

The

Lateral Line

Volume 6, Issue 1

January, 2013



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Are *Tropheus* Difficult?

CARES Sheet - *Neochromis omnicaeruleus*

Just Another Day in the Fishroom -

Harpagochromis sp. "orange rock hunter"

Austin to Get a New Aquarium

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Cover - Hippo Tank in Africa Alive at the San Antonio Zoo. Photo by Joshua Schechter.

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Editorial

Happy 2013 everyone!

Despite my best intentions, I have once again got the Lateral Line ready a month late. While I'm usually whining and complaining to everyone to contribute so I can put the issue together, this particular compilation is not the case. We have some fantastic content in this issue! Our good friend Klaus Steinhaus from the motherland (the great white north to all you southerner's) kindly allowed me to republish one of his many great works. Klaus is a very well known *Tropheus* expert and relays his experiences and expertise in his aptly named article, "Are *Tropheus* Difficult?" Thank you very much Klaus and I hope you won't mind too much if we reprint more of your writings. They are a treasure to the hobby.

I started the first in a series that I've wanted to do for sometime having a brief look at the fishrooms of my fish friends around the country and beyond. This inaugural article in the series brings back some great memories of a trip I took to Minnesota several years ago. I got to visit with Jason and Sara Swanson, wonderful friends whom I respect greatly. I will always have fond memories of that trip and my scant collections of photo's don't do justice to the fish collection and breeding prowess Jason has. I hope you enjoy this new feature.

I am extremely happy to have an excellent original contribution for everyone from Troy Veltrop in a critically endangered species *Harpagochromis* sp. "orange rock hunter" from Lake Victoria. This piscivore is not only thought to be extinct in the wild, but we are precariously close to losing it in the hobby...and forever. Troy has taken it upon himself to ensure that this species will endure. His breeding efforts have been en-

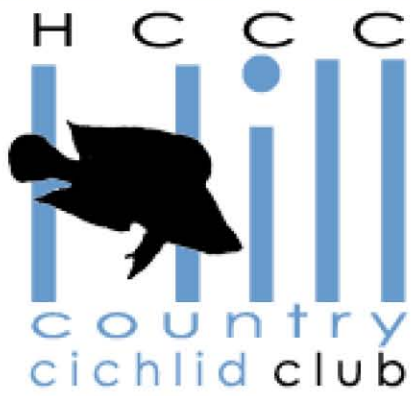
couraging and this fish is now well on it's way to being established in stable numbers. This is yet another species that HCCC members have literally saved from total extinction. It is unfortunate that there are still so many more to save and with time running out, efforts such as Troy's become critical. All the more reason conservation programs such as the CARES program we whole heartily endorse, become so very important. Troy looks at the possibility of male mouth brooding in this species along with husbandry hints. Thanks you Troy for your writings and your commitment to CARES.

Spring means that a busy schedule of fish events is starting up. We are holding our spring auction on February 24th in Schertz. This is always a must attend event on my schedule and I hope for everyone else as well.

On April 28th we will be holding our very first Swap Meet. I know that a lot of people really are not giving this much attention but I assure you that this is going to turn into an event that will eventually be our most popular. I recently attended the GCCA swap in Chicago; it was a spectacular! There were vendors there selling everything from books to shrimp, from plants to driftwood and thousands of fish of all kinds. It might be a while before we get to that level with ours but you have to start somewhere.

Our friend in the Austin area are hosting a gathering at Fish Gallery February 21st. There is an ad on page 12. We wish them well and hope that it will lead to another great fish club in our area!

Speaking of meetings, the first HCCC meeting of 2013 will take place March 10th in Schertz with speaker Charles Clapsaddle from Goliad farms speaking. This will be a great time so don't you dare miss it!



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This meeting will include prize drawings and a small auction that all are invited to participate in. Come join your fellow fishaholics for an afternoon of aquatic camaraderie!

**Fish Room Tours - Jason Swanson, August 2010
- Greg Steeves**



Jason Swanson standing by a small portion of his fishroom mostly dedicated to haplochromine cichlids.

