

CAT CHAT


The Journal of the Catfish Study Group (UK)

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The Editors Bit

Dear Members

Not much to gripe about at this time of the year but we have had, or nearly have had, a summer.

My albino *Ancistrus* haven't bred at all since the beginning of the year, perhaps it's been too warm in the fish house. I haven't been able to leave the door open like I usually do because of the rain.

As we say round our way 'the difference between summer and winter is that in the summer the rain's warmer'.

As you can see by the small ad at the back of the journal, we are preparing for the Convention in February 2003. It will go ahead as planned but in a new venue.

The Wigan Metropolitan Borough people are either getting greedy or just don't want outsiders using their facilities. They have upped the price of the hall to £300 for the day and we can't afford it, nor do we want to. Don't worry though we have a place in mind which may be even better!

Articles and pictures can be sent by e-mail direct to <bill@catfish.co.uk> or by post to

Bill Hurst
18 Three Pools
Crossens
SOUTHPORT
PR9 8RA (England)

Ed

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SOUTHERN REP

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CATERING DEPARTMENT

Mr & Mrs Morris and Mr & Mrs Ward

CAT CHAT EDITOR

Bill Hurst
bhurst@catfish.co.uk

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From the Chair



Hi everyone, this quarter I must start by offering my apologies for the missing No 28 information sheet, *Anadoras grypus*. At the last minute it was discovered that the pictures I had used were of a completely different species. That error has now been corrected and you should receive the amended sheet with this issue.

During the last three months I have been extremely busy in the day job, working quite long hours. The result of which has meant that I have just not had enough time to complete all the next three information sheets. They do take a fair amount of time to complete and I would certainly appreciate any help that members can give. The basic requirements for each information sheet are

- a) A reasonably accurate line drawing
- b) A description of the fish, either scientific or in layman's language, preferably with location and husbandry details.
- c) Quality photographs.

If any of you feel that you can contribute something towards the information sheets please feel free to send your contributions to me at: -

68 Canterbury road,
Kidderminster,
Worc's
DY11 6EU

Alternatively I can be contacted at ian@corycats.com

Moving on to what's been happening within the group:

June: The subject for the day was 'Live Foods' and to give us the benefit of their knowledge members Joe Boardman (this issue's Meet the Member) and Brian Walsh with the aid of some excellent slides, took us through the many live foods available both cultured and wild collected. They also gave us tips on some of the undesirables that should be looked out for when introducing aquatic born live foods.

July: Chris Ralph gave us the benefit of his vast knowledge of catfish. He travelled all the way from Southampton to talk about and show us slides of some of the larger species of catfishes that are available to the hobby today. He explained many of the pitfalls that people do not anticipate when trying to house some of these giants. Because of the problems people have had trying to keep large catfishes, Chris formed a

Catfish Rescue Group in his area and has installed two large indoor ponds in his fish house for some of the catfish he has rescued. The problem is many of these fish look absolutely stunning when they are only a few inches long but in a short space of time they outgrow their owner's set-ups. Many of these fish are only suitable for large public aquaria and some of the migratory species are just not suitable for keeping in captivity at all. So if any of you are thinking of buying that beautiful little Redtail cat, remember it can grow very large, maybe to five or six feet and will eventually need tank or pond space as large as the average living room. Please think seriously about the adult size of the catfish you are thinking of buying and whether you can house it properly when it grows.

August: Unfortunately Peter Liptrot, the speaker booked for our August meeting, had to withdraw at the last minute. We will have to wait until another time to get the benefit of his knowledge on filtration. At the eleventh hour Brian Walsh stepped in and with the aid of some of his excellent slides gave us a superb talk on the anatomy of catfish, with particular attention given to the teeth types and formations found in some of the Loricariidae species. He also showed slides of many of the different catfish shapes and bone structures This encouraged some interesting debates into the reasons these forms have evolved.

Our next meeting in September will be our third annual Open Show and the results will appear in the December issue of Cat Chat.

Most of us here in the UK are interested to hear how our overseas members keep your catfish, where you get them from, are they expensive? etc. How about some Meet the Members information?

I would certainly like to receive feedback from all members, whether good or bad, to know what you think about the service you are getting through the magazine. I am aware that for some of you, it is the only contact you have.

Please write or e-mail me with your views. Articles should be sent to the editor.

Until the next issue - happy catfish keeping

Ian Fuller
Chairman.

Notes on the Lancers of the genus *Bagrichthys* (Teleostei, Bagridae)

R. Shane Linder and Ng Heok Hee

The genus *Bagrichthys* is a small genus of highly specialized bagrid catfishes found in large rivers throughout Southeast Asia. The genus is primarily known to the aquarium hobby through the occasional import of the black lancer catfish, a common name applied to *Bagrichthys macracanthus*. Members of *Bagrichthys* are characterized by their elongate and laterally compressed caudal peduncle, the dorsally-directed serrations on the posterior edge of the dorsal-fin spine, gill membranes united at the isthmus, and a long adipose fin without a free posterior margin. At present, there are seven recognized species:

- B. hyselopterus* (Bleeker, 1852) Borneo and Sumatra
- B. macracanthus* (Bleeker, 1854) Borneo, Java, and Sumatra
- B. macropterus* (Bleeker, 1854) Borneo, and Sumatra
- B. majusculus* Ng, 2002 Mekong and Chao Phraya River drainages, Indochina
- B. micranodus* Roberts, 1989 Kapuas drainage, western Borneo
- B. obscurus* Ng, 1999 Mekong, Chao Phraya, and Bang Pakong drainages, Indochina
- B. vaillantii* (Popta, 1906) Mahakam River drainage, eastern Borneo

Although commonly referred to as the lancers, only *B. hyselopterus*, *B. macracanthus*, *B. majusculus*, and *B. vaillantii* possess the elongated dorsal spine from which the genus gets its common name. Coloration amongst the members of the genus runs from tan to black, usually with some white or cream-colored markings. However, the exact coloration of any *Bagrichthys* can be difficult to describe because the overall color, and pattern of the lighter markings, can change in response to such factors as the substrate's color, daylight or darkness, and the fish's mood. All *Bagrichthys* species are sexually dimorphic with males possessing a genital papilla slightly fore of the anal fin. It has also been noted that the nasal barbels of male *B. majusculus*, *B. obscurus*, and *B. vaillantii* are twice as long as those of females. This observation may hold true for the entire genus.

