



ACROSS THE NATIONAL DESK

- Bruce Hansen
President ANGFA

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE 1998 ANGFA CONFERENCE IN BRISBANE

The premier ANGFA event of the year, the ANGFA National Conference, is over for another twelve months. The venue was tops, the program was stimulating and varied and everyone had a great time. For all those who were unable to attend for whatever reason – you missed out on a tremendous event. The highlights were many. The generosity of our sponsors allowed us to offer superb value for money especially in the numerous raffles which were particularly well supported. Please remember our sponsors and support them whenever you can.

The spacious trade room next to the conference room allowed attendees to inspect and purchase a wide variety of goods from the regional groups as well as the displays by our commercial supporters. A prominent feature was the planted ANGFA display tank in the centre of the room. Three publications produced especially for the conference were also available. The first, a compilation of the best of the ANGFA Queensland Newsletter for the first 8 years or so of its existence was presented attractively thermally bound with a colour front cover and packed with useful information. The other two from ANGFA Vic were part of our tribute to Ian Munro – limited reprints of his "Handbook of Australian Fishes" and "Additions to the fish fauna of New Guinea". For anyone interested in the literature and history of native fishes they are a must.

Friday evening's AGM was a quiet affair and the same crew were returned unopposed, the major area of debate being the division of material between the various national and local publications. The final solution to this perennial chestnut seems to lie with increased solicitation of articles from every available resource. Each and every one of us should be prepared to write or seek articles occasionally if not regularly!!

Registration went off smoothly and Barry Meiklejohn's "Welcome to Brisbane" introductory slide show got the program off to a good start. From then on it was flat out all day with our able sessional Chairmen struggling to keep the timetable somewhere near that scheduled. The Saturday evening dinner in Tosca's Restaurant at the venue featured superb Italian cuisine and was followed by Ray Leggett's slide show on his recent trip to Costa Rica. This departure from the previous practice of having the auction after the dinner seemed well received and may well be retained at future conferences.

Sunday morning's program was climaxed by Heiko Bleher's return to our speaker list with two presenta-

tions including a world first showing of the slides of his trip to central Asia. After the official closure of the conference the monster auction occupied the remainder of the afternoon and bargains abounded. We are indebted to the many vendors who generously donated their fish and goods instead of accepting the traditional 50/50 split. Then it was the usual clean-up for the host group (ANGFA Queensland Inc) and final drinks, informal dinner and good-byes until next year in Canberra.

Our co-patron, Dr. Gerald Allen supplied a narrated slide-show based on recent surveys he undertook in the Wapoga River system in northern Irian Jaya and the Raja Ampat Islands. The superb new rainbowfishes and other new species disclosed add to our interest in this poorly investigated region and makes one wonder how many other new species await discovery. Further details are available in the current issues of "Fishes of Sahul" and "Aqua". It was an especially nice touch for Gerry to announce to attendees that he had named one of these new species *Glossolepis leggetti* after Ray.

Neil Armstrong, ANGFA stalwart, man of many nicknames and our honorary photographer had two short sharp presentations that featured his great slides and his deep knowledge of the hobby. The first was designed to show us some of the other species of native fish that aquarists might consider keeping, and Neil's anecdotal comments kept us amused and informed. The second show on the differences between sexes in Rainbowfishes highlighted some of the difficulties encountered in sexing immature fish, the problems that some species particularly cause, and a few directions for future study. It was a topic more complex than it seems on the surface and provoked a lot of thought.

Steve Baines started the program with a series of slides and comment on many of the commercial and private aquascapes he has done over the past few years. His flair, imagination and willingness to include the space above the tank in the design together with the use of "backgrounds" had us all drooling and I'm sure many will be keen to use some of his approaches in the future in their own tanks.

Heiko Bleher was back with us and once again held us spellbound with his two presentations. The first was a compilation of 3 of his trips to New Guinea and besides the fish and fish habitats there was a wealth of

detail about the surrounding landscape, the people, the other wildlife and his adventures collecting and transporting these living jewels back for breeding and distribution. The second show was spectacular but sad. This presentation on his most recent trip to Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan revealed the parlous state that exists for the aquatic habitats of this region. The extraordinary lengths that Heiko will go to in order to find fishes has to be seen to be believed and I will be haunted forever by the slide of his torso stained vivid green by the "treatment" used for an ailment acquired by him during this trip. It was a memorable and moving show.

Culum Brown, who is working on his Ph.D. on aspects of rainbowfish conservation biology was able to put us in the picture about *Melanotaenia eachamensis*. He was able to summarise the disappearance, re-discovery and current status of the various populations of this fascinating group. A phylogeny of rainbowfishes prepared at the University of Queensland made fascinating viewing for the comparisons between known species and their relationships to each other. We look forward to the results of the ongoing work on these fishes being done here in Queensland.

