

# THE NEW ENGLAND CICHLID

*New England Cichlid Association*

January 2014

## Upcoming Events

**Next Meeting:  
Saturday, January 24 @ 1 PM**



Our next meeting will be at Jim Kenniston's home in East Lyme, CT. Jim is a Tanganyika specialist, and has an amazing array of Tangs in one of the most interesting fish rooms I've ever visited. Make sure you are prepared to bring home some fish, if you like Tangs, because Jim always has fry and smaller adults for sale.

We'll be serving lunch, but any food contributions will be welcome, including drinks and dessert. There will be a brief business meeting at 1 PM, and all members are invited to participate. See you all on Saturday @ 35 Mayfield Terrace, East Lyme, CT



**There will be a mini auctions as well, so bring some fish and plants.**

## CICHLIDS ON MY MIND



Winter is a good time for New England fish hobbyists. Outdoor recreational opportunities are limited, and just hanging around the backyard isn't very appealing. So we tend to focus on the fish, the fishroom, the fish tanks and the breeding. I've been working assiduously on my fishrooms in anticipation of our February meeting here in Petersham, cleaning up hundreds of broken filters, random filter inserts, unidentifiable plastic pieces, stuff I haven't used in years – and even vacuuming the floors. I've become a pretty adept midwife, as I strip more and more females successfully, generating plenty of fry for myself and my fish-loving friends. I'm also repurposing a few tanks, particularly my 100-gallon Malawi show tank, which I'm converting to a Chizumulu Island biotope. As a result, I've got many beautiful adult Malawi fish for sale or trade – just contact me for details.

This newsletter has a special feature: an article by Dr. Mathew McGee, a Lake Victoria expert who is currently beginning post-doctoral research with Ole Seehausen in Switzerland on the fish fauna of Lake Victoria. He's a very interesting guy, with a lot of extremely helpful insights that I've already incorporated into my methodology of keeping and breeding Vics. The story about how this article happened to end up in our newsletter is interesting, but I'll save it for the Saturday meeting at Jim Kenniston's.

Right now we're scheduled for a visit to my home on the third Saturday in February, and we're working on a speaker for our March meeting. April brings our Spring Auction, and then we'll have to spend most of our spare time prepping for the ACA Convention in late July. Lots to do, and we'll need help from all of you, so please contact Jim Kenniston or me with times, skills, etc.

Last month we lost a good friend and a very good man way too soon. Ken Porcaro, who has been a part of the local cichlid scene for a long time, died from pancreatic cancer at age 48. This newsletter includes Ken's obituary, which doesn't really deal with Ken as the person many of us and liked a great deal. I had seen Ken over the years at different clubs and events, but it was at a NECA Auction that I first got to know him. He always volunteered to be a runner, and on this occasion he had with him a young man who was clearly cognitively disabled. My youngest, Jeremiah, was with me, and he too has moderate mental retardation, so I was interested in Ken's friend, and I found out that Ken worked in the Human Services field and often brought clients with him to various fish-related functions. I was impressed by his commitment and his approach, and although we never really became close, I always felt that he was a person to be respected.

I hope that all of you had an enjoyable holiday season and that you have a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. I look forward to seeing all of you at one or more of our activities.

*Peter George*

## THE BAP

I am hopeful that we can officially start the Breeder Award Program (BAP) at our next meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Please refer to the website for overall instructions of how to participate, or go to the last newsletter, which included a complete overview of the program. For so many of us, breeding fish is a huge part of our hobby, and this is an excellent way of advancing our skill as well as breeding fish for our fellow hobbyists.

*PFG*

## COPTODON SNYDERAE

TEXT AND IMAGES BY MIKE LIU



Female *C. snyderae* - image by Sam Borstein

I stated in my last article that I have no interest in West African cichlids. Well, my focus changes just about every month. I attended the ECC fall auction down in New Jersey with some other NECA members and bought a large pair of *Coptodon snyderae*. This cichlid is endemic to Lake Bermin in Cameroon, a country which is along the West African coast. Lake Bermin is a small round crater lake surrounded by lush jungle in the southwest part of Cameroon. Peter George published a few photos in the December 2014 newsletter and has "asked" me to write a short article about this fish. That meant I had to do a little research so this article might have some useful information.