I have been very fortunate to have been invited to many different aquarium clubs throughout the continent. Perhaps the most enjoyable part of these trips is seeing the fishrooms and aquariums of many different people. In this, the first installment of "Fish Room Tours", I will show you the fishroom (albeit two years ago now) of my friend Jason Swanson from the Minneapolis region of Minnesota.

Back in 2010 I was invited to the Minnesota Aquarium Society and the Midwest Cichlid Association's Minnesota chapter by Jason Swanson. I had met Jason the previous sum-

mer at the Greater Chicago Cichlid Association's Cichlid Classic. Jason was already head first involved with haplochromine cichlids, specifically those from the Lake Victoria region, at this time. We already had a lot in common. On this trip I was treated to several fishroom tours specifically Ron Hansen and Jason's fishroom. My next trip up I really want to see Bob Randall's set up as well.

Jason and His wife Sara reside outside Minneapolis in a charming little town called Inver Grove. The Swanson's have a beautiful home here. Jason's fishroom takes up

The finished basement portion of their house. His other passion is his love of muscle cars.



At the time of my visit, his tanks were populated mostly Lake Victoria cichlids but sev-

eral other very cool fish in his collection. I have been told that in the time since he has converted 100% to haplochromines.

Jason's aquariums are individually set up. That is there is no central filtration or fancy plumbing connecting tanks. Each aquarium is decorated with simple structures as in clay flower pots and ample air supply on all the larger tanks. Some tanks contain substrate, some do not. The fry tanks were mostly bare and filter with air driven sponges. With all the fry he had, whatever he was doing was working very well. Most every large aquarium had multiple holding females. The glass of every tanks was sparkling clean and the entire setup was a very clean, well maintained and organized.



A large colony of *Lipochromis* sp. "Matumbi hunter" housed in a 75 gallon aquarium.



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Jason had several Rubbermaid vats housed outside that were full of cichlids.



The MCA's meet was hosted by Jason and held in his garage. There was a fantastic crowd show up on a beautiful Minnesota afternoon. Lots of great food and drinks. They really know how to host a meeting!

I have so many good memories of this trip. The hospitality both clubs gave me was way more than expected or necessary. I'll always remember the red M&M's and case of Diet Dr. Pepper waiting for me (a request I made out of jest and never expected to be filled) and of course cementing a solid friendship with one of the best haplochromine breeders on the planet.

Jason has won Breeder of the Year in multiple clubs. His prowess for spawning these cichlids is uncanny. Jason and Sara flew down to be part of FOTAS CARES with us in San Antonio. He is actively involved with the maintainance of endangered species. We are very lucky indeed to have Ja-

son using his abilities to ensure the survival of these fish. I hope our path's soon cross once again!



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Are *Tropheus* Difficult?

- Klaus Steinhaus

- Originally printed in the Buntbarsche Bulletin June 2007



There have been many articles written about these fish, many good ones and also a few bad ones. However, I felt compelled to write his article because I still sense a lot of bad vibes when it comes to these beautiful cichlids. Many hobbyists still feel scared of giving them a try because the reputation they have is not the best.

When talking to my fellow cichlid lovers, the answers I get are usually the same: "They are way too difficult to keep" or "They are way too expensive". Another argument is "I would like a nice community tank". Well, with this article I will try to remove some of these arguments and fears. OK, I admit suffering from the "*Tropheus* Syndrome" because I am a *Tropheus* nut.

Since keeping my first group in the mid 1970's, I have been fascinated with the behavior of them, their social structure and their liveliness. A tank full of *Tropheus* is never boring to me. So please, take this article with a "grain of salt" because it's hard for me to stay impartial.

These fish have been around for quite some time. Discovered by J.E.S. Moore in 1896, and described two years later by George Boulenger, *Tropheus* did not get into our aquariums until 1956. The first variant to make it was *Tropheus* sp. "Rutunga", and from that time on the cichlid hobby has never been the same. Very few cichlids had the ability to turn our hobby upside down like the *Tropheus*. The only one coming to



mind is the discus.

The prices we had to pay for these fish were astronomical 35 years ago, but that did not stop us cichlid nuts from buying them. At the time, knowledge about *Tropheus* was still fairly limited as to their dietary requirements and behavior, and so a lot of hobbyists' dreams literally went down the toilet.

