



New Beginnings, Reconstruction, and Reactivation – Vivarium Keeping after the Second World War, 1945 to the Early 1960s

by Hajo Herrmann

Europe, after 8 May 1945—the day of the German Wehrmacht’s capitulation—lay in ruins. Most historic city centers resembled quarries of shattered masonry; many streets were barely discernible, and people picked their way across and around the debris along whatever paths remained passable. From today’s conflicts, we know the harrowing images from Gaza, Ukraine, or Lebanon. Yet the devastation then was even more profound. That portion of the German population which had believed in the Nazis and their ideology lay broken, much like the fallen regime itself. An almost incomprehensible pessimism, coupled with resignation and a wounded sense of self-worth, cast a pall over all of postwar life. Hunger and scarcity prevailed everywhere—worse even than during the war. It thus comes as no surprise that in the years 1945 and 1946 many people succumbed to the lingering effects of their injuries, to the emaciation endured in concentration camps, or to sheer hunger and destitution. All of them may rightfully still be counted among the war’s victims.

City centers were gradually cleared, yet there remained a dire lack of housing, basic infrastructure, and indeed nearly everything required for an ordinary life. Within the occupation zones of the four Allied powers that had liberated Germany from fascism, life developed along markedly different lines. While the regions occupied by France, Great Britain, and the United States in western Germany soon joined forces, using reconstruction funds (the Marshall Plan) from the United States—investments directed particularly toward industrial areas such as the Ruhr, the automotive industry of southern Germany, and mining—to begin a gradual return to normality, eastern Germany, under Soviet control, largely fell behind.

In this eastern zone, however, the process of denazification was pursued more rigorously and systematically: officials and officeholders of the NSDAP were exposed and stripped of power. Whereas in western Germany many functionaries were allowed to remain in offices, organizations, and universities, the East saw a comprehensive replacement of personnel. Yet reconstruction lagged, proceeding slowly and often with rudimentary means. Where once stood grand edifices, there now rose simple barracks or provisional structures. In Gotha, too, several significant buildings were missing—the theater, the wagon factory where railway carriages and trams had been produced, and railway stations. Still, Gotha had not suffered destruction on the scale of cities such as Berlin or Dresden. In Berlin, one can still see, in many places today, the bullet holes left by the street fighting of 1945. When I later brought my first aquaristic and terraristic articles to the editorial office of the journal *Aquarien Terrarien*, I would walk from Friedrichstraße station past the Gendarmenmarkt to Otto-Nuschke-Straße. The Gendarmenmarkt—once Berlin’s most beautiful square, with the German and French (Huguenot) cathedrals and the Schauspielhaus at its center—was then a landscape of ruins. When I visit the meticulously reconstructed square today with younger friends and colleagues, scarcely anyone can imagine that trees once grew amid its rubble.

Those who, in East Germany and in Gotha as well, sought after the war to revive our hobby step by step were mostly young people, uncorrupted by Nazi ideology. As sensitive spirits, they possessed an affinity for art and culture. A prominent example from Berlin is Hans-Albert Pederzani, long-time editor of the later GDR journal *Aquarien Terrarien*. Like nearly all young men, he had served at the front and bore injuries and traumas that haunted him throughout his life. Pederzani was a writer, actor, and dramaturge. Yet after the war there was no employment for such pursuits. In 1946, he earned a little extra as an extra in the first German feature film after the war, *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, directed by Wolfgang Staudte. Soon thereafter, Berlin's only functioning theater „Schlossparktheater“ resumed performances under Boleslav Barlog; as in the film, Hildegard Knef appeared as the first female lead. Pederzani attended, paying for his tickets—as did all theatergoers—with coal, the only means of providing a modicum of warmth. Like him, many culturally inclined individuals combined a love of art with a love of nature, seeking a sense of belonging within a larger organization.

It is thus hardly surprising that artists and hobbyists alike followed similar paths in times of hardship. As early as 4 July 1945, the German poet Johannes R. Becher founded the „Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands“ (Cultural Association for the Democratic Renewal of Germany). Here, all those who were more optimistic than the former adherents of Nazism found a new home. Intellectuals and people of varied talents and interests quickly formed regional groups throughout the country. Alongside artists in the narrower sense, historians, naturalists, local heritage enthusiasts, philatelists, numismatists, and vivarium keepers found a place for their activities. Hans-Albert Pederzani became one of the key figures in aquaristics and terraristics within the Kulturbund. They were united by a single aspiration: never again war. Financial motives were of little concern; they were ready to begin anew in a peaceful, humanistic world. When, in 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in the western zones and, through currency reform, effectively sealed itself off from the East, the Soviet zone was compelled to respond. To survive, the German Democratic Republic was established—initially open, tolerant, and above all antifascist.

