

THE NEW ENGLAND CICHLID

New England Cichlid Association

April 2015

Upcoming Events



The NECA Spring Auction



Sunday, April 12

**Polish-American Club
9 First Street
Windsor Locks, CT**

Bring all your fish (Not Just Cichlids!)

**Doors open @ 9:30
Auction starts at NOON**

**Check our website for updates
and information about pre-
registration**

www.necichlids.com

CICHLIDS ON MY MIND



It appears that Spring is just about here. I look outside and I see dirty snow, ice and mud, but the ratios are changing every day, and hopefully within a week or so we'll be down to just mud.

The fish hobby tends to be mostly an indoor thing here in New England, but that doesn't change our need for warmth and sun and growing things outside. I simply cannot wait to be able to open my bulkhead and let some fresh air into the basement. It won't help my fish, but it will help me, and right now that's more important.

We are entering a particularly interesting and challenging period for our group. We've got a serious auction to run on April 12, and I'm confident that it will be the biggest and most interesting auction NECA has ever held. You can find the list of fish that I'm expecting on the website, www.necichlids.com, under 'Blog.' The list is long, and getting longer by the day, and for cichlid nuts like us, it's a beautiful thing to see!

May brings a home meeting at Sandy Feder's house in Sandy Hook, CT, and then we'll have a speaker in June, and you should know by now what July is featuring. If you don't, then stop what you're doing right now and go to <http://www.acaconvention2015.com/> and sign up!

Our Facebook page is amazingly active, and seems to get more attention than the website, but it's hard to keep track of threads after a day or two. I try to keep the website up to date, and since we opened it for business, we've had over 1200 discreet 'hits,' so it is getting some attention. Our newsletters can be found there, and I'm trying to figure out a way to get a functional calendar working. It seems easy, but unless we buy one, it's surprisingly difficult to find one that works the way I want it to.

We belong to a surprisingly large population of hobbyists, and we've got quite a selection of breeders and larger retail and wholesale businesses that provide us with the fish we want and need. We have a lot of support among the businesses, and several stand out as particularly generous when we hold our semi-annual auctions. Right now we've got contributions from Dave's Rare Fish, Geiler Aquatics, Tangled Up In Cichlids, Valley Aquatics, Cunningham Cichlids, West Coast Cichlids, South East Cichlids, The Wonder of Cichlids, Beantown Aquatics Cichlid Express, Cichlid Lovers Tropical Fish and Imperial Fish Farms. For now, that's it, but I wouldn't be surprised to get a few more breeders to contribute in the next week. When you're looking for that special species or variety of cichlid, check these companies out first, because they are our friends, and they are also very high quality breeders!

Finally, I want to remind all of you that we are a club, which brings with it some responsibilities, including dues. We have over 380 people who have joined our Facebook page, and many of those people live within our geographical reach, here in New England. We'd like to ask each of you to consider really joining NECA, by paying our annual dues and participating in our meetings and other events during the course of the year. I hope you agree that \$15/year dues is not too much to pay for the value we offer in return.

See you all in 10 days in Windsor Locks.

Peter George

THE GENUS *CRYPTOHEROS*, FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

TEXT BY MIKE LIU



C. spilurus, yellow morph female,
image by Helena Flykt

The group of Central American cichlids in the genus *Cryptoheros* has long been a favorite of cichlid keepers and aquarium hobbyists. These fish do not grow large and are fairly hardy. They are not fussy about water chemistry. They will eat most any foods offered but should be fed a majority portion of veggie matter. And they often spawn readily in smaller aquariums that are kept by most hobbyists. Most of the *Cryptoheros* species can be kept with larger cichlids in mixed community tanks as well, creating a more interesting and natural setup. The Latin word "crypto" refers to the secretive breeding behavior of these fish who like to spawn in caves, or under stones. "Heros" is one of the early names given to New World cichlids. Thus, we have 'secretive cichlid' as a common thread for this group of fish.