Previously, this cichlid was classified as *Tilapia snyderae*. It belongs to a sub-family of moderately sized West African Tilapians (not sure if this a real word). Recently, those darn ichthyologists created a new genus, *Coptodon*, and re-assigned *Tilapia snyderae* here. Other fish in this newly created genus include *C. bakossiorum*, *bythobates*, *dageti*, *deckerti*, *rendalli*, *tholloni*, *zillii*, to name a few. I have only seen *zillii* and *snyderae* in the hobby, at least here in the US. *Coptodon bythobates* is a similarly colored cichlid also from Lake Bermin. I know that Dr. Paul Loiselle has been maintaining this fish, but I do not know if he has fry to distribute. The photos of *Coptodon snyderae* I had seen always showed a fairly colorful fish with an olive body color with a red belly, throat and ventral region. There is the typical *Tilapia*-spot on the

rear base of the dorsal fin and the bottom lip is a characteristic light blue. You can always tell where the fish are in a dark tank as the bright lip is very visible. After reading some literature on the web, I learned there are at least three color morphs. That might explain why my fish are not as colorful as some of the photos I had seen.



Lake Bermin

<http://mankaa1984.wix.com/fishman-cameroon#!lake-bermin-/c10rt>

Now, I like to know where my cichlids come from, so I went to Google and typed in Cameroon. It only took me 10 seconds to find out where Lake Bermin is located, but I did not know that the lake is very small. I knew that *Coptodon snyderae* is an endangered fish, so I went to the IUCN Red List web page ([www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)) and searched “cichlids” for the list of endangered cichlids (makes sense right?). I found that IUCN still lists this fish as “*Tilapia snyderae*” and it is “critically endangered”. Its major threat is from oil plantations and slash and burn agriculture practices. This leads to sedimentation and pollution of the lake. The lake is also subject to “burping” a phenomenon where water from the depths rise to the surface. The deep water is very low in oxygen and high in organic matter. This can cause sudden death due to a massive reduction in oxygen available for the fish. It is thought that high winds cause this phenomenon, and this “burping” is also documented in other lakes. I don’t mind a good burp, so I may end up liking this fish enough to keep it around for a while.

Okay, let’s skip to my fish. Why did I buy a pair of large *Coptodon snyderae*? At the auction there was only one other bidder and I managed to outbid him with minimal effort and paid a small amount. I figured a large pair such as this had to have spawned, so at least I was getting a

spawning pair of cichlids. The seller later approached me and told me he had the fish for a few years and they never spawned. “Oh great” I thought. I always need a pair of non-performing cichlids taking up tank space. I don’t really keep a lot of community tanks, and my goal is to spawn every cichlid I acquire. Returning home, I had to think where to put this pair of fish. They went in a 40 breeder with some juvenile *Cryptoheros sajica* cichlids I am growing out. After a few days, I removed the *sajica* because I noticed the female *snyderae* was hiding in a small ceramic pot and I thought maybe she is protecting eggs in there. She stayed in the pot with her head just poking out. If food drifted nearby, she would snap it up. The male stayed behind some stones but came out to nibble. The next day, I noticed the male in the small pot with his tail sticking out. He is quite large and could not fully fit inside the pot. After two more days, both fish stayed in the rear of the tank and the female did not come out to feed. The pot was ignored. I did not know whether she had laid eggs, or if eggs were moved from the pot to an area in the rear behind some stones. Both fish did not exhibit much coloration, so I just wasn’t sure if spawning had taken place or what was going on. I had not done any research on these fish yet. After another 3 or 4 days, I finally saw a swarm of about 50-60 free swimming fry. Both parents seem quite shy but they stood guard above the swarm. They would retreat to the rear when I put my face up to the glass to observe. After another 14-15 days, I was doing the morning feeding and noticed the female’s color changed dramatically, and she darted inside the same pot when I got close to the tank. The male was also much more colorful. Were they spawning again? The female’s ovipositor was swollen and she kept going in and out of the pot, while the male waited for his turn to get in there the best that he could. I got my camera and snapped many photos where you can see the dramatic color change during this second spawning act.

The next day, both fish returned to a much more subdued coloration. They no longer seemed interested in the pot. The female was at the rear of the tank like after the first spawning. I think they move the eggs to a safe place under a large stone in the gravel. For the next 9-10 days, I

watched and waited to see newly swimming fry. On the 10th or 11th day, I used a flashlight to get a good look inside a white ceramic log as the female seemed to have moved much of the gravel away. And yes, there was a small pile of very tiny wrigglers inside. Two days later, they became free swimming and now there are two batches of fry in the tank. The fish seem to be good parents but they amount of fry is not the same as when the first batch became free swimming. I'm going



*Coptodon snyderae* pair watching over their 1st brood

to leave the fry in the tank with the parents and see if they will raise them to a larger size so I can net or siphon some out. But if the spawn every two weeks, I may have found the West African equivalent of the convict cichlid!