Much has changed since then due to the research and observations of people like Ad Konings, Peter Schupke, Wolfgang Staeck and many others. We now know what to feed them and what to stay away from. We know that we need to keep them in larger groups and not to disturb their social structure.

Now I am far away from being an "expert", but having kept these fish for over 30 years, I have learned many things the hard way. This article is strictly based on my experi-

ence and will hopefully help somebody else to save a lot of grief and money.

OK, let's get to it. The first thing I tell anybody who has never kept *Tropheus* is that they are much easier to keep than many other cichlids. That is a fact and has been proven many times over. To keep any fish, you have to obey some rules. No difference here.

There are several things to consider before you go out and buy yourself some *Tropheus*:

Do you have enough time to look after them properly? *Tropheus* are happiest with a set regimen like the same feeding time each day and at least one 40% water change weekly. You should watch them every day at feeding time and look for any unusual behavior.

Do you have enough space for your beauties? *Tropheus* can be quite aggressive and



Tropheus duboisi "Kigoma" – photo by Klaus Steinhaus



Tropheus sp. "Katonga" – photo by Klaus Steinhaus



Tropheus sp. "Cape Nundo" (Golden Chisanse)
– photo by Klaus Steinhaus



Tropheus sp. "Nangu" – photo by Klaus Steinhaus



Petrochromis trewawasae – photo by Klaus Steinhaus



Eretmodus cyanostictus – photo by Klaus Steinhaus



need to be kept in groups of at least 12- 15 specimens. That requires a tank of 65 gallons as an absolute minimum. It would be better to start with a group of 18-20 specimens in a 90 gallon or 100 gallon tank to live them the necessary swim room they need and to spread the aggression.

Do you know which *Tropheus* variant you would like to keep? My recommendation is to start with a group of 15 -20 juvenile *Tropheus "Duboisi"* of about 1½" – 2" in size and let them grow up together. This will pretty much guarantee you a good functioning group.

Do you want a species only tank or a community tank? What type of filtration will you use? *Tropheus* need clean water to thrive and stay healthy, so good filtration is a necessity.

Once you have made up your mind on these

items, the fun part begins. Get your tank set up and cycled. Don't rush (I know it's not easy to be patient). Give the tank some time to develop into a healthy environment. Watch the water parameters like nitrite, nitrate, pH and hardness.

As for the decoration of a *Tropheus* tank, well people have different opinions and tastes. I like to offer my fish an environment that is as close as possible to their natural habitat.

I absolutely hate bare tanks because they only serve the purpose of the owner and not the fish. Some sand or fine gravel will do just fine as substrate.

For the rock structure, I like to use limestone pieces as large as I can get into the tank and build it in the two corners right up to the surface. Large rocks have several advantages. They make the tank look larger and more



natural, plus you only have to take out a few rocks to catch a holding female. Just make sure that your rocks are stacked securely.

The next item to discuss is food. *Tropheus* are herbivorous cichlids that live along the rocky shoreline where the sun is capable of penetrating the clear water, helping to produce an algae layer on the rocks. This layer is usually covered with sediment due to the constant surf. This sediment covered algae layer is called "aufwuchs" and represents the natural food source for our *Tropheus*. Since it is impossible to recreate this aufwuchs layer under aquarium conditions, we have to find a substitute that comes close and that is where opinions differ.

I have tried many types and brands of food and have found that a good spirulina flake works best for me. However, the variety of food being offered these days is immense and sometimes a bit confusing for a newcomer to our

hobby. I know of a number of people that feed small pellets exclusively and their fish are doing well too. I have tried these pellets with my fish without success so I keep feeding the flake because my fish seem to like it better.

The statement that *Tropheus* have to be kept in species only tanks is, in my opinion, misleading and not correct. Yes, it is the best and easiest way to keep these cichlids, but it is not an absolute must. The problem is to find other species that will match their dietary requirements and their temperament. The good thing is that we have a very nice and interesting selection of possible tank mates available to us. *Petrochromis*, *Tanganicodus*, *Eretmodus* and *Spathodus* species are ideal company for our *Tropheus*. *Simochromis* & *Pseudosimochromis* would also fit the requirements nicely.

