



Director Schröder closely examines his rare fish specimens twice a day. So efficient is his aquarium that losses from disease are unknown. The fishes in this huge aquarium are Characins of the genera *Metynnis*, *Colossoma*, *Prochilodus* and *Leporinus*. Photo by Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod.

Trials and tribulations of a public aquarium.

The Berlin Aquarium

BY WERNER SCHRÖDER,
Director

The first Berlin Aquarium was founded by Alfred Brehm, the well-known author of *Brehm's Tierleben*. For four years, together with Dr. Hermes, he managed the undertaking he had started in the year 1869 at the corner of Schadowstrasse and Unter den Linden. This Aquarium was built in the form of grottos, and in the rooms which were richly decorated with tufa rock there were kept not only freshwater and marine fishes but also amphibians, reptiles and many parrots and other tropical birds. Particular emphasis was placed on the keeping of anthropoid apes, and it seems almost unbelievable that as early as 1876 the first gorilla to be seen in Europe was shown at the same time as a large orang, a chimpanzee and a gibbon.



This Discus (*Symphysodon aequifasciata axelrodi*) makes its home in one of the Berlin Aquarium's large fresh water tanks. Photo by Karl Alexander.

The Aquarium maintained its own collecting station in Rovigno, on the Adriatic, because its aim, as Hermes wrote, was "to show the creatures of the sea in the interior of the country." In this manner it became possible for the curious Berliners to see alive, for the first time, the marine life of the Mediterranean. The freshwater fishes were by no means neglected, and included such interesting and costly specimens as the American Bowfin (*Amia calva*) and the Alligator Gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*).

When the old Berlin Aquarium closed its doors a few years before the First World War, the Director of the Berlin Zoological Garden, Prof. Dr. Ludwig Heck, gave his assistant, Dr. Heinroth, the task of working on the plans for a new Aquarium. This new Aquarium was to be erected on the grounds of the Zoological Garden, and it was decided to abandon the old romantic grotto style and build a modern three-story building to contain what were for that time tremendous aquariums and bright, airy terrariums. Heinroth began by embarking on trips which lasted for months to make studies of the big public aquariums of Germany and foreign countries. The building was completed within two years and stood at the site which was located on the Budapester Strasse, where it became an electrified annex to the Zoo. It was identified by a tremendous chimney and brick water-tower. In the upper part of the water-tower there were built two new compartments, into which were pumped salt water and fresh water from the main filters.



Director Werner Schröder of the Berlin Aquarium is a well rounded individual and freely gives assistance to many of the aquarium societies. Aside from being President of "Triton," Germany's oldest society, he also helps other groups. Here he is meeting with (from left to right) Dr. Stoerzbach, Hans Peter, Schröder and Ewald Somann (head of the VDA, the German equivalent of TIFAS). Seated are Mrs. Somann, left, and Mrs. Stoerzbach. Photo by Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod.

On the 18th of March, 1913, the new Aquarium was opened to the public. The three-story building, which cost more than \$250,000, a tremendous sum at that time, deserved to have not only freshwater and marine creatures, but also some terrestrial animals. Therefore they showed about 400 different land species in 255 cages. The first sea water was brought in from Hamburg in two large tanks to the Aquarium's intake valves and was pumped into the building at night with the help of the Fire Department and 1000 yards of fire-hose.

Under Heinroth's direction, and with the help of Chief Inspector Carl Seitz, the Berlin Aquarium became a world-renowned institution. The number of exhibits, which fell off greatly during the First World War, rose to more than 700 and the number of visitors reached a height of a quarter million. Many rare species could be brought from overseas and shown to the Berliners for the first time. A gorgeous 8-foot Komodo lizard, known to frequent visitors as "Moritz," lived there for more than 10 years. Also famous was the collection of coral fishes and the breeding of "moving leaves" (*Phyllium*). These were grasshoppers from Indonesia which greatly resembled an oak-leaf, and their progeny were distributed to large showplaces all over the world.



When the bombs were flying the night of November 23, 1943, the Aquarium was reduced to a shambles. Some people were lucky, though, as they had alligator steaks for dinner the next evening. These views show the damage that was inflicted.