Systematics

Bagrichthys is most closely related to *Bagroides* (the harlequin lancer), and these two genera in turn are most closely related to *Leiocassis* (refer to Mo, 1991). All three genera share characters unique to the Bagridae, including a very prominent bulbous snout, the lateral line pores produced into a long canal projecting above the body surface, and the presence of numerous hair-like projections on the skin. In fact, these three genera are so distinct that they have been placed within their own family (Bagriichthyidae) by de Pinna (1993). However, current evidence indicates that this placement may be unwarranted, as the lancers still show some osteological characters unique to the Bagridae.

Although no phylogenetic studies have been performed within the genus, a brief study of the morphology of *Bagrichthys* species suggests that *B. macracanthus*, *B. majusculus*, and *B. vaillantii* are most closely related to each other and that these three species are in turn most closely related to *B. hyselopterus*. *Bagrichthys macropterus*, *B. micranodus* and *B. obscurus* are most closely related to each other and they are considered to be the less derived members of the genus, meaning that they are possibly more closely related to *Bagroides*.

Diet

In nature, *Bagrichthys* are found in large muddy rivers. Roberts (1989) reported that gut content analysis conducted on five species revealed that the intestines normally held the detritus of higher plants, although one specimen had recently consumed a large winged insect. In contrast to Roberts' observations, Zakaria-Ismail noted that all of his specimens of *B. majusculus* (identified in his paper as *B. macracanthus*) were caught on hook and line using earthworms for bait. Members of the genus have a small narrow mouth and moderately elongate convoluted intestines. This would suggest that these fish normally feed along the mud substrate consuming plant detritus and small benthic animals and could also explain why some members of the genus have greatly reduced oral dentition. Compared to other members of the genus, *B. hyselopterus*, *B. macracanthus*, *B. majusculus*, and

B. vaillantii have a large and wide mouth opening with well-developed oral dentition which would suggest that these species consume larger animal prey than their congeners.

Gut content analysis of *B. hypselopterus* by the second author (Tan & Ng, 2000) in Sumatra found the guts distended with fine silt from the riverbed, although chironomid larvae and pupae were also found in small quantities. This finding seems to suggest that *B. hypselopterus* feeds by ingesting large amounts of silt from the riverbed while targeting aquatic arthropods. The same study found the guts *B. macropterus* to contain large numbers of freshwater gastropods of the genus *Rivomarginella*, indicating that this species may be molluscivorous.

Natural Habitat

Bagrichthys species are primarily inhabitants of large rivers, although juveniles may be found in smaller streams and flooded forests during the rainy season, where spawning presumably has taken place. Although a few specimens have been found in low pH (3-4) blackwater areas, the normal habitats of *Bagrichthys* species are large, slow-flowing rivers, generally of less acidity (pH 5-6) and with turbid water and a muddy substrate. In western Borneo, Roberts (1989) recorded *B. hypselopterus* from a collecting site near Danau Pengembung where the water was turbid (the color of coffee with milk) and had a slow current with a temperature of 26c and pH 6. Other fishes captured at the site included *Mystus micracanthus*, two *Kryptopterus* species, two *Ompok* species, two *Pseudeutropius* species, and *Trichogaster leerii*, the pearl gourami. The holotype location of *B. micranodus* was a forest stream 5-10 meters wide and 3-4 meters deep. The current was swift, colored clear and dark brown, with a pH of 6 and temperature of 30c.

Reproduction

Bagrichthys species spawn at the beginning of the rainy season in flooded riparian forests, with juveniles appearing in August (Rainbooth 1996). The beginning of the rainy season in the tropics initiates a number of radical environmental changes. Heavy rains typically cool the large rivers, the water becomes softer (having hardened after months of evaporation), and oxygen levels are greatly elevated both by the rain hitting the water's surface and the increased current as the new waters move towards the ocean. Additionally, the flooding of the surrounding forest opens up new territories and new food sources. Two secondary protein food sources during the rainy season are the huge numbers of insects swept into the water by the rains and the increased number of larvae as

mosquitoes, and other insects with aquatic larvae, increase their reproductive tempos. Some, or all, of these factors may serve as spawning triggers to *Bagrichthys*. While no *Bagrichthys* species have been spawned in aquaria, other members of the Bagridae (most notably *Mystus*) have spawned following large volume water changes with cool fresh water.

Captive Husbandry

Of the seven species, only *Bagrichthys macracanthus* has been regularly exported for the aquarium trade, with most of the material coming from Sumatra (and a smaller number from Borneo), although *B. macropterus* and *B. obscurus* have occasionally shown up as contaminants. Newly imported lancers are usually in rough shape and require an extended quarantine in isolation. It has also been suggested (Finley, 1995) that higher temperatures, 85F or more, for a few days can help with the initial acclimation. During this acclimation process, stress should be kept to a minimum. To minimize stress, the fish should not be moved between tanks, water quality must be kept pristine, and foods high in protein should be fed regularly. Once beyond this initial break-in, lancers prove to be hardy aquarium residents.

A single lancer can make a fine addition to the community aquarium provided that it is not kept with particularly aggressive tankmates. *Bagrichthys* will fight with other species, especially for choice hiding spots, but their small mouths make them poor combatants and they usually end up on the losing end of a confrontation. Lancer's small mouths also make them ineffective predators, but they will still attempt to consume small fishes if given the opportunity. Once acclimated, water hardness and pH are unimportant as long as extremes are avoided. Groups of the same species of *Bagrichthys* can be kept together provided that there is only one male per tank. Ideally, one male should be kept with three or four females so that the male's aggressiveness is spread out over his harem. Keeping two males together, even in a large tank, can be a recipe for disaster.

Their captive diet should reflect, as well as possible, their natural diet and consist of both animal and vegetable material. The black lancer, *Bagrichthys macracanthus*, shows a strong preference for meaty foods such as bloodworms, but algae-based foods should make up a significant portion of any lancer's diet. Black lancers will also consume fresh vegetables such as cucumber, so these should not be overlooked as an occasional food.