This description of the postwar situation is necessary to understand the development of Gotha's aquarium and terrarium societies. Their facilities—the three open-air aquariums along with their club buildings—had been destroyed by bombing. Many aquarists had fallen in the war or perished in air raids. Their aquariums and terrariums had likewise vanished; who among the survivors possessed the means, food, or space to sustain such a hobby in times of dire need? And yet, there were a few—foremost among them the two surviving leading figures of the Gotha clubs, Charly Fuchs and Kurt Koch. Both had been fortunate: their homes had escaped bombing, and their aquarium installations remained intact. Like those enthusiasts who, even in the darkest war years, had clung to their hobby as a final refuge for their souls—sacrificing their last resources for it—these two Gotha activists continued to care for and breed their fish. Particularly in the soft-water regions of Thuringia, but also in Bavaria and Baden, aquarium fish were bred even during the war. Thus, a foundation for renewal already existed, for imports were out of the question.

Since the 1920s, a stock of aquarium fish had become established. Wherever aquariums had survived, they contained various species that continued to be bred. Because the GDR later saw almost no new imports, this politically enforced isolation can be regarded as the largest and longest genetic experiment—spanning, in many cases, from around 1930 to 1989—offering practical evidence against the oft-cited concerns about inbreeding damage. Many aquarium fish from all systematic groups were thus the descendants of the original imported specimens across countless generations. To this day, they are considered among the most robust breeding lines, best adapted to aquarium life, and most tolerant in terms of water parameters, diet, and behavior.

Which fish were these? Alongside numerous livebearing toothcarps and their cultivated forms, and classics such as *Macropodus opercularis* and *Australoheros facetos*, there were species still commonly found in aquarium shops today. Among characins, for example, *Hyphessobrycon flammeus*, *Pristella maxillaris*, *Moenkhausia sanctaefilomenae*, *Hemigrammus erythrozonus*, *Paracheirodon innesi*, and *Gymnocorymbus ternetzi*. Among cichlids, species such as *Pelvicachromis pulcher*, *Heros severus*, and *Amatitlania nigrofasciata* survived the war. From the latter—the zebra cichlids—I received a pair as a schoolboy from Kurt Koch’s breeding facility; they were the first fish I successfully bred in my own aquariums. Carp-like fishes such as *Danio rerio*, *Pethia conchonius*, *Puntigrus tetrazona*, and *Tanichthys albonubes* were likewise maintained, as were killifishes including *Aphyosemion gardneri*, *Epiplatys dageti*, and *Fundulopanchax gardneri*, to name but a few.