Ed Frazer, of "Pisces" aquatic plants fame talked to us about the other string to his bow – live foods. His company supplies a wide range of worms and insects to zoos and the pet industry throughout Australia and he certainly challenged many of the old adages about food for fish and the suitability of current practices for maintaining long-term health and vigour in our stock. He also adeptly used humour to delineate fishermen's priorities.

Dr. Helen Larson, our expert "Gobiologist" from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory introduced us to goby classification and diversity and her enthusiasm and expertise shone throughout her presentation. We all sympathised with her dilemma of the increasing number of newly-discovered goby species being faced by the dwindling number of experienced goby taxonomists. She also made a plea for aquarists who keep this fascinating group to publish their behavioural observations as the literature is sadly lacking this information.

Ray Leggett, now "Mr. Glossolepis", had us enthralled after dinner with the spectacle of the habitats, plants, birds, insects, fish and above all, the reptiles of Costa Rica. His slides of the trip were superb and although fish content was minimal the show was memorable. The close-up shots of the Poison Arrow Frogs and the Eye-lash Vipers for example were spectacular. I'm sure many of the attendees and their spouses have put Costa Rica on their "wish-list" for some time in the future.

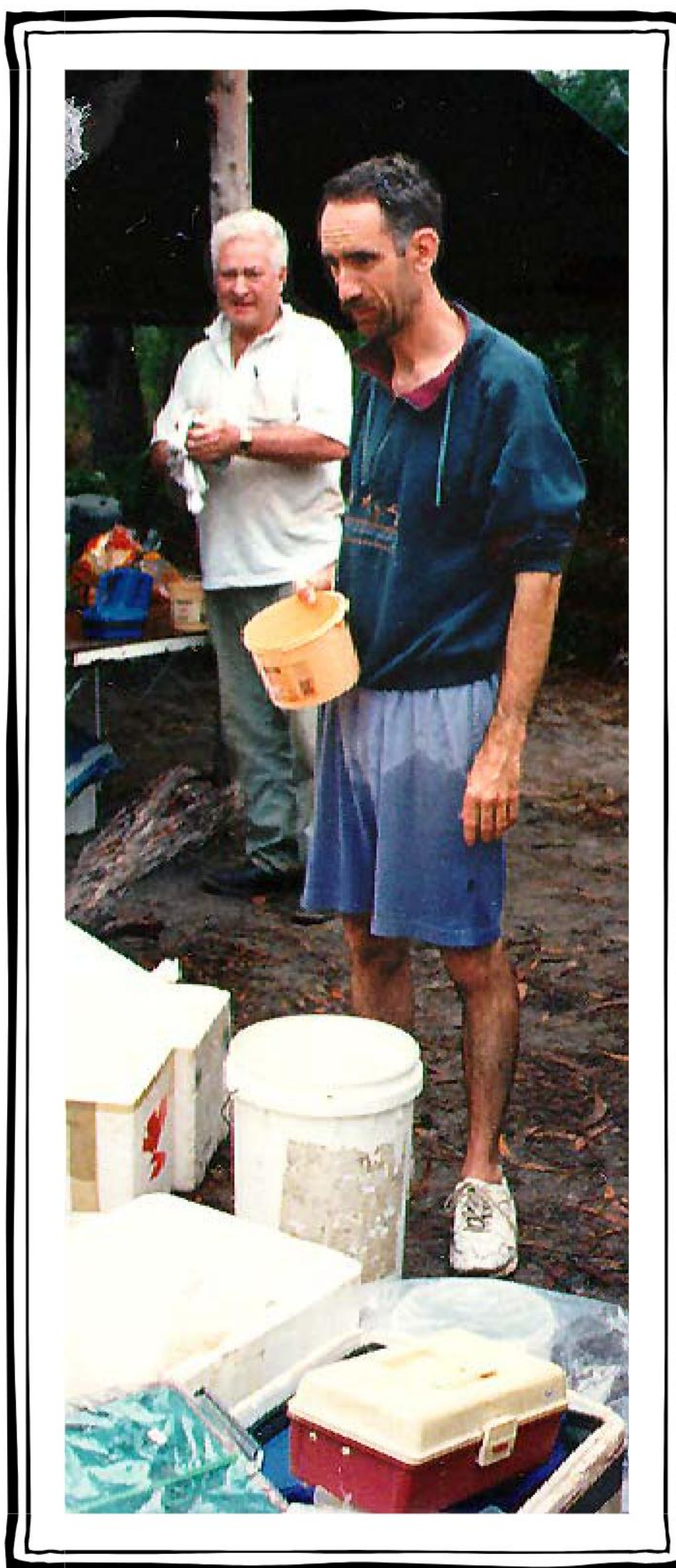
Andrew Lo, in my opinion the "find" of the last conference in Sydney, delivered a well-constructed and thoughtful overview of the surveys being conducted by ANGFA NSW members and their significance to aquatic conservation issues in that state. His presentation was illustrated in part by some of his own art and

featured many humorous anecdotes and observations drawn from his own experiences. Once again he entertained us and still delivered the message.

