

the cichlid

monthly



Victorian Cichlid Society Incorporated

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THE NEXT MEETING of the Society will be held on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 pm sharp (the Trading Table opens earlier) in the Mitcham Scout Hall, Brunswick Road, Mitcham. Visitors are encouraged to come along.

MINI TALK: AGM.

MAIN TALK: Cichlid of the Month - John McCormick.

DOOR PRIZES: MAS.

DRAW PRIZES:

1. Large Hamper.
2. Medium Hamper.
3. Small Hamper.

TABLE SHOWS: Details see page 2.

MEMBERSHIP FEES 2005

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Overseas.....	\$35.00

(new memberships add \$8 joining fee)

COVER PICTURE: The Editor's New Toys. Christmas 2005 -- Picture by Christopher Kringle.

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Kevin Archibald, Keith Patford,
Danny Genovese, Daryl Hutchins and
John McCormick.

HONORARY MEMBER:

Max Davenport.

FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY:

Graham Rowe.

PUBLIC OFFICER: David Green.

Meeting Details	1
OSIPet Table Show Calendar	2
The Breeder's Achievement Award Program - P Robinson	4-5
La Grande Ile - P de Rham	6-21
Rowemin' 'round - G Rowe	22-23
Minutes of the Previous Meeting	23
The Last Last Word	24

OSIPet Table Show Calendar 2005

	<u>Kevin Archibald Show</u>	<u>Keith Patford Show</u>
January	Earthaters	Riverines
February	Angels, Uarus and Discus	Lake Malawians
March	South Americans	Lake Tanganyikans
April	Central Americans	African Riverine and Lake Victorians
May	South Americans	Lake Malawians
June	Dwarf Americans	Dwarf Africans
July	Central Americans	Lake Tanganyikans
August	Pairs (American)	Pairs (African)
September	South Americans	Lake Malawians
October	Central Americans	African Riverine and Lake Victorians
November	Angels, Uarus and Discus	Lake Tanganyikans
December	American of Your Choice	African of Your Choice

NOTE: Asian and Madagascan Cichlids may be entered any time, but must meet the special requirements in June (dwarfs) and August (pairs).

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Editor of TCM or the committee of the Victorian Cichlid Society Inc. You are encouraged to write to, or e-mail the Editor on any subject raised herein.

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Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year
from the Members and Committee
of the
Victorian Cichlid Society Inc



The Breeder's Achievement Award Program

By Peter Robinson

I am surprised and very disappointed that the members of our Society, which has the proud aim of ensuring the survival, fostering species and hopefully disseminating our cichlids to the rest of the population, have lost all interest in breeding and registering their achievements with the club. Are we so financially absorbed that the only thing we wish of our fish is that they put dollars in our pockets?

Are we so blasé that obtaining an achievement certificate is worthless, or of no interest? Is there no competitive interest in trying to achieve a high commendation for the effort of successfully spawning and raising a batch of fry or numerous batches?

This program is in danger of complete collapse, as members show no interest in joining in the fun. It is not hard work to participate; all you need do is record the date you spawn a fish, get a fellow member to witness your feat, have the fry witnessed again after 60 days and lodge the BAA form with me. Is that too difficult?

I believe nowadays with the web and digital cameras we could even make things simpler. What if you photograph the spawning? Most cameras have a date facility; take pics of the fry as they grow until 60 days then these could be e-mailed to the BAA chairman, be it myself or whoever. This could even take away the task of registering on a form; you won't even have to write anything except an email.

I would like to hear some comments on this idea: as Daryl says, "throw the cat amongst the pigeons". I think this system could work quite well. What do you think?

The BAA is also excellent for giving the breeder all the start needed to write an article for our magazine. You only have to keep a few more details such as pH, hardness, temperature and there you have the basis to write up an interesting story to help other members spawn a difficult species or give a newcomer the help needed to breed maybe his/her first cichlid.

We hear the poor Editor month after month begging members for something to help fill 'The Cichlid Monthly', but he rarely if ever gets any assistance from the members. I now am no longer spawning fish like I used to, so my input will be down considerably and your magazine will deteriorate to being a reprint journal with little or no local input. Do you wish this to happen? Are you actually reading the magazine? Or is it just left in the envelope and put out with the recycled papers? I would like some input about this too if you can be bothered answering me.

I know some of you will say, "Oh listen to Robo, he doesn't even come to meetings any more." That may be so; there are many reasons why I no longer attend the meetings, but my heart is still deeply involved with the VCS, otherwise I would not still try to write the odd article and continue with the BAA. I would

hate to see the BAA and TCM fail through lack of interest. I have served on the Committee for many years over two eras; the beginning of the club and over the 1990s. It is time for others now to take up the task.

Another valuable facet of your club is the Message Forum on the web. It started off with great gusto, but has now deteriorated to basically a buy, swap and sell site. Victorian cichlid keepers seem to prefer to support the NSW forum rather than their own Club's. Yes it is busier, but that is partly because you all flock there while ours sits deserted. I think it will end up disappearing due to lack of interest, which is a shame because it is another way of projecting our club across the world.

December is the Annual General Meeting. I hope you will show enough interest to stand for a committee position. Your club needs and deserves the best you can do for it, or it will

just flounder along. Let's start throwing ourselves into the running of the club; if there are things you wish to change, then being on the committee is where you can attempt the task. Do not just be a silent taker from your Society; it is YOUR Society, work to ensure it is alive, vibrant, thriving and growing into the 21st Century, only you can do it. Do not just expect others to do it for you, then complain when things are not done to your satisfaction. Be proud of your club and show your appreciation for what it has achieved over its long history.

If you would like to let me know your ideas you can email me at victoriancichlidsociety@hotmail.com. I am eagerly awaiting your input from this diatribe.

All this now said; may I wish all members a very happy Christmas and a safe and happy 2006.