I have also seen many hobbyists keeping different *Tropheus* variants together in the same

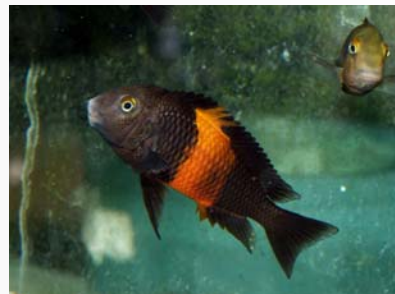


tank. This practice is something to be very careful with. It is my goal to keep any species I maintain pure, meaning to keep them as they are in nature. By keeping different variants together you give them the chance to interbreed and produce hybrids that eventually will get out to other hobbyists. However, there are some combinations where the possibility of interbreeding is fairly minimal. Some examples are *Duboisii* / *Moorii* or *Duboisii* / *Brichardi* or *Moorii* / *Brichardi*. I too have at times used one of these combinations due to space restraints for a short time period and have had no problems, but there is never a 100% guarantee. Given the right circumstances, they will interbreed.

Breeding these cichlids is not a very difficult task. Conditioning the females seems to create the only problem. The actual breeding is the same as all mouth brooders. A *Tropheus* female usually breeds about 4–6 times per year and their clutch size is very small. Anywhere

from 5–15 fry per spawn is a common result. The fry, after being held by the female for about 4 weeks, are already 10–12 mm in size and look like completely finished miniature *Tropheus*. They will stay close to the female and she will take them back into her mouth if threatened.

In closing, I would like to say to all cichlid lovers that have not had the pleasure of maintaining these beautiful fish: "Don't be afraid of them. They are much easier to keep than you think, and the only real danger is that you too will catch the "*Tropheus* Syndrome" and get hooked on these amazing cichlids".





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Neochromis omnicaeruleus (Seehausen & Bouton, 1998)



From various locations in the southern regions of Lake Victoria, *Neochromis omnicaeruleus* resides. This algae grazer has several variants including a vertical barred variety typically found in males, to numerous piebald hues realized in both sexes. It typically grows to 12cm, will accept most prepared commercial food and adapts easily to an captive environment.

Neochromis omnicaeruleus is best kept in small groups that can contain numerous males and females. A larger tank of 200 liters or more is recommended. The fry produced from any spawning is always in high demand amongst hobbyists.

Although this animal rightly deserves a spot on the CARES preservation list, recent collections suggest that this cichlid is still abundant in wild habitats.



**Just Another Day in the Fishroom -
Harpagochromis sp. “orange rock hunter”
 - Troy Veltrop**



I awoke on December 5th, 2012 to the normal cat paw to the face and rather annoyed “Meow!” Just like clockwork our female cat, Abbey, was there to remind me it was her breakfast time and I was running late in its preparation. I am so glad that fish cannot behave similarly when they think it is time for a meal! Dragging myself from a warm bed on a frigid morning was not exactly at the top of my list but I also had a fishroom project to start; swapping out the substrate in my *Harpagochromis* sp.’orange rock hunter’ tank and it was going to take a while. Out of bed I climbed and soon after feeding the other animals I was off to the fishroom; only not to do as I had planned. I quickly learned the fish had something else in mind for me that day.

After removing only a few rocks from the 125 gallon tank, my attention was drawn to

the 75 gallon across the fishroom. It held two year old progeny of the main colony, as a backup group, and the dominant male was chasing everything in his sight away from his cave. Curious, I hurried over to the tank and started counting fish, looking for ripe or holding females; a ritual I conduct on a daily basis. Once again, as it was for the last year and a half I had been watching, all fish were accounted for and no holding females were found. There was one female that looked as though she had just spawned, but she wasn’t holding, so I figured it would only be a matter of time before I saw her swimming around with a mouthful of eggs. Within minutes, however, the dominant male proved me wrong as I knelt beside the aquarium to get a better view of his cave.



He was there, facing the back of the tank, but even viewing from the rear, I could see his gill plates were flared. I thought for a moment he was displaying to his reflection in the glass. That was until he swam out of the back entrance of the cave, positioned himself directly facing me, golden rings in his eyes ablaze, and started chewing. Yeah, chewing! You know, the way a female does when she is carrying eggs. No, I did not have Irish coffee for breakfast. I am more a Café Ole type of guy anyway, but I'm telling you, the male was holding a mouthful of freshly laid eggs.