For the serious hobbyist that would like to maintain

their *Bagrichthys* under ideal conditions, a Southeast Asian theme tank is recommended. When setting up the theme tank, lay down a substrate of about one inch of peat. This is then covered by about one and a half inches of fine sand. The peat provides a rich substrate for live plants while helping to keep the aquarium's water soft and acidic. Given their shy nature, lancers seem more at ease in a planted aquarium with numerous hiding places. Several pieces of driftwood can then be arranged so as to provide hiding spots and both Java moss and Java fern can be attached to the driftwood pieces for a more natural look. Once the driftwood is arranged, plant about two thirds of the aquarium with various species of *Cryptocoryne*. Last but not least, cover about one third of the aquarium's water surface with floating Indian fern (*Ceratophyllum submersum*). The Indian fern not only looks great with its long roots trailing in the water, but also adds a very interesting visual effect to the tank's lighting. As the plants change position with the current, different portions of the tank are exposed to light while others are left in the shadow. The theme tank's water should be soft and acidic with a golden brown coloration. *Bagrichthys* also seem to enjoy a fair amount of current and this is easily replicated with the addition of a submersed powerhead.

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Identification

To help with the identification of the members of *Bagrichthys* a key to the genus is provided below. This key is based solely on external characteristics so that it may be useful to hobbyists. Lengths are taken from the largest fish of the species to have been collected and measured by scientists. All lengths are given in Standard Length (SL), a measurement from the tip of the snout to the caudal peduncle. The notation %SL means "as a percentage of standard length."

External Characteristics Key to *Bagrichthys*

- 1. All barbels straight.....2
 Inner and/or outer mental barbels crenulated.....4
 Dorsal profile gently sloping, dorsal spine longer (24.4-32.9 %SL)3
 Dorsal profile moderately steep, dorsal spine shorter (18.2-21.9 %SL), length to 7.5 inches *B. vaillantii*
- 2. Pectoral spine longer (15.8-20.7 %SL), adipose fin longer (38.8-45.8 %SL), and caudal peduncle deeper (5.6-7.0 %SL), length to 8 inches *B. majusculus*
- 3. Pectoral spine shorter (13.3-16.2 %SL), adipose fin shorter (46.0-58.0 %SL), and caudal peduncle more slender (7.1-7.5 %SL), length to 11.5 inches *B. macracanthus*
- 4. Caudal peduncle extremely elongate, dorsal-fin spine extending to or beyond base of caudal fin when depressed, nape and dorsal-fin base extremely elevated, giving a hump-backed appearance, oral dentition well-developed, length to just over 10 inches..... *B. hypselopterus*
- 5. Caudal peduncle not as elongate, dorsal-fin spine not reaching caudal peduncle when depressed, nape and dorsal-fin base not greatly elevated, oral dentition reduced.....5
 Body uniformly brown with no pale midlateral stripe or pale blotches, length to 10 inches *B. obscurus*
- 6. Body with pale midlateral stripe and pale blotches6
 Both inner and outer mental barbels crenulated, body pale brownish or tan with whitish to cream-coloured markings, length to 9.5 inches *B. macropterus*
- 7. Outer mental barbel simple but inner mental barbel crenulated, body dark brown to black with pale markings, length to 5 inches *B. micranodus*

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A pictorial guide to *Microsynodontis* catfish

By Steven Grant

There are currently only three valid species of the African catfish genus *Microsynodontis* Boulenger, 1903; I say currently because Heok Hee Ng is working on the descriptions of at least three, possibly four or five, new species, and he will revalidate one other.

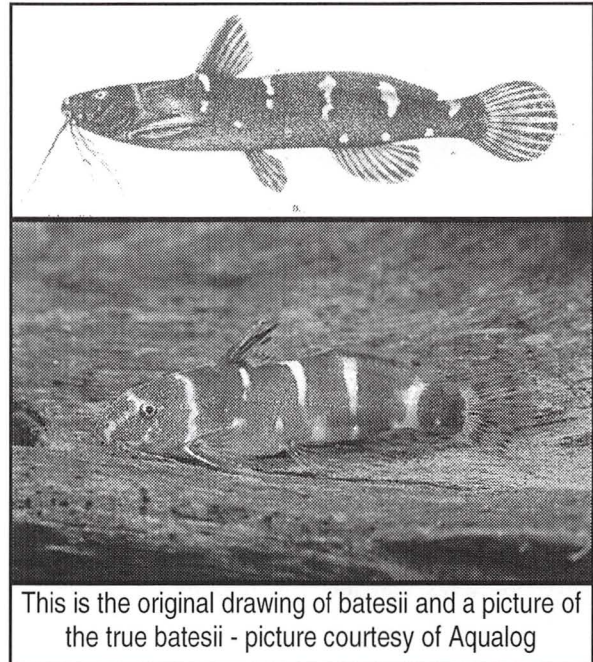
Some confusion exists as to which name to put to the specimens we come across in our hobby, and I will attempt here to give you an idea on the correct identifications. In the first draft of this article I was convinced I had my identifications correct but Heok Hee kindly reviewed my attempts and I was incorrect on at least one of the identifications, so it just shows you why people are confusing the species! Until his work is published, this may go some way to clear up the confusion.

Firstly, we need to be able to tell if the fish we have is a *Microsynodontis* or a member of the genus *Synodontis*, Cuvier, 1817. Perhaps the easiest way for most aquarists to use is the shape of the outside edge of the caudal (tail) fin; in *Microsynodontis*. It is either rounded, truncate (squared), or emarginate (like truncate but with a indent near the centre), whereas in *Synodontis* it is either forked, or lunate. The way to tell for definite is to look at the eye of the fish; in *Microsynodontis* the eyeball is fixed in the socket so it cannot move, whereas in *Synodontis* it is moveable (this is called having a free orbital rim). There are also two internal differences i.e. no suborbital bones and a modified fourth vertebrae in *Microsynodontis*.

The closest related genus to *Microsynodontis* is *Mochokiella*, Howes, 1980, which only has one species in it — *Mochokiella paynei*, Howes, 1980, which comes from Sierra Leone. *Mochokiella* (like *Microsynodontis*) are a peaceful, excellent addition to any community tank with small fishes; unfortunately they are harder to find in the shops than the *Microsynodontis* species. *Mochokiella paynei* has not got a free orbital rim, just like *Microsynodontis* but in *Mochokiella* the caudal fin is forked, with the lobes rounded.