In general, females of this genus are often thought to be the more attractive fish. They have a more colorful dorsal fin, often with a bright metallic blotch in the dorsal fin that is mixed with dark bands or patches. As a hobbyist and fan of Central American cichlids, I always seem to have at least one species of *Cryptoheros* in my fish room, and currently I am keeping several species. I have not kept every species but over the years I've experienced most of them and find them to exhibit fascinating cichlid behavior. A couple of

species are more sensitive to water quality, but they are generally rugged fish that show exceptional brood care. Some, like the Convict cichlid, will defend their broods against tank mates that are more than ten times their size. The Convict is a much maligned fish, perhaps because it can produce so many offspring that the fry quickly take up more room than one has available. But its behavior and brood care instincts are the reasons that many hobbyists keep cichlids in the first place. The Convict has been placed in different genera, and a new one, *Amatitlania*, was erected in the last 10 years for this fish. I'm not an ichthyologist or a taxonomist and I don't know the current status of the correct genus name, but the Convict was placed in *Cryptoheros* before *Amatitlania* was erected, so I am including it in this article. I personally feel the Convict and recent similar finds, belong in a different genus, or perhaps a sub-genus of *Cryptoheros*.

In this article, I will refer to all the fish mentioned as "*Cryptoheros*". I will briefly share my experiences with the various *Cryptoheros* species I have kept over the years. And I will summarize the few species that I have not yet kept. The known species of the genus along with their location is presented in the Table below. There are many, many other Central American cichlids that are popular in the hobby. Many are large fish that require big tanks to maintain, not to mention breed. But, I hope the information presented about these smaller *Cryptoheros* will spark an interest and result in a few more fans of these wonderful aquarium residents.

Table 1 – The Genus *Cryptoheros*

<i>Cryptoheros altoflavus</i>	Panama
<i>Cryptoheros chetumalensis</i>	Belize & Mexico
<i>Cryptoheros cutteri</i>	Honduras & Guatemala
<i>Cryptoheros myrnae</i>	Costa Rica & Panama
<i>Cryptoheros nanoluteus</i>	Panama
<i>Cryptoheros nigrofasciatus</i>	Honduras to Panama
<i>Cryptoheros panamensis</i>	Panama
<i>Cryptoheros sajica</i>	Costa Rica

<i>Cryptoheros septemfasciatus</i>	Belize to Nicaragua
<i>Cryptoheros spilurus</i>	Guatemala



C. altoflavus male - image by Matthias Meindertsma

Cryptoheros altoflavus is a fish I have never seen available in this country, and thought it may be a subgenera to one of *C. nanoluteus*. Some folks in Europe apparently are keeping this little beauty, and I hope it makes its way into this country, if it hasn't yet. Obviously, I haven't seen live specimens of *C. altoflavus*, but its coloring is similar to *C. nanoluteus*. I believe it stays smaller and is more intensely yellow all over the body and fins. The photos shown are taken from a Dutch fish keeper and make me jealous. I would assume this fish can be kept successfully in a 20 gallon tank, but a 29 would be a better home for a breeding pair. I read on a forum that this fish is also more sensitive to poor water conditions, so frequent water changes would be required, not really all that much more effort for such a spectacular fish.



C. altoflavus female - image by Matthias Meindertsma

Cryptoheros chetumalensis is a recent discovery from Belize and the Mexican Yucatan. It is similar in appearance to *C. cutteri*, at least when

young when it shows strong dark vertical barring on a silver body. As this fish matures, it develops an orange-red coloring on its throat up into the gill plate and shoulder, and the base of the dorsal fin. It is quite an attractive fish. I have passed over this fish at auctions because I thought they were too close in appearance to *C. cutteri*, and I didn't think they were that nice looking. I kept this species only once when I got some fry from a fellow hobbyist. They did not need much care, and they produced a small spawn, but their colors were not as nicely developed as in the photos. So, I got rid of them at an auction. I guess it could take a little time to mature and develop better coloring. Patience is a virtue, but not one of mine. These fish are easy to keep and are surely more colorful during spawning and brood care.



C. chetumalensis male – image by Sam Bornstein



C. chetumalensis female in brood color – image by Sam Bornstein

I've kept *Cryptoheros cutteri* several times. This fish can also grow to over 6" but will spawn at a small size. A pair I worked with did grow to be about 4" before spawning took place, but I have heard of 2" fish producing fry. *C. cutteri* develops into an attractive fish. They have a silvery-grey base color, dark vertical stripes, blue eyes (also referred to as Blue-Eyed Cichlid), and a sky blue patch of color on the lower rear abdomen area. The female sports a fluorescent splotch on the



C. cutteri male, image by Alf Stalsberg

dorsal fin, and both male and female get a rusty red color throughout the caudal fin which makes them more attractive. They also have a more pointed snout than the other species. I have heard comments that *C. cutteri* is a bit aggressive, but I did not find them to be more aggressive than any other species of *Cryptoheros*.