Cichlid POWER



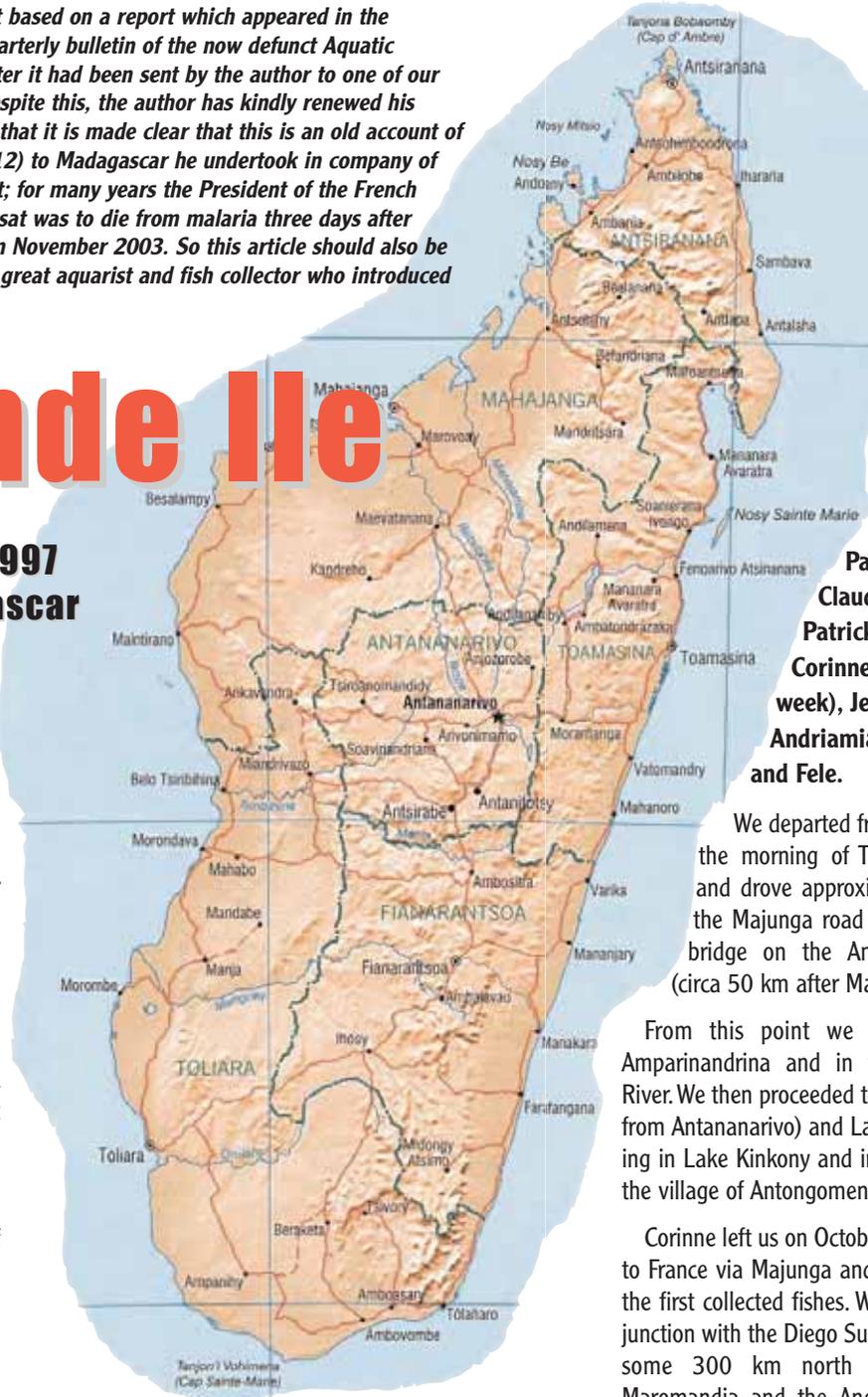
This can be considered as an unpublished text based on a report which appeared in the sparsely distributed 'Aquatic Survival', the quarterly bulletin of the now defunct Aquatic Conservation Network (ACN) organisation. After it had been sent by the author to one of our members, it became "lost" for eight years. Despite this, the author has kindly renewed his permission to reproduce it with the provision that it is made clear that this is an old account of one of the nine expeditions (out of a total of 12) to Madagascar he undertook in company of his sadly missed friend, Jean-Claude Nourissat; for many years the President of the French Cichlid Association (AFC). Jean-Claude Nourissat was to die from malaria three days after coming back from a last trip to Madagascar in November 2003. So this article should also be considered as a tribute to the memory of this great aquarist and fish collector who introduced so many new cichlid species to our hobby.

La Grande Ile

Main Results of October 1997 Collecting Trip to Madagascar

By Patrick de Rham

In October 1997, after two years of solo trips, Jean-Claude Nourissat and I, travelled together again to the Grande Ile. For the first part of the trip, we were fortunate to have the company of Miss Corinne Toumi. This energetic young lady is a French Cichlid Association member and works for Air France. Corinne had kindly agreed to take the fishes collected during the first week of the trip back to France. The success of this trip would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of our Malagasy friend and collaborator Jean-(Gilbert) Andriamianamihadja, who as usual tirelessly cumulated the functions of driver, mechanic, guide, interpreter and enquirer. Fele, Jean's faithful and strong adopted son, was of great help in maintaining alive the collected fishes. He took great care of our property and helped his father with the mechanical maintenance of his old but roomy VW minibus.



CIA map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

Itinerary with main collecting localities

Part 1: Tour through north-west Madagascar by minibus.

Participants: Jean-Claude Nourissat, Patrick de Rham, Corinne Toumi (first week), Jean-(Gilbert) Andriamianamihadja and Fele.

We departed from Antananarivo in the morning of Thursday 3 October and drove approximately 300 km on the Majunga road till we reached the bridge on the Ankalamintotra River (circa 50 km after Maevatanana).

From this point we collected in Lake Amparinandrina and in the Ankalamintotra River. We then proceeded to Majunga (550 km from Antananarivo) and Lake Kinkony, collecting in Lake Kinkony and in two lakes close to the village of Antongomena.

Corinne left us on October 10 and flew back to France via Majunga and Antananarivo with the first collected fishes. We went back to the junction with the Diego Suarez road and drove some 300 km north on this road to Maromandia and the Andranomahaza River. Collecting was mainly in the Andranomahaza

and Manangarivo Rivers, both downstream and upstream from the bridge. From Maromandia, we continued north till we reached the Sambirano area and the town of Ambanja.

This was to be the northernmost point of our 1997 road trip at some 900 km from Antananarivo. Collecting took place in the Sambirano River and in several small lakes and swamps of the area. On October 18 we began our way back south to Antananarivo, but detoured to Mandritsara to collect in the Mangarahara River.

From there to Antananarivo we were to collect only once in a small stream 247 km from Antananarivo. We were back in Antananarivo in the late morning of October 22 having completed an approximately 3000 km road trip. Jean-Claude Nourissat flew back to France the next day, taking with him most of the collected fishes.

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Part 2: Ile Sainte Marie, Andapa, Sambava, mainly by plane.

Participants: Patrick de Rham, Jean-(G.) Andriamianamihadja.

On October 24, Jean-(G.) A. and I flew to Ile Sainte Marie off the east coast of Madagascar, where we stayed till October 27, collecting in several small streams of the island.

On October 27 we flew via Tamatave to the north-east coastal town of Sambava where we rented a taxi which took us 110 km inland to the small town of Andapa. With the kind assistance of Mr Guy Tam Hyock we collected in the Andraka and Antagena streams and obtained pond-bred live specimens of the local *Paratilapia* species.

On October 29, Guy T.H. drove us back to Sainbava from where we visited Lake Andohabe, 10 km south on the Antalaha road. Next day we flew back to Antananarivo. On October 31, I had a very pleasant and inter-

esting meeting with the new Directeur du Service de l'Aquaculture. November 2, I departed from Antananarivo for Paris and Geneva.

CICHLIDAE

Cichlids are the main target species of our Madagascar collecting trips. This year we were able to collect and carry back home to France and Switzerland live specimens of the following species and populations.