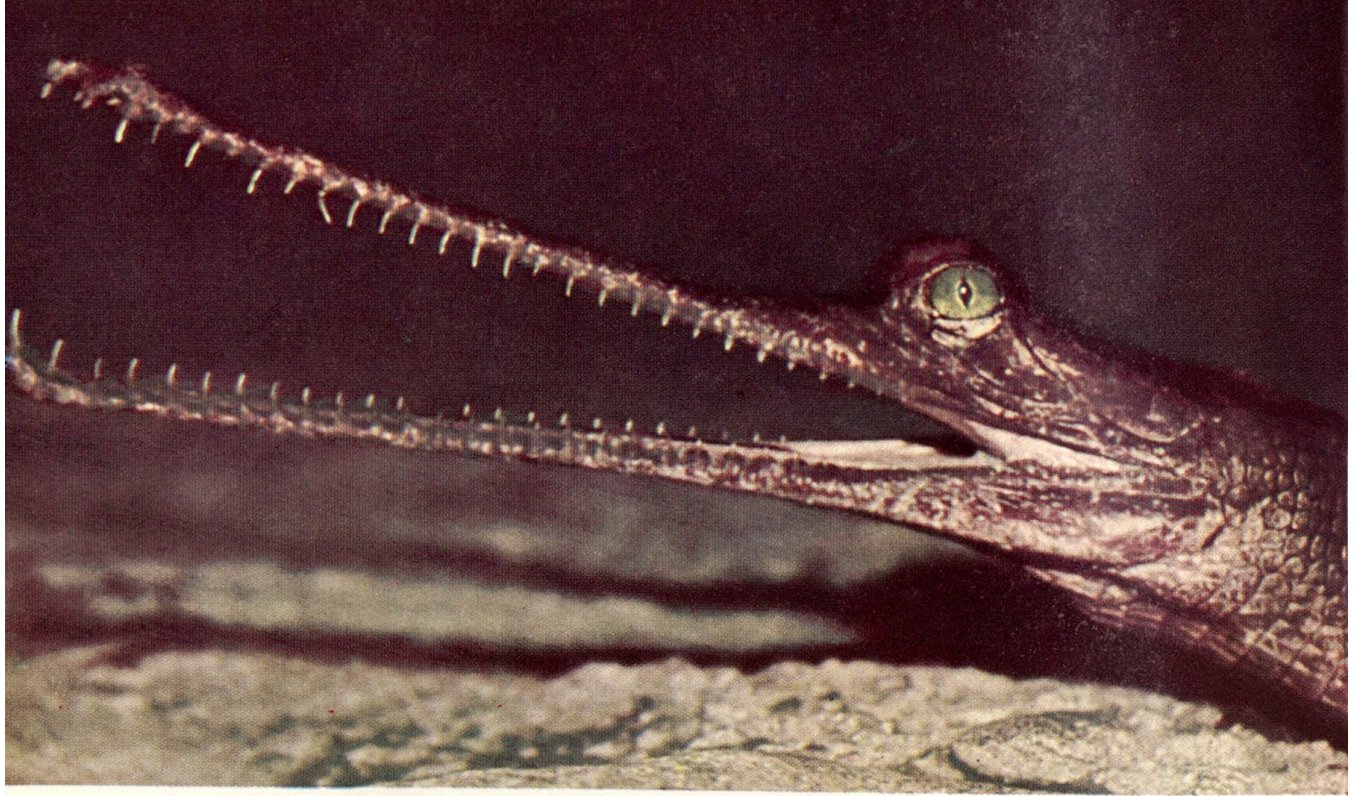




A great part of Director Schröder's time is taken up with answering hundreds of letters each week advising animal lovers on the care of various pets. His very loyal secretary, Fraulein Gisela Sander, assists him. Photo by Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod.

The entire unique collection in the Berlin Aquarium perished during the night of November 23-24, 1943 as the result of a bombardment. The Crocodile Hall was hit and the entire three-story building was damaged. All of the aquariums ran dry, and whatever animals were not killed immediately died soon afterward from the winter cold. Some of the huge alligators and crocodiles lay stiff in the pools. They were slaughtered, their meat cooked in the laundry room, and the zoo employees and their families were provided with meals. Oskar Heinroth, who remained with the Zoo in spite of poor health, did not see the ruination of his life work much longer. He died during the first difficult times of the Occupation on May 31, 1945.