C. cutteri pair with fry, image by Michael Liu

Cryptoheros myrnae is also called the Topaz Cichlid due to its bronzy yellow coloring on the flanks. I first got some fry from a fish friend. At the time, the fish was called *C. septemfasciatum* "Topaz Cichlid". The female sports a bright yellow splotch interspersed with black on the dorsal fin. This fish is listed as endangered in its natural range, so it is one that I would like to acquire again and spawn so that the offspring can be kept in the hobby. This fish is non-aggressive and can be kept with many other types of docile fish. At times, I found this fish to be reclusive, often hiding for much of the day inside a cave. It may help to keep them with swordtails or the like as dither fish. A pair can be successfully kept in a

15 or 20 gallon tank. I never managed to spawn this fish, even after keeping groups and pairs at least three times. When in spawning dress, the fish changes color dramatically. Both male and female turn a pinkish grey, the ventral region, ventral fins, and nose become very dark, and the mid body spot turns black. This is a sure sign that the fish are ready to spawn, or that the female may have already laid eggs.



C. myrnae pair, image by Jeff Rapps



C. myrnae pair in spawning dress – image by Matthias Meindertsma

My experience with *Cryptoheros nanoluteus* was not successful until the fourth time I kept this fish. I acquired a group of six juveniles from an auction, but I lost three pretty quickly. I thought I had two males and one female left, and they survived for a few months before two more died. I think I passed the last one to a fellow club

member, and didn't think about acquiring this



C. nanoluteus male, image from www.GCCA.net

fish any time soon. I think this fish is reported to be more sensitive to water conditions. But I read a breeding report in the ACA bulletin that did not talk about water condition as being particularly important. Eventually, I managed to acquire more fish and a pair developed. Soon a spawning took place. This was about three years ago, and since then, I have kept three different breeding pairs of this species. This fish can probably reach a good 5" or more, but my largest male is just over 4" total length. I think they are the most attractive of the *Cryptoheros*. As you can see by the photos, the fish have a nice yellow coloring that intensifies when spawning. Females sport the dorsal fin splotch, and both sexes have blue eyes. The Latin name, "nano-luteus" means "little-yellow". This fish comes and goes in the hobby, but they seem to be sought after by cichlid hobbyists.



C. nanoluteus pair with fry - image by Michael Liu

Cryptoheros nigrofasciatus, or the Convict Cichlid, is an ever-present fish in the hobby. It is



C. nigrofasciatus the Black Convict - image from www.fishindex.com

often the first cichlid someone gets to spawn. In fact, you often cannot stop this fish from spawning, and I have heard people say (or complain) that a pair of Convicts will spawn in a container the size of a coffee cup. I have had convicts spawn at a size of 1"! At that size, they were probably only about 3-4 months old. The standard Black Convict has a grey base color with black stripes. Females often display a bright reddish or orange splotch in the dorsal fin and have red spots on the abdomen. A grown male is 3"-4" and an adult female is 2"-3". I have seen many male convicts at 6" and larger, but I have never kept one that big, or had the patience to keep one long enough for it grow so large. Different varieties of *nigrofasciatus* have been found in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. In the 1990's, a fish called the Honduran Red Point was been introduced to the hobby and quickly made its way in and out of hobbyists' tanks. This fish has a fluorescent blue body, shows faint vertical stripes, and the males' caudal fin and soft parts of the dorsal and anal fin turn a rusty red, especially when spawning. It is a beautiful fish that is not as aggressive as the Black Convict. It was assigned to a new genus, *Amantitlania*, along with the Black Convict and other convict-like fish. Over the years, the convicts have been assigned to various genera, including *Cryptoheros*. Their breeding behavior is not as secretive as other *Cryptoheros*, but they like caves and secluded areas behind rocks. I probably have been keeping varieties of *nigrofasciatus* for over 20 years.