X-ray tetra, *Pristella maxillaris*



Red-eye moenkhausia, *Moenkhausia sanctaefilomenae*



Glowlight tetra, *Hemigrammus erythrozonus*



Neon tetra, *Paracheirodon innesi*



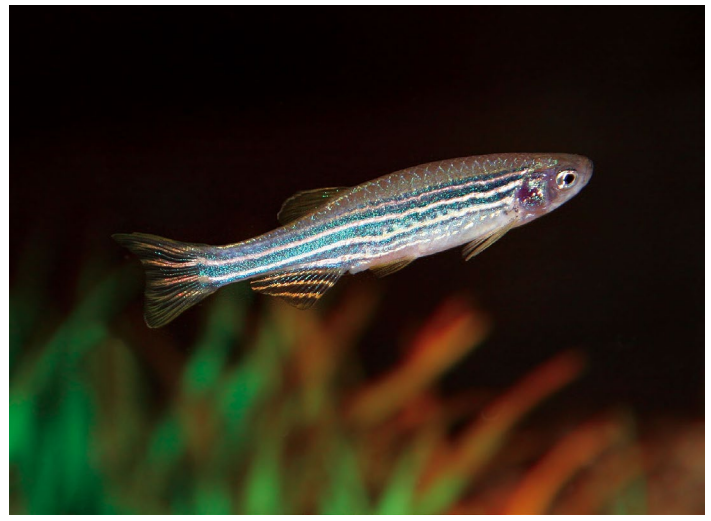
Severum cichlid, *Heros severus*



Black skirt tetra, *Gymnocorymbus ternetzi*



Zebra cichlid, *Amatitlania nigrofasciata*



Zebra danio, *Danio rerio*



Gardner's killifish, *Fundulopanchax gardneri*



Tiger barb, *Puntigrus tetrazona*



Banded panchax, *Epiplatys dageti*

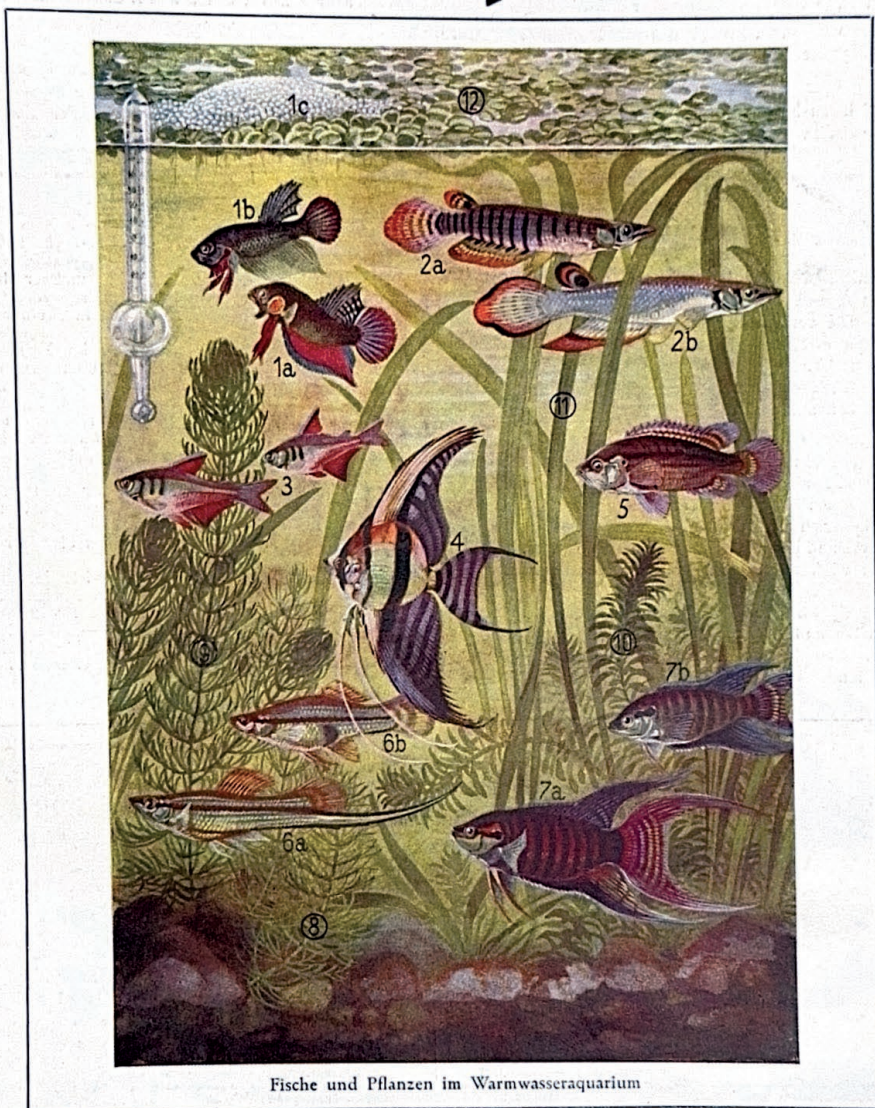
I would like to single out the black-banded barb, *Striuntius lateristriga*. I first saw these imposing large barbs in the Erfurt Aquarium on the Nettelbeckufer in the mid-1960s. The labeling, however, was incorrect; the fish were identified as “Everett’s barb, *Barbus everetti*,” a completely different species not yet known in the GDR at that time. A school of black-banded barbs was on display—aged specimens originating from a Thuringian postwar breeding line, as they were no longer imported into the GDR. For reasons I cannot fully explain, these powerful fish fascinated me, and I searched for them at fish exchanges, pet shops, and breeders. Only a visit to Kurt Koch yielded modest success: in his facility swam a single specimen, which I obtained in exchange for a pair of dwarf gouramis, *Colisa lalia*. Koch, too, referred to the fish as “Everett’s barb.” The well-known club activist and prolific author Wilhelm Schreitmüller had reported on the breeding of this species in 1936 in the journal *Das Aquarium*. Apparently, all remaining specimens in the GDR descended from this and a few other postwar breedings, as further reproduction failed. Perhaps the fish were too old, or improper feeding had rendered them incapable of spawning. Thus, for some species, preservation proved impossible; the spotted danio, *Danio nigromaculatus*, suffered a similar fate.



Black-banded barb, *Striuntius lateristriga*

DAS AQUARIUM

Die Fachzeitschrift des Naturfreundes



Fische und Pflanzen im Warmwasseraquarium

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Ueber Zucht von Schwanzbandbarben

Barbus lateristriga C. et Val. (1842)

Von Wilhelm Schreitmüller, Frankfurt a. M., „Isis“-München.

Mit 4 Skizzen des Verfassers.

Herr Professor Dr. Duncker, Hamburg, macht über diese indische Barbe, welche erstmalig von Julius Reichelt (†), Berlin, im Jahre 1905 aus Indien importiert wurde, in seinem Werke „Die Fische der malayischen Halbinsel“, Seite 177, unter Nr. 335, folgende Angaben: „... *Barbus lateristriga* Cuv. et Val., Sel. Mus., Nr. 1290, 1312: Umgegend von Kuala Lumpur Jelai (Jungli-Bach), Hbg. Mus. Nr. 8439: Kuala-Jelai-Steindachner p. 10: Singapore, Selita. In fließenden Gewässern. Geschickte Schwimmer, die bei Nachstellung unter Steine schlüpfen. Nicht sehr häufig.“ (Abb. 1.)

