

ST. CATHARINES & AREA AQUARIUM SOCIETY NEWSLETTER: “The Scat”



DECEMBER 2016: Vol. 29 #04



Toronto's Ripley's Aquarium Just Dazzles

You've heard about Ripley's Aquarium, and not yet visited? It's one place you won't soon forget. I visited earlier this month with the Hamilton Aquarium Society and I'm already anxious to return.

Ripley's is located right next to the CN Tower, quite aptly in Toronto's Entertainment District. This attraction, swimming with creativity, is a carefully crafted fusion of Aqua-Museum and the Cirque du Soleil. Canada's largest indoor aquarium offers the biggest shark collection on the continent, one of the world's most extensive jellyfish exhibits, 100+ year old giant lobsters, and “petting pools” for stingrays and bamboo sharks. While this is home to over 16,000 animals from all over, its allure is not merely the multitude of aquatic species on exhibit, but also how you are able to view them.

Magical and fantastical, the novelties begin right at the entry with a columnar saltwater tank rising high out of a large doughnut-shaped freshwater African cichlid tank. At first glance –and perplexingly-- exotic fish that would never see each other in their natural habitats, or for that matter in captivity, appear to be living together. Closer scrutiny reveals the two separate tanks have been designed in such a way that these very different groups of colourful fish are, in reality, living quite independent of one another, but together only in an optical illusion.

The meandering halls create a sense of childlike anticipation in all ages for visitors with surreal exhibits of amazing sea creatures unfolding before you with every turn, from those of the Great Lake Basin to the giant toothy predators of the oceans' depths. The Aquarium is not without categorized geographical organization and as we passed through the massive galleries of Great Lake Basin Fish, to my amusement, a friend from my Aquarium Society was quick to recognize many fine specimens from his years as an angler, and proceeded to explain how unbelievably tasty even the eel would be if brined, smoked and spiced just right with a little garlic – an effort quite lost on me who despises seafood. I had an appreciation for that exhibit, however, as it was both interesting and educational to see all the creatures which live right in our own waters and not just those from far off seas.

The various displays make you forget you are even in an Aquarium as they are all aquascaped with attention to authenticity; rather you have the perspective you are scuba-diving with the sea creatures as a visitor to their underwater world. The pièce de résistance for me was the acrylic tunnel that snakes underneath a cavernous lagoon where you are surrounded 180 degrees by an amazing diversity of tropical aquatic life. Sharks, fish, sting-rays, and giant turtles are swimming all around you and this acrylic tunnel offers the visitor an exceptional glimpse of their brilliant colours, behavior, agility, size, speed, and in several cases, rows of dagger-like teeth! The tunnel is truly a feat of engineering and is perhaps where Ripley's parts company with other more conventional aquariums. The fish and sea creatures are scientifically discussed on informational panels throughout, and children are by no means forgotten with many interactive displays.

Everything is flawlessly maintained, clean and there is no trace of odour even around the sting ray touch tanks. At the end of our tour, we had a fleeting glimpse into the state-of-the-art Life-Support-Systems room showing 12 of the Aqua-Museum's filters, along with many tank monitors. All very methodically colour-coded with paint, it appears like the engine room of the Queen Mary 2, but is really only a small percentage of the equipment required to operate the facility. The Aquarium uses 5.7 million litres (1.5 million U.S. gallons) of water in its display tanks and filtration requires over 127 million litres (33.5 million U.S. gallons) to be pumped daily. The piping painted blue represents freshwater lines and green ones saltwater. As the Aquarium houses over 16,000 aquatic animals, it must store enough pre-conditioned tap water in reserve to replenish all the water in its tanks, not only for evaporation purposes, but in the event of emergencies. This water, kept in reserve, must be replaced regularly as it will not remain safe for use indefinitely as a result of potential bacteria and other water issues that arise with time. The discharge water is released incrementally at off peak hours into the city drainage system so as not to exceed system capacity restrictions.

Upon leaving the remarkable Aqua-Museum, I looked way up and recalled the once dazzling 'Sparkles' nightclub of the 1980s atop Toronto's iconic CN Tower. The highest dance club in the world was then a Mecca for locals, tourists and anyone looking to have fun with friends in the unique atmosphere with an array of creative special effects. While it has disappeared into the clouds forever, Canada's largest indoor aquarium, appears to have captured easily as much interest, not as a nightclub, but as a "sparkling" entertainment venue in its own right, appealing to the adventurous side of a broad mix of people and ages at the local, national, and international level. I encourage everyone to make the effort to visit this incredible attraction - a truly worthwhile experience.