C. nigrofasciatus male from Costa Rica – image by Mike Liu



C. nigrofasciatus female from Costa Rica – image by Mike Liu

Cryptoheros panamensis is a fish previously placed in the genus *Neetroplus* along with *N. nematopus*, the "Poor Man's Tropheus". It has a



C. panamensis, pair in breeding color – image by Lennart Axelsson



C. panamensis juvenile - image by Michael Liu

more streamlined shape than other *Cryptoheros*. I once read that *N. nematopus* was going to be assigned to the genus *Cryptoheros*, so the game of musical fish chairs goes on and on. *C. panamensis* is a very attractive cichlid. The red morph is by far more attractive than the other morph that is kind of grey and gold. The red morph has red speckles throughout the body and red streaks in the fins, making this fish pretty flashy and desirable. I have only kept this fish a few times and as they grew, they became more colorful. Unfortunately, they seem to be more sensitive to poor aquarium maintenance than others. But I found them to be active and highly social. I only managed one successful spawning, but 75% of the fry died off. This fish may be a bit more prone to stress from poor water conditions as it is found in highly oxygenated, fast flowing streams, but its beauty certainly makes up for any added tank maintenance that may be needed.



C. sajica male - image by Michael Liu

Cryptoheros sajica, is called the T-bar Cichlid. Their common name refers to the strong vertical



C. sajica female - image by Michael Liu

mid-body band with a horizontal stripe in front, forming a "T". It is a very popular fish, due to its nice purple-ish coloring with red and blue streaks in the unpaired fins. It wasn't until the third time I kept this fish that I managed to spawn this species. During spawning, both male and female change colors drastically. They turn darker grey, all the purple and red virtually disappear, and the stripe that goes through the mid-body spot intensifies to nearly black. The throat area also darkens as they watch over the brood. This fish can grow to 6" but are capable of spawning at the small size of 2". Even at a small size, the number of fry they can produce in one spawn may reach 200. They are not aggressive and can be housed with catfish, tetras, livebearers and other similarly sized cichlids. It usually is not hard to find homes for the offspring, as this fish seems to be popular at auctions and desired by pet shops.



C. septemfasciatus - image by www.destin-tanganyika

Cryptoheros septemfasciatus is a fish that was once common in the hobby. But now it is hard to find, and may appear as a contaminant from time



C. septemfasciatus male – image by Peter Andersson

to time. Sometimes, it can be found offered for sale by other hobbyists. It is not the most colorful fish, nor does it have spectacular markings. These are the reasons why it may not be popular, with all the other choices available to keepers of Central American cichlids. I am guilty of passing this fish over in order to acquire other species myself, and I have never kept this species. However, it is a nice non-aggressive species that deserves more attention. In the past, other species of *Cryptoheros* were thought to be color varieties of *C. septemfasciatus*, as mentioned throughout this article. From many photos I have seen of this fish, there appear to be several color morphs. Some have more blue, some have red to pink tints, some have golden spots and highlights. Most have blue eyes, or partially blue eyes. This fish is hardy and easy to maintain, not growing more than 5". During periods of breeding, their color also changes dramatically. The body darkens to a grey or grey with blue tints, the eye color darkens, and the ventral part of the fish along with the ventral fins also darkens, much like *C. myrnae*.

Cryptoheros spilurus, the Blue-eyed Cichlid is not a flashy fish, but there are two color morphs, a grey morph and a yellow morph. While this fish has a bright blue eye, many other species of *Cryptoheros* are also referred to as "Blue-eyed Cichlid". This fish definitely grows larger than its cousins, capable of topping out at over 7". I had a very nice breeding pair of the grey variety. The male grew to 6" and the female was much smaller, maybe 4" total length. They produced a few spawns, and I traded them for other fish.

They were not overly aggressive. The male had a yellowish coloring on the abdomen/throat area. A pair can be maintained in a 29 gallon tank, but I would recommend a larger tank for a group of adults.



C. spilurus, yellow morph female – image by Helena Flykt



C. spilurus, yellow morph female – image by Helena Flykt

Given the many species of *Cryptoheros* that are available, a hobbyist has a decent choice of which one (or more) to keep. They don't take up a lot of room, are generally peaceful and easy to maintain. When they spawn, they show excellent parental behavior, watching over their brood and leading them around the aquarium in search of food. Some show unique and dramatic color changes during spawning periods, increasing their appeal. While I am always looking for that elusive Central American cichlid that I have not kept, or have not yet spawned, I always come back to the *Cryptoheros*. They are great little fish with great personalities. If you're interested in experiencing smaller Central American cichlids, why not try one of the *Cryptoheros*?

NEOLAMPROLOGUS MULTIFASCIATUS

TEXT AND IMAGES BY ERSKINE PLUMMER

One of my favorite Lake Tanganyika cichlids are *Neolamprologus multifasciatus* which are often confused with *Neolamprologus similis*. *N. similis* are bigger, their bar stripes are wider and more defined and they have larger eyes.