Dies ist alles, was er über diesen Fisch berichtet. — Der Angabe Prof. Dr. Dunccker, daß sich diese Barben häufig unter Steinen aufhalten, entsprechend, richtete ich vor mehreren Jahren (im Mai) ein Becken (80×40×35 cm groß) für meine „*lateristriga*“ ein. Auf eine 4 cm hohe Sandschicht brachte ich, die Hälfte der Bodenfläche bedeckend, taubeneigröße und hierauf einige flache, hohlliegende, größere Steine, unter welchen sich die Tiere verstecken konnten. Das Becken bepflanzte ich nach dem Fenster zu und an den Seiten dicht mit Vallisnerien, *Sagittaria natans* und *Elodea densa*. Der Wasserbestand betrug 25 cm und die Temperatur des Wassers hielt ich ständig auf 26—28° C. Die erste Zeit nach dem Einsetzen der Tiere in das Becken, waren diese fast nie zu sehen, sie zeigten sich äußerst scheu und hielten sich meistens unter den Steinen auf. Ich fütterte die Fische während der ersten vier Tage absichtlich nicht, um ihren Appetit roge werden zu lassen, um sie somit zu zwingen, ihre Verstecke zu verlassen. Am fünften Tage gab ich, da mir momentan anderes Futter nicht zur Verfügung stand, eine Anzahl Cyclops in das Becken. Diese, in letzteres eingebracht, sanken wie eine kleine Wolke zu Boden, um sich hier nach und nach zu verteilen. Die Barben reagierten absolut nicht auf dieses Futter¹⁾. Gegen Abend desselben Tages versuchte ich es mit kleinen Laubregwürmern, die ich direkt vor die hohlliegenden Steine warf, und siehe da, die Barben kamen ruckweise, mit den Brust- und Bauchflossen zuckend, herangeschwommen und fraßen mit großer Gier die Würmer auf. Sobald aber keine Würmer mehr da waren, verschwanden

¹⁾ Möglich, daß sie die in ihre Verstecke gelangten Cyclops gefressen haben. D. Verf.

sie ebenso schnell wie sie gekommen waren, wieder unter den Steinen. Dies ging etwa acht Tage lang so fort. Eines Tages schien nach längerer Zeit die Sonne wieder; wohl hierdurch hervorgelockt, zeigten sich nunmehr auch die Barben. Sie standen dicht an der dem Fenster zugekehrten Seite des Beckens, zwischen Glasscheibe und Pflanzen und führten ununterbrochen die den Barben eigenen, zuckenden Bewegungen mit den Flossen aus. Trat ich plötzlich an das Becken, so schossen sie mit großer Schnelligkeit unter die Steine und waren nicht mehr zu bewegen, ihre Verstecke zu verlassen. Aus diesem Grunde entfernte ich später die hohlliegenden Steine, so daß die Fische immer sichtbar waren.

Barbus lateristriga Cuv. et Val. (1842) ist also sehr scheu — wenigstens im Anfang —, später wird das Tier zutraulicher, jedoch nie in dem Maße, wie man es von anderen Barbenarten gewöhnt ist. Als Nahrung ist diesen Fischen — da ziemlich groß werdend — (im Aquarium bis 15 cm, im Freien bis 30 cm) möglichst großes, kräftiges Futter zu reichen. Bevorzugt werden entschieden kleine Laubregwürmer, Enchytraeen, Mückenlarven aller Art, Flohkrebse, Wasserasseln, glatte Raupen, Fliegen, kleine Fische (Guppybrut usw.) und Piscidin 00. Pflanzliche Kost ist auch für diese Barben ein Bedürfnis, alle Arten Algen (außer „Fadenalgen“) werden gerne genommen, ebenso sah ich sie auch zarte, frische und faulende Pflanzenteile fressen. Wasserlinsen fressen sie ebenfalls von der Wasserfläche weg. Geschabtes, mageres, rohes Fleisch oder fein zerriebenes, gekochtes Kalbsherz wird auch nicht verachtet. Auf das Wasser geworfene Motten, Fliegen und frische Ameisenpuppen nehmen sie auch gerne an, namentlich an sonnigen, warmen Tagen wurden solche blitzschnell erhascht und verzehrt. An trüben, regnerischen Tagen zeigen sich diese Fische ziemlich träge und stumpfsinnig, nur das typische Flossenzucken ausführend, stehen sie in den Pflanzen und nehmen nur mäßig oder gar keine Nahrung an. — Mit zunehmendem Wachstum und Alter werden diese Barben entsprechend träger und fauler. Oftmals rühren sie sich halbe Tage lang nicht vom Fleck und zeigen sich wenig beweglich, während sie als Jungtiere bis zu 8 cm Länge ziemlich lebhaft umherschweben, sich jagen und necken.

On Breeding the Banded Barb

Barbus lateristriga C. et Val. (1842)

Von Wilhelm Schreitmüller, Frankfurt a. M., „Isis“-München.

with 4 sketches by the author.

Professor Dr. Duncker. Hamburg, makes the following statements about this Indian barb, which was first imported from India by Julius Reichelt (+), Berlin, in 1905, in his work „Die Fische der malayischen Halbinsel“ (The Fish of the Malayan Peninsula), page 177, under number 335: „... *Barbus lateristriga* Cuv. et Val., Sei. Mus., No. 1290, 1312: Vicinity of Kuala Lumpur Jelai Uungli-Bach), Hbg. Mus. No. 8439: Kuala- Jelai-Steindachner p. 1 o: Singapore, Selita. In flowing waters. Skilled swimmers who slip under stones when pursued. Not very common. (Fig. 1.)

