

ANGFA ACT



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President's Report

Wow!! What a weekend. At last the convention has come and gone. Now we must ensure that the group doesn't stagnate. We need to ensure that we keep busy, and have a good range of topics and excursions to ensure that the group grows.

Overall, we performed extremely well with the convention, but we could have done a few things better in my opinion. We need to reflect on the convention and come up with any criticisms to help Melbourne make their convention as good. Some things that come to mind include: raffle ticket sellers (not enough) and not getting to everybody, changing talks at the last minute, entry to the auction for non paying attendees (who looked to see if everybody had passes, entry to dinner (who checked to see red spots?) the Port was a dismal performer, so were the T-Shirts. The computer recording at the auction was good, we only lost 1 bag of *Glossolepis Incisus* (which Alan Ford replaced with his own fish), however, the way we handled the dispersion of lots left a bit to be desired. We should have had more chairpersons to introduce the speakers.

Please do not think that this is an attack aimed at anybody, but just my opinion on things as I

saw them. There are probably things I did wrong. Let me know to ensure we fix things for the next conference. I am sure that we all have various ideas of making things better, and we need to discuss them.

Enough of the poorer performance. I believe that we had a wide range of speakers, covering a wide range of topics. Anybody that missed this conference missed a good one. The auction was huge, we were extremely lucky to have so many sponsors and I thank them all. I am sure that over the next few weeks, as we pay bills and send out accounts, a major profit will eventuate.

This conference would not have been the hhhhuuuuuuuuuggggggggggggggeeeeeeeeeee success that it was without the support of the committee and members of ANGFA (ACT) and I want to personally thank you all for your support and dedication.

The unfortunate incident at the National Aquarium was an embarrassment to ANGFA (ACT) and the organisers of the event. However, it is time to move on from that place, get a new meeting hall and grow. I wish the Aquarium luck.

See you at the next meeting.

Andy

ANGFA (ACT) MEETINGS - CHANGE OF VENUE

As a result of recent events, we have decided to change the venue for our meetings. For the immediate future, ANGFA (ACT) meetings will be held at the Canberra Workers' Club, Childers Street, Canberra City commencing at 8.00pm.

The room is downstairs and Alan Ford will be waiting in the foyer to direct you to the appropriate place from

about 7.45pm- so please try to be on time.

This month we will be having a Conference debrief.

An important matter to be raised is whether we move to monthly meetings or continue with our bi-monthly ones. Over the next few meetings we will be trying to get "back on track" with regular speakers, auctions, etc.

The Conference - First Impressions

The Conference was always going to be a lot of hard work - we knew that, didn't we? As I was heard to say to a few of those present, you could spot the grins of the Queenslanders a mile away because they had the advantage of knowing exactly what we were going through without the worry of actually having to take part (although, to their credit, many did help quite a bit).

Doug Williams and I spent most of the weekend in the Trade Room, and things went well in there despite some initial security concerns. Does anyone want to buy a bottle of port? We still have a few left...

I wasn't around when people were volunteering to help out with the Auction - could have been planned that way I guess! How Alan Salmon kept his cool I'll never know, he was under a lot of pressure there - but like the man said, if you keep your head when all those around you are losing theirs - you'll be the tallest man in the room!

Now for the blatant name-dropping: I really enjoyed meeting Gunther Schmida and Gerry Allen for the first time. Gunther especially had a lot to

relate (we share an interest in frogs and reptiles).

Gerry Allen's two talks complimented Heiko Bleher's on the Sunday beautifully. They both had a lot to say about the same part of the world (Irian Jaya) with Heiko offering a tantalising glance of where he is as I write this - Bougainville. Walter Ivantsoff's expert help on identification of the many interesting Hardyheads in Gerry and Heiko's slides was excellent - one species growing to over 30cm long and having a predatory pike-like appearance.

I enjoyed all of the talks and learned a lot, as I am sure everyone else did. Some I regretfully missed owing to Trade Room commitments. The speakers were from diverse backgrounds, and presented in an order that seemed to make the Conference flow well.

My personal thanks go to all the other volunteers that made it happen so well, because even though I worked hard, I know many of the worked harder, which allowed me to enjoy the Conference as a participant as well as a worker.