Article By: Dave Holland

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Very Special Request for Your Photo Please:



TO ALL MEMBERS from Pat Bridges, SCAAS's membership chairperson:

*"I am experiencing a severe memory problem, and am in the care of a specialist. As our membership grows, I am having much difficulty matching faces with names. **I would greatly appreciate a recent photo of each of you to attach to your file at the sign-in table.** Dave Holland, the Club's new Newsletter Editor was the first to provide his photo and it was helpful straight away. To all of you, thank you for helping to make my job a little easier!"*

***Reminder to All Members** - Some membership dues are still outstanding. Please ensure that your membership card is up to date. The card ensures your eligibility for discounts along with Club benefits.

Family	\$25
Single Adult	20
Junior (under 16)/Student with card/Senior (over 65)	10
Senior Couple (over 65)	20

Upcoming Events:

- **EARLY START 7:00PM** Monday December 5, 2016 - **SCAAS Potluck Christmas – Holiday Dinner;** Seafarers' and Teamsters' Union Hall, 70 St. David's Rd. E., Thorold, ON.



- **CAOAC Aquatic Expo 2017**, hosted by Hamilton & District Aquarium Society, May 19-21 at Holiday Inn Burlington Hotel & Conference Centre. Excellent speakers. For tickets & more information see <http://hdas.ca/convention>

Unlocking the Mystery of Apple Snails



The term Apple Snails has become a “catch-all” for many species of snails: *Pomacea diffusa*; *Pomacea canaliculata*; *Marisa cornuarietis*; and *Asolene spixi*. The first two types of snails *Pomacea diffusa* and *Pomacea canaliculata* are often called Mystery snails in the pet stores, but you will see below they are quite different.

Pomacea diffusa

P. diffusa (formerly called *P. bridgesii*) are beautiful snails which grow to the size of a golf ball and are not considered plant eaters. They may nibble occasionally, but will not wipe out a planted tank. They lay their dusty rose coloured egg clutches above the water line.



Pomacea canaliculata

The *Pomacea canaliculata* are called “canas” for short. They grow to the size of a peach and will devour any plant life. 7 years ago these snails were banned in some states due to the destruction they caused when let loose into the wild. These snails also lay their orangey egg clutches above the water line. The yellow variety is not available in the hobby that I have seen for a while, but the caramel and brown colours can be found at pet stores.



Asolene spixi

These cute little snails are called “spixis” for short and grow about the size of a gumball. They can be plant eaters if crossed with Marisas. They lay their eggs under water. Spixis are not found in pet stores, but can be found sometimes at auctions.



Marisa cornuarietus

These are also known as Giant Ramshorns, but grow much larger than your typical pest ramshorns. Their colouration is often gold and striped. Marisas will eat plants, but slowly, unlike the canas. Their eggs are laid under water. These snails are not usually sold at pet stores, but occasionally at auctions.



Data Courtesy: Applesnail.net author Dr. Stijn A. I. Ghesquiere,

Photo Courtesy: Canadian Aquarium Connection.

Article By: Pam Danyluck



It's hard to believe that December is already upon us. As is tradition, this month will be our Christmas - Holiday potluck. In order to add to the festivities, we ask that you bring your favourite entrée/dessert. Kindly label any dishes that contain nuts. To remember those less fortunate, kindly consider bringing a canned or non-perishable food item for donation.

We will have a small auction and jar show (open choice) at the meeting. All club members will win an aquarium-related prize in our draw. See you at the potluck and in 2017!

Best Wishes to All from Your SCAAS Executive

Getting To Know Your SCAAS Members: **Ashley Godfrey**



"I started fish-keeping when I was about 15 years old, but I didn't know about cycling a tank then or how to really care for a fish tank properly. I began with a 90 gallon mixture of fish which turned out horribly. Then, I tried my hand at convict cichlids -- needless to say they bred like crazy and were so aggressive, I didn't like them at all and sold them to a pet store. Since, I've cared for lizards such as black and white tegus, iguanas, and a Nile monitor. Down through the years, I've had cats, dogs, ferrets, hamsters, rabbits, and rats as pets. I used to work in the nursery for baby birds at Superpet when it was in business. I've always loved animals as you can tell by the personal zoo I've just described. It has been over the last 4 years when I've really concentrated on learning the essentials, and then some, of keeping tropical fish. For a time, I bred endlers. Most of my experience is in tropical freshwater fish, but I have also maintained a large saltwater tank. Future plans include further exploring the saltwater side of the hobby. Currently I am a moderator on the online Aquarium site, 'Exploring Aquatic Atlantis' lending advice. I have been a member of the St. Catharines and Area Aquarium Society for one year."

December Jar Show Data & November Results:

For the December Jar Show, there will be no specific fish category. It is open to all types. All entries to this upcoming jar show will receive a chance to enter the year-end draw for a new hang on back filter. Best of Luck!