This is all he reports about this fish. Corresponding to Prof. Dr. Dunker's statement that these barbs often stay under stones, I set up a tank (80x40x35 cm large) for my „lateristriga“ several years ago (in May). On a 4 cm high layer of sand, I placed egg-sized stones, covering half of the bottom area, and then some flat, hollow, larger stones under which the animals could hide. I planted the tank densely with *Vallisneria*, *Sagittaria natans*, and *Elodea* dense towards the window and on the sides. The water level was 25 cm and I kept the water temperature constantly at 26-28°C. In the first period after placing the animals in the tank, they were almost never to be seen, they were extremely shy and mostly stayed under the stones. I deliberately did not feed the fish for the first four days to stimulate their appetite, thus forcing them to leave their hiding places. On the fifth day, as I had no other food available at the moment, I put a number of Cyclops into the tank. These, introduced into the latter, sank to the bottom like a small cloud, to gradually spread out here. The barbs did not react at all to this food! Towards the evening of the same day, I tried it with small earthworms, which I threw directly in front of the hollow stones, and lo and behold, the barbs came swimming jerkily, twitching with their pectoral and ventral fins, and devoured the worms with great greed. But as soon as there were no more worms,

1) It is possible that they have eaten the Cyclops that have entered their hiding places. D. Verf.

they disappeared under the stones just as quickly as they had come. This went on for about eight days. One day, the sun shone again after a long time, probably lured out by this, the barbs now showed themselves as well. They stood close to the side of the tank facing the window, between the glass pane and the plants, and continuously performed the twitching movements with their fins, which are characteristic of barbs. If I suddenly approached the tank, they shot under the stones with great speed and could no longer be persuaded to leave their hiding places. For this reason, I later removed the hollow stones so that the fish were always visible.

Barbus lateristriga Cuv. et Val. (1842) is therefore very shy at least at the beginning - later the animal becomes more trusting, but never to the extent that one is used to from other barb species. As food, these fish - since they grow quite large - (up to 15 cm in the aquarium, up to 30 cm in the wild) should be given food that is as large and nutritious as possible. Small earthworms, enchytraea, mosquito larvae of all kinds, amphipods, water crustaceans, smooth caterpillars, flies, small fish (guppy fry, etc.) - and *Piscidin* 00 are definitely preferred. Plant based food is also a necessity for these barbs, all types of algae (except „thread algae“) are readily taken, and I have also seen them eat tender, fresh and decaying plant parts. They also eat duckweed from the water surface. Scrapings of lean, raw eat or finely ground, cooked calf's heart are also not despised. Moths, flies and fresh ant pupae thrown on the water are also readily accepted, especially on sunny, warm days such were snatched and consumed in a flash. On cloudy, rainy days, these fish appear quite sluggish and dull, only performing the typical fin twitch, they stand in the plants and take only moderate or no food at all. With increasing growth and age, these barbs become correspondingly more sluggish and lazy. Often they do not move from the spot for half a day and show little movement, while as juveniles up to 8 cm long they swim around quite lively, chasing and teasing each other.

Returning to the immediate postwar situation of Gotha's aquarists: if there was any positive outcome of Nazi rule, it was the realization that noble ideas and goals gain strength only through unity in the face of evil. The remnants of Gotha's three aquarium and terrarium societies had come to understand this. During the twelve years of Hitler's regime, they had partly gone underground, partly adapted, and partly been suppressed. Their distinct club cultures had been destroyed, and former rivalries had become meaningless. Like shipwrecked sailors from three once-hostile frigates, cast ashore on a common island and forced to struggle together for survival, Gotha's vivarium keepers united after the war. They pooled their finest qualities and experiences—resources that had already sustained them through the Great Depression and the First World War. Initially, the club leaders sought, unsuccessfully, to obtain official reinstatement of their associations and open-air aquariums through the municipal cultural office. Gustav Schubert undertook this effort for the Danio Club. Meanwhile, Kurt Koch gathered a group of young aquarists around him, inspiring them with enthusiasm for the hobby. Former members of all three clubs reconciled and began meeting informally in 1946 and 1947.

Some members of the Danio Club sought cooperation with Gotha's scientific institutions to consolidate remaining resources. On 30 December 1948, the active member Erich Veit wrote to the city's cultural office proposing collaboration with the local natural history museum. He suggested installing aquariums and terrariums for native small animals, to be maintained by club members, and even proposed the establishment of a small zoological garden on the bombed-out Danio site. Unfortunately, no documents survive regarding the city's response.

Gotha, 30. Dezember 1948. 1

An das Kulturamt
der Stadt Gotha.
Betrifft: Zusammenarbeit des Naturkundlichen Heimat-
museums mit den Aquarienfrenden.