Paratilapia polleni

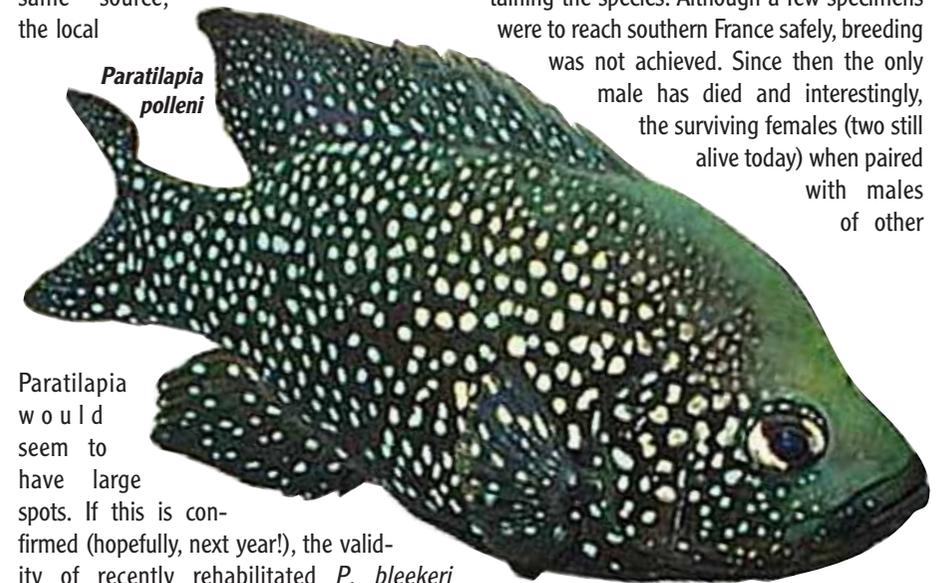
This beautiful fish used to be the most widespread cichlid in Madagascar, with a range encompassing most of the island. However, it is possible that several more or less allotropic species were included under this name. Unfortunately, today *Paratilapia* has become very rare in most places and has even completely disappeared from large areas of its former range. This of course renders the system-

atic and distribution study of *Paratilapia* very difficult and the situation is getting worse every day.

One of our main reasons to push as far north as Anbanja on this trip was to reach the lower Sambirano area which is the terra typica of *Paratilapia polleni* Bleeker 1868. Unfortunately we were not able to catch any *Paratilapia* there. However, the local fishermen know this fish very well, and although rare, it is still extant in the area. According to the same source, the local

be restricted to the Andapa "cuvette" (upper Lokoho River system), north-east Madagascar. The coloration of this population is very distinct, the characteristic points of *Paratilapia* are so large that, especially in females, they tend to merge and form more or less elongated marks.

According to local sources, this fish is nearly extinct in nature and the specimens we were offered came from a pond in which a conservation-minded individual was and still is maintaining the species. Although a few specimens were to reach southern France safely, breeding was not achieved. Since then the only male has died and interestingly, the surviving females (two still alive today) when paired with males of other



Paratilapia would seem to have large spots. If this is confirmed (hopefully, next year!), the validity of recently rehabilitated *P. bleekeri* Sauvage 1882 (large spots, *P. polleni* was supposed to have small spots) shall have to be re-examined.

We were also unable to obtain any *Paratilapia* specimens on Ile Sainte Marie. However, we met several people on the island who definitely knew the species, whose local name is *Zazavavyantsoy*. We were told it existed in a lake close to the airport.

***Paratilapia cf polleni* Andapa**

In 1993 we had already been able to obtain a few small adults of this population of *Paratilapia cf polleni* which range appears to

Paratilapia populations would not breed with them.

This time I was to obtain about 30 2-4 cm long juveniles from Mr Guy Tam Hyock, the son of the owner of Hotel Vatosoa in Andapa. Guy has devoted one small pond to the breeding of the local *Paratilapia* and is interested in raising other native species. On both our visits to Andapa, Guy has given of his very precious time and spared no effort to help us. We are very grateful for his assistance.

Mortality of the young *Paratilapia* has been rather high during transport and the first week

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*Ptychochromis sp*

in an aquarium, but today the remaining dozen fishes are doing very well, some specimens reaching 10 cm and taking on at times their brilliant adult coloration.

Paratilapia (bleekeri) polleni Sophia Lake

In 1992 we obtained some Paratilapia specimens (large spots) from a lake situated on the right bank of the Sofia River, at some 2-3 km away from the bridge of the Befandriana-

Mandritsara road. This year at the same place (Sofia bridge), we were presented with three specimens of Paratilapia, which had been caught together with three specimens of "Lamena" in a (another?) nearby lake. These specimens have been deposited at the MHNG.

Ptychochromis oligacanthus

Three or four small specimens of *Ptychochromis oligacanthus* were collected in

a pond and swamp in the vicinity of Anbaja, Sambirano area. One of these specimens was brought back alive to France and the preserved specimens have been deposited at the MHNG. These specimens are important as they correspond to the type population of *Ptychochromis oligacanthus*, a name that has evidently been given to separate species in the past.

The availability of live and preserved specimens of the type population of *P. oligacanthus* should greatly help in the systematic revision of the previously monotypic genus *Ptychochromis*. The local name of *Ptychochromis oligacanthus* in the Sambirano area is "tsipoy" (pronounced tsipuee).

Another interesting finding of this trip was the collecting of a few specimens of "Joba" (pronounced juba), *P. cf oligacanthus*, in the Mangarahara River near Mandritsara. This fish which used to be abundant in nearby Ambalafary Lake, is considered by Kiener (1963) to be the most colourful "race" of *P. oligacanthus*.

In 1991 we had travelled all the way to Mandritsara with the object of collecting Kiener's fish, only to be told by local fishermen that Joba had disappeared from Lake Ambalafary a few decades ago and could not be found in the area anymore. Fortunately this 1991 trip had led to the discovery of "Lamena" and other new species. The recently collected Mangarahara *Ptychochromis* are rather colourful with some red in the caudal fin and these colours could brighten up at breeding time which appears to take place later in the season.

Now it remains to be seen if this fish corresponds to a geographic population of *P. oligacanthus* or should be considered as a separate species.

Paretroplus dami

On this trip, *Paretroplus dami* was collected at Maromandia, above the bridge, in fresh and

*Paretroplus dami*

slightly brackish water, and in the Sambirano River at Anbanja, where this species can reach a large size (+30 cm). From previous expeditions, we know that *P. dami* is found in all river systems draining into the Mozambique Channel, from the Anjingo-Ankofia River (Lake Andrapongy) in the South, to the Manajeba River, north of Ambilobe, in the north. Its presence in the remaining small systems found further north has to be checked. Jean has collected *P. dami* in Nosy Be, Djambala Lake (but unfortunately did not preserve any specimens). South, *P. dami* does not seem to occur in the Sofia River system.

Paretroplus kieneri

Paretroplus kieneri was collected (1997) in the following localities: Lake Amparinandrina and Ankalomlotra River, Betsiboka system (circa 50 km north of Maevatanana); Lake Kinkony and nearby lakes, Mahavavy system; Mangarahara River, near Mandritsara, Sofia system. Previously, we have also collected this species in Lake Ravelobe at Ampijoroa,

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Betsiboka system and in Lake Sarodrano, Bemarivo-Sofia system.

We do not know whether *P. kieneri* occurs throughout the whole Sofia system or if the Mangarahara (Mandritsara) population is isolated. Mangarahara *P. kieneri* look somewhat different from the other populations, being larger and more elongated. This could indicate isolation and possibly correspond to another taxon. However, *P. kieneri* is a very variable species, small colour and shape differences can be observed between practically every population. Lake Amparinandrina *P. kieneri* were breeding and had an orange mark on the snout. Specimens of the latter population have been preserved.

