



K. C. C. Newsletter - May, 2005

A Publication of the American Killifish Association, Killifish Conservation Committee

“The only failure is not to try”

Conservation News...

K.C.C. Chairman's Message

We find ourselves once again at convention time and I imagine we are all wondering where the year went. This has been a difficult year for many and the conservation effort has shown the effects. I must report that we have not made any significant progress this year. We have lost some subcommittees that are yet to be replaced, and no new groups have been started. Nonetheless, several sub-committees continue to do well, and our cadre of dedicated genus and species coordinators continue to provide critical leadership and energy to the program.

Our main issue has and remains the level of member participation. At our highpoint, we had about 70 AKA members and some friends from our sister organizations overseas participating in the KCC program. Although I do not have an accurate count at this writing, the level of participation has dropped approximately 30%.

This trend in the face of the enormous effort many people have made to maintain and raise the level of participation over the years illustrates that the program, as we are now presenting it is not inherently attractive to the rank and file member. Rather, its appeal remains limited to a small group who recognize the importance of conserving killifish in the hobby. The program appears to many to be work, not fun, and something one must do out of a sense of duty. This wears thin in the context of a hobby activity.

This is nowhere more evident than at our annual convention. For the past four years, I have provided rather extensive KCC displays that have elicited virtually no interest and few volunteers.

Clearly, we need to do something different if we are to stem the current malaise and have the KCC realize its potential. I suggest we need to provide a more interesting and attractive package of perceived “benefits” to the members, and it is here that I turn to the experience of study groups.

Over the years, individuals have privately initiated and maintained study groups for small groups of specialists. By and large these groups thrive for a period of time then tend to decline with the energy level of the leader. And even though most of these groups ultimately disband, their occasional recurrence points to an innate reservoir of interest in what a study group can provide – information, contacts and mentoring. The idea here is to harness this inactive pool of interest and blend it into the KCC program. I think we can do this by evolving some of our more active core species committees into study groups.

They will need help of course. The KCC may consider providing newsletter services and assistance in publishing papers on the study group's findings or other information that may be of interest to the AKA membership at large. It may be feasible to act as a clearinghouse of sorts for study group activities within the structure of the KCC.

Perhaps there is value in formalizing the existence of the study group as they do in the DKG. The KCC could provide publicity that may facilitate recruiting and contributions from experts or other consultants.

What we ask in return is the dedication by each study group to a core species initiative that conforms to the KCC program.

By providing additional beneficial activities, we should be able to recruit more effectively and then educate the recruit in the need for

killifish conservation as part of the members study group activities.

I would like to open this idea up to the coordinators and any other interested parties for discussion of this or any other idea that would serve to increase participation.

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

I'm always looking for arguments to support killifish conservation. And although the ethics of the activity always powerful points, it occurred to me that there is a longer term justification that may have some validity.

1: Many of our killies are from undeveloped countries where human-driven extinctions of local fauna 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.

2: 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: Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast. In addition, collecting in foreign countries is becoming exceedingly expensive and will become beyond the reach of many collectors.

3. There are political factors as well. More and more countries are becoming protective of all their resources, including their native fauna. A trend toward what I call "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 that these factors will eventually result in 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.

If anything, we have been for the last 20 odd years in an oversupply phase. The plethora of new and interesting species seems inexhaustible, and this period of abundance fuels the most insidious problem of all, our behavior. It is the desire to acquire rather than conserve, and it drives the continual replacement of species already in the hobby by newly available ones.

Part of the acquisition behavior is caused by the finite capacity in the killifish hobby to absorb new species while maintaining all the older ones. There is simply not enough "tank resources" to do it, and this, together with our attraction and gravitation toward the newest species will continuously result in the loss of previously established species.

So if the 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 the declines accelerate. 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 killifish diversity.

To change our members behavior from one of acquisition and consumption, to one of conservation, maintenance and reproduction takes not only education, but also 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.

I'd like feedback from the coordinators and any other interested parties as to the validity of this line of reasoning, and whether it has potential to change perception about the value of the KCC effort.

Exchanging Core Species Fish and Eggs:

We once again remind all coordinators that we like to offer the other functioning killifish conservation programs excess eggs of killies endangered in the hobby. Our past success in helping re-establish *Fp. walkeri* and *Fp. oeseri* illustrates the importance of communication with our international friends. 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 they are to arrange for at least one annual swap of fish or eggs among the members of each species group. This is necessary to maintain to whatever degree is possible the genetic diversity among the populations you are working with. This practice is critical to the success of the long term breeding and maintenance program. If you have not already done so, please see to this task as soon as it is practical to do so

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 inbreeding.

Genus and Group Coordinator Reports:

A summary report and an updated Genus and Species Coordinator list are included in this newsletter. Plans to establish a number of new core species were not successful because Species Coordinators were unable to get enough volunteers or stock to do so. It is not

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unusual for these kinds of efforts to experience ups and downs, so no one should get discouraged at our current position.