The species

Microsynodontis batesii Boulenger, 1903



This is the original drawing of *batesii* and a picture of the true *batesii* - picture courtesy of Aqualog

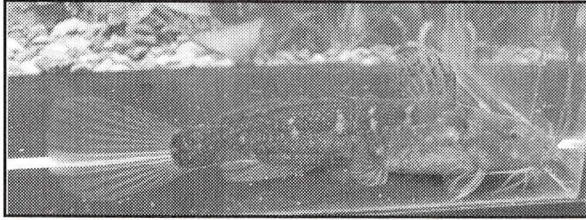
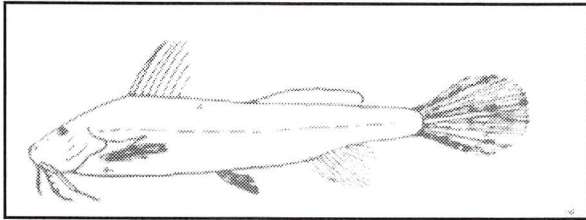
This species name is given to most fish in the hobby. In 1999 I thought I had correctly identified the fish known as 'Nyong Syno' as being the true *batesii*, because the fish I pictured was supposedly caught in the Nyong River, Cameroon — a locality listed by Boulenger (1911) - for *batesii*.

The type specimens originate from the Mvile River in south Cameroon, but Boulenger (1911) lists additional specimens from Ja River, Bumba River, Nyong River and near Efulen (all Cameroon), and also Gabon, although these identifications may represent two of the new species that will be described.

Heok Hee has identified the true *batesii* for me (see picture) and says that the 'Nyong Syno' in my 1999 work represents one of the two new species he is describing which both come from the lower Gabon River. He says *Microsynodontis* sp. 'Gabon' can be identified by its deep body and faintly marmorated pattern. I have no other information on the other undescribed species from the lower Gabon River.

Most literature will give a size of 10 cm Standard Length (minus caudal fin) for *batesii* but this is due to a misunderstanding of the size given by Boulenger; in my opinion this species should only reach 8.5 cm SL.

***Microsynodontis polli* Lambert, 1958**



This is the original drawing of *M. polli* and an image of *polli* by me.

This name is used now and again in the hobby but again, incorrectly. If one consults the original description and subsequent scientific work it is apparent that this species has appeared in the hobby but usually under the name of *batesii*.

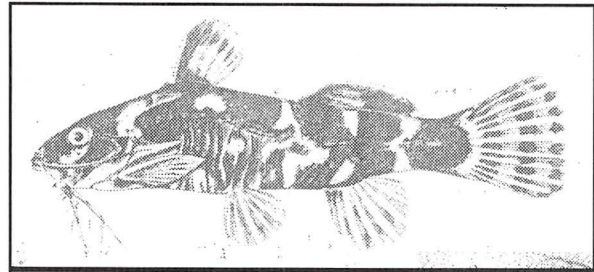
Baensch & Fischer (1998) appears to show a *polli* on page 357 (incorrectly identified as *batesii*), although Heok Hee says that the fish in Baensch & Fischer probably originates from the Zaire River near Kinshasa in Zaire, and at the moment he is not sure if this fish is a separate species from the true *polli* which originates from the Gbin River, Guinea, which is a considerable distance away. My photograph of *polli* may also be the Zaire variant. When it was small it had no or only very minute markings on the body. The fish is now approx. 4 cm SL and the markings are more distinct now.

M. polli will probably only grow to around 4 cm SL (the type specimen was 3.2 cm SL). Paugy & Roberts in Lévêque, Paugy & Teugels (1992) list it as reaching 4.1 cm Total Length.

Apart from the differences in markings (*polli* having very small and indistinct markings), this species can be differentiated from the others by the slender caudal peduncle area (the body area before the caudal fin starts), and the elongated caudal fin.

***Microsynodontis lamberti* Poll & Gosse, 1963**

It comes from Lilanda River, Yangole, Central Congo, and will **probably** only reach around 5 cm SL (largest type specimen is 3.4 cm SL). I don't think that this fish has appeared in the hobby yet. See picture of one of the type specimens.



drawing of *M. lamberti* from original description

***Microsynodontis christyi* Boulenger, 1920**

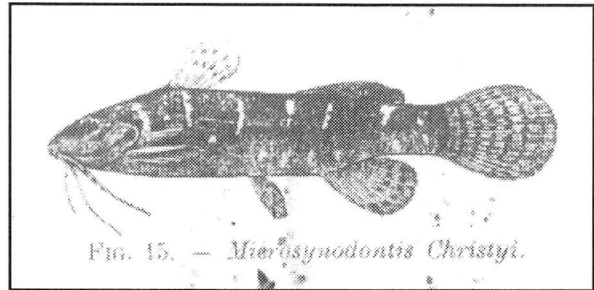


FIG. 15. — *Microsynodontis Christyi*.

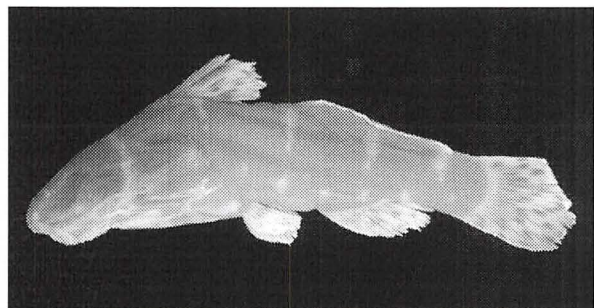


Original drawing of *M. christyi* and a picture by Ingo Seidel

Originates from Poko, Zaire. This has long been considered a junior synonym of *batesii* but Heok Hee will be revalidating it. Boulenger listed the following differences to *batesii*: there are fewer anal (6-7 in *christyi* vs. 8-9 in *batesii*) and dorsal (5 in *christyi* vs. 6 in *batesii*) fin rays, and also the dorsal fin spine is shorter in *christyi*.

This is rare in the hobby.

***Microsynodontis* sp. 'Rio Muni'**

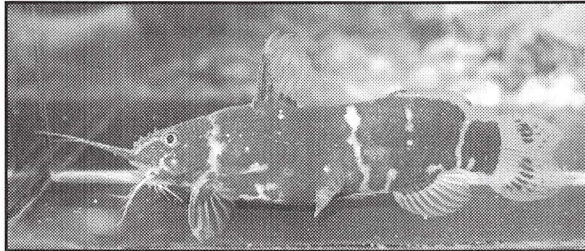


Microsynodontis 'Rio Muni' by Heok Hee Ng

CAT CHAT

This fish is currently being described to science by Heok Hee. It originates from Rio Muni (Equatorial Guinea) and can be distinguished from the others by its very deep body.

Microsynodontis sp. 'Nigeria'



Microsynodontis sp. 'Nigeria' photo by me.

