



ANGFA Code of Conduct

Introduction

The aim of this document is to assist ANGFA members make informed decisions regarding ANGFA and fish related activities. It is not intended as a rulebook, but a guide to behaviour considered ethical by the membership. ANGFA recommends that you conduct yourself in such a way that reflects well on yourself and the association.

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1. Fish and the Law

The Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments have legislation relating to Australian native fishes and their habitats. Ignorance of the Law is no defence against prosecution.

ANGFA recommends that its members check relevant legislation before commencing fish related activities, and comply with all relevant State laws in regards to fish related activities.

These may include:

- Importing livestock or plants from inter-state and overseas
- Collecting from the wild
- Buying or obtaining species that may require a permit
- Disposing of unwanted specimens

ANGFA does not condone the illegal importation of fishes into Australia, or between states and territories, and recognise the potential threat this poses with possible pest and disease introduction that will threaten native aquatic life and industries that rely on healthy natural environments in Australia. As ANGFA members, if we disagree with a law, we propose to apply to change the law through the proper channels using all aspects of the administrative and democratic processes.

Further information can usually be found either on the relevant Federal, State or Territory Government internet websites, or at the State and Federal Departments that cover natural resource management, agriculture and fisheries.

2. Studying Fishes

The study of Australian and New Guinea fishes forms part of the objectives of the Association.

ANGFA recommends that members:

1. Keep records of fish collections and fish behavioural observations, including observations of habitat and water quality.
2. Publish those records and make them available to others who study fishes.
3. Deposit fish specimens from collections into the relevant State museums.
4. Photograph fish and their habitats and publish those photographs.
5. Assist fish scientists and researchers in the study of Australian and New Guinea fishes, wherever possible.
6. Volunteer to help with worthwhile native fish study programs.
7. Promote Australian and New Guinea fishes where possible.

Scientists in various fields study fishes and their habitats. They publish their results in accredited refereed journals and these results are considered and usually cited when the same subject is studied. Increasingly references to ANGFA publications are being cited in fish study publications. Often ANGFA members report items that are poorly known to science. It is possible to find unusual or new fish, report on behavioural observations or interesting habitat information from large cities; you need not necessarily have to travel to the most remote part of New Guinea to find something new.

3. Sampling of Fishes

One of the most important aspects of the study and appreciation of fishes is to collect them to make specimens available to study.

State or Territory and Federal laws on collection are checked before commencing, including both sites for collection and the species being collected (whether they are protected), along with any other relevant laws.

Even if there is no law preventing collection of a particular species, if its population is threatened in the area it is being collected from, or in general, that should be taken into consideration when making the decision to collect, particularly if collection is not for the purpose of breeding.

ANGFA recommends that:

1. Permission is sought before sampling fishes on private property.
2. Permits are obtained before sampling fishes in National Parks.
3. Species status is known before taking numbers of a particular species and only minimum necessary numbers are taken for the required purpose.
4. Unusual findings are reported to, and specimens lodged with State Museums.
5. Non-destructive sampling methods are utilised to ensure minimal, if any, impact on the fish and their habitat.
6. Nets and other sampling equipment are washed and sterilised between sampling sites to prevent any translocation of organisms between drainages.
7. Species sampled are bred in captivity and distributed to other ANGFA members, interested individuals and institutions.
8. Members support the aquaculture of Australian and New Guinea native species for food and ornamental purposes.
9. Members make themselves aware of any community related water activity in any area they wish to collect fishes. Landcare groups may wish to know what aquatic life is in their area.

ANGFA encourages the sustainable use of natural resources in a manner that encourages landowners to conserve the natural habitats on their properties.

ANGFA urges its members to consider the latest worldwide trend of making natural resources valuable to the landowner. If property owners have natural habitats on their land which can be used in a sustainable manner, then they are more likely to preserve those habitats in an undeveloped state for they are resources with some value.

4. Transport of Fish

If members are to collect and study fishes and their behaviour, then it is necessary to transport fishes successfully.

ANGFA recommends that:

1. They transport fish in a manner that ensures safe arrival of the specimens at their intended destination.
2. The air transport of fishes complies with the requirements of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

3. The fishes are transported in a manner that will not allow any to escape into any ANGFA is strongly opposed to translocation of fish species.

FISH TRANSLOCATION in this context means the transport of live fish from one natural water body and their release into another natural water body in accordance with the definitions in the "National policy on the translocation of Fishes". It is possible that the translocated species, even though it may be native, might become a pest species in the new water body.

ANGFA strongly opposes the release back into any habitat, even the original sampling site, of any species native or exotic, after it has been kept in an aquarium or pond due to the possibility of disease introduction (bacteria, virus, plant or invertebrate) into an area that is free of those organisms.