Nov. Fish of the Month – "Any type of cichlid"

1st prize: Catherine Salmon – 6 pts

2nd prize: John Morvan – 5 pts.

Best in Show: Catherine Salmon won with her *Apistogramma cacatuoides*

Both lucky winners receive 1 ticket to the year-end draw for a new hang on the back filter.





Ask Larry Lobster!

This new segment offers anyone a chance to pose questions via email submissions to “Larry Lobster” about their aquarium. Opinions will be sought to help answer the question by various resources, from veterans, those with experience and reliable online research. Answers are “friendly opinions” only.

Dear Larry Lobster: *My Ornate Bichirs need ‘caves’. My bichirs are 5cms long. I have no substrate so I can keep it clean as Bichirs need impeccable water quality to thrive. I was thinking black tubes or pipes... my question is, are the ones from Home Depot ok or will they be harmful to them from chemicals? Any input is appreciated -- Thank you Shawn*

Dear Shawn: Both ABS pipe and PVC are available at Home Depot. You will find aquarists who have used both for “caves”. There is controversy with using black ABS pipe as it may release harmful toxins over time. ABS, Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene, is made from thermoplastic resin and is made for drain, waste and vent applications (marked DWV). Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe is typically used in drain, waste, vent and cold drinking water applications. PVC is strong, durable, rigid, corrosion resistant and somewhat chemically resistant. Research and a local plumbing supply store confirm that PVC pipe would be the safer option and suggest that aquarists look for the symbol “NSF” on the pipe. NSF, National Sanitization Foundation, will be shown on a PVC pipe bearing its certification. It means it may be used for potable water and will also be lead free. The PVC will come in white and grey. There should be no issues with water conditions typical for freshwater tropical fish. There are couplings you may use for smaller fish caves, but custom larger lengths will require that you buy a larger piece of PVC and cut it with a hack saw, then sand it to smooth rough edges. You can decorate the PVC pipes with medium fine sand/gravel to create a more natural look with aquarium silicon. Smooth rocks and larger pieces of driftwood can be used to create caves also. Note: How PVC may interact with brackish water or salter water applications are other variables that exceed the scope of this question.

Data Courtesies: Noble Plumbing Supply, Niagara Falls, On. ; Fisher, A. WQP Magazine: “Picking Plastic for Pipe”, 2013.

Dear Larry Lobster: We saw bettas all together in the same tank at a fish store and liked it - didn't know this was possible? We have a few tanks we could use from a 25 gallon high to a 30 long. Where to start? Oh yeah, we want to add koi too. Tony & Maria

Dear Tony & Maria: Betta “females” may be housed in a “sorority” in a carefully stocked and planned tank. A 30g long would be best given they are surface breathers. This size will better suit the required aquascaping (smaller tanks eg. 10g are possible, but suboptimal). The females are not peace-loving and will still flare/duel; some more so than others. There “will” be a pecking order established when they are put in the tank and a dominant female will emerge. That period may take a few days or more. Pay close attention during this time. A sorority should consist of no less than 5 females or they will typically fight with unfortunate results. A dominant female may actually be a bully and require separation - even for a few days. A heavily planted tank with high plants (thick, not stringy) that grow to the surface (even if silk) are required “at setup”. Cutting the lines of sight (i.e., the fish’s view of others) is vital to diffuse aggression. Rockery, driftwood, caves (PVC pipe), floating plants, floating tunnels all help stop fighting. Buying your fish from a breeder is best as biological sisters of similar size that have never been separated will get on better. Quarantining may not be needed and their care will have been superior to the fish store (LFS). Often store bettas are old, stressed and have grown used to life alone. Store bettas must be quarantined. Ideally you would not mix different varieties of bettas together as some have more finnage and will be unduly bullied. 1.5 gallons of water per betta offers a general stocking guideline, not accounting for one with a very aggressive personality. Females will be territorial. Add them all at once. Adding a female later will mean moving the bettas out, rearranging the tank so territories are unrecognizable, then adding the fish back including the new one. Even removing one lady for a brief time (eg. jar show) will cause them to fight when she is returned. Be wary that sometimes young “females” turn out to be males as they mature. Males must be removed to avoid a fight. Bettas are tropical and need a heater to keep the water about 27C (80F). Filtration is also useful but don’t stress them with strong current. Some females will be too aggressive for sorority life. 15 bettas in a 30g long would be fine and an “uneven” number of bettas seems to work better. Betta sororities may be kept with select other community fish, but those fish shouldn’t resemble a betta (eg. guppies), nip (tiger barbs) or swim near the top. Other community fish should be in the tank first and these fish must have similar habitat requirements. Koi are beautiful, but unsuitable tank mates. Koi need much larger tanks. The bettas will be very small in contrast to the koi and are likely to be bullied by them. Failing that, the betta might nip at the Koi's big fins.