Paretroplus maculatus.

Paretroplus maculatus specimens were collected by Jean in Lake Akohomadikinika near Maevatanana, IkopaBetsiboka system and were observed (in fishermen's canoes) from a lake near Mangabe, Betsiboka drainage. Last year specimens had been collected in Lake Amparinandrina, but none were found this year.

The known occurrence of *P. maculatus* in three new lake localities lessens somewhat the risk of imminent extinction threatening this species. Previously we had found *P. maculatus* only in Lake Ravelobe at Ampijoroa. However, all these localities are part of the lower Betsiboka system and the known range is small.

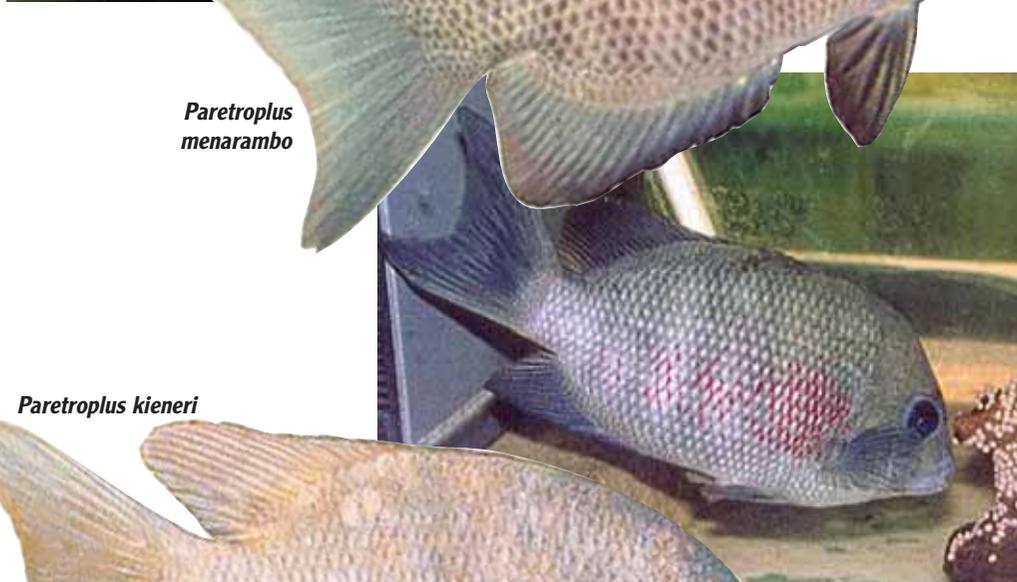
Moreover, we also know that *P. maculatus* is now extinct in several lakes in which it used to be abundant. Therefore, the danger of extinction remains high and *P. maculatus* should remain in the top priority group for conservation measures.

Paretroplus menarambo

Recently discovered and described *Paretroplus menarambo* (Pinstripe Damba) was not collected this year. It is mentioned



Paretroplus maculatus



Paretroplus menarambo



Paretroplus kieneri

Paretroplus dambabe (ex petiti)

All Madagascar Cichlid images by Dave Tourle

here, because we paid a short visit to a fisherman of Lake Sarodrano who had collected the species for us in 1991 and 1992. According to this fisherman, catches of Menarambo (local name) which were still comparatively common up to 1993, declined considerably in 1994, none were caught in 1995, only two in 1996 and none again in 1997 (at least up to the time of our visit, 13/10/97). Therefore the species can be considered as practically extinct in its type locality, Lake Sarodrano.

Up to now we have failed to find another locality for this species and although Menarambo is still remembered by many fishermen in the area, they usually tell us they do not catch this fish any more. However, there are many difficult-to-reach lakes, including a large one, on the right bank of the Bemarivo River that might still have populations of *P. menarambo*.

Until other populations can be located, the species must be considered as extremely endangered and everything should be done to maintain captive-bred stocks of the species in Florida and elsewhere.

Paretroplus polyactis

We did not collect any specimens of this east coast *Paretroplus* this year but, were shown several freshly caught specimens in the village of Antohamara on the shores of Lake Andohabe, a coastal lake situated at some 10 km south of Sambava, north-east coast. The fishermen told us this fish was still common in the lake. This is the northernmost locality of the species known to us, but *P. polyactis* range certainly extends further north and perhaps up to the northern tip of Madagascar provided there are suitable habitats.

The other east coast euryhaline cichlid, *Ptychochromis aff oligacanthus*, a common fish in the Pangalanes Canal system further south, is not known by the fishermen of Lake Antohamara. We had already failed to find this

species in Maroanetra so its absence from the northern part of the east coast seems to be confirmed. Possibly the northern limit of *Ptychochromis* on the east coast is situated somewhere south of Mananara and coincides with the end of the Pangalanes system.

Paretroplus petiti

We had already collected *Paretroplus petiti* from Lake Kinkony (type locality) on three previous occasions. Unfortunately this species stands transport rather badly and Jean-Claude had never managed to bring a sufficient number of live specimens back home to attempt any breeding. This time we hoped that freshly captured fishes carried back to France as fast as possible by Corinne would stand a better chance to arrive alive. This was to be the case.

Fortunately it would appear that *P. petiti* is doing not too badly in Lake Kinkony, as the species is still fairly common and we did not notice any decline in the numbers caught com-

pared to our previous visits (1991, 1992, 1996).

Not very far from Lake Kinkony, we were also pleased to find two other lakes, which have good populations of *P. petiti*. Both lakes are close to the village of Antongomena, one being on the right (north) of the road when driving towards Mitsinjo, the other, larger lake being on the left. The *P. petiti* of the first, smaller lake were very colourful, the background colour of the body, especially the dorsal area, being green (compared to pale yellow in the Lake Kinkony fishes) and the red spots of the middle of the body well marked. Interestingly this shallow and reedy lake appears to be largely artificial, a man-made dyke holding back the water which after going through a system of sluices and canals is used to irrigate a large extension of ricefields. The many palm trees standing in the middle of the water attest that most of the lake area has been flooded recently. As for the *P. petiti* of the

other much larger and natural Lake Bekifafa, although less colourful, their basal colour was also greenish and different from that of the Lake Kinkony fishes. This is surprising, as natural channels to the Mahavavy River connect both lakes. Unfortunately we collected these green *P. petiti* after Corinne had left us and therefore did not manage to keep them alive during the two remaining weeks of our trip. Specimens have been preserved.

Fishermen of both Lake Kinkony and Bekifafa told us, that besides *P. petiti* and *P. kieneri* (Kotsovato) there existed a third "red" species of Damba, but in spite of all their efforts they could never produce a specimen. Strangely enough some equally experienced fishermen do not see what fish their colleagues have in mind, so the question remains open.

Paretroplus sp Red Damba

In 1992 we collected in Lake Andrapongy (Ankofia River drainage, circa 40 km north of

Antsohihy) two or three specimens of a *Paretroplus* sp looking very much like *P. petiti*, but which in our opinion (and in that of Paul Loiselle) corresponds to another, undescribed, species. The most obvious difference between the Andrapongy *Paretroplus* and Lake Kinkony *P. petiti* is that the former (one specimen is still alive in France) always displays black vertical bars on the body, whereas in *P. petiti* these bars are usually invisible or only faintly marked. However, cichlid specialist Robert Allgayer could not find any significant meristic or other morphological difference between preserved specimens of both populations.