What is most important is that we do not give up, or in other ways diminish our efforts. In fact, it is the time when things are flat that we redouble our efforts. This is best accomplished by continuous recruiting for the species breeder teams, and to keep close contact with the core team members.

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

Aphyosemion chromaphyosemion
Aplocheilus and Eurasian

Highlighting the South American Annual Group:

Special thanks and congratulations go out to the Coordinators and members of South American Annuals Group, headed by Dan Katz. This group of dedicated breeders has done and continues to do an excellent job of maintaining two important species, *Simpsonichthys marginatus* and *alternatus* that would have no doubt been lost to the hobby were it not for their efforts. The group is now working to establish an additional species, *Simpsonichthys zonatus*. Contact Dan Katz for details. dskatz@optonline.net

Always, More Recruits

All groups are urged to increase the number of members within the breeder groups. Remember that nothing is forever, and even the most dedicated of us will at times relent to life's pressures at the expense of our fish. The more core breeders we have the less likely that a fall-off by a few core species breeders will damage the overall program. So recruit, recruit, recruit. There are never too many backups - never too many breeders, and never too many core species. I've found that affiliate club meetings are a great place to recruit.

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.

Species Maintenance:

The BOT has decided to combine like committees in order to increase efficiency and

reduce overlapping efforts. As a result, the KCC has been assigned the reporting duties of the Species Maintenance Committee. This is essentially a reporting project. Look for details in an upcoming BNL.



KCC Winter 2004-2005 Summary of Coordinators Reports:

Status Key:

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

Established: Sufficient stock available to continue the program but more stock and/or breeders required to achieve a "Secure" status.

Insecure: Additional breeders and/or breeding stock required to continue the program.

Critical: Insufficient breeders and/or breeding stock. Core species may be abandoned. Some coordinators have not reported and we assume those groups are not currently functioning. They have been dropped from this summary until a status can be ascertained.

Genus/subgenus: *Aphyosemion chromaphyosemion*:

Genus Coordinator: Position Open

Core Species:

A. bitaeniatum 47km N. Lagos Abadan.

Species Coordinator: Dr. Harry Specht:

AUS62@aol.com

Number of members: 3. Status: Secure:

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

Number of members: 9. Status: Secure: See the coordinator's comments at the end of this summary.

Genus/subgenus: *Epiplatys*:

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Jim Hutchings:

killifish1@juno.com

Core Species: *Ep. bifasciatus Venego* TMBB 90/1.

Species Coordinator: Jim Hutchings.

Number of members: 1. Status: Insecure. More members needed.

Core Species: *Ep. chaperi chaperi* Angona:

Core Species Coordinator: Hugh Moore:

hughm@comcast.net

Number of members: 2. Status: Secure:

Core Species: *Epiplatys chevalieri chevalieri*

Core Species Coordinator: Edd Kray:

edd.Kray@rf.doe.gov

Number of members: 1. Status: Insecure. More volunteers needed.

Core Species: *Ep. huberi*

Core Species Coordinator: Edd Kray

Number of members: 1. Status: Critical

Core Species: *Ep. ansorgii Sindara*:

Core Species Coordinator: Liz Hutchings

killifish1@juno.com

Number of members: 3. Status: Insecure

Core Species: *Ep. sexfasciatus* Sp. "Elon":

Core Species Coordinator: Hal Henglein:

epiplatys@worldnet.att.net

Number of members: 2. Status: Established

Core Species: *Ep. fas. zimiensis* Perié

Core Species Coordinator: Charlie Nunziata:

epiplaty@tampabay.rr.com

Group has not been reconstituted. Status: Insecure.

Genus/subgenus: *Fundulopanchax*:

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: David Ramsey:

djramsey@earthlink.net

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax gardneri* Jos Plateau

Core Species Coordinator: George Morris:

gmorris@kester.com

Number of members: 3. Status: Secure

Core Species: *Fundulopanchax gardneri* N'sukka

Core Species Coordinator: Patrick Coleman:

patrickjcolemanis@attbi.com

Number of members: 1. Status: Insecure

Core Species: Fundulopanchax walkeri GH2 Kutunze

Core Species Coordinator: Chris Wetmore
cjaws@worldnet.att.net
Number of members: 2. Status: Secure

Core Species: Fundulopanchax oeseri

Core Species Coordinator: David Suffia:
dmsuffia@aol.com
Number of members: 4. Status: Secure

Core Species: Fundulopanchax gardneri Misaje

Core Species Coordinator: Doug Eberling
ebeling@charter.net
Number of members: 4. Status: Secure

Core Species: Fundulopanchax cinnamomeus Supe

Core Species Coordinator: Roger Langton:
rwlacn@aol.com
Number of members: 2. Status: Established

Fundulopanchax robertsoni

Coordinator: Ralph Tedepani. ralpht@noln.com
Number of members: 3. Status: Critical. See coordinator comments at the end of this summary.