This is the species most commonly available in the hobby. It is usually sold as *batesii* or *polli*. Baensch & Fischer show one as cf. *polli*. The identity of this fish is uncertain at the moment but I originally thought it represented *lamberti*. It should reach approx. 5 cm SL.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Heok Hee for his time and assistance with this article and permission to use the image of sp. Rio Muni; Erwin Schraml, Ingo Seidel, D. M. A. Wright, and Aqualog for the use of their photographs.

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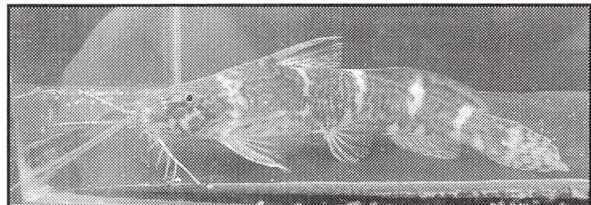
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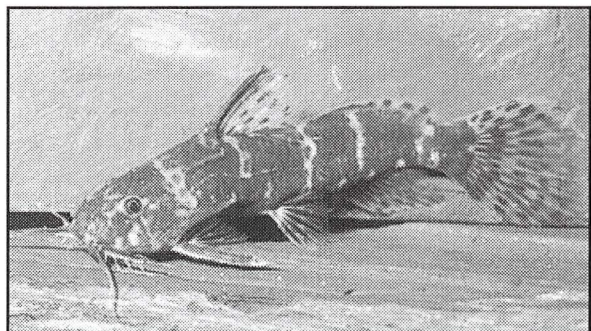
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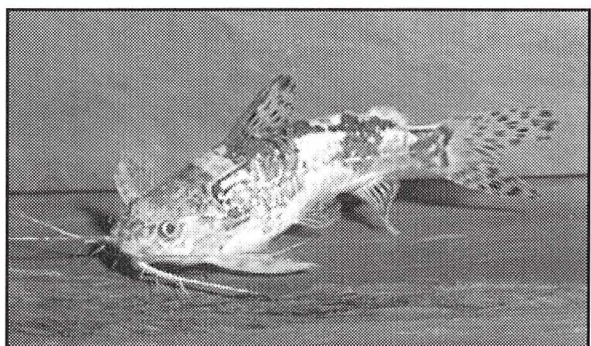
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Microsynodontis sp. 'Gabon/Nyong'- photo by D. M. A. Wright



Microsynodontis sp. 'Gabon' - photo by Erwin Schraml



Mochokiella paynei - photo by Erwin Schraml



MEET THE MEMBERS

Joe Boardman

A regular member at our monthly meetings - from the Northwest

I was on demob leave from the army in 1952 and I was walking a main road in Leigh when I saw something that caught my eye and took hold of me. It was a 3' x 1' x 1' (91 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm) tank in a house window against the pavement. It was well lit and well planted and there were a number of colourful fish swimming around. I stood watching for a while, then went on to do my shopping. I again stopped on my return journey to admire the show. I returned the next day to see the tank and I knocked on the door and asked the man who answered how to go about setting up a tank like his. He took me inside and told me where to get a tank and the kit to go with it. He also told me not to buy any fish for a week or two but to see him first.

He invited me to the Leigh Aquarist Society where I enjoyed meeting some keen aquarists. Between them they put me on the right path and advised me never to do complete water changes, only top up with fresh tap water. The aim was to have 'mature' water. It was suggested at a meeting that members take a jar of their own water when going to collect fish from fellow members - thus saving their own mature tank water (how times have changed).

I soon had a tank planted out complete with the right number of fish.

I have never been without at least one tank since those days - that was when we ran an off-license in Salford and I was working 15 hrs a day.

We returned to Leigh, after about 3 years, where I got a job working 12 hr shifts 6 or 7 days a week.. We lived with my wife's parents for about 18 months and I had a cabinet with 6 two foot tanks in.

By this time I was mainly interested in breeding fish and started with livebearers, like most hobbyists do.

We moved into our present house in 1958 where I set up the cabinet up and got it going again. I then started to build my first fish house which had a concrete floor and walls made from packing cases. It had a glass roof and was heated with a paraffin heater. Under each tank I placed a home made small paraffin heater with a sheet of tin to protect the glass from the naked flame. I had 50 tanks and some concrete pools on the floor. I left gaps in the door for ventilation and the smell wasn't too bad from the fumes.

With this set-up I went into breeding with great enjoyment. I kept smaller species of fish because it meant I could keep more. This was in the 1960s and I still do the same today so there are no large catfish in any of my tanks. However, the paraffin heaters have been replaced

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

20 OCT 2002

FNAS Breeders meeting Nutrition (Speaker to be confirmed)

17 NOV 2002

Autumn Auction

08 DEC 2002

Annual "Hot Pot"

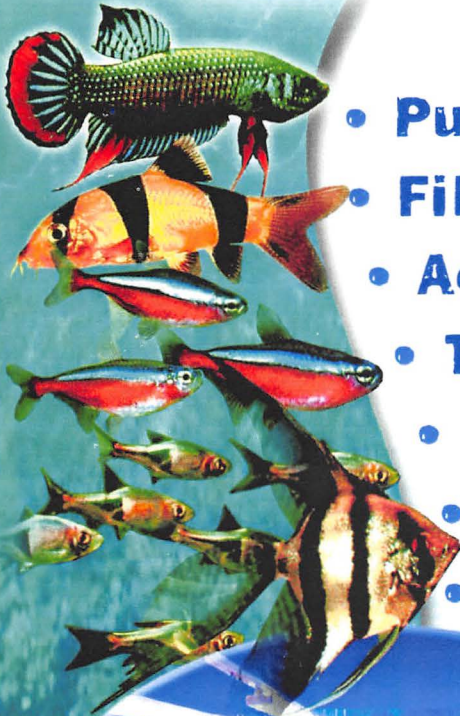
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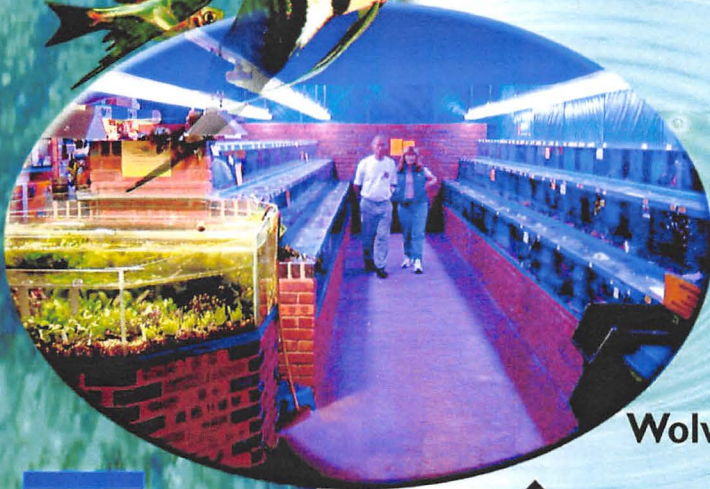
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Climatic aspects of keeping of tank catfishes