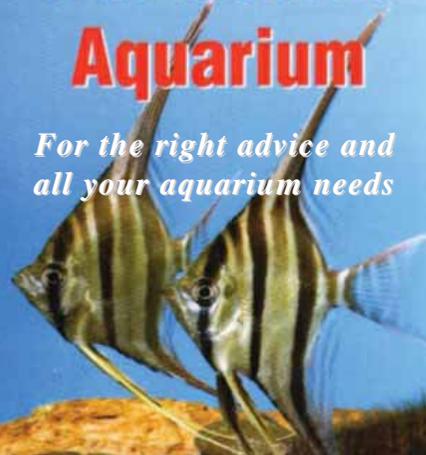
According to Lake Andrapongy fishermen, large specimens of this Damba can occasionally show a lot of red on the body, which would make it a very desirable aquarium fish. Unfortunately, a few years later we got from Jean, who had revisited the area, the bad news that this fish, already very rare in 1992, had



Lake Kinkony

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now totally disappeared from the lake. However, Jean also got the information that the same fish could still be found in the Maevarano, a river crossing the Diego Suarez road some 30 km to the north.

In 1996, Jean-Claude and Jean drove as far north as the Maevarano River and with the help of local fishermen collected several specimens of this *Paretroplus* species. The problem was that these fishes were so large (circa 25 cm) that only two or three could be brought back alive to France. A surprise was that at the level of the Maevarano bridge (the large village on the right bank of the river has the same name) the river is tidal and especially with an incoming tide, its water is distinctly salty. In order to find clearer water, Jean-Claude and Jean went to a place situated some

40 km upstream. There Jean-Claude could observe underwater beautiful breeding pairs of *P. dami*, but no Red Damba lived in that inland stretch of the Maevarano River.

This year we stopped only briefly in Maevarano, just to ask the fishermen to try to collect some Damba and stock them in a children's inflatable pool we left with them. We hoped to pick the fish up on our way back. We proceeded to the next large river, the Andranomahaza also known (at least by us) as the Maromandia River, the name of the village on its right bank.

There a fisherwoman told us there were two species of Red Dambas in the river and arrangements were made to collect the fishes the next two days (15/16 Oct). We first went some four km downstream. The tide was going

down and the water was brackish (circa 10-20% sea water). In spite of this, the riverine vegetation, reeds and trees, was still of the freshwater type. But the many *Rhizophora* seedlings, which had been carried by the tide, indicated that the mangrove must not be far away downstream.

Fishing at first produced only marine-estuarine fishes, but eventually six large specimens of *Paretroplus sp* were caught. These fishes were magnificent with alternating vertical black and purple red bands on the body. Next day we fished upstream from the Maromandia bridge.

At a short distance the Manangarivo River joins the Andronomahaza River (in fact I am not sure what is considered to be the main river). Three km upstream the water of the Manangarivo was fresh to the taste but the tides were still felt. Jean-Claude could observe underwater *Paretroplus sp* and *P. dami*. Eventually a few of the latter species were caught. Later a team of young fishermen brought us about 10 juvenile red Dambas. At that size their coloration is quite different from that of the adult fishes, the black vertical bars are a little less visible and the body is covered by small red spots.

All the other fish species collected at Maromandia were marine-estuarine species and rather remarkably no tilapiine or other non-native fish were caught. Young "Tilapias", however, have probably been observed. The fishermen told us another "red" Damba existed in the river and was more abundant some three hours by canoe downstream from Maromandia. Jean-Claude tends to think that these fish could be breeding *P. dami*, which do get very red during reproduction. However, three hours downstream would mean that the sea would be close and *P. dami* does not seem to occur in very saline water. We did not see or collect any *P. dami* four km downstream from Maromandia.

Another question, which remains open, is whether the red *Paretroplus* of the Maevarano and Maromandia rivers belong to the same species. The large Maromandia specimens were much more colourful, showing more red, than their Maevarano counterparts of the same size. However, this may be due to individual variations and the Maromandia specimens which were all caught at the same place, probably consisted of three breeding pairs displaying reproductive colours. Jean-Claude has observed a difference which could be more significant: fishes of the Maevarano population have a black spot just above the insertion of the pectoral fin (like found in *P. dami*), which is not present in the Maromandia fishes.

Biogeographically, the north-west coast of Madagascar is characterised by a succession of deep bays and large multi-river estuaries, usually bordered by extensive mangrove formations. The Maevarano and Maromandia estuaries belong to separate bays and estuarine systems. Therefore their *Paretroplus* populations have probably been separated for a relatively long time, allowing some allotopic speciation to take place.

Clearly further studies based on the close examination of preserved and live material are needed to settle this question. In the meanwhile, one may put forward the hypothesis that *Paretroplus petiti*, *P. sp* Maevarano and *P. sp* Maromandia belong to a glade of three closely related species, to which, if our local informants are correct, one or two more still unknown species could be added.

***Paretroplus sp* Lake Amparinandrina**

In 1996, one specimen of an unknown *Paretroplus* species was collected by Jean-Claude and Jean in Lake Amparinandrina, Betsiboka system, at circa 50 km north of Maevatanana. According to a photo of the dead fish, the body is rather elongated for a *Paretroplus* species and colour is a plain light



The author, Patrick de Rham (left), with Jean-(Gilbert) Andriamianamihadja (centre) and the late Jean-Claude Nourissat (right) taken in July 2003 at Jean-Claude Nourissat's home in Southern France.

grey with no dark marks. Local fishermen told Jean-Claude this Damba always had this drab coloration.

The collecting of more specimens of this unknown species was the main reason for our return to Lake Amparinandrina this year. Unfortunately, we completely failed in this.

"Lamena" Mangarahara River

It is recalled here that "Lamena" is an etropline cichlid which was first collected by our team in 1991 (juveniles) and in 1992 (adults) in the Mangarahara River and its Ambombo tributary near Mandritsara, north-central Madagascar.

The long overdue scientific description of the species is still in waiting. This year, as already mentioned, we could go back shortly to the Mangarahara River and collect about 15 adults and many more circa two cm long juveniles, these obviously all of the same age class. Since reproduction appears to take place mainly from October to December, these young were certainly born last year and were circa one-year-of-age. This shows that the growth rate of Lamena under natural conditions is slow, as already observed in captivity.

On our way to Mandritsara and the Mangarahara River, we stopped briefly at the Sofia River bridge to check with the people on the presence of native cichlids. Pictures of Fony (*Paratilapia* sp) and Lamena were immediately recognised and we were told that these fishes occurred in nearby lakes. As we were surprised to hear of Lamena living in a lake, we asked a fisherman to try to catch a few specimens so that we could see them on our way back.

The following day we were presented with three *Paratilapia* and three Lamena freshly caught specimens. Therefore it appears that Lamena, previously believed to be a rheophilic species, can also live in still water. We hope to

be able to check on this population and lacustrine habitat next year.

