



Hi – Fin

April 2010



Madagascar Lace Plant in flower

Aquatic Plant of the month

Photograph by: Udo Rohmann

Presidents Message

Tim Antler, will be acting President for the balance of the term.

Editor's Message

Well, Easter has come and gone and the CAOAC Convention is just around the corner. As you all know that means this club season is coming to a close. I hope all of you will consider running for one of the club positions in the upcoming election (June)! In this April's issue we have 2 reprint articles which I hope you will find of interest!

Please remember that this is your Club and your newsletter, the greater the level of participation the better the club and the newsletter!

Enjoy!

Udo Rohmann

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Peel Regional Aquarium Club Executive

President	Tim Antler (acting)
Vice President	Tim Antler
Treasurer	Lloyd Cockburn
Secretary	Denise Antler
CAOAC Rep	John van Rompu
Auction Chair	Ed Czuchnicki
Program Chair	Gary Peacock
Hi-Fin Editor	Udo Rohmann
Membership	Bob Wilson
Web Master	John van Rompu



CAOAC Calendar

April 11, 2010

Durham Region Aquarium Society Show and Auction

April 17, 2010

Sarnia Aquarium Society Auction

May 1, 2010

Cambridge District Aquarium Society Auction

May 2, 2010

London Aquarium Society Auction

May 21-23, 2010

CAOAC Convention



June 26, 2010

**Sarnia Aquarium Society
Guest speaker Gary Lange**

September 26, 2010

Sarnia Aquarium Society Auction

September 26, 2010

London Aquarium Society Show and Auction

October 3, 2010

Hamilton Aquarium Society Auction

October 24, 2010

Kitchener Waterloo Aquarium Society Show and Auction

October 31, 2010

St. Catharine Aquarium Society Show and Auction

November 7, 2010

Peel Regional Aquarium Club Auction

Executive Meeting Minutes

No executive meeting was held

A Newbie Joins the Club!

As a brand new member of NJAS, yet a board-member of two other professional associations, I know how difficult it can be for the newcomer to feel acclimated to a group. With that in mind, I've listed the top five actions that both seasoned members (I hate the phrase "old timers") and newbies themselves can take to ensure a pleasant and rewarding experience. History shows us if the newbies have a great time at their first meeting, the likelihood of them returning is high. The reverse is true if they end up not feeling welcomed.

Top Five Points for Newbies:

1. Open your mouth.

Remember that you will get from the club, exactly what you put into it. Hence, if you want someone to talk to you ... talk to someone! Your experience will be 100 times more rewarding if you connect with others in the club vs. attending just to hear the speaker. FORCE yourself to "mingle" even if you hate this function. Remember, this isn't some boring cocktail party -- you are amongst other aquarium hobbyists so you have much in common!

2. Get involved.

The quickest and easiest way to feel like you belong in the club is to volunteer in whatever way you can. Offer to be a "runner" during the auctions; write an article of any kind for the Reporter; come early and aid in setting up the room; offer help at Bowl Shows; go to shows with club members even if you aren't showing (great experience). Do whatever you can to make this YOUR CLUB, not just A CLUB.

3. State you are new.

Be sure to tell people you are new -- new to whatever it is with which you are new - - meaning, new to the hobby, or new to the association. When you state you are new, you give people the subtle clue that you need help. It may be help in setting up an aquarium if you are new to the hobby, or it may be how the BAP program works if you're a long-term hobbyist but new to NJAS.

4. Consistently attend meetings.

One of the biggest mistakes newbies make is to scan the list of upcoming speakers and make choices of what meetings to attend based on the speakers. This method GUARANTEES you will never feel part of the group. Think of the speakers as the "icing on the cake" rather than the main attraction. Many of the "regular" members are experts in their fields. The "regular" member with whom you converse this month might very well be next month's keynote speaker. Commit to yourself that you will attend every possible meeting you can, REGARDLESS of the speaker or her/his subject matter. Period.

5. Keep coming back.

If you have a bad experience, if something is said that offends you, if the meeting seemed "flat," if no one spoke to you -- WHATEVER. Don't write off the club. Try and look at what YOU could have done differently to ensure you had a better evening (talking to someone, asking for guidance, volunteering, etc). Set your mind to having a fabulous experience next time, take appropriate action by utilizing the above points, and I

can guarantee you you'll experience exactly that: a fabulous time!

Top Five Points for Seasoned Members:

1. Remember what it's like to be a newcomer.

All too often, long-term members forget the uncomfortability that the newcomer is experiencing, and rather than seek out a newbie, seasoned members congregate amongst themselves, forming something of a click. This can be very intimidating to a newbie, who doesn't know a soul and feels left out right from the start.

