



K. C. C. Newsletter - February, 2006

A Publication of the American Killifish Association, Killifish Conservation Committee. Charlie Nunziata, Chairman

“The only failure is not to try”

Conservation News...

K.C.C. Chairman's Message

We find ourselves once again approaching convention time and I imagine we are all wondering where the year went. There have been several changes since our last report in May, 2005. Some groups failed to jell while others dropped one or more core species for lack of support, paucity of stock, or inability to propagate. On the other hand, several groups remain viable, and new ones initiated. All and all, the KCC remains an active and viable effort and that, in and of itself, is noteworthy.

Our main issue is recruitment and retention of volunteers. Although participation in the KCC has somewhat decreased, it is not far off historic highs. And it is here that the fundamental issue is most vivid. We have never gotten above 80 “signed-on” KCC members and no more than 50 members who were truly active in the program. This 3 to 4% of the overall membership probably represents the fundamental pool of recruits we can expect to maintain over the long term.

This apparently limited pool is most likely rooted in the disconnect between the widespread support for the idea of conserving core species and the number of people who actually translate that support into action. Quite simply, this illustrates that the program is not inherently attractive to the person with a passing interest, or whose interest goes to competition or the breeding of an ever changing suite of species.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with that relationship to the hobby and, again, is it not a criticism. The reality is to one with that orientation, a commitment to keep and propagate a single species for two or more years represents work. But to the person with

the passion to conserve a species, to give something back to the hobby or who hates to see a beautiful species leave the hobby, conservation is not work. It is, in fact, an essential part of the hobby itself.

A corollary of this idea arises when the selected core species does not hold wide appeal. For example, a member may be willing to participate in the KCC effort if it involves a fish that he or she has a strong interest or affinity for. Of course, to the conservationist, the appeal of a candidate species is in its appropriateness to the goals of the program. In other words, it is inherently appealing if it needs to be conserved and may otherwise be lost to the hobby,

The KCC program has tried both approaches: Rigorously select a group of core species and stick with them, or allow the group of volunteers to select their favorite species for conservation. We have examples of each method both failing and succeeding. In the latter case, we began some time ago allowing groups to select the core species they wished to work with. We found that when members of the breeder teams changed, so did the selected core species. As a result, core species dropped away and were replaced by others that also dropped away as the cast of participants changed. There was not stability in the groups or in the core species they chose to work with. Nonetheless, some groups were very successful with this approach, but success only followed when the breeder group stabilized and with it a stable group of species.

On the other hand, the *Epiplatys* group has been working with the same core species virtually from the beginning of the program, many years ago. And although they have also had problems recruiting members, they have maintained both the breeder team members and the original set of core species.

The common thread in our successes? Stable breeder teams. When the breeder team members remain essentially unchanged, then the group succeeds, regardless of the core species selected. As in many things in life, it is the people that count.

Everyone experiences periods where the priorities of family, career, and of life in general do not leave room for hobbyist interests. With respect to the KCC, such events can result in a coordinator slowly or abruptly ceasing activity.

This is not meant as a criticism of those who find they can no longer participate. And although we are both grateful for whatever time people spend on this program, and we understand the aforementioned issues, we must recognize the impact of a non-functioning coordinator on the program is exacerbated when the coordinator does not reveal that activity has ceased. Inactivity manifests as unresponsiveness, and this is particularly damaging. New volunteers become frustrated with the lack of response, and breeder team members become discouraged when their hard work appears to have been in vain.

In the last survey, I indicated to the listed coordinators that if I did not receive a response I would assume that the subcommittee was no longer viable.

There are of course other reasons for a subcommittee to go quiet that have nothing to do with the activity level of the coordinator. Typically, the breeder team is not successful in propagating the species, sex ratio problems develop or a viable breeder team cannot be stabilized.

If the key to success is a suite of stable breeder teams headed by active coordinators, we need to understand how the program can facilitate their inclusion in the program.

So what keeps a team stable?. I think the most fundamental element is a fervent belief in the idea of conservation. This belief then can manifest as a successful KCC program when a member with this orientation also has an abiding interest in the selected core species. We all know of members who, without any formal program, have kept the same species more or less continuously for decades. That

represents both the passion for conservation and for the species kept.

If we accept that both these elements are required for success, we need to recognize that only education and experience will instill these elements in someone who does not possess them. The program cannot give experience, but it can educate. Our displays at the national conventions, JAKA articles, these periodic reports and emphasis on the affiliate club level are all vehicles we hope will educate and at some point ignite a passion for conservation. We should also recognize that if that passion is not there, it cannot be ignited. Therefore, a main focus is on facilitating the expression of the interest that exists within the membership so that it is applied to the KCC program.