Realizing I would need some photographic proof of what was happening, I grabbed both the video camera and the digital camera and began recording. I recorded 15 minutes or so of video and took many stills. I was not 100% convinced of what had happened until

the male swam up to the glass and presented me with the perfect photo: his mouth slightly open and the new eggs clearly visible. Of course, the digital camera was set to TIFF mode and the last picture I took was still processing.

I spent the next several days taking photos and more video, anxiously awaiting the day the male would release the fry. During this time, he spent most of the time in his cave, only allowing a couple of the females in for a short visit while immediately chasing everything else from his sight. He behaved like a holding female but with a dominant male attitude. He would display to the other males to assert his dominance, and then dart back to his cave to continue his new domestic duties. After all, he is fish that is confident enough in his male fishyhood, to lend a hand with the kids.



He continued carrying the eggs for almost two weeks, only occasionally taking in a little food. He kept to himself, eventually even chasing the females away. Then the morning came when he hit a chunk of *Repashy Meat Pie* so hard water splashed me in the face as he broke the surface in his zest to get every chunk. He was not holding any longer and went immediately from gorging himself to gallivanting with the ladies. His colors were glowing as he darted from female to female, pausing only to fully extend all fins and do the haplochromine shake. His reds burned like hot embers and the yellows shone as bright as the sun. The rings in his eyes were illuminated, as if lit from behind, and surrounded coal black pupils. Although the eggs he was carrying were gone, the color show was almost worth it and there were soon two more females in the tank holding for the first time. I was disappointed that no

fry were hatched by the male but the behavior was interesting and I am hoping he will exhibit such again, only carrying the eggs to term next time.

The disappointment in the lost eggs was wiped away by happenings in the 125 gallon that held the original group I purchased back in 2010. In my haste to document the holding male in the 75 gallon tank, I had only removed about a quarter of the rocks in the 125 gallon that needed the substrate change. This left a large open space between two large rocks and my dominant male began clearing a pit in the opening, sweeping away any rocks and even the pieces of crushed coral that might interfere in his courtship. I had never seen them prepare to spawn in the open before, they had previously always



spawned in the large football sized caves I created by stacking large rocks. Even in the caves they excavate a pit because one of the telltale signs of pending spawning has always been little scatterings of sand on the rocks near the entrance of the cave.

I took notice of the pit on December 7th and the next day there was a holding female in the tank, hiding in the largest cave. This brought a smile to my face that had to have run ear to ear because she is a 5" fish and her buccal cavity looked full. I knew she could be holding 50, 60, maybe even 70 eggs and my anticipation to know how many heightened as the days fell off the calendar. She did fine in the tank with the main colony, staying hidden in her favorite cave; only giving me occasional glimpses of her through its opening. I left her in the main tank until December 26th, at which time I

removed her and she spit a number of fry that far exceeded my expectations.

I thought I had seen her with free swimming fry in her cave so I was not surprised to find them fully developed. What I was not prepared for was the number; ninety-two. Ninety-two! I could hardly keep from grinning the whole time I was moving them from their bucket to a 10 gallon tank. The tank was setup with #5 sponge filter, salt-n-pepper cichlid sand as substrate, a few rocks and some small plastic plants. Water changes were performed twice a week but only 30% was changed each time. While adults can handle large water changes easily, fry can sometimes perish when you do massive water changes. I do smaller, more



frequent ones on the fry tanks if the fry they contain are less than half an inch in size.

At that small size I feed them much more often than I do the adults. I prefer the fry have a constant source of food on which to graze, whereas the adults I will let skip a day, sometimes two, between feedings. To accommodate this, I have added the Repashy line of foods to my fishroom and the *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter' fry went nuts over both the Meat Pie and Shrimp Soufflé. They also accepted crushed Dainichi pellet as I found out while I was waiting for a new supply of Repashy and some frozen foods to arrive. The other food I fed, although unintentionally, was snails. There are some Malaysian trumpet snails in the tank and I noticed that many of the hunter fry would pick at them and try to yank them from their shells, or possibly just bite chunks off, by grasping them in their mouths and

shaking their head violently. I harvest the snails from larger tanks regularly to feed to my *Ptyochromis* sp. 'hippo point' colony and have seen their young do this often but I've never intentionally fed them to *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter'. This grow out tank previously had *P.* sp. 'hippo point' in it and there were remnant snails, that is until the hunters took notice. They seem to enjoy them and now will head straight for them and begin picking when I drop a fresh batch in the tank.