Gilbert Maebe's presentations at ANGFA Conferences are always highlights – the concept, technical excellence and the content always leave us full of admiration and this year it was no different. "One Name Colours the Rainbow" is all about his experiences with his beloved *Melanotaenia trifasciata* – catching them, breeding them, photographing them and lecturing about them. His shows just keep on getting better and better!

Franz-Peter Mullenholz is Gilbert's friend and collaborator both on the trips and in the studio. His AV presentation "Around the World with a Fishnet" spans the globe from Europe, through America, Madagascar, parts of Asia and Cape York and Arnhem Land in Australia. The humour and the warmth shine through and are not eclipsed by the beauty of the habitats and the wildlife – we certainly hope he will be able to treat us to more of his inspirational shows in the future.

Stephen Pyecroft, "the Fishician", took on the difficult task of advising us on how to administer medications to our fish through their food. It was a good practical session with visual aids in the form of "pots and pans" and audience involvement. The simple folded paper with the 10 cm scale along the fold was a brilliant



way to work out doses. Unfortunately I suspect many will still opt to look for medicated food prepared by someone else rather than go to the trouble.

Martyn Robinson from the Australian Museum showed us some of his expertise with aquatic invertebrates in his talk on "Australian Freshwater Crabs". It became quite clear that this group is poorly known and many more specimens are needed from all over the country to help sort out the systematics and distributions. It is not often that animals are supplied to the museum from the petshops rather than from field trips and surveys.

Finally a few words on Gunther Schmida's presentations – three in all. Gunther is well known to anyone who has seen a few books on Australian aquatic life as his photos are everywhere and in most nature publications. His expertise in the field he has chosen, cold-blooded creatures especially, is unsurpassed and to get such shots he has to know the habits of the animals intimately. To have him show his own slides and comment not only on the techniques but also on the animals was a treat. The three shows were on "Our Rainbowfishes", "Aquatic animals other than Fish" and "The Habitats of Native Fish". To all those that missed him – commiserations!

In summary – the conference was a beauty! Each one is special and this one was no exception. Next year in Canberra there will be a new crew with a clean slate to entertain and inform you. I intend to be there (I haven't missed one yet) and I hope to see you there too.

Until next time – Happy Fishwatching,

MORE ON KEEPING GUDGEONS WITH RAINBOWFISHES

- Culum Brown

Just read that great passage by Doug in the bulletin. I've got an interesting situation at home. We captured a couple of purple spots in our bait traps along with hundreds of rainbows when we last visited the Atherton tablelands. The gudgeons had been living with the rainbows in very small tanks (2ft x 2ft) for about 6 months at uni. It didn't take long for the gudgeons to

realise that if they weren't going to go hungry then they had better start feeding like the rainbows (when in Rome....). Before long they were at the surface gulping masses of flake into the mouths. They soon started growing and their colours were fantastic. None of the rainbows ever suffered an attack.

After a while the purple spots reached a size where I figured they could hack it in my tank at home. My home tank is only 5ft long and has heaps of very large empire gudgeons in it, as well as firetails, Midgleys' carp gudgeons, rainbows, blue eyes, hardy heads and smelt. The tank has huge amounts of weed but growth is kept in check by having a two-foot light at only one end of the tank. The tank also has several logs and large stones.

The purple spots were a little shy at first, but the largest of them soon made himself owner of the feeding area. He always chases off any other gudgeon but completely ignores the rainbowfish. On occasion he takes a swipe at the blue-eyes but he is very rarely successful in capturing them.

All the gudgeon in my tank have taken to feeding at the surface and do very well for themselves. After the initial feeding frenzy the rainbows are typically satiated, however, the gudgeons continue to feed by patrolling the ground and searching for food in the weeds etc. Their vision is primarily out to the sides and slightly up so they are pretty much blind to anything directly in front of their noses. When they do spot something good to eat you'll notice that they actually turn side on and check it out using one eye (similar to most birds). They then take a sideways strike and suck up everything in the viscosity.

The diet of most gudgeons is said to consist primarily of small fish and aquatic insects, but if you spend enough time snorkeling you'll find that most gudgeons graze on the algae and other junk growing on rocks and logs. I agree that they love small fish and aquatic insects but the opportunities to feed on these animals are few and far between.

As part of our tribute to the work of Ian Munro, ANGFA decided to issue 3 small and inexpensive in-house publications. The first is a reprint of his "Additions to the Fish Fauna of New Guinea", which was originally printed in "The Papua and New Guinea Agricultural Journal", Volume 16, Number 4, March 1964 and of especial interest to ANGFA members are the pages dealing with the Rainbowfishes.

The second volume is the subject of this review. "Handbook of Australian Fishes", which was published in instalments in "Fisheries Newsletter" every second month starting July 1956 and the last issue we have is from December 1961. The "Fisheries Newslet-

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