This is a fish I learned about by quick experience rather than the typical long period of growing them out, getting a pair bond, and then spawning



Female *C. snyderae* laying eggs in pot a second time?  
Note her swollen ovipositor

them. They spawned right away for me. They do not seem to care about water chemistry, eat any food offered, seem very peaceful, and do not



Male *C. snyderae* doing his best to get in the pot

grow very large. They are supposed to reach sexual maturity at 1.5" -2" but my male is about 5 inches. I think this is due to the previous owner having kept the fish for years and feeding them well. I will keep these fish for a while and get to know them better. Maybe they will grow on me, maybe not. In any case, I have had a good experience with *Coptodon snyderae*, and not once did I burp while writing this article.



*Coptodon snyderae* pair taking turns going inside pot  
- Note fry from first spawning

## SPRING AUCTION

It's time to start preparing for the Spring Auction, held in mid to late April. We'll be announcing the date and location soon, so in the meantime, start thinking about the fish you will be bringing and those you want to bring home!

# WILD EXPRESSIONS PHOTOGRAPHY

TEXT AND IMAGES BY SANY FEDER



Electric Blue Jack Dempsey

Three years ago I picked up my first DSLR camera, a used Nikon D50 I had bought off an Ebay advertisement. I wanted to be able to take better pictures of the fish I had for sale. Not knowing if I'd be any good at taking pictures I didn't want to invest a lot of money in a camera. When I saw how much clearer the photos came out I decided that fish photography was something I'd like to pursue. I went ahead and bought some remote flashes and decided to learn, in my own way, how to photograph my fish so I could always have a record of them. Never in a million years would I have thought I'd be here, writing this to my fellow hobbyists.

Some of you are already familiar with my Facebook page, which can be found at [www.facebook.com/WildExpressionsPhotography](http://www.facebook.com/WildExpressionsPhotography), and have even visited and "liked" it. It's grown to something more than I ever thought it would and I am very excited about it. With 357 "likes" and growing I have decided to take it one step further. I'm starting a pet photography business. My business will focus on photographing other hobbyists' fish, giving them a portfolio of all the fish they keep. How cool would it be to have a photo album with all the species you currently keep? I know I really cherish having pictures of my fish and I've been honored enough to take some really nice photographs of my fellow hobbyists fish as well.



*Enantiopus 'kilesa'*

Along with fish come other pets as well. How many of us have pets other than our fish? Do you have a dog, possibly a pet snake? Maybe you have other pets you'd like some pictures of. My passion is for all animals, not just fish and I will embrace the opportunity to take pictures of all your favorite pets. Please contact me at [Wildexpressionsphotography@gmail.com](mailto:Wildexpressionsphotography@gmail.com) for more information!

## BREEDING THE 'BLACK WIDOW' CICHLID

TEXT AND IMAGES BY DR. MATHEW MCGEE, PHD



*Pundamilia* 'black widow' female

*Pundamilia* "black widow" is one of the newest species of Victorian cichlid to make its way to America. Wild individuals were originally caught in late 2012 by exporters working for Laif DeMason of Old World Exotic Fish. New Victorian cichlids are hard to come by these days, and wild breedable fish were quickly snapped up. I was lucky to get F1 individuals from a Florida breeder who purchased the lion's share of this species.

This fish bears a striking similarity to another fish, *Pundamilia* “pink anal”, which you can read about on page 119 of Ole Seehausen's fantastic (and now sadly out of print) Victorian Rock Cichlids book. This somewhat unfortunately named species is native to the rocky reefs surrounding the islands of Igombe and Makobe. It is said to be a zooplankton feeder like its close relative *Pundamilia azurea*, a rare Victorian sometimes kept by US hobbyists but more commonly in Europe.

So, given the strong similarities between our new species and *Pundamilia* “pink anal”, why not just call it “pink anal” and by done with it? I have



*Pundamilia* ‘black widow’ male

several reasons. Laif's exporters caught the fish near Juma Island, on the other side of the Mwanza Gulf from Igombe and Makobe. Oftentimes, populations separated by that distance will have a number of differences in shape and color. The second reason is Ole himself! I am currently employed by Ole in Switzerland as a postdoctoral scholar. I asked him about Laif's new fish and showed him a picture. He thinks it is similar to *Pundamilia* “pink anal” but not identical. Just in case some Makobe or Igombe “pink anal” enter the hobby in the future, it would be good to name this fish something else to reduce the potential for hybridization.