Facilitation is of course the setting of a conducive environment and the structure by which the groups are more easily empowered. Now we have come full circle because this is where the coordinator provides a pivotal and critical service; responsiveness and leadership. So it is strong and dedicated coordinators that will make us grow by running subcommittees that encourage member participation among those that have the passion to really work at conservation.

We have several people in the program that have shown this ability – they head the successful subcommittees. We have several equally talented and dedicated coordinators who are hampered by the issues previously mentioned; failure to keep the species going or the non-commitment of breeder team members.

Therefore, my first emphasis this year is to ask coordinators whose groups have languished to take on a different species, to weed out coordinators that are no longer functioning, and to recruit additional talented and passionate coordinators who will make the time necessary to administering a successful KCC group.

I will also emphasize the importance of not scattering our energy unproductively by recommending limiting the number of core species within a group and to eliminate those species that overlap and fill the same criteria for a core species.

In the same vein, I will ask that some level of interest be determined before we expand into additional genus and species groups not now in place or otherwise authorized under the program.

Hopefully, these actions will prove productive in 2006. What is most important is that we all recognize that the KCC effort will never be easy. We should equally understand that the fact that we still exist after these many years is a testament to success. Remember that no effort at conservation in the AKA has ever persisted this long or reached the level of accomplishment we have. Like our motto says, "the only failure is not to try."

Everyone's comments would be appreciated.

Exchanging Core Species Fish and Eggs:

We once again remind all coordinators that as the shipping season approaches, we would like to offer the other functioning killifish conservation programs excess eggs of killies endangered in the hobby. Please let me know what species, if any, you may have available, and I will canvass the other International Killifish Conservation Programs to determine which are needed. Likewise, I will make our needs known as well.

Trading Core Species within the Breeder Groups:

Coordinators are reminded that it is a critical requirement to arrange at least one annual swap of fish or eggs among the members of each species group.

We recognize that opinion, scientific or otherwise tends to be confusing on the effectiveness of this practice. Nonetheless, the KCC has adopted the policy to require these exchanges in the hopes that ultimately, this practice will tend to minimize the effects of limited genetic pools.

Please see to this task as soon as it is practical to do so

Species Maintenance:

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the BOT desires that we combine like committees in order to increase efficiency and reduce overlapping efforts. As a result, the KCC will take in Species Maintenance. This effort had evolved into a survey function whose purpose is to track what species are being kept. A

laudable goal but one that is exceedingly difficult to achieve because it quite literally requires that all our AKA members cooperate by supplying a periodic list of their holdings. It also requires tracking the F&E listings and now, Aquabid which has a lot of killifish activity. At this point I really don't know how this is going to work although I am looking at a statistical approach that looks promising. After the upcoming convention, I will make an attempt at some sort of tracking and analysis program.

Distribution of KCC Materials:

This report is issued in PDF format and although I have the contact information on some of the active KCC members, I'm sure my list is not complete. Therefore, the coordinators are asked to distribute this report to their team members. In addition, the KCC manual is also available upon request in PDF format. Each coordinator should have a copy of the manual and distribute it to each of their breeder team members as well.

This report will also be offered on the killi-list and in the BNL.

Best regards to all, and I hope to see everyone at the upcoming convention.



KCC Winter 2005-2006 Summary Report

Open Genus Coordinator Positions:

We still have genus coordinator openings for the following genera. Contact Charlie if interested at 727-393-3757 or epiplaty@tampabay.rr.com

Aplocheilus
Aphyosemion chromaphyosemion
Callopanchax
Rivulus
Scriptaphosemion/Archiaphyosemion

Groups eliminated:

The following core species have been dropped from the program due to the inability to attract volunteers and/or to secure sufficient stock to initiate or maintain a viable breeder team.

Fundulopanchax gardneri N'Sukka
Fundulopanchax robertsoni
Callopanchax:

Core Species Groups retained, but not currently viable:

The following core species have been dropped from the KCC tracking program and will not appear in future reports. These breeder teams have only a coordinator and in some cases one additional active breeder. These coordinators require at least 3 more volunteers to form a viable breeder team. If interested, please contact the coordinator directly.