Andrew Boyd

Looking to the

This article is written in seeking an answer to a problem that should not really exist. Since I have started keeping fish I have heard the expression "oh they had that fish for a few years and then the strain died off" a number of times. To a lesser degree this also applies to the changes to species in tanks eg solid blue Lucustrus, the bent spined pagwi, the hook nosed incisus or red tailed herbetaxelrodi. I am sure that the readers of this article would be able to fill in many more examples that I am unaware of. We are a country in comparative genetic isolation, in terms of fish breeding and our access to foreign stocks of fish. If we are to maintain our current species we must change out attitudes towards the maintenance of fish species and their genetics, within our captive populations.

Some of the species that we maintain are now found only in our tanks and nowhere else eg Eachamensis (yes, Alan, I know) and now unfortunately the Ok Tedi seems to be in the same category. Some are also not able to be imported any more and this puts them in the same boat as the 'extinct' Australian species. The Oktediensis seems to be in a very bad state since there is no captive breeding maintenance program being installed to protect it for potential restocking. I have read articles on this fish but have never seen it and I do not know anybody that keeps it. A great fish is what it is described as and yet nobody keeps it (here at least) or seems concerned that it has a very narrow genetic base

The members of ANGFA (ACT) wish to thank the following for their support of our Conference:

Chisolm Tavern	Skyline Buildings, Canberra
Neptune's Haven	Intrad Pty Ltd
Jem Aquatics	Ian & Joan Michels
Carkeet Transport	Rods 'n' Tackle
Tower Photographics	Australian Pitch & Putt
Pet Pacific Pty Ltd	Pilkingtons
Australian Pet Supplies Pty Ltd	The Gemini Hotel

for future workers to breed from.

What is the solution then? To that there are no easy answers, a great start is to register all of your fish with our species maintenance officer or equivalent (in our case Rick). Many people only put down part of their little hoard of rainbows because they want to be the only people with those fish in an area or perhaps the country. Then a heater breaks, or you fall ill, or a rare and virulent disease gets into your tanks and suddenly you don't have them any more. Please share your fish around and try to trade fish with people as often as possible. The easiest way to keep a strain going is to find someone else that is interested in your fish and swap fish/eggs from time to time. The larger the number of people that do this the greater the chance that the strain will survive and actually remain true to type. This is easiest for the species that everybody can get and wants to keep eg Goyder River trifasciata's. No matter what you wish to keep there will be other people that wish to keep it and being forward thinking people will want to help out as well. There are more species and types to keep than there are people prepared to devote time and effort to breeding them so you do not have to worry about not having some degree of exclusivity.

Another thing is to get some good type photographs of your species and make sure that you stick with fish that match that type photograph. A suggestion from

the conference was to wait as long as possible between generations to breed your replacement brood stock. You will need to keep breeding all the time anyway because you do not know when the axe will fall and this gives you a great opportunity to help the genetic diversity of other peoples breeding program (or at least have available some fish of yours that can be used in an emergency). You will some day need some genetic boost to your stocks and that is when you call in favours from people that you have given stocks to in the past.

This system that I have mentioned here is not the preferred option as far as I am concerned. I would be far happier to see a national program developed for all uncommon species (chiefly the non commercial ones) or common types that are known to no longer represent the type specimens. This national program would use modern breeding principles to maintain the genetic diversity of our tank specimens and would determine what pairings of fish to use in our tanks. This would be an enormous task and one doomed to failure for the same reason that this article will not

change anything, we are too interested in maintaining our independence and not having anybody tell us what to do. It would require people to be prepared to adopt the plan and stick to it. The benefits are enormous, we would be able to say that we started the move to save all of our species and not deplete natural stocks, the price to pay a bit of our pride and some effort.

We are all in this together and the only people that we harm by hoarding our precious few fish are ourselves, people think we are stingy now and future generations will remember us as the generation that could not meet the challenge of keeping these fish. Think of it as a challenge, most ANGFA species are easy to keep, the long term (10+ years), true to type, breeding is the next level of difficulty in keeping these fish. A single successful spawning gives more than enough fish to share with your friends and acquaintances. We may have to maintain our species in captivity indefinitely and we can not allow our current record to be the par for the future.