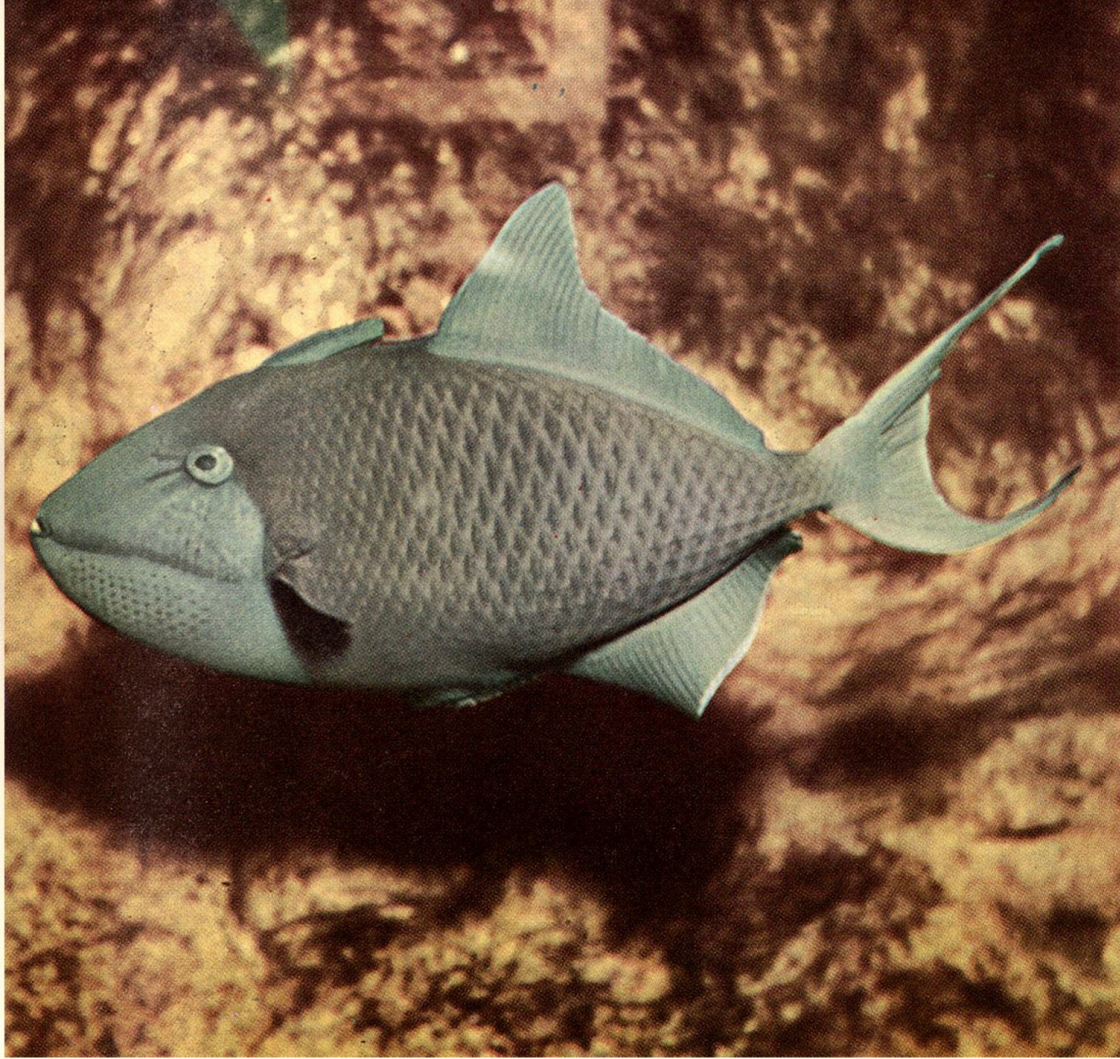
In the first years after the war ended, it was the main task of the Zoo personnel to feed the few remaining animals and to give them warm winter quarters in smaller new buildings. It was not until much later that the Aquarium could be demolished and rebuilding begun. The procurement of materials for such a special building entailed a great many difficulties. For instance, the large, 1½-inch-thick heavy glass panes had to be ordered by a Danish agent from England.



The Berlin Aquarium does not limit itself to fishes alone. This long-snouted, sharp-toothed specimen is *Gavialis gangeticus*, an Indian crocodilian. Photo by Karl Alexander.

This round-toed amphibian is *Hyla caerulea*, a tree toad. Photo by Karl Alexander.





Odonis niger, one of the salt water species maintained at the Berlin Aquarium.
Photo by Karl Alexander.

The old building had been laid out so spaciouly and with so much foresight that there were very few changes required. The old water-tower was modernized in its outer shape and today still forms one of the corners of the Aquarium. The changes in the building itself were mostly of an architectural nature, and resulted in a simplification by the use of a more modern design. Additional usable space was made available by a widening of the zoological section. This gave room in the basement for two sections devoted to tropical aquarium fishes, and in the upper floor a larger section for the European amphibians and reptiles. The display rooms of the Insectarium were considerably widened, and on the roof there was a garden which was used for raising orchids to be shown in the Crocodile Hall.

Our Aquarium is being continually enlarged, and as a result the number of show aquariums is considerably higher than in the pre-war times. In about 350 aquariums, terrariums and insectariums there are shown invertebrates and cold-blooded vertebrates from all parts of the world.

The Berlin Aquarium has such costly exhibits as a large Australian lung-fish (*Neoceratodus*), a python (*Python reticulatus*) more than 25 feet long, a



One of Schröder's displays is a large marine aquarium with Clownfish and Sea Anemones. Photo by Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod.

very rare lizard (*Oplurus*) from Madagascar which has never been shown before, another from the Fiji Islands (*Brachylophus*), and the largest collection of armored reptiles, which includes 22 kinds of crocodiles, alligators, caymans and gavials.

NUMBER OF SPECIES EXHIBITED

1939 — 711	1953 — 359	1956 — 595	1959 — 922
1943 — 630	1954 — 482	1957 — 732	1960 — 1034
1951 — 2	1955 — 536	1958 — 777	1961 — more than
1952 — 192			1100

The number of visitors is always increasing and has surpassed by far the highest pre-war figures. We can therefore figure on a considerable growth in the future.