



September, 2008
Volume 17 Issue 1

THE TBAS . . . Since 1992 FILTER



Apistogramma cacatuoides 'Triple Red' . . . pic by MFJacobs

September Program

Folks . . . this month will be a 'Boy are we working on the program
. . . everyone keeps cancelling on us . . . OK, we'll make it!!!'

September Bowl Show Fish

- 1) Characins
- 2) Sharks, Loaches & Eels

Tampa Bay Aquarium Society



“The Filter”

Tampa/St. Pete, Florida

Volume 17 Issue 1
September, 2008

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Pearl Killifish . . . photo by MFJacobs 2007

A Few Words About Selling At The Auction

by Mike Schadle

SouthWestern Michigan Aquarium Society

I've had the pleasure of acting as auctioneer at many aquarium society auctions in the last few years, and in that capacity have sold thousands of bags of fish and assorted aquarium paraphernalia. In the process I have developed some rather strong feelings on how the aquarists can best realize the maximum profit for his goods, and conversely, on how a seller can guarantee a low return (and, occasionally, the wrath of the buyers) by poor presentation of the items he has for sale. In this article I hope to bring out some of these pet peeves and helpful hints with the aim of educating the auction sellers, so they may attain higher profits while adding to the success and reputation of their society's auctions. For the sake of this discussion I will leave out the topic of proper bagging and packaging, as this has been well covered in other articles and should largely be a matter of common sense, and will instead concentrate on the items being sold.

The first and foremost rule to follow as a seller is to consider whether or not you yourself as a buyer would pay money for the item you are considering for sale. No matter if it is fish, plant, aquatic animal, equipment, or other hobby-related items, would you, if you had an interest, pay out your hard earned dough for the item you are about to put in the auction? If the answer is no or even a marginal qualified yes, you are best off throwing it in the garbage, flushing it, or feeding it off, as the case may be. Let's face it, who profits when a 1-pound baggie of fluorescent purple gravel is placed in an auction and sells for 50 cents? If you really need the 30 cents that such a sale might net you that badly, then maybe you really need to take a look at your priorities and sell off your aquarium stuff and put some food on your table. At any rate, following this basic rule in and of itself will insure that you are welcome back the next time a given society holds an auction, and you will usually not be disappointed with the financial outcome. Not following this guideline can insure the buyers will be on the lookout to avoid your items in future auctions, and auction staffs and auctioneers will be on the lookout for "that cheapskate jerk with the purple gravel".

Let's take a look at the fish you bag up for an auction. If your kribbs spawned three weeks ago and right now you're sitting on about 500 three-eighths inch long fry, do you bag up three to a bag and put twenty bags in the auction? If you do, you are guilty of at least three auction mistakes. First of all, your fish are not ready to be sold – they simply aren't yet big enough. Especially for a more or less common fish, such as a krib, tiny fry are just not large enough to place in an auction and expect someone to part with several dollars to obtain them. Only in the case of extremely hard-to-come-by fish are small fry really acceptable for an auction (and then, if they're really that rare, you ought to have a long list of ready buyers at hand for private sale with no need for an auction). A good rule of thumb for most

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species is that the fish be about one inch long before they're ready for auction (obviously this doesn't work for *Heterandria Formosa*, among others, but, hey, the whole point here is think before you bag). Here's another test to try: would you take the fish to your local dealer and ask him to buy them from you for sale in his shop? Again, if the answer is no, what makes you think that they are any more desirable in an auction? If you don't have the room to raise up all your fry to a saleable size, then use the excess as feeders. Why waste time bagging stock that will not net you any money and just bogs down the auction? Excess baby fish are a wonderful source of live food. Remember the old rule - big fish eat little fish! It doesn't really matter that it took you a year to spawn the suckers - if you can't raise them they'll be stunted, which means they aren't good for anything but feeders anyway!

The next mistake is usually made in the number of fish placed in the bag. Almost every article you read about spawning fish says, "purchase at least six fry to insure obtaining a pair". Assuming that there is a fifty-fifty mix of males and females in every batch of fry (usually a false assumption, but that's another article), purchasing six at a time gives roughly a 97% probability of obtaining at least one pair - pretty fair odds. However, rarely do I see six unsexed fry bagged together in an auction. It may be two, three, or four, but rarely six. Here's a tip from the auctioneer: unless it is an expensive or desirable species (like *Tropheus* or *Discus*) your best bet is to place four fry to a bag. Four in a bag will bring a far better per-fish price in most cases than two or three, and a marginally better price than five or six. It all has to do with buyer psychology - particularly as the price per individual rises. For expensive species, buying three bags of two fish each for ten dollars somehow seems less expensive than buying one bag of six fish for thirty dollars. However, as the price per fish falls, four to a bag seems to make more sense than either two or six. I'm not defending this behavior from any logical or rational point of view; this is simply my observation of what really happens during an auction. Take advantage of it!