I have chosen the moniker of *Pundamilia* “black widow” because females of this species will often turn jet black like the males. Females do not get the reddish fins of the male but retain the yellow fins of a typical Victorian rock cichlid female. This often produces a striking effect in the tank, with black-and-red males and black-and-yellow females, and it is for this reason I think the species may become a popular choice with hobbyists. It should be noted that the black coloration in

females is somewhat dependent on the mood and temperament of individual females, and sometimes they will adopt a less attractive greyish body color, particularly when mouthbrooding.

Despite its somewhat specialized diet in the wild, *Pundamilia* “black widow” greedily accepts all manner of standard cichlid fare in the home aquarium. Zooplanktivores have relatively high-protein, high-fat diets compared to many other dietary specialists, so there is little risk feeding with rich fare like California blackworms. I fed my colony Ken's Tropical Green Granule most of the week, with the occasional blackworm treat to condition females for spawning.

Like many of the other fish in its genus, *Pundamilia* “black widow” is quite aggressive, and demands attention to tank space and tankmates if breeding is to be successful. I first bred my young colony in a 40 breeder, but unhealed fin damage increased rapidly as the fish increased in size, so I moved them to a 55 gallon. I also added some tankmates to decrease the likelihood of individual fish being singled out and attacked.

Some hobbyists will keep different Victorian species together, but there is always some risk of hybridization. I have personally observed cichlids with very different male coloration and body shape freely mating together in tanks. The risk is reduced if both breeding groups have an obvious dominant male, but it is not uncommon for a tank to only have one dominant male. When this happens, females may choose to mate with a dominant male of the “wrong” species and ignore the subdominant male of their own species.

I used a young group of the yellow variety of *Astatotilapia calliptera* as tankmates with great success. Both species are of a similar (aggressive) temperament and have very different male coloration, but that was not the primary reason I chose calliptera. Recent research in Ole Seehausen's lab has shown that *Astatotilapia calliptera* males do not produce viable offspring when mating with Victorian cichlid females. Therefore, I felt safe that the *Pundamilia* “black widow” females would only produce fry with

their own male. This inviable-offspring trick – biologists call this “intrinsic postzygotic isolation” – also works with Victorian females and male *Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor victoriae* and the less common *Astatoreochromis alluaudi*, if you are looking for other alternatives to *Astatotilapia calliptera*. Breeding is not particularly different than in other common Victorians, with one major exception – fry are often jet black like their parents!

I have now spread *Pundamilia* “black widow” to multiple hobbyists in the US, including Rick Borstein in Chicago, Lawrence Kent in Seattle, Greg Steeves in Texas, and to several breeders in California. It should not be difficult to source this fish within the next year or two, if you are interested in working with them. If you are in Europe, they should be available there as well! My original colony has been sent to Marco Welss, a noted German breeder of Victorian cichlids, and I suspect he will have great success.

Give this fish a try! They are well worth it!

## BEANTOWN AQUATICS

TEXT AND IMAGES BY FRITZ ANDRE



**M**y name is Fritz Andre (everyone calls me Andre) and I am the owner of Beantown Aquatics located in Woburn, MA. I've been in the hobby for close to

**Mr. Kenneth John Purcaro**, age 48, of Terryville, passed away on Wednesday December 24, 2014 in Naugatuck, surrounded by his loving family.

Mr. Purcaro was born in Waterbury on February 5, 1966 a son of Anthony Purcaro of Naugatuck and the late Elaine Marie (Boucher) Purcaro. He worked at Key Human Services. Ken enjoyed riding motorcycles, cooking, music, tattoos, collecting and breeding exotic fish, concerts, eating, especially Pepe's pizza, and was a sci-fi fanatic. He most of all enjoyed spending time with his family and many friends.

In addition to his father, Mr. Purcaro is survived by two sisters: Karen Purcaro-Tarsi of Naugatuck and Susanne Purcaro-Daly and her husband William E. Daly, Jr. of Naugatuck, a brother: Anthony Purcaro and his wife Kate of Torrington, five nieces: Alyson Tarsi, Sara Tarsi, Madison Daly, Jillian Daly, and Cali Purcaro and two nephews: William A. Daly and Aiden Purcaro.