I kept them in the 10 gallon tank for only a couple of weeks. Currently, about 30 days after release, they are in a similarly laid out 20 gallon long for grow out. The little guys have been gaining size fast, and will be ready for distribution soon. For those of you that plan on picking up a group, I offer my experiences on keeping them and want to prepare you for what might be a long wait



for any spawning activity.

When I heard the name *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter', I envisioned a bold and powerful predator; fearing nothing and devouring all in its path. I was right on the count of predator, it is a piscivore, from Gabalema Island in Lake Victoria, but bold was a bit off the mark. I have found this species can be easily bullied and in my experience will spawn best when given the luxury of a species tank. I do not even have catfish in with my group any longer after watching one relentlessly chase a holding female from cave to cave, presumably hoping for an appetizer of caviar. Mine simply will not successfully carry eggs full term unless they are the sole inhabitants of the aquarium and I've tried many combinations from other victorians to the mbuna of Lake Malawi. The only exception I can remember is one spawn when they were housed with *Paralabidochromis sauvagei* but that was shortly after the introduction of the new species to the

tank and the male *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter' had not yet been toppled as dominant fish.

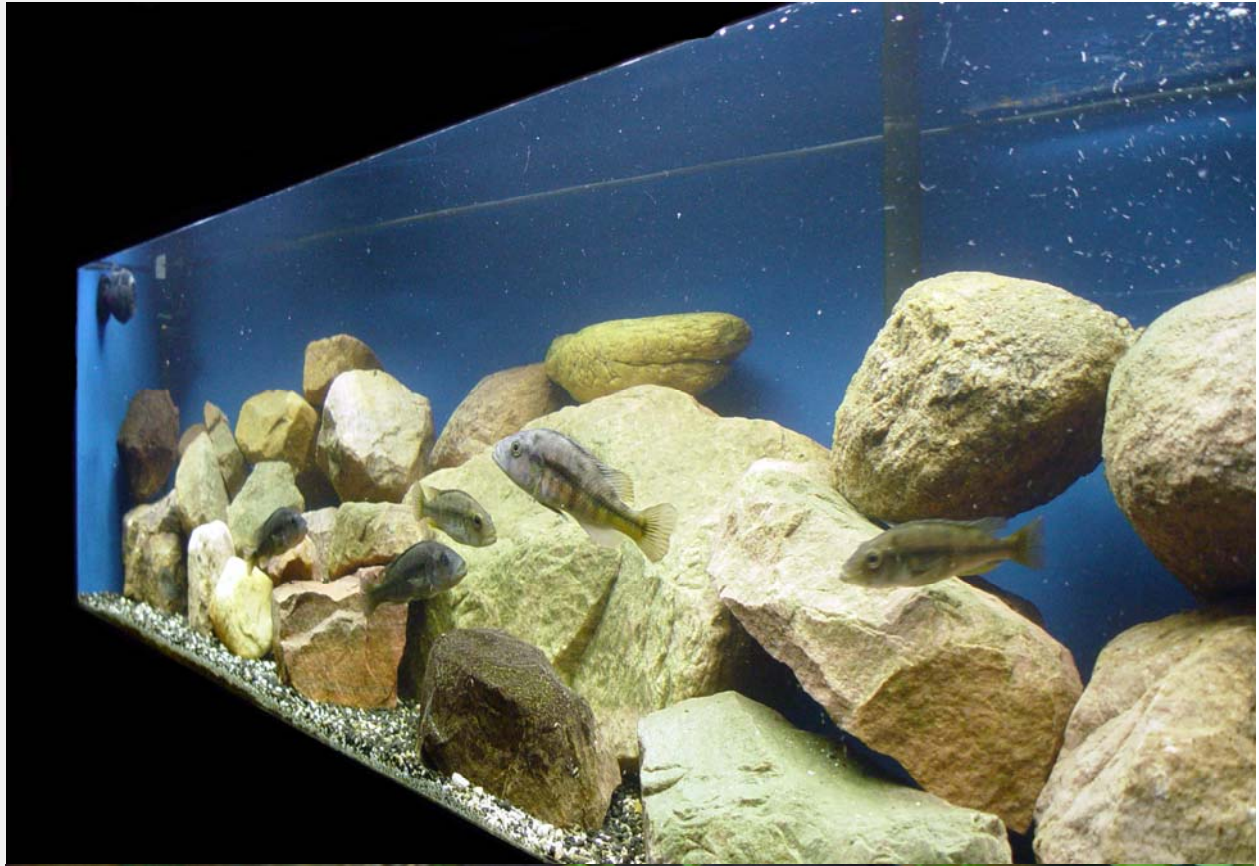
As I have learned, you will want to be prepared to eventually provide a large aquarium for an adult breeding group and will want to choose their tankmates, if any, wisely. My largest male, thank you Allen Abrahams (teknikAl), is all of 7" long and when he yawns, I could stick the whole of my thumb in his mouth and have wiggle room. I have lost two large males in the past due to them trying to swallow 3" tankmates. I found one floating one morning with a *Pseudotropheus demasoni* stuck head first into his mouth. The second passed in a similar fashion, only after me attempting to save him by removing the fish lodged in his mouth. Although my luck with tankmates has been poor, even using the suggestions following, other keepers



