

1991 ANGFA CONFERENCE

by Bruce Hansen

The 1991 ANGFA National Conference (the fourth so far) was a beauty! If you are interested in native fish, especially the smaller ones, and you missed this one then I suggest you make every effort to attend the next; the costs are modest and the value and enjoyment immense.

The venue, the Dorset Gardens Motel, was well-appointed and comfortable although not everyone appreciated the "weight-watchers" meals. The customary Conference folders and samples were up to the usual standard while the program was varied and informative with the typical ANGFA friendliness there in abundance.

Some 60-70 "aficionados" from all over Australia, (and even one from Hawaii) had a whale of a time being informed, supporting the many raffles and cementing friendships. Overlooking the whole show was Ron Bowman's latest labour of love - an incredibly impressive huge map of Sahul surrounded by colour photographs of the Fishes of Sahul. Ron's handiwork was also evident on the new "werner" T-shirts, the Conference Book covers and the podium banner.

1. John COATES spent 40,000 km and most of 1989 travelling clockwise around Australia. Along the way they were able to also examine many aquatic habitats, often by snorkelling - and send back specimens from previously uncollected areas. His slides and commentary were excellent and took the audience to such out-of-the-way places as the Pilbara, the Kimberleys, Litchfield Park, Kakadu and Bathurst and Melville Islands.
2. Dr Gerald ALLEN is known to us all and he provided an enthralling slide show and accompanying audio tape of his 1991 expedition to Irian Jaya. Collections were made at L. Santani, L. Holmes, Triton Lakes, the Mamberamo Plains and Yapen Island. Once again he showed us several old favourites. The most spectacular was *Melanotaenia praecox* - a dwarf species with a brilliant wide metallic blue body and red fins.
3. Effie HOWE talked to us on her latest investigations into the effects of pollution and "exotic" competition on the reproductive biology of the Pacific Blue-eye (*Pseudomugil signifer*). Her topic attracted a great deal of interest and questions were numerous especially about competition with *Gambusia*.
4. Noel HARCOURT told us about the "Melbourne Zoo: Past, Present and Future". Obviously the zoo's programs for conservation, education and research are going well and ANGFA is assisting in the implementation program for Australian native fishes in the future Aquarium Section.
5. Rob WAGER's slide show outlined a recent successful breeding of Coal Grunters (*Hephaestus carbo*) with Steve Brooks using very basic but effectively improvised equipment. The whole process from accumulating breeding stock, through hormone induction to spawning and rearing was covered well and underlined with more than a touch of humour and inventiveness.
6. Dr Walter IVANTSOFF is a world-renowned expert on Atherinids and is about to survey the Sailfin Silversides (*Telmatherinids*) of Sulawesi with Dr Maurice Kottelat. He showed us some of the new species already described; introduced us to the fascinating geography of the lakes and rivers of that area and gave us a new insight into the relationships of the fishes of Sulawesi to those of Australia and New Guinea.
7. Ron BOWMAN read us a letter from an aquarist in Siberia to give us a rare look at life and leisure in that part of the world and the financial difficulties of trying to belong to overseas associations such as ANGFA. Hopefully ANGFA's new Research and Promotion Fund can be instrumental in assisting worthy projects such as this.
8. Heinz STAUDE entertained us with his often humorous account of "The Early Days of Native Fish-keeping in Australia" and his experiences with fish and "fish-characters" such as Monty Heidke and Peter Tsang. After 40 years of keeping fish he still maintains heaps of enthusiasm.

9. **Bryan PIERCE** impressed us with his grasp of the problems facing the various inland waters fisheries in South Australia. His talk literally raced along and was enhanced by Bryan's laid-back style. He also described programs to protect several species and habitats as well as a Code of Ethics for captive fish and importation of aquarium fish.
10. **Bruce HANSEN** gave a slide show on a trip he made to Cape York with his family in 1987 and described some of the scenery, some of the fish and some of the pitfalls of travel in that region.
11. **AUCTION** - the traditional ANGFA Saturday Night Auction was once again a whopper! Not only fish and plants but electrical gear, cameras, books, videotapes, aquarium accessories were auctioned and raffled. As usual there were many bargains as well as a few competitive bidding duels. It was a very successful evening and raised welcome funds for ANGFA National to continue the good work.
12. **Peter UNMACK** had obviously done a lot of research into "The Artesian Springs of Western Queensland". His facts and figures on their distribution and evolution was fascinating stuff. It is sad to think that fish like the newly-discovered Red-finned blue eye could go the way of *Melanotaenia eachamensis* unless adequate protection can be introduced.
13. **Neil ARMSTRONG** and his photographs are well known worldwide and his slide-show and commentary illustrated his great store of knowledge of the fishes of "Sahul" together with his expertise as a wildlife and nature photographer. His Rainbowfish shots have been the catalyst that has converted many a fish-keeper from exotics to natives.
14. **Ron BOWMAN** with a little help from Bruce Hansen conducted a native fish-keeping "Questions and Answers" sessions ranging from selection of breeders to raising fry and culturing live foods.
15. **Heiko BLEHER's** first slide-talk featured a combination of several of his trips to New Guinea - some old favourites such as Lake Kutubu and several new ones. Once again he treated us to glorious habitat shots and fish pictures, also glimpses of other wildlife and the culture of the local tribespeople.
16. **Wayne FULTON** - talked on the 15 species of Galaxids which form the major section of the 25 native FW species from Tasmania. He demonstrated his wide knowledge of this interesting group of fishes and outlined some of the conservation issues being tackled in Tasmania.
17. **Adrian DAWSON** showed the slides of his trip last year to Arnhem Land and the Gove Peninsula. Habitat shots of such places as the legendary Goyder River were highlighted by several excellent aquarium shots of fish he brought back. All this with an entertaining commentary delivered in the now-famous Dawson drawl.
18. **Heiko BLEHER'S** African safari to his "dream lake" in Zaire was an extraordinary look at an almost untouched aquatic jewel - fed by an incredible underwater spring the crystal-clear water eventually emptied into a muddy river. Heiko's cameras (underwater as well) showed us literally a thousand glimpses of this fascinating spot in a tortured part of the world. Catfish, Cyprinids, Killifish and of course spectacular Cichlids held us spellbound - included were many new species. Heiko took us there and allowed us to experience some of the physical and emotional involvement he has with the environment. I hope he never runs out of places to explore and share with us.

The day finished with an impromptu Chinese banquet and a few hours of sleep before the optional Monday program. Many were treated to a "behind-the-scenes" tour of the Melbourne Zoo with the director and education staff. A few "hard-core fanatics" did a "crawl" around the setups of several fish-breeders and aquarium shops. All too soon it was time to leave old and new friends and head home.

It seems each ANGFA Conference manages to top the previous one - I for one can hardly wait to enjoy the next one in Canberra in late 1992. See you there!