

Memories of Melbourne

Derek Girkin

So, off I headed to the National Convention in Melbourne to meet up with Cameron, Sunny, Sebastian, Connie and half a dozen other NSW members. Not a bad turn out for the newest ANGFA group. When I got there I was greeted by national and regional members and made most welcomed. The evening started off with the AGM and finished up in the bar which, due to staff, closed early. I don't know why, maybe they had made enough money already!

Next day, Saturday, it was convention time. Well what a day! Lecture after lecture and included was one of the most astonishing slide presentation I have ever seen, "Pajinka - An Exploration of Cape York" by Gilbert Maebe from Belgium. It was worthy of an award, as good as anything I have seen on TV; anyway, that's my opinion but I'm biased, due to my association with native fishes. Although there were some teething problems with slides etc., the quality of speakers and presentations was excellent and very interesting ... take note Sydney.

Saturday night was the auction. This went on quite a while. Some of the fish, plants etc. bringing good prices but well worth what they sold for. I managed to buy some wild-caught specimens for an unbelievably low price. The bar at least stayed open a little longer and this is one of the best times to catch up on news and swap fish keeping experiences.

Sunday, while waiting for the convention to start, I was completely floored by Ron Bowman. He walked over to me with a rather large shopping bag and said "have a look at this". It was a very complete photo album of his pilgrimage to Cape York. I was lost for words as he walked away, grinning from ear to ear. All I could say was thanks and ask him if this was his 'holy grail'; he just nodded. I was very privileged to see something of this mans life-long quest to see his beloved Pascoe River.

Next, more lectures and another outstanding day. Once again, Gilbert Maebe stole the show with a slide presentation of collecting and his own fish in Belgium entitled "Rainbow Symphony". One of the most emotionally charged lectures was a presentation by Rob Wager, an aquatic environment consultant from Raintree Aquatics, concerning

mound springs fed by the artesian basin; especially the Edgbaston Springs. These are the habitat of gobies and the Red-finned Blue-eye. The biggest threats are wild pigs (digging), Cattle (excrement, chopping of plants, walking straight through the springs), and of course, Gambusia! Separate springs have been dug and so far the native fishes and plants are doing well. Also the artesian wells have been capped and the difference is drastic. These are fenced to stop the aforementioned animals causing another catastrophe. I spoke to Rob personally and he said it is very frustrating to see the plight of these fishes. It certainly made me feel very depressed to see the destruction caused by human neglect. As Rob said, if you can help in any way, do so, but if you ever visit the area, look, but don't touch.

Sunday night and success at last! The bar was left open later, probably due to June Caughey getting right up the hotel manager, well done June. Well, what a mistake going to the bar was for me. I was cornered by Bruce Hansen and Andy Wattam, among others, and it was pick on Derek night, but I took it in the context it was given and a great night was had by one and all.

Monday, Oh! What a headache and it was on again at breakfast. All I can say is that these people are my new friends and my respect for them has escalated. A very kind gesture from Ken Shaw, Adrian Tappin and his wife June to give Barry Meiklejohn and myself a lift to Melbourne to catch the bus to the airport via St Kilda Aquarium. Finally, back on the plane and home, losing only one fish. I am now waiting in anticipation for the Sydney Convention, not only for the lectures, slides and video presentations, but to meet up again with the many friends I made. All I can say now is "Sydney Convention, roll on!"

As a member of the convention committee for the Sydney Convention, may I say we shall try our best to continue the high standards of past ANGFA Conventions. ☺