By Erskine Plummer

Multis should be kept in a fairly large group, at least 5 or 6. They need a lot of shells, generally at least 3 per fish. You should start with a group of at least six juveniles and a lot of snail shells to fill up a corner in the tank. You will notice that as soon as you put the fish in the tank, they will rush into a shell to hide: only later will they rearrange the shells and gravel. I found that the best snail shells for them are neothauma shells (which can get expensive) and escargot shells. You can keep multis in tanks from 10 gallons and up. I would suggest that you get a long tank or one with a wide footprint. Try a 20 long or 40 breeder tank due to the fact that these fish prefer to stay close to the bottom of the tank and rarely venture up to

the top or middle level. The substrate that I keep mine in is a marine white sand base with aragonite and calcite gravel. Or you can just buy about any cichlid sand substrate that you like. I have found that they keep to themselves and do not bother their tank mates at all.



By Erskine Plummer

Why do I like these little fish? If you look at them closely, you will notice that they are basically a silvery brown with nice blue eyes that pop out from their tiny bodies even when they are fry. Their body are striped with bars that become less defined and more irregular the closer you get to their tail. Another feature you will notice is that their faces are elongated. I keep mine in 2 different setups with great success. I have them in a 46 bow-front and 90 gallon tank. They love to dig around the tank, moving through their mini shell condo.

You can keep them in a species tank to develop a bigger colony. They will help each other out as the group grows. I would recommend that you don't add a new group to your existing colony because they will isolate that group in the corner. They also do not bother the plants in the tank, so you can keep any plants from Java fern, java moss, anubias, and all kinds of vallisneria.

These little fishes are well worth keeping even though they do not have much color. What they do have is a very interesting lifestyle and lots of personality!

PARALABIDICHROMIS 'RED FIN PIEBALD'

TEXT BY PETER GEORGE

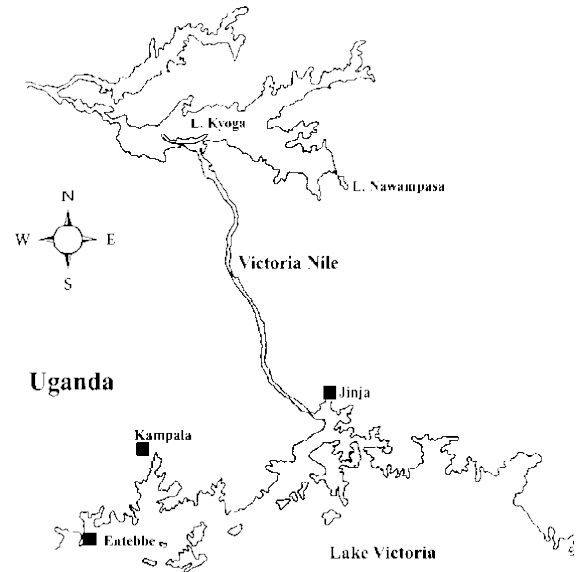


Paralabidichromis 'red fin piebald' male – image by Patrick Erickson

As many of you know, I really like Lake Victoria Basin cichlids, and keep many of them. Just about 8 months ago I bought a breeding group of *Paralabidichromis* 'red fin piebald' cichlids from Josh Cunningham, and gave them a 55 gallon tank as their new home. There appeared to be 3 males and 8 females in the group, but one of the females turned out to be a male, and one female died within a week, so after a month or so the ratio was 4 males to 7 females. The males were about 3 inches in length, while the females were slightly smaller, about 2 inches or even a bit smaller. Over the next few weeks, one male colored up and increased in size more than the others, and clearly was the dominant fish in the tank. P. 'red fin piebalds' are insectivores in the wild, so I fed them high protein food, heavy on krill and spirulina, as well as frozen mysis, frozen brine shrimp with spirulina and plenty of Paradigm Omnivore. I normally change about 20% of the water every 10 days, but with these fish I worked on a more frequent schedule, changing at least 25% every week.

The fish are found naturally in what is known as The Victoria Basin, rather than in Lake Victoria itself. These areas include Lake Nawampasa, The Victoria Nile and Lake Kyoga, none of which

were impacted by the introduction of the Nile Perch (*Lates niloticus*) to the big lake, Lake Victoria.



http://www.cichlid-forum.com/articles/lake_victoria_sick.php.