by Eric Schiller

Erik Schiller: Born 1968 in Dohna (Saxony), married with two small children. Connected since earliest youth with the Aquaristik. I have dealt with viviparous tooth carps and barbels from my early years. I still have enough time for Rineloricaria and Peckoltia. For 10 years now my main emphasis has lain with the family of the Callichthyidae. and particularly the last few years the genre Aspidoras.

Tank catfish have gained acceptance within the last few years at once. There are still problems of keeping them in an aquarium

Most aquarium catfishes come from South America, they are widespread there. People find the locations which are known to catfish families in the northern countries, Colombia and Venezuela. In the southern countries, people only think of *Corydoras undulatus* from Argentina. On this continent the climatic conditions vary considerably. Countries like Uruguay and Argentina show a subtropical climate. Paraguay is open in contrast to a small stretch of coast on the east and Southern Brazil still has oceanic tropical climate counts. The climate of Southern Brazil is a transitional climate from the tropics to the milder subtropics. This, therefore indicates that tank catfishes don't have always to be kept in a stable environment.

Most aquarium catfishes are content with a temperature around the 25°C. However, many aquarium catfishes don't fit into this scheme. It is important to know the basics of the origin of the catfishes that we keep because their environment is so different. Reports published can be very instructive and should often be referred to in order to find the best way to keep the fish alive.

Tank catfishes from Amazon are warmth loving catfishes e.g. *Corydoras sterbai*, *Corydoras guapore*, *Corydoras caudimaculatus*

One keeps tank catfishes from Central Brazil more successful at cooler temperatures e.g. *Corydoras barbatus*, *Corydoras macropterus*, *Corydoras nattereri*, *Corydoras prionotus*

also tank catfishes from the southern Argentina have to be kept cooler e.g. *Corydoras paleatus*, *Corydoras undulatus*, *Corydoras carlae*

From the outset, it is difficult to know how to keep our fish which come from such different habitats, particularly the water conditions. We have to discover whether our catfishes are exposed to distinctive dry and rainy periods and what type of water exists.

Three waters types are distinguished with the water colour and the dulling to soil

1. White water like the Rio Madeira, Rio Solimoes and the Amazon which are fast flowing
2. Clear water like the Rio Tapajoz with its source rivers Rio São Manoel and Jurueña and the Rio Parguaza
3. Black water like the Rio Negro or the Rio Cururu

Aquarium catfishes from the Amazon area, for example *Corydoras sterbae*, are subject to strong change with a definite dry and rainy season. Constantly high temperatures and large precipitations characterize these areas. A half-yearly temperature of 25°C in the spring and summer months and 27°C in the fall and winter months are the natural conditions for the life of these beautiful tank catfishes.

With these changing conditions, one notices the number of eggs produced by the female *Corydoras*. Often, without change, the same small clutches are produced. On the other hand, with the half-yearly change of the temperature and other impressionable environmental conditions (food, water change and flow) a greater number of eggs are likely to be produced. *Corydoras sterbae* kept by me produced one clutch of eggs of almost 300 !!

One clearwater catfish is *Corydoras barbatus* and from this we can note a clear difference in its care. "Schabracken- catfish, as we call *Corydoras barbatus* in German, comes from the federal states São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in South Brazil. The water temperatures in the rivers around Rio de Janeiro, during the months of July - September are approx. 21°C. It increases substantially only during January and February to 26°C. There is a very strong fluctuation of the daily temperatures and the further one moves from the coast to the inland region (particularly from the coasts and mountains south of São Paulo) the greater these fluctuations become.

Corydoras from these areas will survive comfortably in temperatures 20 — 22°C with a high rate of water flow. One shouldn't keep too many male *Corydoras barbatus* with females because

they are territorial and fight with their spiny cheeks to keep their area from other males. However, the right pair is soon found and the respective area is well defended. The clutch of eggs, in form of a bunch of grapes, is almost always spawned in the aquarium near the water surface where the highest flow is.

At too high a temperature *Corydoras barbatus* sensitive, its fins close and the unstable catfishes then have to be watched. Within only few weeks these splendid catfishes can be destroyed and become a terrible site. Before the purchase of aquarium fish, one should make sure to prevent this occurring by ensuring that a proper or corresponding environment can be provided at home

Fishes kept in the wrong temperature may feel like an Eskimo in the Congo. The high water flow rate ensures that oxygen passes through the fishes gills in order for them to survive.

The following climate tables summarize and clarify the text briefly. In the aquarium the temperatures do not take into consideration the air temperature changes.

Climate diagram São Paulo, Brazil, e.g. *Corydoras barbatus*

Month	Temperature	Precipitation
Jan	22.0°C	233 mm
Feb	22.3°C	233 mm
Mar	21.7°C	164 mm
Apr	19.7°C	73 mm
May	17.6°C	76 mm
Jun	16.4°C	53 mm
Jul	15.7°C	44 mm
Aug	17.1°C	45 mm
Sep	18.0°C	77 mm
Oct	19.0°C	122 mm
Nov	20.1°C	146 mm
Dec	21.2°C	192 mm

Climate diagram Buenos Aires, Argentina, e.g. *Corydoras undulatus*

Month	Temperature	Precipitation
Jan.	24.5°C	118 mm
Feb	23.3°C	117 mm
Mar	21.2°C	142 mm
Apr	17.6°C	104 mm
May	14.4°C	80 mm
Jun	11.2°C	61 mm
Jul	11.1°C	68 mm
Aug	12.2°C	68 mm
Sep	14.3°C	75 mm
Oct	17.2°C	119 mm
Nov	20.4°C	117 mm
Dec	22.8°C	104 mm

Climate diagram Cuiaba (Mato Grosso) Brazil, e.g. *Corydoras sterbai*

Month	Temperature	Precipitation
Jan	26.5°C	211 mm
Feb	26.5°C	208 mm
Mar	26.4°C	183 mm
Apr	26.1°C	128 mm
May	24.4°C	43 mm
Jun	23.1°C	14 mm
Jul	22.8°C	14 mm
Aug	24.9°C	16 mm
Sep	26.6°C	58 mm
Oct	27.4°C	122 mm
Nov	27.2°C	158 mm
Dec	26.9°C	192 mm

THE MOVE

An insight into some of the problems encountered when moving house (and fish)

by J T Morris

Once upon a time in a small place called Wigan there lived a race of meat and potato pie eaters. This group of people were thought to have become extinct with the pie-age, somewhere between the angle-iron and the all-glass ages.