Peter Hughes

Social Events:

Andrew Boyd is trying to organise a visit to Alison Copperfields' Koi Farm for CDAS members during November. He hopes that ANGFA members from ACT and NSW will attend. Contact Andrew or CDAS for more details.

We are hoping to organise a pre-Christmas get together (wives and children welcome) to celebrate the end of another successful year for ANGFA (ACT). Your ideas on a suggested venue and the type of event would be appreciated. A spit roast is the current front-runner.

Sahulian Analogues

What's an Analogue? The dictionaries all seem to agree that it is a thing which is much the same as another thing. All very interesting. In Biology Boffinate it has been loosely used to describe a species which has enough similarities to another so as to be the same in terms of behaviour and accordingly keeping systems. The specific case was, from memory, a justification of the keeping of the Princess Parrot (*Polytelis alexandrae*) on the grounds that it was good "training" for the keeping of the rarer Superb Parrot. Damfino, I used to keep princess parrots because I liked them! But it makes sense if you think about it... This is why we have all recommended "beginner's fish" to others- Platies, White Clouds and the like.

I have a pet hypothesis that there are many of the commonly kept exotic fish species that are actually "Analogues" for Sahulian species: that is, they prepare the fishkeeper for the responsibility of keeping our Australian and New Guinea fishes. This may seem a little elitist, and I guess it is, but I would personally rather that someone "cut their teeth" on exotics and then moved on to indigenous fishes than the other way around.

What are these Analogue species? I would like to start at the "top" and work my way down. The obvious candidates for biggest commonly kept tank fish amongst Australian aquarists would have to be the Cichlids. There are rough parallels between their aggressive behaviour and large tank/filter requirements and that of the Grunter/Cod/Saratoga type fishes. Indeed - many large Cichlid keepers are "going over" to large natives.

The comparison can be made between the general day-to-day keeping of the common "community tank" species and that of

Rainbowfish. They are of a reasonable but not excessive size, they are not overly aggressive, and do not damage plants to any large degree.

The Dwarf Cichlids are rather similar to many of the smaller Gudgeons and Gobies. I was particularly struck by the behavioural similarities between the Lionhead Cichlid (*Steatocranus* sp.) and the Desert Goby (*Chlamydogobius* sp.). They both benefit from a tank of their own and will spawn in much the same environment (although not in exactly the same fashion, there the similarity breaks down. - the Desert Goby would appear to be heremically polygynous with the male tending the eggs).

Finally, there are the fiddly little fish for the specialists - the Blue-Eyes, who equate rather nicely (in my humble opinion) to the Tetras. Everyone can keep them alive, for a time at least, but breed them in numbers? Not a job for the beginner or faint-hearted. Someone correct me if I'm wrong but I am sure that we are only just maintaining the numbers of Honey Blue-Eyes kept by ANGFA (ACT) members - and that despite the best efforts of our more experienced breeders. Myself, I have given up on them - I just don't have the 'knack' (is it just patience?) and gave mine away for "the common good".

But, and it is a big but, the Tetras are bred in large numbers overseas and imported cheaply. We cannot say the same for the Blue-Eyes, or most of the Rainbows, or any of the bigger species. It is up to us to breed our own tank specimens, if for nothing else then for the sheer selfish pleasure of continuing to own them.

Andrew Boyd

The Editor's Lament

This is my column to badger and berate you into supporting the Newsletter. Alan Ford put much effort into creating a fine Newsletter and I hope to continue his tradition, but for me to do so requires input from the readers - you!

If you look back over the last few issues, you will find most of the articles have originated from the same few people. We need input from a wider range of people with

more and diverse interests and skills. Your article may be on any of a wide range of subjects relating to aquaristic. Articles on breeding or maintenance of the not-so-common species are especially welcome. Your articles should be forwarded to me care of the Secretary.

On another note, the Convention (and lack of space) has meant that our Financial Statement does not appear in this newsletter. Rest assured it will be back next issue!

Alan Salmon