

REPORT

on the

SECOND NATIONAL ANGFA CONVENTION

Sydney, October 1-3, 1988

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Last year's inaugural convention was good but this year's was great! The organising committee must have put in an amazing amount of work to make it such a success - hats off to Andy Wattam, the Caugheys and all the others who helped. Well done! We had top-class speakers, much improved catering and sample bags, conference folders, ANGFA clothes and badges for attendees from most Australian States and two visitors from the U.S.A. Once again a highlight was the friendly informal discussion at meal times and tea breaks.

I will briefly try to give you an idea of what was presented -

1. **Ray Leggett** (author of "Australian Native Fishes for Aquarists") talked on exhibiting and judging native aquarium fish. He stressed the importance of maintaining the "wild" form for each species and illustrated his talk with excellent Neil Armstrong slides.
2. **Chris Barlow** (Fisheries Research Branch, D.P.I., Queensland) talked on the background to the "Eachamensis Extinction" disaster and advised on the progress being made with pond breeding of ANGFA supplied stock. It appears that periodic releases back into Lake Eacham to try to re-establish them in their original habitat is intended.
3. **Heiko Bleher** (International adventurer and fish collector extraordinaire). This was the first of Heiko's sessions and he held us enthralled as he talked to his slides for 1 1/2 hours about his several trips to Cape York since 1982. He showed his broad interest in nature and humanity with superb slides of people, places, plants and wildlife (including fish) - I especially enjoyed the habitat shots (including the "Dingo's Breakfast") and those of the Freshwater Sawfish.
4. **Rick Datodi** (Managing Director of Pet and Aquarium Industries Pty Ltd) gave an up-to-date address on fish health and the aquatic environment with special emphasis on the basic chemistry involved. The section on how these factors operate during transport of fish in plastic bags was very valuable.

5. **Dr George Blasiola** (Director of Research, The Wardley Corporation) delivered a crisp authoritative lecture on the role of nutrition in preventing diseases in aquarium fishes. He expertly covered the principles and practicalities and pointed out many pitfalls, e.g. fatty degeneration of the liver from too much beef heart. In summary the signs of poor nutrition are:
- lowered disease resistance
 - poor colour
 - reduced growth rate
 - abnormal behaviour
 - low fertility
 - low survival rate of off-spring.
6. **Anthony Shelley** (Curator, Sydney Aquarium, Darling Harbour) presented the development of this new public aquarium from concept to opening (it only took 18 months from approval to opening). The design includes two huge walk-through oceanaria floating in the harbour, a crocodile display area and various freshwater and marine habitat displays. Each tank has its own pump and up to 3 filtration systems.
7. **Dr John Merrick** (Author of "the bible", lecturer at Macquarie University) spoke on freshwater grunters and perches and their care and maintenance in aquaria. He stressed that they are sociable fish and therefore are best kept in small groups of 6-8 to reduce the bullying of individuals and even if kept solitary should be able to see other fish.
8. **Auction.** Saturday evening's Auction was again marked by spirited bidding, especially for the rare aquatic plants. Our two American visitors were in the thick of it and were happy to be able to take home *P. mellis* and *P. cyanodorsalis* (amongst several other varieties).
9. **Lionel Lambkin** has studied the Australian Lungfish for many years and has recently published a book on his findings. His talk was full of personal observation and showed his dedication to this unique species. He provided handouts on his breeding ponds and techniques and even brought along eggs and larvae for us to see first-hand.
10. **Dr Gerry Allen** (Senior Curator of Fishes, W.A. Museum) gave another superb lecture on his collecting survey of the Ramu and Gogol River Systems of P.N.G. Once again he held us fascinated as slide after slide of habitats, fishes and other items of interest flashed up. Naturally there were new species and extensions of ranges featured.
11. **Heiko Bleher** - Heiko has been collecting fish around the world for the past 30 years and we were privileged to share some of those experiences with him. We saw fish and habitats that no longer exist; we saw fish that have not been described yet; we saw the beauty and the havoc that man is wreaking on nature.

His wide interest in nature and life showed through and kept us spellbound. The comment was expert and wide-ranging and the slides were superb - for these talks Heiko brought 3,000 slides from his collection of 150,000!

12. **Alex Caughey**, who needs no introduction, gave us a thought-provoking talk on fish keeping entitled "How many fish can you squeeze into a tank?" The old rules were debunked and instead the answer depends on the biomass ratios and on evaluation of the filtration system.
13. **Dr Phil Cadwallader** (Manager of the Fish Culture Section, Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands) spoke on the redevelopment of the Snobs Creek Hatchery and their work with trout, salmon and various native fish including Murray Cod and the endangered Trout Cod. While most of their fish are distributed for angling purposes, the Trout Cod are being released to safe habitats to help in the preservation of the species.
14. **Ron Bowman** (the Godfather of native fish keeping in Australia) took us on a mental tour of his fish rooms and discussed species maintenance, egg distribution and some of his experiences with approximately 60 species of Australian and New Guinea fishes.
15. **David Burnett** (from Dupla Australia) talked on modern technology in aquarium management with special reference to the Dupla System. Dupla kindly provided each attendee's sample bag with a copy of "The Optimum Aquarium" (value approx. \$40.00). Fascinating stuff and possibly the way the hobby is going but rather expensive for the majority, e.g. a complete state-of-the-art 4 ft set-up costs approximately \$11,000.00. However a graduated up-grading program is available.
16. **After Dinner Discussion** on ANGFA general business included the following topics
 - the proposed constitution and incorporation
 - the possibility of a national newsletter
 - past, present and future conventions
 - continuation of the "Eachamensis" projectand concluded with the last little bit of Ron Bowman's talk on egg shipments.
17. **Neil Armstrong's** superb slides of fishes and his travels up the east coast of Australia were accompanied by his personal comment drawn from his vast store of experience of collecting, keeping, breeding and photographing fishes of "Sahul".
18. **Dr Doug Heese** talked on Gudgeons and Gobies, the group of fishes he specialises in, and showed us fish from other areas as well. A lot of work is being done on this group and much remains to be done, e.g. Desert Gobies may actually be a complex of 3-4 species. Included was the new *Styphodon* species caught near Cairns by Gerry Allen.
19. **Dr Gerry Allen** followed with a short address on his continuing work on *Lepidogalaxias Salamandroides* from south west W.A. which apparently buries in the substrate and aestivates when its habitat dries up. This is another fish that probably should be considered as an annual.
20. **Heiko Bleher** - By popular demand and as a fitting finale to the convention, Heiko showed the rest of his world travels and fish collecting slides. This was followed by a

movie he made of his trip to a very remote part of Irian Jaya to collect Mel. doesmani. Once again we were enthralled as he made us aware of the enormity of the task. There is no doubt in my mind that he has had so many "firsts" to his credit because of his dedication, persistence and ingenuity and I will remember his contribution to the convention forever - "Thank you, Heiko!" from all your friends in ANGFA.

Then it was all over - probably until 1990 in Brisbane. The Queensland contingent included Bill and Sue Smith, Ray and Niecey Leggett, Monty and Joan Heidke, Bruce and Leigh Hansen, John Moss, Des Hill, Barry Beck, Steve Hume, Naomi Watson, Adrian Dawson and Terry Gilbert.