My group now has three males, but over time two males that grew from my first spawn were beaten up so badly that I was forced to remove them. The dominant male controls about half of the tank and keeps the other fish out of his area except at feeding time, when



P. 'red fin piebald' male – image by Peter George

his territoriality seems to break down. I've never seen them spawn, but a female or two (never more than two at a time) almost

always has eggs in her mouth. I let them hold for 14 days, and when I strip them I've gotten anywhere from nine to 20 vigorous, free-swimming fry. One very nice feature of this fish is that you can mix the fry with any non-piebald species, since the fry show their adult coloration almost immediately.

The males are not terribly aggressive with other species, so they can be mixed comfortably with any relatively peaceful species, as long as they are not piebald. Piebald, by the way, means "blotched, or of different colors, generally black and white." Obviously these fish are not black and white, but they are still called piebald because they are blotched – orange, black and pink, in the case of my fish.



P. 'red fin piebald' female – image by Kevin Bauman

Of all of the Victorians I keep, these are among the most interesting and attractive. Every visitor comments on them, because they are relatively large, very active, and strikingly colored. I will be bringing an adult pair as well as one-inch fry to the auction, so if you have the room and the interest, you should take advantage of the opportunity to obtain these beautiful and interesting fish for yourself.



**PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE
AMERICAN CICHLID
ASSOCIATION**

www.cichlid.org

TANGANYIKAN SHOWBOATS

TEXT BY JIM KENNISTON



E. sp. Kilesa – image by Jim Kenniston

How do we select fish when we want to set up a display tank? We obviously start with fish that we want to look at. Maybe we like their appearance or perhaps we enjoy observing their behavior. Perhaps we choose fish because of their breeding potential or rarity in the hobby. We usually factor in compatibility when combining species. We might also consider diet. *Tropheus* will not realize that bloodworms are meant for the neolamps in the tank, so best not to mix fish that can't be fed the same thing.

But do we ever think about which fish will be happiest in the tank? I recently met someone that did just that. Jennifer lives in Switzerland, and decided to convert her 1000 liter show tank from Malawi haps to Tanganyikans. She didn't have any experience with tangs, but she had a book, and started to make a list of fish that looked good in the pictures. She came to Connecticut in March to visit relatives, found the NECA Facebook group, and got a hold of me. She was especially interested in featherfins and sandsifters. By the way, Lake Malawi has no equivalent of either. Oops, my bias is showing. She was thinking *Benthochromis tricoti*, *Enantiopus melanogenys* and *Cyathopharynx foai*. But remember, she wants the fish to be happy, not just pretty.

At first I thought “no problem”. A 1000 liter tank is around 264 gallons. That'll work. But there was a catch to her setup. It was located in the middle of her apartment, where people could walk around and view it from all sides. Kind of like having four “fronts” to the tank. Not a good environment for a fish that needs the security of a safe hiding place. It was also going to be brightly lit. After all, it's a show tank. These are conditions that would cause stress in many species of fish.



C. furcifer 'ruziba' male – image by Jim Kenniston

She ruled out the *Benthochromis tricoti* quickly once she realized that the chance of finding tank raised specimens was just about nil. The idea of fish being captured wild from one of the largest lakes in the world and placed in a glass box for her amusement was unappealing. These fish are found in the dimly lit deeper waters of the lake, and may not appreciate bright lighting either. Anytime you see “benth” in a fish's Latin name, you know it comes from deeper down. Lake Tanganyika is the second deepest lake on the planet, and there are several species that live in a perpetual twilight. Many do not feel comfortable in a brightly lit aquarium. Interestingly, Jennifer had visited Heinz Buescher, and remarked that his fish are kept in very dim light. He let her borrow a flashlight to view them. So she narrowed her search to shallower water fish.

Another of her favorites from the book was *Cyathopharynx foai*. Damn, she has good taste. These fish are spectacular, but like the *B. tricoti*, prefer deeper water. They can be very skittish also. Probably not the best choice for her “fishbowl”. But wait. *Cyathopharynx furcifer* looks very similar and comes from shallower

water. It also doesn't seem to mind people walking about. A group of them would probably feel right at home in her “no place to hide” display tank.