2. Make it a point to talk to at least two newcomers.

Sometimes at the beginning of a meeting, an announcement will be made asking if there are any newcomers attending. Look around during that announcement to see who is raising their hands, then make it your mission to speak to AT LEAST two of those folks. If no announcement is made, look around for new faces or for folks who "look lost" and go up and introduce yourself. You can also keep an eye on the back tables just before the meeting takes place -- people filling out forms are the ones joining that night.

3. Get them educated.

Make sure the newbie has all the paperwork that's available at the meeting -- a copy of the Reporter, fliers, articles, etc. It's taken for granted by seasoned members, but very often, newbies don't even know where to look for these things. Walk them over to the fish/items on display for auction. Explain the raffle table to them.

4. Introduce the newbie to at least two other members.

Find out what aspects of the hobby most interest the newbie and then introduce her/him to more experienced members in that area. It's also a great idea to introduce the newbie to a member who owns an aquarium or pet store.

5. Make it easy for the newbie to stay connected.

In case the newbie has a question about something prior to next month's meeting, offer your phone number and/or email address to her/him. Remember the Mission Statement for NJAS includes increasing the knowledge of all hobbyists, so do your part to offer support.

Just like our aquariums, meetings and associations are a mini ecosystem. All ecosystems are comprised of intertwined and synergistic dynamics. The long-term members are like the nitrosomonas and nitrobacter bacteria in our tanks: they are the core, and are essential for stability and well-being. Without them, things die. The newbies are like water changes: they bring in a new supply of elements and energy. Without them, things also die. Hence, the blend of both groups is essential, and makes for a healthy, growing vibrant aquatic organization. See you at the next meeting

By: Alesia Benedict, NJAS

Erythromycin vs Blue-Green Algae

If you have a heavily-planted fish tank, you know that your worst enemy isn't ich or fungus - it's algae. Typically, the fish in the tank cost far less than the plants. It's a crime what a little neglect can do to a well-planted tank. Miss a few water changes, add a little pH buffering solution to your water, have strong light, use some plant fertilizer, and chances are you'll be looking at algae that will cost you plenty of green stuff.

It has happened to me. I used fertilizers as recommended on the packages, added Wimex iron supplement, had 2 20 W fluorescent tubes on top of the 75 gallon tank, and had pretty good plant growth. My Apongeton crispus were flowering, my Echinodorus bleheri were flowering -- I was on top of the world. Then it happened. A dark green algae started to cover some of the plants. I thought - "no sweat", I bought the algicide from Aquarium Pharmaceuticals, placed the recommended amount into the tank, and watched my fish (mostly tetras, but also a plecostamus) go crazy trying to jump out of the tank. I rapidly did a 50% water change which seemed to calm the fish down, and did another 50% water change the next day. I noticed that the nice green algae was dead, but the ugly stringy stuff and the dark green slimy stuff was doing great. Algicide was definitely not the right treatment.

I tried the "old-fashioned" approach to reducing the algae - I shut off the lights for a few days. The Hygrophila polysperma, already weakened by the algae, all but died and I had to pull it out of the tank. The A. crispus died back, and I had to pull off numerous leaves from the E. bleheri. I now only had about 1/3 of the plants I originally had, but I was reasonably algae-free because I had thrown out everything with algae on it.

Over the next few months I purchased a few more plants, including some from the club auction, but unknown to me, those had algae on them.

Guess what? I was in trouble again. I didn't notice it at first because the algae was close to the stem on my cabomba and not on the leaves where it would be easily visible. This time I tried a more systematic approach, I used my computer to find help. I have access to a world-wide network of computers (Internet), and read "newsgroups" about tropical fish. One guy reported that the dark green "algae" one sees in tropical fish tanks is not really an algae, but a bacteria. He reported great success in using the anti-bacterial drug erythromycin (available at pet shops, trade name for it is Maracyn - not Maracyn II). In fact, blue-green algae are not bacteria, but share many of their characteristics \cite{Bake77}.

Erythromycin works by attacking the cell wall of the bacteria \cite{Dixo92}. I figured I didn't have much to lose, so I bought some, removed the carbon from my filter, used the recommended dosage, and miracle of miracles, the "algae" died off without affecting the other plants or fish.

The miracle cure wasn't without drawbacks though. Although the instructions on the package specifically state that Maracyn does not affect Nitrosomonas and Nitrobacter bacteria (those responsible for the nitrogen cycle in the tank), I immediately noticed a rise in ammonia levels. The depletion of nitrifying bacteria by erythromycin is also reported in \cite{Dixo92}. I used Amquel to remove the ammonia, and continued to use it until water changes reduced the amount of erythromycin in the tank, and the filter was again working properly (about 2 weeks). Through interactions with other people on the internet, it appears that freshwater nitrifying bacteria suffer more than saltwater ones from this treatment, but this is only a casual observation and I'm not ready to commit to that statement yet.