Die Aquarienfrenden vom früheren Verein Danio verfolgen ein ähnliches Ziel wie das Heimatmuseum. Sie wollen ebenfalls in der Bevölkerung naturwissen-
schaftliche Kenntnisse verbreiten und Liebe und Ver-
ständnis zur heimischen Tier- und Pflanzenwelt
erwecken. Ein Zusammenarbeiten mit ihnen ist
daraus im Interesse des Heimatmuseums nicht nur
möglich sondern sogar sehr erwünscht. Ich würde
es sehr begrüßen, wenn von Aquarienfrenden
mehrere Aquarien und Terrarien im Heimatmu-
seum fachgemäß eingerichtet und nach Möglichkeit
auch gepflegt würden. Vier Behälter sind schon
vorhanden: ein ziemlich großer Glaskasten für
Fische und drei kleinere für Landtiere. Die Beschaf-
fung noch einiger Aquarien und Terrarien sowie
Raupenzuchtkästen seitens des Heimatmuseums
dürfte möglich sein. Aufgestellt werden könnten diese
Lichtgeräte in den Fenstern. Fachgemäße Einrichtung
und Besetzung mit einheimischen Tieren und Pflan-
zen wäre dann Sache der Vereinigung. Es brauchen
keine selteneren Tiere zu sein, die gezeigt würden.
Im Gegenteil: gerade die häufigen Kleintiere sind
den meisten Besuchern noch unbekannt und werden
gern betrachtet. Ich denke also besonders an Stichlinge,
Blitzeln, vielleicht auch Bitterlinge, die vorzuführen
wären, weiter Forelse, Muscheln, Taumelkäfer,
Gelbrand, Libellenlarven, Wasserläufer, Kam-
molch, von Landtieren Feueralamander, Ringel-
natter, Blindschleiche, Eidechsen, die verschiedenen
Frösche.

Eine gute Ergänzung würde es dann sein, wenn vom
Danio wieder der Kleintierzoo eingerichtet würde

First page of the letter from Erich Veit, written on behalf of the Danio Society to the Gotha municipal cultural ad-
ministration

mit Tieren wie etwa Wildschwein, Reh, Igel und natürlich auch in größeren Freilandbehältern Fische und Kriechtiere. Plakate könnten im Heimatmuseum ebenso wie im Garten am Seeberge auf die beiderseitigen Ausstellungen hinweisen und so Naturfreunde zu weiteren Besuchen anregen.

Der Vereinigung müßte als Versammlungsraum unser Sitzungs-Zimmer zur Verfügung stehen. Ebenso könnte an eine Ausleihung einschlägiger Schriftwerke gedacht werden.

Sehr wünschenswert wäre es auch, daß in den Schulen Aquarien und Terrarien eingerichtet würden. Die Mitglieder des Danio müßten dann unter den Schülern Jünger ihrer edlen Betätigung heranziehen, die diese Tierbehälter pflegten und warteten. Auch dadurch würde Naturliebe, Naturverständnis und Naturkenntnis erweckt und die Vereinigung der Aquarienfrende brauchte keine Sorge um Nachwuchs zu haben.

Veit.

Nachschrift: Nach unseren Erfahrungen im Sommer 1948 erregen lebende Tiere das größte Interesse der Besucher. Andererseits erfordert ihre Beschaffung und Pflege doch ziemlichem Zeitaufwand, der die Kräfte des Heimatmuseums stark belastet.

Veit.

Gotha, December 30, 1948.

To the Cultural Office
of the City of Gotha.

Subject: Collaboration of the Local History
Museum with the Aquarium Enthusiasts

The aquarium enthusiasts from the former Danio association pursue a similar goal to the local history museum. They also want to spread scientific knowledge in the population and awaken love and understanding for the local animal and plant world. A collaboration with them is therefore in the interest of the local history museum, not only possible but even very desirable. I would very much welcome it if several aquariums and terrariums were professionally set up and, if possible, also maintained in the local history museum by aquarium enthusiasts. Four containers are already available: a fairly large glass box for fish and three smaller ones for land animals. The procurement of some more aquariums and terrariums as well as caterpillar breeding boxes by the local history museum should be possible. These breeding devices could be placed in the windows. Professional furnishing and stocking with native animals and plants would then be the responsibility of the association. It does not need to be rare animals that are shown. On the contrary: it is precisely the common small animals that are still unknown to most visitors and are gladly observed. So I am thinking especially of loaches, minnows, perhaps also bitterlings, which would be presented; further crabs, mussels, whirligig beetles, dragonfly larvae, water striders, newts, from land animals fire salamanders, grass snakes, slowworms, lizards, the various frogs.

It would then be a good addition if the small animal zoo were set up again by Danio with animals such as wild boar, deer,

hedgehog, and, of course, fish and amphibians in larger outdoor tanks. Cockatoos could point out the reciprocal exhibitions in the local history museum as well as in the garden on the Seeberg, thus encouraging nature lovers to visit again. Our meeting room should be available to the association as a meeting room. Likewise, consideration could be given to lending relevant written works.

It would also be very desirable for aquariums and terrariums to be set up in schools. The members of Danio would then have to attract followers of their noble activity from among the students who care for and maintain these animal containers. This would also awaken love of nature, understanding of nature and knowledge of nature, and the . association of aquarium enthusiasts would not have to worry about successors.

