My Native Fish Winter Cooling Device

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My tanks are normally 65-72°F all year, but in Fall 2007 I decided to try and give my darters a “winter” period to see if it would possibly lead to spawning activities when I warmed them back up. I needed a cheap, easy way of creating cooler water, so I came up with the following.

Equipment list:
  • air pump
  • 25’ of airline
  • 20’ of “pool noodles”
  • duct tape

I placed the air pump on my porch, plugged it in, and ran the airline through a window that I opened just enough to let the airline through. Then I used duct tape to seal the rest of the opening.

Once the airline was in the house, I ran it through “pool noodles” across the room to my darter tank. Pool noodles can be found at most stores in the summer for only a buck or two.

(The ones I used were in my garage, left over from the previous summer.) I duct taped them together at the joints.
Thomas, “Point-and-Shoot,” cont. from p. 20  make the room completely dark. Position the camera squarely with the tank since angle shots will appear distorted. With the camera set to automatic (and possibly macro, depending on the subject), half-depress the shutter button and see how the camera wants to shoot the photo. If the camera wants to use the flash, disable it. It’s best to start on stationary or slow-moving fishes at first. If the subject remains somewhat still and your shots are blurred while in focus, extra lighting is probably needed. If shots are continually out of focus, double-check the glass for streaks and/or algae and make sure you’re using a tripod. Fast-moving fishes require either extremely intense light (along the lines of 2000 watts for a standard 55-gallon tank), or you can use the camera’s flash.

When using the flash, color will often look unnatural. In addition, bright reflections from the glass may ruin the shot. In order to reduce flash reflection, slightly angle the camera to force the reflection away from the subject. The reflection can then be edited from the photo with software. You can also place the camera lens directly against the glass. This will give you the benefits of the flash while keeping the reflection out of the field of view.

Final Thoughts

Up to this point I’ve tried to keep all camera adjustments to a minimum, but for home photography manual adjustments can yield better photos. Since each camera is different and lighting conditions and subjects are diverse, providing an easy-to-follow guide for better photos is impossible. But I do recommend taking several photos with as little manual functions as possible to give you a base line. Once you’re comfortable with taking photos in the above style, you should seek more information (books or online) about camera basics. With an hour of reading you’ll feel comfortable in manually adjusting your camera, and you’ll easily see the results of your adjustments in improved photo quality. Your only expense will be batteries.