I'd be happy to hear about your experiences to see if this theory is correct.

Over 100 varieties of blue green algae are found all over the world \cite{Bake77}. It's hard to avoid getting any in your tank because the spores are in the atmosphere, and plants you put in the tank are likely to contain some. Although high nitrates are usually

suspect when blue-green algae begins to grow, Vinny Kutty reports \cite{Kutt92} that it can grow even in water that is almost absent of nitrates (because it can fix atmospheric nitrogen) -- provided there are phosphates in the water. Kutty reports that a level of 0.5ppm of phosphates in a river is considered ``polluted", but that phosphate levels below 0.5 ppm may retard plant growth. My guess is that a level somewhat below 0.5 ppm would be a good target for phosphates, and about 10 ppm or below for nitrates (freshwater).

There are a couple of ways to keep nitrates and phosphates at low levels. You can either try to keep their introduction to the tank low, or you can get them out of your tank once they are there. In the latter category, there are of resins that can be used and the old standby -- water changes. To make sure the phosphates and nitrates don't get in your tank, note that many plant fertilizers contain these components, so use them sparingly (see below). If you use a product that buffers the pH of your water, it likely contains phosphates.

Novaqua, a common water additive, will result in 5 ppm phosphates if used as directed. Overcrowded tanks are a cause of phosphates from fish waste \cite{Kutt92}, and of course, with a working biological filter, ammonia is eventually converted to nitrates. PH Down, a product which lowers the pH level of aquarium water uses phosphoric acid, so that might not be a great idea either. Finally, check your water supply, it may be the source.

I don't want this article to be a complete downer regarding keeping plants, so I'll just summarize quickly some of the points I have gathered from my internet reading. Fertilizers are not generally recommended in planted tanks because of the potential algae problems. Trace elements and iron are all that should be used, fish provide the rest of the fertilizer. You must provide sufficient light for the plants to grow, this is the most common problem people have with plants. About 40 W of fluorescent light on a 75 Gallon tank is about right. I use one full-spectrum bulb and one ``plant-bulb" on my tank. You have to provide sufficient gravel for the plants to grow, about 8-10 cm of 1 or 2mm gravel is okay.

Water changes are important, they help to reduce any pollution that may be present in your tank.

I wish you luck in keeping your plants healthy, use the guidelines I collected above to try to reduce the chance of algae infestation in your tank. If the choice is between losing your plants or using Maracyn, use it, but keep a close eye on the ammonia level. Don't depend on using this drug to combat all algae, just blue-green algae. Remember that using anti-biotics on a casual basis can result in strains of bacteria that are resistant to the anti-biotic - so be careful. A few good references on keeping plants in an aquarium are below.

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Do you have unwanted aquarium in habitants?

Please do not release them into the wild. Contact Peel Regional Aquarium Club or any other CAOAC Club to assist you in finding a new home for your pet(s)



Questions? Comments? Concerns?

About the Hi-Fin or Peel Regional Aquarium Club? Please contact any of the Club Executive Members as listed above and share your thoughts. This is a club run by volunteers for the benefit of all members. That includes you! Strong member participation is what has allowed this Club to continue for over 39 years!

Come and join us and make a difference!

About us

The Peel Regional Aquarium Club (PRAC) is a progressive, non-profit organization whose purpose is to share with our members the many wonders of the best hobby in the world, fish keeping and to promote our hobby in the community.

PRAC started out as the Brampton Aquarium Club in 1971. Since that time it has increased in numbers to what is a well run and successful club today. Membership is only \$25 per year for adults and families, and \$10 for students.

Our members come not only from the Region of Peel, but also as far away as Collingwood and Huntsville. Anyone can become a member who wishes to share the excitement of fish keeping.

In early 2008, we changed our name from Brampton Aquarium Club to Peel Regional Aquarium Club to better reflect who we are and the community in which we operate.

If you want to find out the latest information on fish keeping or have a problem that needs a solution, come to our meeting and ask the experts. Our friendly environment has attracted many new and experienced hobbyists. We hope that you will be the next member.

Our Motto

Giving back to the community is a PRAC priority. We have set up many aquariums at schools and hospitals. Building enthusiasm about the hobby in youngsters is important to us. As well, we have participated in Pet Shows, promoting fish keeping in the greater community.

Monthly Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month except during July and August

Our meetings are held at Turner Fenton Secondary School, 7935 Kennedy Road, South building, located at Kennedy Rd. and Steeles Ave. in Brampton.

The meetings start at 7 P.M

Our meetings consist of an interesting presentation, door prizes, guess the fish contest, monthly auction of live fish, plants and related equipment and of course time to talk to other hobbyists.

Club members have access to our extensive Club Library

Visitors are always welcome!

Please contact any executive member for further information

For Advertising in our Bulletin, please contact any Executive member