Veis.

Postscript: According to our experiences in the summer of 1948, living animals arouse the greatest interest among visitors. On the other hand, their procurement and care requires a considerable amount of time, which places a heavy burden on the local history museum.

Veis.

Before the war, each club had maintained its own archive—specialist literature, photographs, specimens, and records—within the small buildings of their open-air aquariums. Most of these were destroyed by bombing. Consequently, only a few scattered documents and images remain. One relic did survive: a pennant attesting to the Gotha “Verein für Aquarien- & volkstümliche Naturkunde” membership in the umbrella organization VDA since its founding. This membership could only be reactivated much later, after German reunification in 1990.



The pennant from the founding years, documenting Gotha's membership in the VDA, survived the destruction of the war



Reverse side of this pennant

Ultimately, the Kulturbund provided an organizational home. The Gotha group registered as the Verein für Aquarien- & volkstümliche Naturkunde” (Working Group for Aquaristics and Terraristics). Leadership fell to the most experienced, knowledgeable, and active member: Kurt Koch. Regular club evenings resumed, featuring ambitious topics. To demonstrate that the war had not extinguished their beloved pursuit, the newly formed Gotha association organized the first postwar aquarium and terrarium exhibition on 10 July 1949—before the founding of the GDR on 7 October 1949. The exhibition drew countless citizens of Gotha, for whom aquariums and terrariums offered a welcome and uplifting diversion in austere times. Thirty-two school classes, totaling 965 pupils, attended; more than fifty species were displayed—an extraordinary achievement under such conditions. History seemed to repeat itself: as in the 1920s, the proceeds enabled the restoration of the Danio site, whose open-air aquarium had been destroyed by bombing.



The first membership card of the Aquarium and Terrarium Group within the Natural Sciences Section of the Kulturbund Gotha



Membership card translated with notegpt.io.

Because the Danio grounds were the easiest to rehabilitate compared to the other sites at Uelleber Ried and the Seven Ponds, all efforts from 1949 onward were concentrated there. Kurt Koch had already attempted to secure protected status for the site through the cultural office, albeit unsuccessfully. A group of young aquarists initially tried to begin restoration but failed without the support of experienced members who had established the site a quarter century earlier. Eventually, the city administration requested that the aquarists, under Koch's guidance, make the grounds accessible again, recognizing its potential as a recreational space. With virtually no financial resources available, the burden fell once more upon the members' physical labor and personal dedication.

The rubble field first had to be fenced, though timber was scarce. Somehow, it was accomplished. Filling bomb craters with earth, clearing debris, and repairing ponds constituted a Herculean task. Paths were laid out anew, surfaces leveled, drainage installed, and trees and shrubs replanted. The greatest concern, however, was the destruction of buildings, for materials were almost nonexistent—priority was naturally given to housing reconstruction. In this phase of scarcity, the ingenuity, improvisation, and self-reliance that would later become hallmarks of East German aquarists began to flourish. Cement was procured through unofficial channels; iron parts and pipes were salvaged from the ruins of Gotha's airfield. Even nails, screws, and wire mesh were collected and reused. I recall from my grandfather how old rusted nails were straightened on a steel block and painstakingly cleaned—each one individually—a laborious lesson from my childhood.

In total, 14,500 hours of labor were invested—before the later establishment of the GDR’s “Nationales Aufbauwerk” (National Reconstruction Work), which called for voluntary, unpaid contributions from the population. In the 1960s, I participated as a schoolboy, derusting and repainting benches and fences. Yet what Gotha’s aquarists achieved on the Danio site far exceeded such efforts. They transported 35 tons of natural stone to rebuild foundations. All of this was done in their spare time; in the postwar years, every worker was needed in factories, and unemployment was virtually nonexistent due to the immense loss of life.



No monetary compensation was given for the reconstruction work; instead, certificates such as these were awarded within the framework of the so-called “National Reconstruction Work”

CERTIFICATE

The Gotha Working Group

Special Interest Group for Aquariums and Terrariums

has within the framework of the competition

Nature and Homeland Enthusiasts Collaborate in
Shaping Our Socialist Homeland

to support the National Reconstruction Program

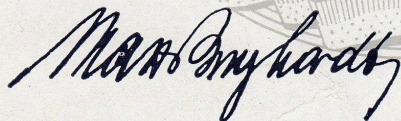
in the Seven-Year Plan

for 2,170 DM worth of

values created in collaborative work and receives this certificate for it.