The third big mistake of the breeder/auction seller is to flood any single auction with too many fish. If you've put more than half a dozen bags of single species in the auction, you simply will not see the return you might expect. All the fish are on the table for everyone to view before the auction starts. As a result, if there are twenty bags of a particular fish available, everyone knows it, and there is little incentive to bid up the price on the bags of that fish that come up early. Later, as the crowd thins, there are less people bidding on those fish, and again, the price won't rise as desired. Finally, if there were simply too many bags of one species to be comfortably distributed throughout the auction, they will end up practically being given away in a lump towards the end of the sale. Always remember to apply the law of supply and demand. Too many of your fish plus too few buyers for your fish always equals low prices! You can't do much about the number of buyers, but you can certainly limit the number of fish available, thus raising the price on at least one side of the equation.

Let's move on to the non-fish items in an auction. I've seen some tricks that can do a lot to raise selling prices on normally ho-hum items. For example, every auction seems to have more than its share of microworm and white worm cultures. Each of these can normally be counted on to bring in its half - or one-dollar bid. BUT - try including a typewritten sheet of culturing instructions and see what the price is. Many people know that live foods are good for their fish, and are willing to buy them, but simply don't have the know-how to sustain them. I've seen a simple set of culturing instructions triple the price of a food culture over those without them. A few minutes' time at the typewriter and judicious use of a Xerox machine may well net you a few bucks in the future.

How about equipment? A little bit of elbow grease and some time are all that is needed to turn a \$5.00 grunge covered 20-gallon high tank into a sparkling \$15.00 or more bid winner at your next auction. The same holds true of any piece of hobby equipment. If it is clean and shiny, be it tank, hood or box filter, it is guaranteed to do better than an algae-encrusted, water-stained piece of crud that someone obviously didn't give two hoots about. Again, this goes back to our primary rule - how would you feel about buying it?

My final point/tip has to do with labeling. Personally, I feel that every item sold at auction should be labeled with the seller's name and complete phone number, over and above any descriptive information on the item to be sold. Putting your name and number to something indicates that you personally have no problem with the items you are selling - in affect, a guarantee, since if there is a problem the buyer has ready access to you. If you can sincerely stand behind each and every item you sell, providing this information should be no problem, and can strengthen a buyers resolve to purchase an item offered in an auction. As far as information on the item itself goes, the more information provided, the better - up to a point. First, the information must be accurate; I've seen three inch diameter Discus labeled as "large", "pairs" of two inch Angel Fish, and many "female" male Kenyi, to name just a few exaggerations. If you aren't sure of the identity or sex of an item, don't guess, and please don't insult the auctioneer's intelligence by stretching the size - if the auctioneer is a specialist in the field and catches your mistake/exaggeration/guess while looking at the bag before selling it, his comments may only make you feel dumb and the price may drop. On the other hand, if he sells it "as is" and it is not what it is represented to be, the host club and eventually you yourself may come in for a whole slew of trouble and bad feelings once the error is discovered. If you don't know the identification of the fish you wish to sell you have three options: 1) Find someone who can identify it (and not your six year old kid looking through his natural science book); 2) Sell it as an unidentified species, but at least try to narrow it down somewhat (Cichlids, Guppies, Killies, and Gouramis are usually fairly difficult to confuse); 3) Don't sell it and use it as a feeder. You will never lose by being honest in your descriptions, yet you might never be trusted by being caught once in a lie, er, excuse me, by stretching the truth. Whatever you

do, please don't leave the item devoid of any description - a sure way to stop an auction is for an item to come up with no description whatsoever, and have the auctioneer try to figure out what it is. No matter how good an auctioneer is, he cannot know every fish, plant, or device that comes up for sale, so please give him a little help, however limited it may be.

I hope that you find this information of some use. There are other tricks and techniques which I'm sure others could add, and I don't expect that this article should be the last word in helping those who sell at aquarium auctions. Much can be learned by attending auctions and observing what sells for good prices, and what doesn't "meet expectations". Experience, of course, is the best teacher. I'm sure that the things I've mentioned have hit home with most readers in some way. Please accept this information in the spirit that it is offered - as help, so that auctions may be more interesting and profitable for all of us.