Epiplatys chaperi chaperi Angona
Hugh Moore Hughm@comcast.com
Fundulopanchax "deltaense"=Fp. gularis:
Mark Kemper. Bigkillies0413@aol.com
Fundulopanchax "gulare" = gularis
Mark Kemper bigkillies0413@aol.com
Fundulopanchax amieti
David Ramsey djramsey@earthlink.net
Fundulopanchax gardneri Jos Plateau George
Morris gmorris@kester.com
Fundulopanchax puerzli
David Ramsey djramsey@earthlink.net
Fundulopanchax walker Orange
David Ramsey djramsey@earthlink.net
Campellolebias brucei:
Curtis Smith cskillies@hotmail.com
Archiaphyosemion petersi Banco Park
Thuan Nguyen sunfish2@mindspring.com

Highlighting the Fundulopanchax Group:

Special thanks and congratulations go out to the Coordinators and members of Fundulopanchax group, perennially one of our most effective subcommittees. And although they have their ups and downs, they manage to keep several core species going, year in and year out. Thanks people, we are all in your debt.

Breeder Group Status Report:

Status Key:

Secure: Sufficient breeding stock, juveniles and fry to maintain species indefinitely.

Not Secure: Sufficient stock available to continue the program but more stock and/or breeders required to achieve a "Secure" status.

Critical: Insufficient breeders and/or breeding stock. Core species may be abandoned.

Volunteers: Several groups are in particularly critical need of additional breeders to join their core species breeder teams. See the summary below for the most urgent shortfalls.

Genus/subgenus: *Aphyosemion chromaphyosemion:*

Genus Coordinator: Position Open

Core Species: *A. bitaeniatum* 47km N. Lagos Abadan.

Species Coordinator: Dr. Harry Specht:
AUS62@comcast.com

Number of members: 2. Status: Not Secure:

This species is being kept exclusively by members of the Suncoast Killifish Society and it currently in short supply. Once stocks are increased, additional volunteers will be sought.

Genus/subgenus: *Aphyosemion kathetys:*

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Monty

Lehman: lehmann@jlab.org

Core Species: *A. elberti* N'Tui:

Species Coordinator: Same.

Number of members: Several. Status: Secure:

Genus/subgenus: *Aphyosemion mesoaphyosemion:*

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Dr. Harry

Specht: AUS62@aol.com

Core Species: *A. australe:*

Species Coordinator: Dr. Harry Specht

Status: Secure: Dr. Specht advises that

although the gold sport remains the most popular version of the species, the original, the so-called "Chocolate" is so well Not Secure in the hobby that the KCC effort need not continue. Entries at the convention and availability on-line confirm that the species is well entrenched.

This is a testament of the success of the australe program. Dr. Specht worked very hard to assure that the hobby retained the normal version of australe in the face of the extensive popularity of the gold sport. On behalf of the hobby, we salute his successful effort.

Genus/subgenus: *Epiplatys:*

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Jim Hutchings:
killifish1@juno.com

Core Species: *Ep. bifasciatus Ghana 2/04*

Species Coordinator: Jim Hutchings.

Number of members: 1. Status: Not Secure.

More members needed.

Core Species: *Ep. huberi*

Core Species Coordinator: Edd Kray

Number of members: 2. Status: **Critical**

Core Species: *Ep. ansorgii* Sindara:

Core Species Coordinator: Liz Hutchings
killifish1@juno.com
Number of members: 3. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Ep. sexfasciatus* Sp. "Elon":
Core Species Coordinator: Hal Henglein:
epiplatys@worldnet.att.net
Number of members: 1. Status: Not Secure.
Additional volunteers needed.

Core Species: *Ep. fas. zimiensis* Perié
Core Species Coordinator: Charlie Nunziata:
epiplatys@tampabay.rr.com
Number of members: 1. Status: Not Secure.
Additional volunteers needed.

Core Species: *Ep. lamottei*
Core Species Coordinator: Open
Volunteer needed.
Number of members: 4. Status: Secure.

Genus/subgenus: *Fundulopanchax*:
Genus/subgenus Coordinator: David Ramsey:
djramsey@earthlink.net

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax walkeri*
GH2/74 Kutunze
Core Species Coordinator: David Ramsey
Number of members: 4. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax oeseri*
Core Species Coordinator: David Suffia:
dmsuffia@aol.com
Number of members: 6. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax gardneri*
Misaje
Core Species Coordinator: Doug Eberling
ebeling@charter.net
Number of members: 5. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax cinnamomeus* Supe
Core Species Coordinator: Roger Langton:
rwlacn@aol.com
Number of members: 2. Status:
Please note that Roger has some fish available
for one or two individuals who are interested in
helping maintain this fish. Please contact
Roger directly.

Genus/subgenus: *Pachypanchax*:
Genus/subgenus Coordinator: MaryJo
Bazeley: maryjo@fuse.net

This subcommittee is a project of the
Cincinnati Killifish Association affiliate club.