A funeral mass will be held on Tuesday December 30, 2014 at 10 a.m. at St. Mary Roman Catholic Church, 338 North Main St., Naugatuck. Burial will be in St. James Cemetery in Naugatuck at the convenience of the family. There are no calling hours. The Prospect Memorial Funeral Home, 72 Waterbury Road, Prospect is in charge of arrangements.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Connecticut Hometown Foundation Dream Ride, 275 Schoolhouse Road, Cheshire, Ct. 06410.

To place online condolences please log on to [www.prospectmemorial.com](http://www.prospectmemorial.com)

15 years. My first tank was a 55 gallon cichlid tank which I had for 7 years until I moved and was unable to take it with me. A few years later I brought my own home and set up my first big tank, a 120 gallon. One day while cleaning the tank I found some red jewel fry in a flowerpot being guarded by their parents. I quickly went over to Petco and got a 10 gallon tank to put the fry in.



I ended up setting up a couple more tanks in my basement as my interest in breeding began to grow. With the support of my fiancé I began building my fish room. Starting with one tank it quickly turned to 2, 3, and 4 and before I knew it I was at 50 plus tanks. I spent countless hours building my fish room. It's been over two years and I am still building it out and upgrading as new ideas pop into my head. It never stops. I usually spend a minimum of 30 minutes feeding my fish then another hour or two making minor adjustments or moving things around in my fish room. There's never a dull moment and it's always entertaining.

I keep and breed only African cichlids, primarily Malawi haps and peacocks. I do have a few groups of mbuna and some Tanganyikans. My prized possessions are my group of wild caught moba frontosa; they are in my 180 gallon show tank in my living room. Every night after dinner I pull up a chair in front of this tank and just sit there and watch them. A few of my other favorite groups are my *Placidochromis mdoka* 'white lips,' *Pseudotropheus sp. "Williamsi North"*, *Petrochromis sp.* Red Bulu Point and

*Otopharynx lithobates* 'black orange dorsal.' I try to acquire wild caught fish or as close to wild caught as possible. A good amount of my breeders are from Germany.



I did all the work in my fish room myself, from putting down the floor to building all my tank racks. I installed a central air system that runs around the room in a closed loop system. All the tanks are filtered by sponge filters only. The tank sizes range from 5.5 gal up to 180 gallons. All the lights for the tanks are LED. The entire room is heated to eliminate the need for individual heaters in all the tanks.

At Beantown Aquatics we sell live fish, fish food, sponge filters, tumblers, plastic air stones and other supplies. A few of the brands we carry include Aqueon, Tetra, Current, Cobalt, Lees, API, Seachem, New Era, Perfecto and Marineland. We can provide you with any and all supplies, equipment and fish tanks. Some of these items may be special orders and will take a few days to get in stock. For those that want a fish tank but don't have the means to pick them up, I do offer curbside delivery within 50 miles of Woburn, MA for a small fee.

Our website is: [www.beantownaquatics.com](http://www.beantownaquatics.com). You can order live fish and supplies directly off the site. We try to keep our inventory on the website up to date. You can also visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/beantownaquatics](http://www.facebook.com/beantownaquatics). From now till January 31, 2015 we are offering a 10% discount to NECA members. Enter the coupon code NECA at checkout to receive the discount. If you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to us at [beantownaquatics@gmail.com](mailto:beantownaquatics@gmail.com).



<http://www.carespreservation.com/introduction.html>

Founded in 2004, the CARES (Conservation, Awareness, Recognition, Encouragement, and Support) Preservation Program is based on the critical and timely significance of Conservation, our Awareness as hobbyists of the issues involved, and the public Recognition of members, offering Encouragement and Support for those who take part in playing a vital role in ensuring a positive future for species at risk. The purpose of the CARES Preservation Program is to encourage hobbyists worldwide to devote tank space to one or more species at risk, while forming an information network between aquarists, scientists, and conservationists.

## IMPORTANT WEBSITES

www. <http://www.necichlids.com/>  
<http://www.acaconvention2015.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/236314137459/>

## NECA POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY



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**Editor's Notes:** Thanks to Mike Liu, Sandy Feder, Fritz Andre, and Dr. Mathew McGee for this month's articles and images.

Next month we'll have articles by Mike Liu, Jim Kenniston, Jim Cumming, Butch Livingston, and the usual stuff from me. Here's a photo taken by Jim Cumming, which shows the species his article covers. [Can you identify it?](#)