of this species have reported keeping them alongside other fish with success, however, I am not sure if they bred in these setups. The following Victorian species have been suggested to me and or tried by me as tank-mates: *Astatoreochromis alluaudi*, *Labrochromis ishmaeli*, *Lipochromis melanopterus*, *Lipochromis parvidens*, *Lipochromis* sp. "Matumbi hunter" and *Pyxichromis orthostoma*. However, to maximize chances of breeding, I suggest a species only setup and to base your group size on the tank you have available for them as adults.

Not only is appropriate tank size a matter of the adult size of this fish, it is also a matter of creating a natural environment, if you are into such madness as I am. They really like to hide in the rocks, so to keep them from fighting over the caves I have used large

rocks to create many large, dark, caves as well as wide cracks and crevices. I am not saying that you must keep them in large tanks but it is difficult to provide a cave large enough for two 5"-7" fish to spawn in without using really big rocks. Some of the rocks used in the 125 gallon just looked out of proportion in a 75 gallon and when I used smaller rocks, the caves were too small and the fish would not stay inside. Smaller tanks such as 40 breeders and 75 gallons are fine for the fish for the first couple of years but as they get to be four or five years old they get to be too big to be housed in a 40 breeder and I think a 75 gallon would even be marginal if you were wanting to accommodate a decent sized breeding group for their lifetime. I have my two year old group in a 75 gallon species tank at the moment and they are all around 4" or a little larger now. They



get along great and there are currently three holding females in that group as I write.

This brings us to the subject of sexual maturity in this species. If you keep a lot of victorians, you've probably seen other species holding at 1" in length, as have I. I have stood in amazement as a tiny 1" *Pundamilia nyererei* sucks 12 little fry back into her mouth when the whole group, if rolled together in a ball, is the size of her head. However, this is not, in my experience, going to happen with *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter'; you have a wait in store for you. I have spent the last year and a half watching, waiting, and wondering; why have these juvenile fish not spawned? The backup colony consists of 5 males and 6 females and I figured I'd have these fish spread from Connecticut to California within the first year. They have been housed in a 75 gallon species tank since they were an inch and a half long and I feed high quality frozen, pelletized and live foods. Water changes are ritualistically performed weekly. Despite all that, not even a shimmy by the male until very recently.