Data Courtesies: Peter DeSouza; Betta Breeders Canada; Betta Breeders United; Betta Fish Enthusiasts; Betta Breeders Canada; Betta Fishkeepers Worldwide; B.E.T.T.A.



Ask Larry Lobster at extra-spicy@hotmail.com



ARTICLES FOR THE SCAT NEWSLETTER SOUGHT! TELL US YOUR FISH STORY! Here is your chance to tell our group what you have been up to with your tank/s, fish, snails or plant-life. Have you started a discus tank or bred some for the first time? Perhaps your arms have been cut open when handling your pet ornate bichir and you would like to tell us what happened and how you plan to prevent it from re-occurring? It's not just about fish here though, we are also open to submissions about shrimp, crayfish and aquascaping or DIY. You might like to share a story such as your experiences buying fish in the US and bringing them across the border. First time writers are very welcome of any age. Please don't feel shy about spelling or proper writing style for the purposes of submitting an article. Our editing "staff" can make any refinements, if required (smiles). An article does not have to be quite long to be included in THE SCAT publication. Photos are helpful and if you reference any documents they can be credited. ***Articles may be sent to me directly, Dave, at the email address: extra-spicy@hotmail.com

Looking forward to hearing what is happening in your fish tank/s!



Where and When We Meet

- The St. Catharines and Area Aquarium Society (S.C.A.A.S) meets the first Monday of the month at the Seafarers' and Teamsters' Union Hall, 70 St. David's Rd. E., Thorold, ON. If the 1st Monday falls on a holiday, we meet the following Monday (no meetings in July & August).
- The Society is a non-profit educational organization, dedicated to bringing hobbyists of tropical fish and aquatic plants together who are interested in breeding, raising, showing and/or learning more about aquaria, both at the beginner and more advanced levels. Members benefit from lectures, power point presentations, hands-on demonstrations, outings, shared advice and monthly auctions. The club has a social aspect and visitors are welcome.
- S.C.A.A.S. is a charter member of the Canadian Association of Aquarium Clubs Inc. (C.A.O.A.C.; www.caoac.ca) and of the Federation of American Aquarium Societies, (F.A.A.S.; www.faas.info)
- More news and information about S.C.A.A.S. can be found online at www.scaas.info



2016 SCAAS OFFICERS

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Advertising in the S.C.A.A.S. Newsletter

Please contact any SCAAS Officers if you would like to place an advertisement in our newsletter or know of someone that might. Our rates are as below:

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**BAP AWARDS
PRESENTED AT
THE NOVEMBER MEETING**

Dave Furness

Poecilia sphenops5 pts.

Congratulations

Tom Bridges
BAP Chairperson

November Breeder's Award Programme Addendum:

An omission occurred on the Nov Breeding list for Dave Furness the BAP Chair would like to correct . The Melanochromis auratus, a cichlid, should also have been included in the chart. Thank you.

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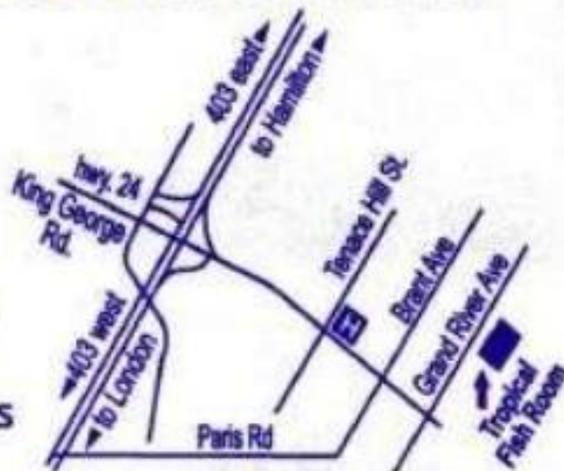
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PLEASE KNOT YOUR BAGS, OR USE ELASTIC BANDS.

ABSOLUTELY NO ZIP LOCK BAGS OR METAL TIES OF ANY KIND, EVEN FOR PLANTS.

DOUBLE-BAG FISH THAT ARE PRONE TO PIERCING THE BAG.

DON'T USE STICKY TAPE TO CONNECT TWO BAGS (i.e. a pair of fish), TIE THEM TOGETHER AT THE TOP OR PUT THEM BOTH INTO A LARGER CLEAR BAG.

To prevent almost certain deaths because of a too small bag - USE A BAG THAT'S APPROPRIATE TO THE SIZE OF THE FISH, **ALWAYS WITH 1/3 water and 2/3 air space in each bag.**

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