The following core species breeding teams are operating, but need additional members in order to be considered a viable group. If interested, please contact the Genus Coordinator for additional information on joining one or more of these groups.

Fp. Deltaensis: Mark Kemper.

Fp. Gulare: Mark Kemper.
BigKillies0413@aol.com

Fp. walkeri Orange: David Ramsey

Fp. Puerzli: David Ramsey

Fp. Amieti: David Ramsey
djramsey@earthlink.net

Genus/subgenus: Pachypanchax:

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Klaus Schoening:
klauss@meyertool.com

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: Rivulus:

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Ken Normandin:
Rivulus9@cs.com
Core species in selection process

Genus/subgenus:

Scriptaphosemion/Archiaphyosemion:

Genus/subgenus Coordinator: Kent Carpenter:
kcarpen1@rochester.rr.com

The following breeder teams have only the coordinator active. These coordinators require at least 3 more volunteers to form a viable breeder team. If interested, please contact the coordinator directly.

Core Species: Archia. petersi Banco Park

Cores species Coordinator: Thuan Nguyen
sunfish2@mindspring.com

Core Species: Script. etzeli yek bir:

Core Species Coordinator: R.W.Wolff:
choupiqu@wctc.net

Genus/subgenus: South American Annuals:

Genus/subgenus Coordinators: Dan Katz:
dskatz@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: 7. Status: Secure

Core Species: Simp. alternatus:

Core Species Coordinator: Curtis Smith:
cskillies@hotmail.com
Number of members: 1. Status: Insecure

Core Species: Campellolebias brucei:

Core Species Coordinator: Curtis Smith
Breeder team being formed.

We are awaiting reports from the following subcommittees:

Genus/subgenus: Nothobranchius:

Coordinator: Dr. Dan Nielsen
drdan@norwich.net

Genus/Subgenus: Callopanchax:

Coordinator: Bobby Ellerman
ruevenm@aol.com

Genus/Subgenus: A. diapteron

Coordinator: Wolfgang Schickler:
killiwolf80908@yahoo.com

Coordinator Comments:

Ralph Tepedino: *Fp. robertsoni* Species Coordinator

Ralph writes: "Thus far (the members) have not been able to breed this fish. My own efforts are not much better. Two years ago I had a hatch of 125 and I felt there would be no problems here in Pa. as my tap water is very different from what I was used to in Mich., There I would get a 30-40 hatch just about all the time. A couple weeks ago I did hatch out 4 fry and are growing. The other guys are wanting to continue, I would like to have at least one other person perhaps in the Midwest to jump in. Hard to find participants."

Dr. Harry Specht

A. australe Species Coordinator

Harry writes: "The AUS committee has been rather inactive in 2004 and no exchanges were effected among members. The members had numbered "Aquarium Strain" fish and exchanged per my advice to maintain as great as possible genetic pool by mixing the populations carefully. Several wild populations are in the group, but none of these were mixed with Aquarium strain fish."

Many of the members have withdrawn from the group, but several new members have signed up without being actively pursued. There is no danger of AUS becoming rare or endangered. Most are able to propagate the fish readily, but seem to lose interest in time and do not wish to dedicate a number of tanks to this one species of fish. This is a hobby and each person has to make decisions as to the fish he maintains.

It is planned to exchange specimens among the members and attempt to obtain new populations of wild collections."

Dan Katz: South American Annuals Genus Coordinator:

Regarding *Simp. Marginatus*, Dan writes: "We have 7 people still maintaining this species, 2 in the US, 1 Holland, 1 France and 3 in Spain. The species is secure for now, but could very easily be lost due to its difficulty. We owe a lot here to the efforts of Manuel Zapater who has used his personal contacts within the Spanish Group to both recruit new people and to keep in touch with those people

so that they remain active within the program. This really points out the value of personal contacts, even within an international program. Manuel is not keeping this species, but he is a key member of the team."

Regarding *Simp. Zonatus*, Dan writes:

"Since we had a very reliable report that the only known habitat of this species has been destroyed, Wright Huntley has offered to put together a group of breeders to maintain this species. He has 6 volunteers around the world who have offered to help and each of them are now working to obtain fish or eggs. That first task should not be too difficult since *S. zonatus* is an attractive, reasonably easy fish to breed and it is around."

Jim Hutchings: *Epiplatys* Genus Coordinator:

Jim reports that "I was very disappointed at the response to my survey. I only had 5 responses. I was not surprised that the response was that low, but I was glad to see that the main people who sustain the committee are still involved and producing *Epiplatys*."