However, for four decades, catfish lived, died and sometimes bred in the tanks of a Wiganese family called Morris (that's me), of northern dance fame, residing in a suburb called New Springs.

These catfish were completely unaware of the fact that their keeper (me again) was looking for a new abode.

After many long minutes of searching, a new residence was found in the neighbouring territory of Hindley (still within the bounds of Wigan).

Unfortunately, and unlike Startrek, I could not just beam my Aquariums to the new family shelter and so a plan of action was made, crossed out, rubbed out and made again - several times.

To move aquariums ranging from 15 gallons to 1000 gallons is no mean feat, particularly when some of the fish are around 2' (60 cm) long. This job was not going to be undertaken lightly so it had to be carried out in stages.

The first stage of the move started in July 2001 with the assistance of a 6' x 2' x 2' fibreglass vat in which to house the water and some of the fish at the new home. Buckets and barrels of all shapes and sizes were used to shuttle the water and fish to the two 6' x 2' x 1' tanks situated in the new conservatory and to

the vat in the garage. The most important factor in the process was to take as much 'mature' water as possible. In order to do this, I had to hire a large twin axle trailer to transport my large tanks and their railway sleeper supports (one of which smashed a 6' x 2' x 2' tank).

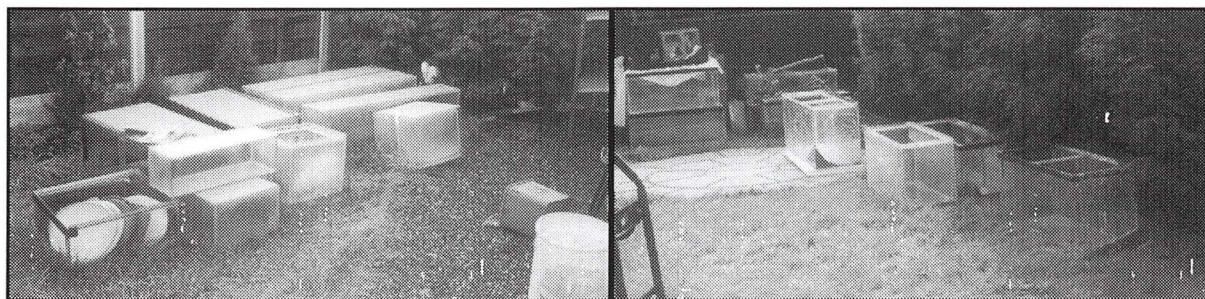
Another problem was overcrowding the fish and, combined with the failure of a filter, I lost a number of my favourite fish.

The move was eventually completed with the tanks being spread between the conservatory and the garage, as can be seen in some of the pictures.

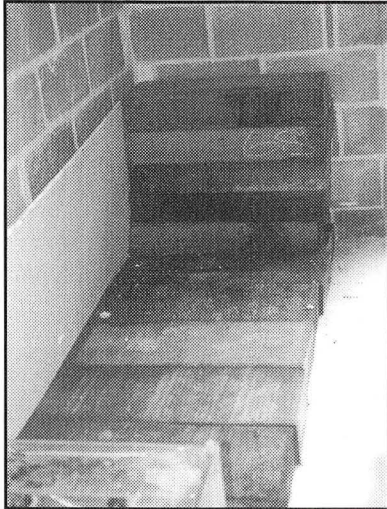
There were a number of journeys involved before the completion saw the light of day and I would like to thank my family, Roy Barton and a number of workmates for their assistance.

Editors note:

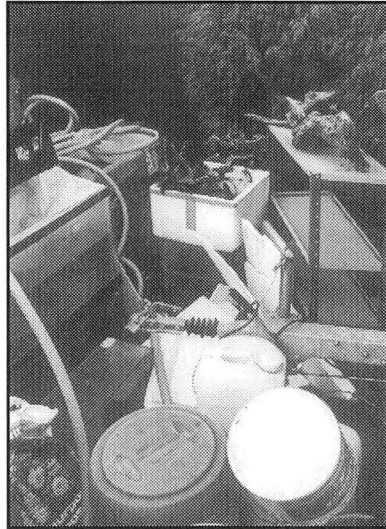
I know that although this article is quite brief, Trevor could have written a book on this subject. It's easy starting from scratch but to organise a move on this scale must be quite nerve-wracking. I often visited his previous house where he had two fish houses with a large number of aquariums ranging from small cubes to four 6' x 3' x 2' tanks and fish ranging from small livebearers to a 2' (60 cm) Megladoras irwini, including cichlids (ugh!), rainbows and a collection of banjo cats second to none. Although the move was eventually completed in about two months, a number of 'good' fish died and equipment was damaged.



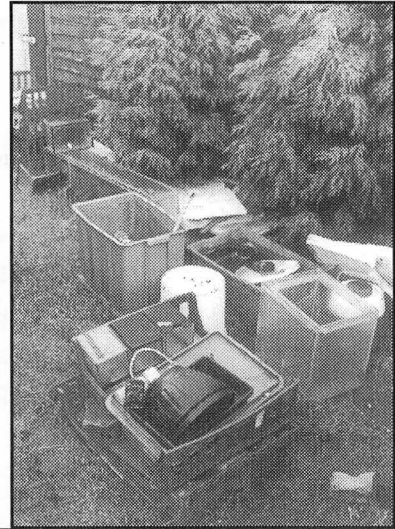
A selection of tanks waiting to be installed