Core Species: *Pachypanchax omalonotus*
Number of members: Unknown. Status: Secure
Core Species: *Pachypanchax playfairii*
Number of members: Unknown. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Pachypanchax sakaramyi*
Jeffreville
Number of members: Unknown. Secure

Genus/subgenus: South American Annuals:
Genus/subgenus Coordinators: Dan Katz:
dkatz@optonline.net
Note: This group works in conjunction with the
South American Study Group, an international
group of killifish breeders

Core Species: *Simp. marginatus*:
Core Species Coordinator: Dan Katz
Number of members: 5. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Simp. alternatus*:
Core Species Coordinator: Curtis Smith:
cskillies@hotmail.com
Number of members: 2. Status: **Critical**. The
group has lost the fish but expect to obtain
additional stock in the near future.

Core Species *Simp. zonatus*:
Core Species Coordinator: Open.
Volunteers needed.
Number of Members: 3. Status: Not secure.
[Potential sex ratio problems]

Genus/subgenus: *Nothobranchius*:
Coordinator: Dr. Dan Nielsen
drdan@norwich.net

Core Species: *N. foerschi*
Number Members: 3: Secure

Genus/Subgenus:
Archiaphyosemion/Scriptaphyosemion
Genus Coordinator: Open.

Core Species: *Scriptaphyosemion etzeli*
Yek Bir:
Coordinator: Ray Wolff:
R.W.Wolff: choupiqu@wctc.net
Number of Members: 1. Status: Not secure.
Volunteers needed.

New Breeder Team:
Core Species: *Script liberienne*
Core Species Coordinator: Doug Eberling
ebeling@charter.net
Number of members: 5. Status: Secure

Reconstituted Group Now Forming:

The following group is in the process of reforming under a new coordinator. Please contact the coordinator directly if you wish to join this effort.

Genus/Subgenus: *A. diapteron*

Coordinator: Marcus Brown
thefishbiologist@charter.net

Coordinator Activities and comments:

For this report, I want to highlight Dr. Dan Nielsen's effort to get a *Nothobranchius* breeding team off the ground.

Dan writes:

"The initial format of the Conservation Project started several years ago didn't appear to be accomplishing very much. Members submitted lists of the species that they were keeping, but that was it. No one appeared interested in swapping fish back and forth to ensure genetic diversity or in getting specimens in the hands of other breeders. As time progressed, fewer and fewer members were sending in their lists and none would be sent in without some prodding.

Being a little discouraged, a new program was started, referred to as the "Foerschi Project". The main objective of the project was to distribute fish to AKA members that had not worked with this fish and to have them propagate them and redistribute them.

Why *foerschi*? There were actually several reasons, academic, practical and personal. In addition I wanted to see if this type of project would work. I had a fair number of the *N. foerschi* available that I could distribute. It is a relatively easy fish to work with and they were not showing up in any numbers on fish lists or in shows. In addition I had raised this strain since 1974 and I was getting a little worried about its future. It is really a delightful little fish, very colorful and not very aggressive. I felt that it would be a shame if it disappeared from the hobby.

After putting a notice in the BNL, I had 17 responses. Starting on 22 Aug 2004, I shipped out 28 pairs and 2 trios of the fish to 15 members. From the responses that I got, all arrived safe at their destination. Our beloved USPS came through without any problems,

although I did have to replace two females that didn't survive the trip. There were 3 people that initially contacted me about the fish, but for various reasons I could not ship them fish. I know, the numbers don't exactly match up, please ignore

The original proposal called for the members to repay committee with 2 pairs within 2 years. After thinking about this for a while, I decided that I really didn't want the fish sent back to me. That wouldn't accomplish very much. I didn't need them and it wouldn't get them in the hands of people new to *N. foerschi*.

Therefore in July 2005, I sent a letter to the participants (copy enclosed) making a slight change.

To date, January 2006, I have gotten positive responses from 3 members. Positive in that they have distributed 2 or more pairs or bags of eggs to people new to the fish. I also have responses from 3 other people that, for various reasons, have not been successful with the fish. The project's initial phase will not be up until later on this summer. By then I hope to hear from the remaining members. At the moment I feel that things are going fairly well, not perfect of course, but not bad. At this point I have 14 members that have been exposed to the fish, along with at least 6 more that have gotten the fry of the initial distribution. This comes out to 20 (or more) people that had never experienced this fish that we hope will breed and distribute them.