X. ochrogenys male – image by Sandy Feder

Finally, what about *Enantiopus melanogenys*? This one was a home run. Unlike most of the *Xenotilapia* sandsifters, these are not easily spooked, and enjoy plenty of light. I had to rule out some of my personal favorites like, *X. papilio*, *X. flavipinnis* and *Xenotilapia nigrolabiata* (cherry princess). They are way too skittish to be constantly on-stage, and wouldn't appreciate the energy of the featherfins either. The best candidates were *E. melanogenys*, *E. sp. Kilesa* and *Xenotilapia. ochrogenys*. These are shallow water fish that seem oblivious to the activities outside of the aquarium. They like plenty of light, and won't mind the featherfins. Three perfect choices.



Jennifer's tank – image by Jennifer

She dropped by for a visit, and got a chance to see all of the fish in person. The second that she saw the group of *E. kilesa*, her decision was made.

They are not only beautiful, but display constantly, and don't kill each other. Sorry *E. melanogenys* and *X. ochrogenys*, but you never had a chance. Kilesas steal the show every time, and they enjoy being onstage. They were perfect for her tank. There was pretty much the same reaction when she saw the *C. furcifer* 'ruziba'. There were a couple males showing off in their pits for the girls. First came the big smile, then the camera. She was hooked. We did have the chat about the dietary differences between the *E. kilesa* and the *C. furcifer*. Sandsifters would love frozen food, but featherfins have very long digestive tracts that aren't suitable for worms etc. She intends to stick with commercially prepared foods that are balanced enough to meet the needs of both fish.

There was one choice that she made that wasn't perfect, but who could blame her for making it. The neolamp she wanted was *N. buescheri*. These fish don't appreciate a lot of commotion outside of the tank, and need a good rock pile with plenty of little secret places that they can hide. But heck, if I had visited Heinz Buescher, I would surely want some *N. buescheri* in my tank too. She plans to throw in a few altolamprologines to pick off any fry that are born in the tank.

I can't wait to see the pictures of this tank once it is set up. Not only will the fish be beautiful, they will be happy. :)

Remember to check our Facebook page and our website on a regular basis. We use both sites to keep our members updated on all things cichlid. And 'The List' continues to grow, so check it out to see what special fish we're going to have at the Auction on April 12.

'UGANDA FIRE'

Last month I wrote a brief article about two Victorian haplochromines, one identified and described, and the other NOT described, although present in the hobby. This is the picture of the fish that is undescribed, and goes by the name *Haplochromis* 'Uganda Fire.'



H. 'Uganda Fire' male – image by Mike Drawdy

Mike Liu commented to me that I had forgotten to include a picture of the other Victorian, the one described and with which the one above is often confused. So here it is, *Paralabidichromis* 'Fire.' It's a very beautiful fish, the male of which is often described as 'spectacular.' I think it is too!



P. 'fire' male - image by Kevin Bauman

PFG

MYTHBUSTER

Each month, I will challenge a common fish-keeping myth. No experiments. No explosions. Just one man's opinion.



Mike Liu's wet hand holding *Pyxichromis orthostoma* – image by Mike Liu

Myth: *Never touch a fish with your bare hands.*

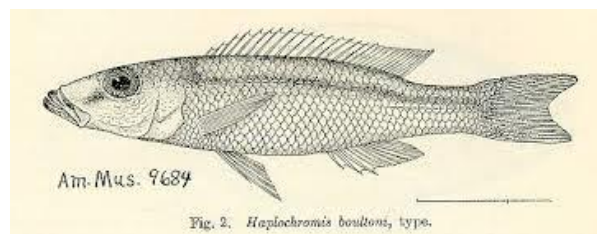
It was once thought that if you handled a fish, then the protective layer of slime would be removed, rendering the poor fish to inevitable infection. There is some truth to this one. It is a bad idea to touch fish with dry hands, but if your hands are wet, there's nothing to worry about. I have *Petrochromis* that will not only eat out of my hands, but swim right into my hands. They don't seemed worried about losing any slime. Many of us have stripped mouth-brooding cichlids by handling them. Just make sure that you wet your hands first and the fish will be fine.

Don't forget the NECA Spring Auction on April 12 at the Polish-American Club in Windsor Locks, CT. Check the website, www.necichlids.com for more information.

Editor's Notes:

The photograph at the top of the first column is a male *Pundamilia nyererei* 'Ruti Island,' taken by one of the Geilers. I want to thank Jim Kenniston, Mike Liu, and Erskine Plummer for their contributions to this issue. And again, I want to thank all the cichlid people across the United States who are contributing fish and fish food to our auction!

PFG



IMPORTANT WEBSITES

www. <http://www.necichlids.com/>
<http://www.acaconvention2015.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/236314137459/>

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