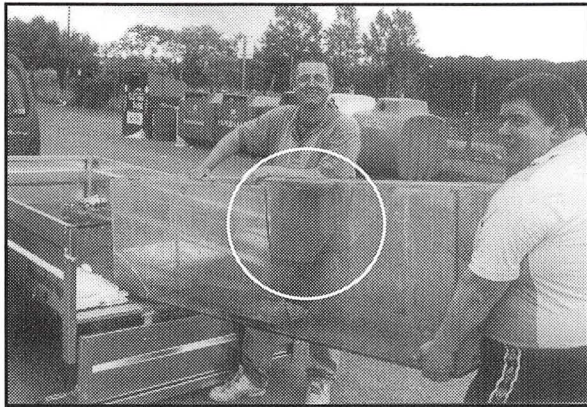
A bed of cut down railway sleepers for a large tank



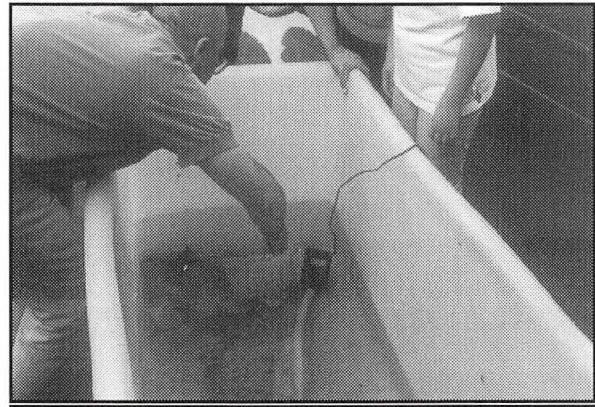
Some of the equipment used to make Trevor's fish at home.



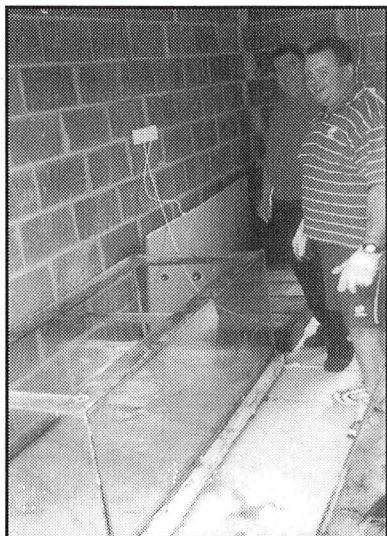
Some of the equipment used to make Trevor's fish at home.



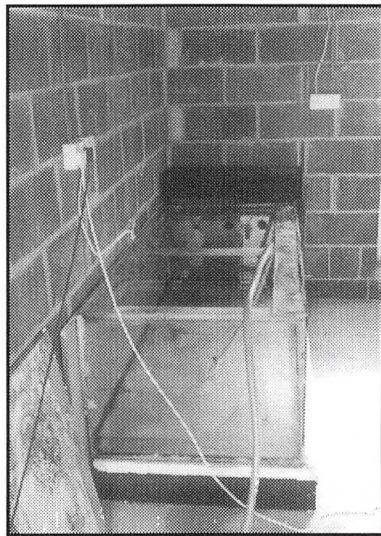
One of the disasters



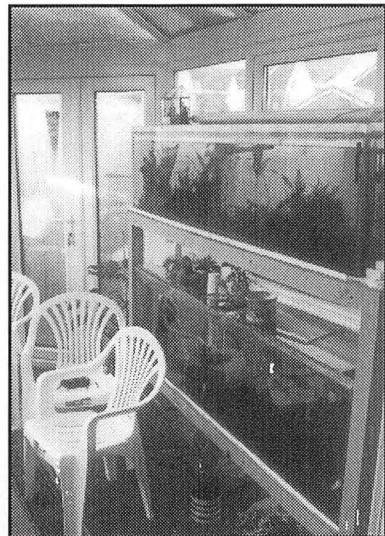
The Vat



One of the big ones



In place filling up



That's that. Now for a kip.

Photo
not
available

MEET THE MEMBERS

Mark Nazer Member 104

I was born in London and moved to Kent while I was a child. I've lived in Tonbridge for about 25 years. I obtained my first tanks (a 3' community and a 2' breeding tank) when I was 15 and joined Tonbridge & District Aquarist Society (no longer in existence) about the same time. I was a keen member of the club until other interests got in the way.

The first fish I bought was an albino Corydoras, that I had seen several weeks previously in a local dealer's tank and just had to have.

Within two years, I had built a small fish house and gained an interest in catfish. I became a member of the Catfish Association of Great Britain and began a small collection of Corydoras. I bought some more albino Corys. and these became the first catfish that I spawned and raised.

I married in 1984 and bought my first house. There was no room for a fish house but I had two tanks with my favourite catfish at the time. I moved into a bigger house in 1994 and started making plans for a new fish house.

I am currently a member of Strood & District A.S. and completed the building of a fish house in November 1999 and have kept a small assortment of fish. I have never lost my interest in catfish and set out to spawn three species that I dreamt of spawning nearly 20 years previously. The fish in question are C Pygmaeus, C.Hastatus and any species of "whiptail". I realise these are not the hardest fish in the world to spawn but when I first kept fish they seemed impossible.

Last year I had my first C.Pygmaeus and Rhineloricaria sp. spawnings. I managed to raise a few pygmaeus, but the male "whiptail" got a taste for the eggs he was guarding and I subsequently lost the female, so it's back to the drawing board. As for the C. Hastatus, I haven't bought any to try spawning, this I will do in time.

I am currently gaining an interest driftwoods, Paratocinclus or Otocinclus species. Any advice in keeping (and maybe spawning?) will be welcomed!!
<m.nazer@alfia.co.uk>

CONVENTION 2003

Well the good news is that we have our speakers:

Hans-Georg Evers and Ingo Siedel

Co authors of the new Catfish Book by Mergus

The bad news is that the price of the Lowton Civic Hall has doubled so we are looking at a new location nearby.

Keep your eyes on this journal for further news in the December issue when all will be revealed. You wont be disappointed.

CATFISH STUDY GROUP

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The CSG is in no position to accept responsibility for the condition of any item sold at the auction or to exchange any item purchased. If in doubt, bid for an item 'as seen'. The vendor's name will be available to the purchaser, in the event of a problem, on the day only.

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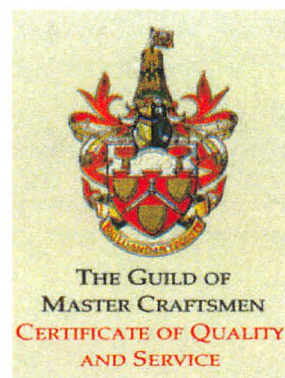
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