

Who Me??

I Don't Need To Keep Notes

Charles Dale Meryman

Recently I had asked some of the students in my Aquarium Management class, what is their most important piece of aquarium equipment? The first item that often appeared in their minds were their pumps, heaters or thermometers. All being very valid answers, yet, thinking a little more carefully; when was the last time your female native fish died mysteriously giving birth or all the medications that you have tried.

As a newcomer to the ranks of fish fanciers 14 years back, I also found myself a victim of many of the pitfalls a novice encounters. Fortunately, many of my problems were solved in one of the hobbyist periodicals or reference books. The most important piece of equipment that I use daily is my notebook, not only for the purpose of preventing repeated blunders but also for planning and reference value. Although I am certain that most of you experienced native fish enthusiasts keep such a notebook handy, it took me quite a while to realize the need and value of the useful information, such as spawning dates of my native fish or my red cap orandas and the time response of my fish to various fungus remedies, that was left unrecorded.

If you now keep a notebook, fantastic. If not I strongly urge you to compile all those scraps of magazine articles and notes. The organization of the three ringed notebook is basically up to the discretion of the individual. A three ringed notebook that contains standard 8" x 10.5" or 20.75 x 26.50 cm. school notebook paper is the best, as it is easily obtained, inexpensive and the pages can be reshuffled as the binder becomes full. I hope that some of my simple documentary methods will prove applicable when you begin to compile your notebook.

In the first section of my notebook I keep my daily feeding schedule, temperature, ph, and DH charts. The feeding chart mainly is used to refresh my memory on what type of food I will feed that particular day and not necessarily that a feeding was made. A useful key to the various foods I feed would be entered as, FDT-freeze dried tubiflex, FBS-frozen brine shrimp, LBS-live brine shrimp, etc. The basic temperature and water quality charts are mainly to keep me abreast of the conditions in my tanks. Random sampling of the tanks ph, dh, and temperature is recorded weekly, where I can tell at a glance when one of the bare bottomed tanks next to each other is going sour and needs to be torn down. This does not discount the daily observance of the temperature in each tank as you feed the fish: only to alleviate some of the paperwork. Later I expect to draw some correlation between feeding frequencies, temperature and water conditions to the growth rate of my fry.

The second section is devoted to a diary of significant events. Entries made here are of new fish purchased, when is the NANFA convention that have strains that I need, spawning dates, fungus problems, all these are religiously logged. As these records accumulate from my research, I am able to go back and make up a spawning record on one of my females, for example, or note the relative effect of different dyes I have used to treat specific diseases encountered. Through painstaking research and record keeping such as mentioned above, I am able to jell all the years of data into my new book on "Diseases and Complications of Native Fish".

The third section of my notebook is basically devoted to planning. After working through an article on fancy goldfish heredity or on a new concept of native fish breeding, I then outline my theory, resolve my plan of attack, and decide what my needs will be in regards to any new equipment or new strain. This way the frivolous spending of funds is eliminated and in the long run one can easily afford a new tank when he needs it, if he follows his fish budget. Rather than being awe-struck by the latest exotic breed of tropical. I can stick to my basic plan of needed species or strain and not have rows of tanks of half-breed, useless fish. This way also a person with a community tank can give more direction to his pastime, than aimless acquisition and separation of all his noncompatible species.

Another problem that crops up frequently is storage of back issues of monthly magazines, society journals and the like. By clipping the articles of most interest to you and glueing or taping them to pages in the section of your notebook you will have the important material easily at hand. Many times I will part with the rest of the magazine reluctantly yet do not just toss the magazine into the trash. Many of your fellow hobbyist may not have read that issue and would greatly appreciate reading it.

I believe my notebook is an outstanding method of making learning experiences last. Not only am I constantly learning new things about aquarium keeping, but I am also getting accurate ammunition for future club presentations, articles and general fish rap sessions. Naturally keeping a notebook is more trouble than just feeding your native fish and buying new fish and tanks when funds are available. Yet, fish provide us with the most beautiful, living hobby in the world. You will want to have each downfall added to your experiences and depth of knowledge as a Native Fish Fancier. But most importantly to add to the knowledge of the native fish hobby. For only as we all work together and compile our experiences and knowledge can we hope to improve the beautiful native fish we have today.