5. Aquarium and Pond Care of Fish

One of the most important activities undertaken by members is the keeping of fishes in aquaria where they can be studied, bred and photographed. Fish behave more naturally and look their best when all the needs for their well-being are met. There has been a wealth of knowledge accumulated by ANGFA members over the years and this knowledge is available in ANGFA publications or by seeking out members with experience with that species which is to be kept.

ANGFA encourages its members to keep fishes in the optimum conditions known for each species.

ANGFA recommends that members:

1. Provide water of the correct quality and temperature for that species.
2. Provide the correct diet for that species.
3. Consider the behaviour of fishes when establishing a community in an aquarium or pond.
4. Provide shelter in the form of places to hide for those species that require cover.
5. Provide the correct photoperiod for species in their care.
6. Take notes of behaviour and publish those notes.
7. Participate in captive breeding programs to make numbers of the species available for other members and interested individuals and for conservation purposes.
8. Take care with the fishes in their control so there are no accidental translocations.
9. Ensure that hybrids are not produced or distributed as a real species.
10. Ensure that whenever possible they breed to maintain the genetic purity of populations
11. Ensure that genetic deformities that will affect the wellbeing or lifespan of the fish are not knowingly passed onto the next generation.

6. Disposal of Fish

A common consequence of keeping, studying and breeding fishes is the accumulation of numbers of a particular species, in addition to the occasional deformed or damaged individuals. It will become necessary at some time to dispose of unwanted fish.

ANGFA recommends that:

1. Unwanted specimens are traded to others in accordance with the laws of the State or Territory in whose jurisdiction the fishes reside and the jurisdiction of the receiving State or Territory.
2. Euthanasia of fishes is carried out in accordance with the procedures documented by the National Health and Medical Research Council. (NHMRC)
3. Any fish that dies or is euthanised is disposed of in a manner that prevents the survival of any disease causing organisms associated with that fish.
4. Any repatriation of a species into a water body is only undertaken with the supervision and approval of authorised government fisheries personnel.

The humane euthanasia of fish is a subject that creates considerable debate.

One method that is accepted by university ethics committees (in compliance with National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines) is an overdose of anaesthetic until all signs of movement have ceased, then the head is severed with a sharp knife or if the fish is required whole by a Museum or other institution it can be immersed in an ice slurry instead. An inexpensive anaesthetic that is freely available from most chemist shops is Clove Oil.

7. Health and Safety Considerations

When planning a survey trip members should consider the following aspects:

- travel and road safety
- water safety
- dangerous and toxic animals such as snakes, crocodiles, sharks and stingers
- minimise the risks of infections such as Melioidosis, Ross River Virus and even Malaria (common in PNG)

Even home aquaria pose some risks including those from:

- broken glass
- the dangerous combination of water with electrical equipment
- Piscine Tuberculosis

8. Guide for first-time ANGFA aquarists with ethical questions

When setting up your first pond or aquarium, there are some things to find out about and consider first. The basics include:

- What kind of aquatic life you want to keep, and whether the aquarium or pond you have is suitable (the right size and with enough filtration) for the life forms.
- Whether the aquatic life you want to keep will go together – many won't, and will kill each other eventually. <http://www.aqadvisor.com/> will guide you.
- Cycle the tank or pond properly before adding all of your new fish. Read up about the nitrogen cycle, and ammonia, nitrites, nitrates.
- Find out what kind of place will make your aquatic life happy – do they require fast or slow water, somewhere to hide? Give them that, and you'll have a happy aquatic life community to reward you. Google your aquatic life to find out what they need.
- If you don't want your aquatic life anymore, where can you get them a new home? Many local Aquarium stores will take them from you, if a friend doesn't want them, or you can put an advertisement on Gumtree, or a fish forum, if you're a member. Don't release them into a river – they probably won't live, and if they do, they might spread disease, and may cause problems for the native environment.
- If your aquatic life is unwell seek help from experienced keepers. There are many internet forums where you can ask for help, or you could ask at your local fish store, or at your vets.
- If you need to kill your aquatic life (if it gets really sick, and you can't cure it), the best way is in the Euthanasia section above.

9. References

- Hansen, Bruce (1999) "Collecting and Survey Hints"; ANGFA Handbook.
- <http://www.aquagreen.com.au/guides.html>
- Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture. (1999) "National policy for the Translocation of Live Aquatic Organisms – Issues, Principles and Guidelines".
- <http://www.brs.gov.au/fish/translocation.html>
- National Health and Medical Research Centre, (1997) "Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 6th edition 1997". <http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/>