If you haven’t decided already what kind of film you want to use on a permanent basis, do so now. Buy just one roll of it. Read the camera manual and lens literature carefully, until you are sure you can load the camera without damaging it or destroying the film. Before taking any pictures at all, move close enough to your fish so that you will get a good, large image and set the focus so the subject is sharp. Don’t adjust the focus after this point. The focus control will help you standardize one more variable, the camera-to-subject distance. Now decide on a lighting arrangement. If you are using the flash off-camera, standardize its location with respect to your tank. Otherwise, the camera-to-subject distance will control the flash distance. Learn to focus on your fish as he moves without changing the focus adjustment, by moving the whole camera to follow him.

The trick now is to get the exposure right. Set the flash attachment on manual, full power, turn it on, and connect it to your camera. Set the shutter speed to the position that the manual indicates is correct for flash photography. Now set the aperture to its smallest setting- that is to say its highest numerical value. Move the camera in and out until the fish is in sharp focus. Then take a picture. Record the frame number and the aperture setting you used in a notebook. Then open up the aperture setting by one click and take another picture. Again record the frame and aperture. Continue to do this until you have exhausted either the roll of film, the range of aperture settings, or your patience. Then unload the camera and send the roll off for processing. Don’t do another thing until it gets back. When it does, match up the resulting photos and their frame numbers to your notebook. Pick out the picture that looks best and find out the aperture you used when you shot it.

Through the next stage of your photographic evolution, don’t depart from either this aperture setting or focused distance. For the time being, practice your composition and background control. Eventually you will want to shoot larger or smaller subjects, but approach this task in the same experimental manner that you used at first. Just remember that the farther away you get, the larger the aperture (numerically smaller) and vice versa.

Special Considerations in Cichlid Photography Cichlid coloration is an evanescent thing. Coloration in cichlids depends largely on the mood they're in. For this reason, it's important that cichlids are feeling happy and at home when you take their pictures. Otherwise, all you can show off are pictures of cichlid flight patterns. (Sometimes these are more colorful than normal patterns). Although it might be useful to have available some cichlid flight pattern photos, the demand for such photos is of necessity limited and one would hardly want one's entire collection to comprise these pictures. And some cichlids have special breeding colors. You certainly want to have some pictures of these patterns available to illustrate this fascinating aspect of cichlid behavior. For these reasons I cannot recommend setting up a special photo tank for cichlids such as I do for killies and catfishes. I photograph them right in the tank they have come to think of as their home.



This vastly increases the importance of aquascaping and good aquaristic technique. Because you can't take the fish out of their home tank to do the photography, that home tank had better provide an artistically pleasing background in your photos. It had also better be clean, for the reasons discussed previously in this article.

Follow the procedures I have already recommended before starting a cichlid photo session: Clean the gravel and make partial water changes to your tank on a regular basis. Clean the inside of the glass a few hours before the session. Clean the outside of the glass about a half an hour before. Dim the room lights and wear

dark clothing during the photo session so the cichlids, who are quite aware of what is going on outside of the tank, will be less distracted. Get everything set up ahead of time, and patiently sit as still as you can when you're not actually taking a picture. Remember to focus on your subjects by moving the camera in and out, not by adjusting the focus ring, but keep all movements slow and deliberate. Cichlids are behavioral fish and you will want to have the outstanding aspects of their behavior recorded on film. You can increase the probability of obtaining good behavior photos by aquascaping in such a manner as to place the most desirable territories in the front of the tank, where there will be less water between you and the subject to degrade the image. Dither fish can be used to encourage the cichlids to behave naturally, but you will probably not want them to appear in the photos. Choose dither fish which will remain close to the surface. Cichlids will generally remain oriented to the bottom.

Try to avoid having too much gravel appear in your photos. Aquarium gravel, even the so-called "natural" colors, seldom looks like any substrate you'd ever see at the bottom of a naturally occurring body of water. It's too well graded: the particles are all the same size. You can help by mixing several grades of the same color. Also, it doesn't hurt to mix in a few cobbles and a little sand. Keep your camera on the same level as the cichlids, so that the aquascaping becomes the background, rather than shooting down on them to make the gravel the background. Aquascape heavily to hide the line of demarcation where the gravel meets the rear of the tank. Use plastic plants if your cichlids persist in destroying real ones. Just be sure they're far enough back to be slightly out-of-focus. Remember that today's plastic plants can't be told from the real thing if they are sufficiently out-of-focus.

Be patient and take lots of pictures. Whenever you try anything new, take notes. Compare the results to the notes you took so that you can learn from your mistakes. And if you learn anything really useful, be sure to let me know about it.

Photos taken by GPASI's own

Catfish photo by Eric Bodrock

Killie photo by Bill Shenefelt

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