"Lamena" Ankalaminotra River

One of the great surprises of the 1996 trip (Jean-Claude and Jean) was the finding of a new population of "Lamena" in the Ankalaminotra River, a right-bank tributary of the lower Betsiboka River. The collecting locality is situated 1-2 km upstream from the Majunga road bridge, some 50 km north of the town of Maevatanana. The habitat, a rocky river with alternating small rapids and pools is similar to the Mangarahara/Ambombo habitat; however, the two localities are separated in a bee-line by more than 300 km and belong to two well-separated river drainages.

This year we were able to collect only a limited number of adults, but Jean-Claude was fortunate to spot two or three pairs guarding their fry and collected a good number of the latter. Most of these were to reach France safely.

The Ankalaminotra Lamena shows several small differences with their Mangarahara counterparts. First, the average size of adults is significantly larger and the body is more robust, being proportionally less elongated. The blue lips are thick, slightly hypertrophied. The body is darker and breeding adults are not as vividly orange, the two black bars, so conspicuous in Lamena Mangarahara (Mandritsara), not standing out as clearly on the darker background. There is also a small dark spot near the insertion of the pectoral fins (like in *P. dami*), not found on the first-discovered Lamena.

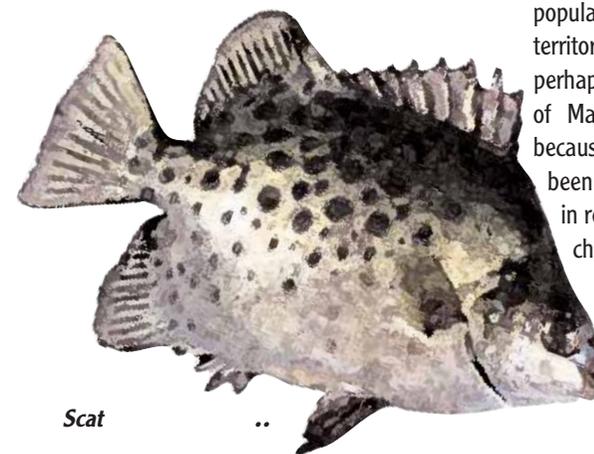
We therefore tend to believe this new Lamena is a closely related, but separate species. Paul Loiselle, who had the opportunity to see adults collected by us (and the next day collect his own specimens) concurs with this.

Marine and Estuarine Fishes

The importance of the penetration of several marine species in Madagascar's freshwater is a well-known phenomena, although the life histories of these species and especially the biological significance of their more or less extended stays in freshwater is still largely unknown. My personal interpretation is that it is mainly the lack of competition from a truly freshwater fish fauna that is responsible for the scale of this marine invasion in Madagascar's freshwaters.

On this trip we again had the opportunity to observe and catch several marine fishes in freshwater. In the Andranomahaza and Manangarivo Rivers which join at a short distance up stream from Maromandia, all the fishes collected were marine euryhaline species, with the exception of the two *Paretroplus* species (*P. dami* and *P. sp* Maromandia).

A small collection of these fishes was made and has been deposited at the MNHG. There has been no time to properly study this collection, but the following families and genera have been recognised in the field (not all preserved): Belontiidae (*Strongylura*), Ambassidae (several species, at least one may be predominantly freshwater), Teraponidae (*Terapon*), Kuhlidae (*Khulia*), Sillaginidae (*Sillago*), Leiognathidae (*Gaza*, *Leiognathus*, by far the



Scat ..

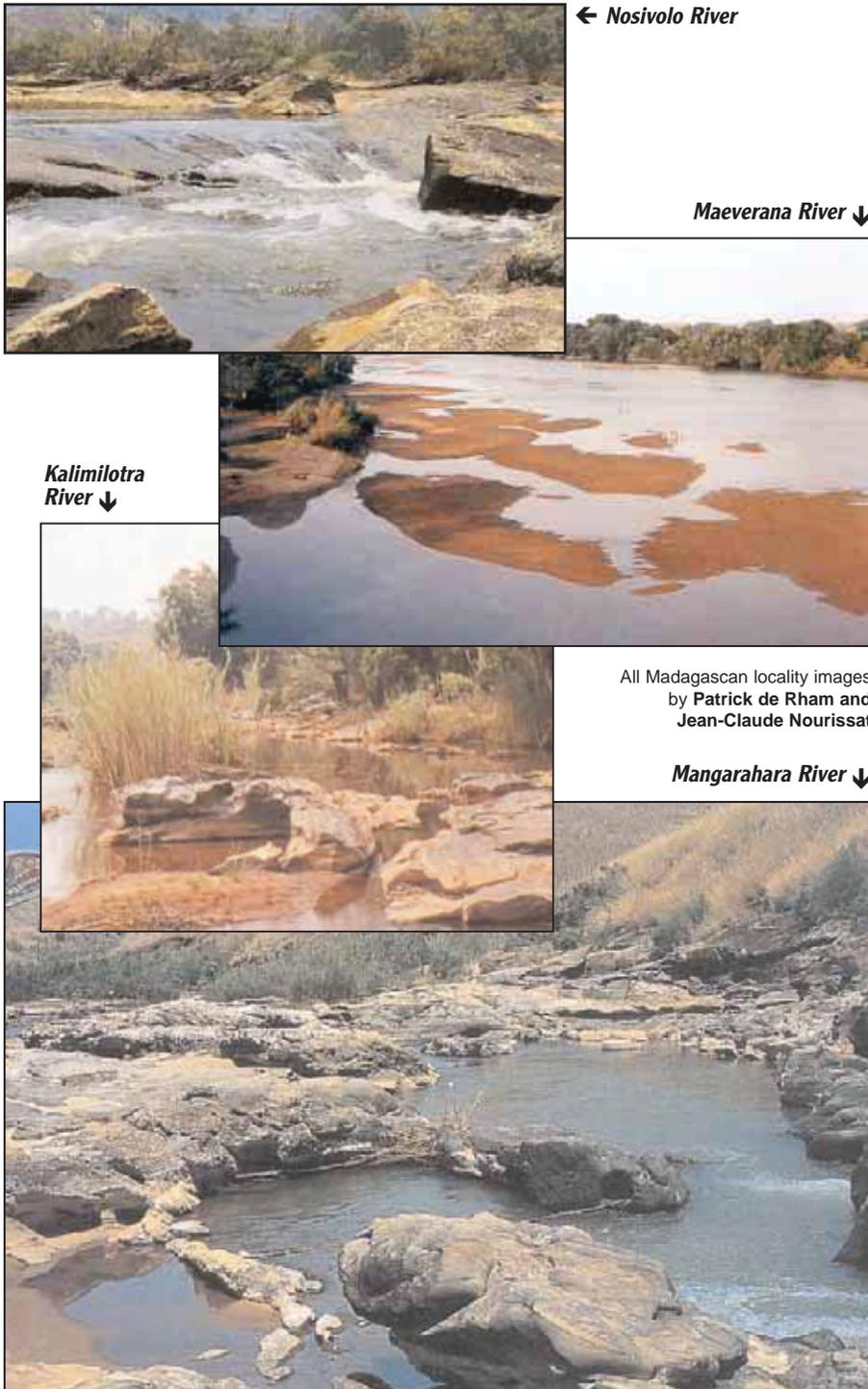
most abundant fishes at Maromandia), Lutjanidae (*Lutjanus*, huge specimens, 20 -30 kg, were offered to us by fishermen on the shore of Lake Kinkony), Gerreidae, Monodactylidae (*Monodactylus*, only small juveniles of *M. argenteus* enter freshwater and this never far from the sea), Scatophagidae (*Scatophagus*, *S. tetracanthus*, restricted to the east African coast and Madagascar, enters freshwaters very far inland in Madagascar, although large adults were only found in brackish water close to the sea) Mugilidae, Gobiidae (*Glossogobius*, *Awaous*), Eleotridae (these two last families seem to have several freshwater species in Madagascar), Tetraodontidae, Syngnathidae.