Trying to save or protect members of the *Nothobranchius* genus one species at a time may not be the ideal way to do things considering the number of species that are in danger of being lost to the hobby. But, I feel that if I can get breeding pairs into the hands of a number of hobbyists, the chances of saving that species increases and one is better than none. AKA members are extremely generous and dedicated, but their interest appears to be mostly in what's new and exciting.

To most the concept of long-term maintenance seems foreign. I have therefore decided that a "breed and redistribute" program may be a more satisfactory way to protect the species. Perhaps later on this summer I will have a better idea if this is a practical project."

Dan's ability to provide the core species stock to those interested is well beyond the capabilities of most of our other core species

groups. It will be nonetheless be interesting to see how his program evolves in 2006.

From Roger Langton:

“Logging in central West Africa is having a catastrophic impact on many animal species, including three of our closest relatives, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos, through the rise of bush-meat trade. The great apes could be careening towards extinction as a result of this trade, and unless governments in both Africa and the rest of the world act soon, it may soon be too late.

The escalation in the trade is being fuelled by our demand in Europe for African hardwood, because logging is opening up vast swatches of forest to poachers. Loggers are actively involved in poaching. They not only eat the bush-meat themselves, but also transport it to nearby cities to sell.....”

It only takes a little imagination to know what is probably happening to small streams that are in the way of logging and the likely loss of aquatic life.”

Final Thoughts:

Roger’s note is a sad but all too often heard commentary. At the risk of repeating myself, I’ve included below some comments made in both past newsletters and other public correspondence on my view regarding the long term prognosis about the flow of new species into the hobby. These comments are all the more accurate given the recent actions of Brazil in designating many of our most popular killies endangered in that country. It is thought that the fish in question are not actually endangered but were so designated as an economic strategy to control exportation of native species, a point I made in the aforementioned comments.

May, 2005

Another way of looking at our necessity to preserve killifish in the hobby:

Many of our killies are from undeveloped countries where human-driven extinctions tend to be less severe than in developed countries simply because economic activity is low. But as these countries develop, economic pressures and the politics fueled by them will surely result in insensitivity to environmental issues. Quite simply, environmental degradation is often pushed down the list of priorities during economic expansions. And we see this in countries that are now rapidly developing: Brazil, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria

and Cameroon. We can only assume that habitat degradation will continue to accelerate with the pace of economic development elsewhere as well. The countries where habitat degradation is most likely contain some of the richest and most diverse array of killifish in the world.

But economic factors are not the whole story. Social unrest and the presence of disease further diminish collecting activities, making such adventures more and more dangerous and problematical. It is already difficult to collect in regions of South America and Africa because of these adversarial factors, and in some parts of West Africa, collecting and exporting killies has virtually ceased. In addition, collecting in foreign countries is becoming exceedingly expensive and beyond the reach of many potential collectors.

There are political factors as well. More and more countries are becoming protective of all their resources, including their fauna. A sort of ecological nationalism will put more and more habitats off limits to the outside collector as time goes on. For example, we have all heard about the new difficulties in collecting and exporting killifish from Brazil.

Taken in the aggregate, we can anticipate the long-term potential for significant reductions in the overall supply of wild killifish. Perhaps more important than the introduction of new species, re-importations of species that were or are now currently in the hobby will likewise be affected, eroding the possibility of reestablishing old lines, and reducing the potential of refreshing the genetic pool among the species we have.

The supply of new species and unique locations of existing species remains high for now, and will probably remain so for some time to come. But the long term trend, if not for our generation, then certainly the next, is to continually reduce the availability of new species and reintroduction of existing ones. The oversupply of these new and interesting species seems inexhaustible and in that appearance lays the most insidious problem of all, our behavior. That behavior drives the replacement of species already in the hobby by newly available ones.

There is finite capacity in the killifish hobby, and this is reflected by our inability to absorb new species while maintaining all the older ones. Our attraction and gravitation toward

the newest species has always resulted in the continual loss of previously established species. So if our analysis is correct that wild fish importations will eventually decline, what will be left in the hobby are the species that had not yet been abandoned as those declines occur. Bad as this may be, if the decline in new importations becomes very rapid, the diversity remaining within the hobby will consist primarily of the most recent residuals of the then current craze. In any case, it is unlikely that what remains in the hobby as these events unfold will fairly represent the true diversity within the killifish group. To change our members behavior from one of acquisition and consumption, to one of conservation, maintenance and reproduction takes not only education, but a structure within which that change in attitude can be creatively expressed. It is here that the KCC has the pivotal role of facilitating diversity preservation in the hobby. We accomplish this by emphasizing the propagation and maintenance of core species that are representative of the greatest possible array of genera and species groups. “