Tampa Bay Aquarium Society Annual Auction

When: September 27th Noon till Finished

Come Early to See the Fish

Doors open at 9:00AM to Set Up

Come about 10:00 - 10:30 to See the Fish

Where: Same as Always

Lakewood High School

Cat Program (West End)

1400 54th Ave South

St. Petersburg, Florida

Go to the TBAS website for info and Directions

<http://tbas1.com>

Don't Miss This One!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

There Will Be Big Time Fish There This Time . . . PROMISE!!!



Who says Auction are no fun????? . . . pic by Ludo VanDenBogart

THE HOW TO'S OF BRINGING YOUR FISH TO THE CLUB FUND RAISING EVENT

By Jim Greenwald

Let's start out by asking "How do you regard the fish you are bringing to the club fund raising event?"

- 1.- They are nuisances using up space in your tanks and you'll be glad to get rid of them. Or it would also be nice to make some extra cash by selling them.
- 2.- They are living creatures whose fate rests entirely in your hands. They are about to have the most stressful day of their lives, and you hope they will go safely to a good new home.

Without getting overly sentimental, perhaps if you lean towards the second attitude your fish will be happier, their new owner will get more enjoyment from them, and, deep down, you will be more satisfied. Remember treat your fish like you would be the one acquiring them.

So with these thoughts in mind, consider the following when taking fish to be sold at the club fund raising event:

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1. **Do partial water changes a day or two before the fund raising event.** You don't want your friends testing your water and finding it in its usual disgusting state, do you? Check that all the fish in the tank(s) are healthy and free of any hint of disease.
2. **Get some suitable fish bags.** Don't use food or sandwich bags as they are usually too thin, and Ziploc bags come open too easily and should not be allowed in the fund raising event. Perhaps your best source is to beg or buy some fish bags from your favorite aquarium store.
3. **Catch the fish with as little stress as possible,** and carefully place them in your bag, together with enough of their own water to fill the bag about **one quarter full.** There should be enough water to cover the fish when the bag is on its side, but otherwise **oxygen is more important than water.** A little "Stress Coat" or similar conditioner could be added to the water.
4. **Fill the bag with air.** Don't blow it up like a balloon, but rather keep your mouth a short distance from the bag, so that you **fill it with oxygenated air rather than your own expelled carbon dioxide.** Alternatively, if you can, use an air pump with hose to fill the bag.
5. **Fasten the bag securely.** If the bag is long enough you may be able to tie a knot in the bag itself. Otherwise twist the top, double it over, and use a rubber band, like they do in the pet stores. Take extra care over this, as you may not be as good at it as the pet store people, and your bag will be getting a lot more handling than theirs do. Do not use metal twist ties because they can burst your bag and other people's bags. **Make the bag quite taut** like a balloon – this will make a small amount of water sit better on the fund raising event table, and will help to avoid the possibility of fish becoming trapped in the corners of the bag.
6. **Double bag.** Place the first bag inside a second bag, upside down, and fasten the second bag securely. This will insure against damage and leakage, and will round out the corners of the first bag.
7. **Before using the second bag, detail the contents clearly,** using a felt pen (or perhaps a sticky label). Write low down on the bag so that your writing is not obscured when you fasten it. Put the same information on **both sides** of the bag so that viewers don't have to turn it over on the fund raising event table. Put as much information on the bag as is appropriate, such as the common and Latin names of the fish, where they come from, how many fish, their size, their gender, and any other information which would be helpful to the purchaser.

You'll probably be in a rush catching and bagging fish on the day of the fund raising event. Consider doing the writing part the evening before.

8. **Should your fish be a species or variety that is rarely seen**, you should definitely provide the Latin name, and might write a short note as to their characteristics in the aquarium such as “community”, “carnivorous”, “killifish”, and the aquarium conditions they prefer. Or you could **give the fund raising eventeer this information** before the sale (they can’t know everything!). Some fund raising eventeers might ask you to say a few words about your unusual fish when they come up for sale.

If the fish are uncommon, a really considerate person takes the time to attach a **computer print-out or photocopied information sheet** about the fish. This is usually appreciated by the new owners and the fish!. You might also consider writing an article about the fish for your club’s newsletter. (right Mike?)

9. **Extra large fish need extra large bags.** – As they will suffocate in a bag that is too small. **Fish with spines** (including cichlids and plecos) have been known to burst their bags. They are best brought in a glass or plastic container, or at least with their bag contained in a bucket.