Conclusion

As with all our seven previous collecting trips to Madagascar, this 8th trip has greatly increased our knowledge on the distribution of several endemic species and has probably led to the discovery of one more new species of *Paretroplus*. However, as is normal in such endeavours, the more information we collect, the more we are aware of the lacunas in our knowledge.

The discovery of a new population of Lamena at some 300 km of the former locality and in a separate drainage system, indicates that there are probably several other unknown populations of the same fish in the unexplored territory lying in between these two spots, and perhaps, even more beyond these. Large areas of Madagascar are very difficult to reach because the long-neglected road system has been in great part destroyed, and especially in remote areas this situation is not likely to change soon.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the past two expeditions (1996-97) has been the discovery on the north-west coast of two populations of an unknown *Paretroplus* species (possibly



← Nosivolo River

Maevarana River ↓

Kalimilotra River ↓

All Madagascar locality images
by Patrick de Rham and
Jean-Claude Nourissat

Mangarahara River ↓

two species) living in the tidal brackish estuaries of the Maevarano and Andramahaza (Maromandia) rivers. Up to now, the only *Paretroplus* species considered to be estuarine was *P. polyactis* of the east coast.

In the same rivers, we have found that *P. dami*, previously believed to be a strictly freshwater species can also be found in slightly brackish water. This again shows that our knowledge on the distribution of fishes in Madagascar, even of the most studied group, cichlids, is still incomplete and that previous considerations on the ecological and habitat requirements of inland fishes were commonly ill-founded.

A good example of this is the discussion on the salinity tolerance of the native cichlids by Kiener and Mauge, 1966. Our findings largely disagree with the conclusions of these two authors. It is true that in the year 1960 only nine species of cichlids were known for Madagascar, now the figure stands at about 20.

As already said several times before, such new discoveries should not distract from the fact that the overall conservation situation of Madagascar's endemic fishes remains very bleak. *Paratilapia polleni*, once a widespread and common species is becoming extremely rare in many places.

Recently discovered *Paretroplus menarambo* is on the brink of extinction and the population of Red Damba (*Paretroplus* sp) of Lake Andrapongy is now extinct. We now believe that fishing is probably a decisive factor in the rarefaction of native fishes and especially of cichlids. Most Madagascar cichlids seem to have a comparatively short breeding season, while competing tilapiines breed throughout the whole year if temperature is adequate.

Native cichlids must reach a comparatively large size to breed, whereas tilapiines can already begin to reproduce when only a few

cm long. Under the situation of high fishing pressure, which is more and more the case in lakes today, all the larger fishes will be caught. The numerous small remaining tilapiines will be able to breed immediately, while the young native cichlids will need at least two years to become breeding adults. They are very likely to be fished out before they reach this stage and this is how the balance of nature tips in favour of the introduced species.

There is little that can be done to counter-balance this trend, only large-scale captive (pond) breeding of native species could help. There is a glimmer of hope as a few persons are becoming interested in the raising of native cichlids, which are very much esteemed as food fish wherever they are still found.

This is very much the case with the new Director of Aquaculture who told me he was very interested in having such projects established. Let us hope we can provide some help before it is too late.

Main references:

KIENER, A, 1963. Poissons, peche et pisciculture a Madagascar. Publ. 24 CFTT, Nogent sur Mame: 244p.

KIENER, A & MAUGE, M, 1966. Contribution a l'etude systematique et ecologique des poissons Cichlidae endemiques de Madagascar. Mem. Mus. Hist. Nat, Zoologie 40(2): 51-99.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

The original text upon which the article above is based is much more detailed, and includes notes pertaining to several other types of Malagasy fish.

For space reasons, only the section on the Family Cichlidae is reproduced here.

The full text, which includes notes about Clupeidae, Ariidae, Aplocheilidae and Bedotiidae, will be available on the VCS Web Site (cichlids.web.com) very soon.

Rowemin' 'round

Welcome aboard for our reindeer-dodging last flight of the year ... and the last flight for all those members who forget to renew their membership.

Even though we once more have a brief flight, it is very enjoyable and educational.

Our first stop is the Federation of New Zealand Aquatic Societies in answer to the invitation in the November issue of 'New Zealand Aquarium World'. Tracey Rowe chronicles her successful spawning and growing of Oscars in "Raising Baby Oscars (Study) – Astronus ocellatus". 465 babies were moved to a larger tank at one month old. Several hundred continued growing and were sold to interested aquarists.

Our other destination is Hamilton & District Aquarium Society in answer to a double invitation in September and October issues of 'Hamilton &

District Aquarium Society Monthly Bulletin'. They are intrigued by Anthony Tu's report on "Breeding Shell-Dwelling Tanganyikan Cichlids Steps to Success" in 'Cichlidae communique' from Pacific Coast Cichlid Association. They also enjoyed Jim Brown's report on *Cichlasoma (Thorichthys) ellioti*. They were also grateful for all the young ellioti that Jim passed on to them.

Members gained an incredible insight into the "Maintenance and Breeding of the Red Hump Eartheater *Geophagus steindachneri* Eigenmann and Hildebrand 1910" from Lee Newman's detailed report in Regina AS's 'Fins & Friends'.

Dave Unruh has a few members envious (and some VCS members also) as he reports on "Keeping & Breeding *Apistogramma bitaeniata*" in the October issue of 'Scat' from SCAS. ↗

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Well now it is time to sit back, relax and enjoy our **Must Read In Flight Literature**.

Cichlid Evening Post.....SeptemberGreat Lakes Cichlid Society.

Cichlid Evening Post.....October.....Great Lakes Cichlid Society.

Cichlid Chatter.....NovemberGreater Chicago Cichlid Association.

We also have some non-cichlid invitations:

SunfishSeptemberSunshine Coast AS

SunfishOctober.....Sunshine Coast AS

FinchatSeptemberAS of Victoria

FinchatOctober.....AS of Victoria .

Hopefully concerned aquarists will answer their Editors' pleas and we will have longer trips next year.

Until then ...

Graham

Previously ... at a VCS Meeting

Apologies: John McCormick and John Reeves.

The November 2005 meeting opened at 8:17 pm with the Secretary in the chair. He welcomed the "elite" group of members present. The magazine had been received by those present. The minutes of the October meeting were taken as read on a motion moved by Tony Ferguson and seconded by Phillip Russell.

The Treasurer reported a bank balance of \$3291.18. Outstanding bills for printing and postage of \$170 and \$5.00 respectively. Presents cost \$83. Balance of \$111.70. One new member in Sandra Robotis. This report was accepted. The following correspondence was received: a membership application from Bruce van Twest; Dan Faddoul's magazine was returned as he had left the address. The correspondence was received on a motion moved by Dave Thorn and seconded by Tony Ferguson.