So what caused the switch to flip to "on" with breeding in the two year old group? I stumbled upon the probable answer in a paper by P.H. Greenwood, in which he was describing the primary differences between the genus *Astatotilapia* and that of *Harpagochromis*. Although they are very similar in their body, bones, and teeth, the characteristics that all *Harpagochromis* species possess that sets them apart from *Astatotilapia* species are two: 1) all *Harpagochromis* reach a larger maximum adult size than *Astatotilapia* and 2) most *Harpagochromis* do not

reach sexual maturity until they reach a length that *Astatotilapia* will never attain. He gave a comparison of the latter by stating that *Harpagochromis* will reach sexual maturity at average lengths of 4.75 - 5.5 inches (120-140 mm), whereas *Astatotilapia* usually reaches sexually maturity at lengths of 2 - 3 inches (50-80 mm). While my two year olds are not quite 4.75", they are close and have begun to spawn. The adult group, now back to species only quarters, has also begun to spawn again and I expect all the females in that group to yield large spawns.

While the wait for spawning is long, I can guarantee you it is worth the time invested in the future of the species to make a spot for them in your fishroom. *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter' was added to the CARES Preservation Program Priority List (www.CARESpreservation.com) in March of 2009, with a CARES Classification of CEW (extinct in the wild), and if the classification is accurate, the only chance to preserve the beauty of this species now lies in our aquariums. With my groups both producing, I am hopeful to get hundreds of these into the hobby but it is still a long time before we could call them established. This species needs breeders willing to invest the time and space to keep them long term. I am counting on your help.

Remember, one person cannot save them all, but we can each save at least one.

Can *Harpagochromis* sp. 'orange rock hunter' count on you?

Peace and happy fish-keeping,

Austin to get a new aquarium Hands-on exhibits set to open by fall

- Natalie Stoll

AUSTIN (KXAN) - If you want to visit exotic aquatic species in Austin, you'll likely end up at a store. But by next fall, we could have an aquarium all our own.

The Austin Aquarium will be run by two brothers from Boise, Idaho. They already own an aquarium in Boise and [another in Portland, Ore](#) .

"In my brother's front yard, he built a stingray and a shark pond that the neighbor kids came over and played in all the time," said Vince Covino with Austin Aquarium. "That gave us the idea that people really love interacting with these creatures."

Their current aquariums host reptiles, birds, fish, sharks and stingrays. Covino says to expect a hands-on experience in Austin with 2,500 different species.

"It's one thing to watch a movie about marine life or read a book about marine life but to have a hands-on experience to have a close encounter with these species is a whole new experience," said Covino. "It's inspirational, it's educational and we think families are going to love what we bring."

Austin Aquarium hasn't picked a location just yet. The owners say they're deciding between two spots in North Central Austin. Once they settle on one, the City of Austin says they'll have to go through the commercial permitting process which could take several months.

In that time, [there are plans to start hiring](#). Austin Aquarium will employ around 100 people, many with biology or marine backgrounds.

"We need qualified employees," said Covino. "We'll have over 100 employees at

this location. 35-40 of those will be marine biologists or master degree biologists or veterinarians and Austin has a very high percentage of college graduates so we're confident we'll be able to get some really good qualified team members."

Already, some are expressing concerns on the [Austin Aquarium Facebook page](#) . One asked about accreditation.

"There are certain accreditations that take several years to get," said Covino. "We'll probably be 2015-16 before we look at national accreditations such as AZA [Association of Zoos and Aquariums]."

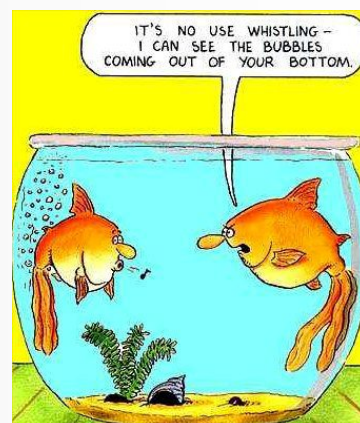
Covino says they hope to see 50,000 guests a month.

An aquarium in the capitol city is an idea Gary Coffman at [Austin Aqua Dome](#) can get behind.

"Anytime you can expose the general community to living things for awareness and the environment and things like that, I think it's great," said Gary Coffman, Austin Aqua Dome.

Coffman's hope is for a friendly, clean facility.

"Just a nice friendly, well kept environment, I think that's what people look for," said Coffman. "I think that in itself lends to the enjoyment of the facility."





The official publication of the
Hill Country Cichlid Club.