10. **Take the bags to the fund raising event in an insulated container** – a Styrofoam box or a cooler. No matter if the temperature outside or in your car is warmer or colder, this will help stabilize the temperature of the fish water. Hopefully the fund raising event room will be at a suitable temperature. If it isn’t, leave your fish in the insulated container as long as possible.

11. **It is very stressful for fish to be lifted and examined** dozens of times when on the fund raising event tables. Make sure your **content information is clearly visible**, so that people who don’t want “guppies” won’t have to lift them to find out what they are. The more details you give, the less they will have to be lifted. If bags with the same contents are placed **beside each other** and labeled the same, each one will have to be lifted fewer times.

12. **After the fund raising event, should your fish be uncommon, seek out the buyers** and tell them a little more about the fishes’ characteristics and how you care for them.

13. **Most aquatic plants do not require much water in their bag.** They are more likely to be damaged washing around loosely in water than in a tight air filled bag. Write on the bag before filling it. Latin names are very useful to purchasers of plants. Don’t include snails, pieces of duckweed, etc.

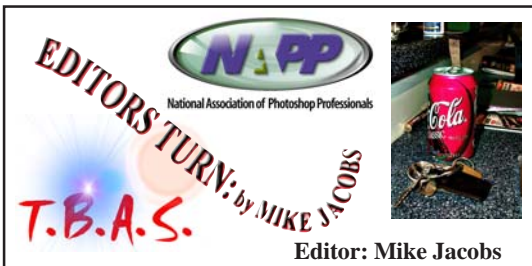
14. **When you buy fish at a fund raising event place them immediately in your insulated container.** Don’t just leave them on the cold floor beside you. Always take a few spare bags in case the fish need re-bagging.

15. **If the species you acquired is new to you, seek out the seller and find out all you can about it** This should include its Latin name, common name, and location so that you can look it up easily at home.

16. **When you finally get the fish home, place them in a quarantine tank**, that hopefully you have set up before the fund raising event. In the event that you brought too many fish home, You can use buckets, coolers and even that Styrofoam box as a temporary home till you can properly set up a quarantine tank for your newly acquired fish.

Take a little extra care!.....and good luck at the Fund raising event!

DON'T FORGET THE TBAS AUCTION
SEPTEMBER 27TH
LAKWOOD HS
DOORS OPEN AT 9:00 AM
AUCTION BEGINS AT 12:00 NOON
Go To the TBAS website for directions and rules:
<http://tbas1.com>



I would like to take a moment to thank the past president of TBAS and his BOD. Ken Friesen ran a good ship and has left TBAS much better as a club than when he started. I would also like to thank Ken's wife Jackie for keeping me straight the whole year as she served as the club Secretary . . . thanks Ken and Jackie and the whole BOD who served with him.

Now to the present! I need for everyone to understand the importance of you participating in the TBAS Auction scheduled for September 27th. That's a Saturday and you have had oodles of notice so please try to get the event on your calendar. The auction is what allows this club to maintain its high standard and all we are asking from you is ONE DAY'S attendance out of the entire year . . . come on guys . . . see you there!

Mike

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Greetings fellow Tampa Bay Aquarium Society members and friends!

As we enter the month of September we are gearing up for our annual auction/fundraiser event, to be held on Saturday, September 27th. Once again, we have the opportunity to use the great auditorium facilities at Lakewood High School in south St. Petersburg. It looks like there will be lots of interesting fish and plants available, including some rare and unusual species. Remember that early registration of your sale items via the aquarium society website (www.tbas1.com) will net you an extra 10% of the sales split. All the details, times, directions and pertinent information can be found on the advertising flyer on the website, or you can pick one up at the next general meeting on Monday, September 8th.

I want to thank Joe Emmons for the program he presented last month about the 2008 ACA convention in Atlanta. He had some great photos of the show fish - winners and losers alike, and gave us all a lot of interesting insights and information about the happenings at the convention.

We have more exciting presentations by some of our great local speakers and club members planned for the upcoming monthly meetings, so be sure to mark your calendars to attend.

This month is also the culmination of the Grow Out Contest, as the entries are brought in for display and final judging. You can enter as many specimens as you like, but only one fish per container. First, second and third place trophies will be awarded to the winners. There are sure to be some fine examples of blue rams (*Microgeophagus ramirezi*) to be seen.

I look forward to seeing you at the next TBAS meeting!

John

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P.O. Box 27044 Tampa, Florida 33623



Tampa Bay Aquarium Society...

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