Phillip Russell then gave the Auction Report: Cash \$5016, Credit \$2108, Total \$7124. Commission \$1192.60. Raffle \$100. Book Raffle \$150. Canteen \$350. Sale of damaged book \$42. Bank \$1834.95. He then presented gifts in appreciation of the workers' efforts.

A video of advertiser Evalife was then shown. David Green and John McCormick were thanked for producing the video.

Members were reminded that Committee Nomination forms and Auction forms were available on the front table. A shortish break was then called.

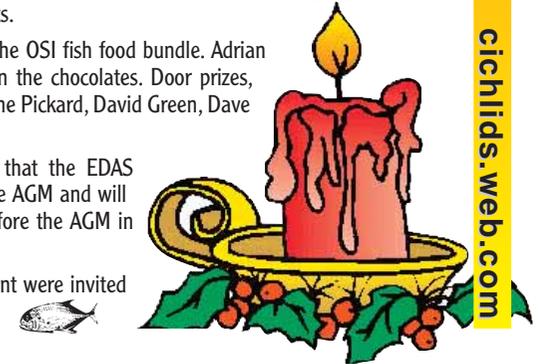
New member, Sandra Robotis, was presented with her badge and Handbook and welcomed to the Society. A brief Mini Auction was then held. Andrew Kiefer was thanked for his donation.

The entries in the Video Home Show were then shown with comments from the judges. Geoff Wills was the winner, Tony Ferguson was second and Phillip Russell was third. Congratulations and thanks to all entrants. Thanks to John McCormick for transferring the videos to DVD. Phillip Russell then highlighted members' photos and David Green spoke about the subjects.

The raffle was then drawn. Maurice Breward won the OSI fish food bundle. Adrian Quental won the cichlid book and Phillip Russell won the chocolates. Door prizes, donated by Masterpet, were won by Manny Pickard, Jane Pickard, David Green, Dave Thorn, Tony Ferguson and Andrew Kiefer.

In any other business, members were reminded that the EDAS Auction is on 4 December, the next VCS Meeting is the AGM and will be held on 7 December. All members must renew before the AGM in order to be eligible to be nominated and to vote.

The meeting was closed at 10:18 pm and all present were invited to have a chat over supper.



The Last Word

Daryl Hutchins..

E&OE: Every year at this point, it is somewhat of a tradition to have a Naming Ceremony and thank everyone who contributed to this volume. Every year I stuff it up by leaving someone out. I hope whoever I leave out this time will be as nice about as their predecessors.

So, thank you so much to the following for their various, often multiple, in some cases ongoing contributions.

Local: Andrew Kiefer, Graham Rowe, Peter Clarkson, Peter Robinson, Phil Russell.

OS: Albert J Klee, Amitabh Avasthi, Craig Morfitt, Dave Tourle, Emory University, Frank Panis, George Reclus, Hubert Sauper, James Owen, Jean-Claude Nourissat, Joe Bartz, Justyn Miller, Leyla Elyanak, Marvin England, Monty Halls, National Geographic, Neal Daymond-John, New Scientist, Patrick de Rham, Phil Maznyk, Philip Greenspun, Rob Robbins, Robert H Robins, Sonia Guinane, Suzanne Garcia, The 1911 Edition Encyclopedia, UN Chronicles, Vancouver Aquarium, Wikipedia.

You may have heard that being Editor of a club magazine is a thankless job. I wish to refute that rumour once and for all. When I see something that I think would be good for this magazine, I contact the author/artist/photographer/copyright owner and ask for permission to reproduce their material.

Only once have I been knocked back (actually, it was a news service and they wanted an outrageous payment; several other, similar organisations have waived their fee).

The people that I have contacted, in most cases, can not do enough to help out. In two cases this year, authors used the expression they "would be honoured" to have their material used in our magazine. Such a pity I can only seem to find one local person who feels anything like that -- Peter Robinson.

Peter has made such a magnificent contribution to this volume ... again ... I am running out of prose to express that fact. Thank you Peter ... once again.

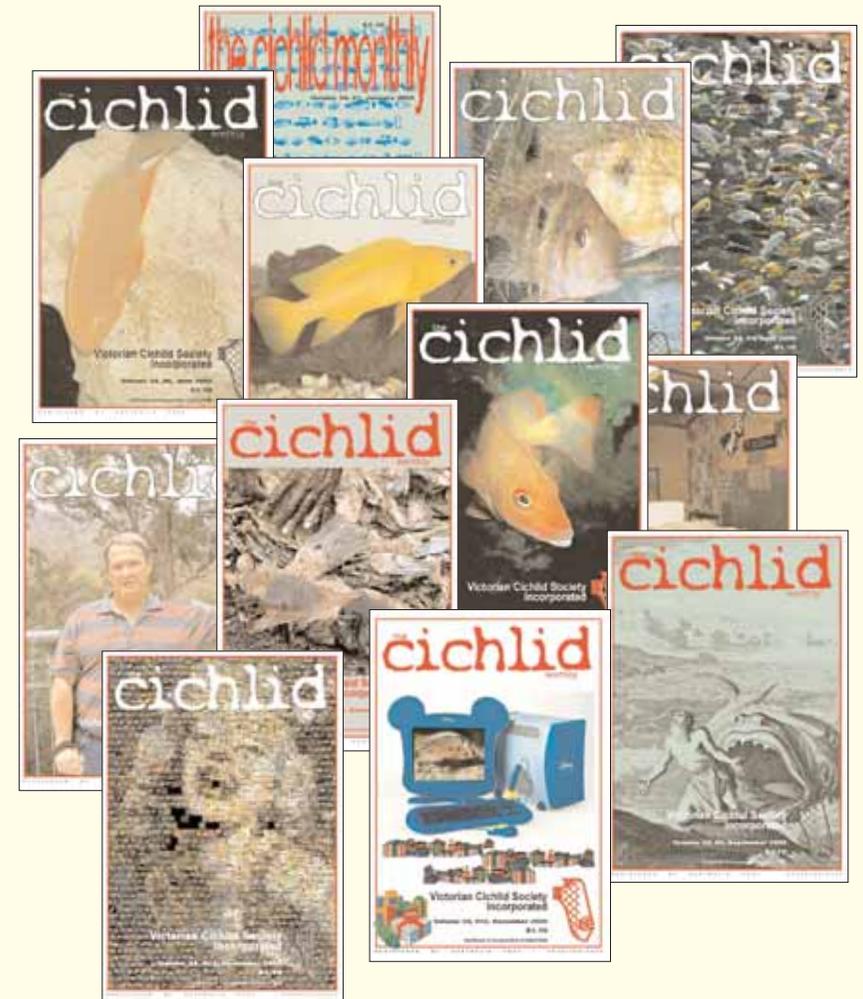
Peter, I am sure, will understand when I say that I would really like to give this award to someone else. I am unsure how many consecutive years Peter has taken the prize (free membership) now, but it is a while since he had to pay his dues. You guessed it ... Peter Robinson wins the 2005 Editor's Prize. Well done Peter and thank you.

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year. I will leave you with this thought for the coming year: *"I am only one, but still I am one; I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do."*
-- (Edward E. Hale)



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