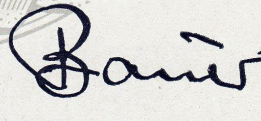
Berlin, the January 27, 1961 1960

GERMAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION



(Prof. Max Burghardt)

President



(Herbert Bauer)

Chairman of the Commission Nature and
Homeland Enthusiasts of the Presidium
Council

(31) BmG 036/60 1,5

Zum Geleit

Der Heimattiergarten am Kleinen Seeberg ist in den letzten Jahren immer mehr zu einem Erholungszentrum der Stadt Gotha geworden. Die Anlage ist heute eine der gepflegtesten Ziergärten des Bezirkes Erfurt. Durch den unermüdlichen Einsatz unserer Bürger, die im Nationalen Aufbauwerk viele tausende von Stunden mit Hand anlegten, wurde aus der von amerikanischen Terrorbomben zerschlagenen und zerwühlten Anlage die gepflegten Heimstätten der zahlreichen Gäste aus dem Tier- und Pflanzenreich.

Noch sind wir bei diesem Aufbauwerk des Tiergartens nicht am Ende, schöner und interessanter soll in den nächsten Jahren der Heimattiergarten sich seinen Besuchern zeigen.

Ich möchte an dieser Stelle den vielen tausenden von Gothaer Bürgern für ihre vorbildliche Einsatzfreudigkeit danken und spreche dabei die Erwartung an unsere Besucher aus, daß sie diese Arbeit ehren, indem sie bei ihrem Rundgang Tieren und Pflanzen die schonendste Behandlung zuteil werden lassen.

WENK, BÜRGERMEISTER

With escort

In recent years, the local zoo at Kleiner Seeberg has increasingly become a recreational center for the city of Gotha. Today, the park is one of the best-maintained ornamental gardens in the Erfurt district. Through the tireless efforts of our citizens, who contributed many thousands of hours in the National Reconstruction Effort, the park, which was destroyed and devastated by American terror bombers, became the well-maintained home of numerous guests from the animal and plant kingdom.

We are not yet at the end of this reconstruction effort of the zoo; in the coming years, the local zoo will present itself to its visitors in a more beautiful and interesting way.

At this point, I would like to thank the many thousands of Gotha citizens for their exemplary dedication, and I express the expectation to our visitors that they honor this work by treating animals and plants with the utmost care during their tour.

WENK, MAYOR

AUS DER GESCHICHTE DES HEIMATTIERGARTENS GOTHA

Die Entwicklung des Heimattiergartens reicht bis in das Jahr 1926 zurück. Zu dieser Zeit gingen die Freunde des Vereins für Aquarien- und volkstümliche Naturkunde »Zierfischfreunde« daran, aus einer baum- und strauchlosen, sumpfigen Niederung am Südhang des Kleinen Seebergs ein Gelände zu schaffen, das ihrer Liebhaberei weiteren Raum geben sollte. In zäher, mühevoller Arbeit entstand im Laufe der Jahre eine saubere, kleine Freilandanlage mit verschiedenen Teichen, Tiergehegen, Aquarien und Terrarien.

Schon um diese Zeit erfreute sich das »Danio«-Gelände eines sehr regen Zuspruches.

Durch Kriegseinwirkungen wurde in kurzer Zeit zerstört, was mühevoll geschaffen.

Abermals versuchten es beherzte Männer mit viel Liebe und wenig Material. Mit Unterstützung des Rates der Stadt Gotha, verschiedener Betriebe, Schulen, Institutionen und von vielen freiwilligen Helfern gelang der Aufbau und die zweimalige Erweiterung der Anlage bis zum heutigen Stand.

Am 6. Juni 1954 wurde das Gelände als »Heimattiergarten der Stadt Gotha« eröffnet.

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE GOTHA LOCAL ZOO

The development of the local animal garden dates back to 1926. At that time, the friends of the association for aquariums and popular natural history, the "Zierfischfreunde" (Ornamental Fish Friends), set about creating a site from a tree- and shrub-less, swampy towland on the southern slope of the Kleiner Seeberg, which was to give their hobby more space. Over the years, a clean, small open-air facility with various ponds, animal enclosures, aquariums and terrariums was created in tenacious, laborious work.

Even at this time, the "Danio" site enjoyed a great deal of popularity.

War damage quickly destroyed what had been painstakingly created.

Once again, courageous men tried with much love and little material. With the support of the Gotha City Council, various companies, schools, institutions and many volunteers, the facility was rebuilt and expanded twice to its present state. On June 6, 1954, the site was opened as the "Local Animal Garden of the City of Gotha."

On 6 June 1954, the Danio site was reopened to the public under the name “Heimattiergarten Gotha.” Kurt Koch, who had carried the main burden of organization and labor, delivered the opening address, declaring: “Whoever loves nature also loves their homeland and peace; whoever loves their homeland is prepared to struggle and to make sacrifices.” These words were not bellicose, but reflective of a time marked by rationing, food stamps (which persisted in Gotha into the late 1950s), and pervasive scarcity. Everything had to be fought for; much more effort was required than in ordinary times. Those who devote such effort to a hobby do so with true conviction—and so did Gotha’s aquarists. Even after the opening, they contributed an additional 18,120 hours of labor.



Admission ticket for the Gotha Heimattiergarten, for adults and for children



Although I was already active in the zoo youth club, I always purchased and collected a ticket to support the zoo; the price was negligible

Geleistete Arbeitsstunden im Aquarium

Oktober 1961

vom 30. 9 - 31. 10. 1961

174.

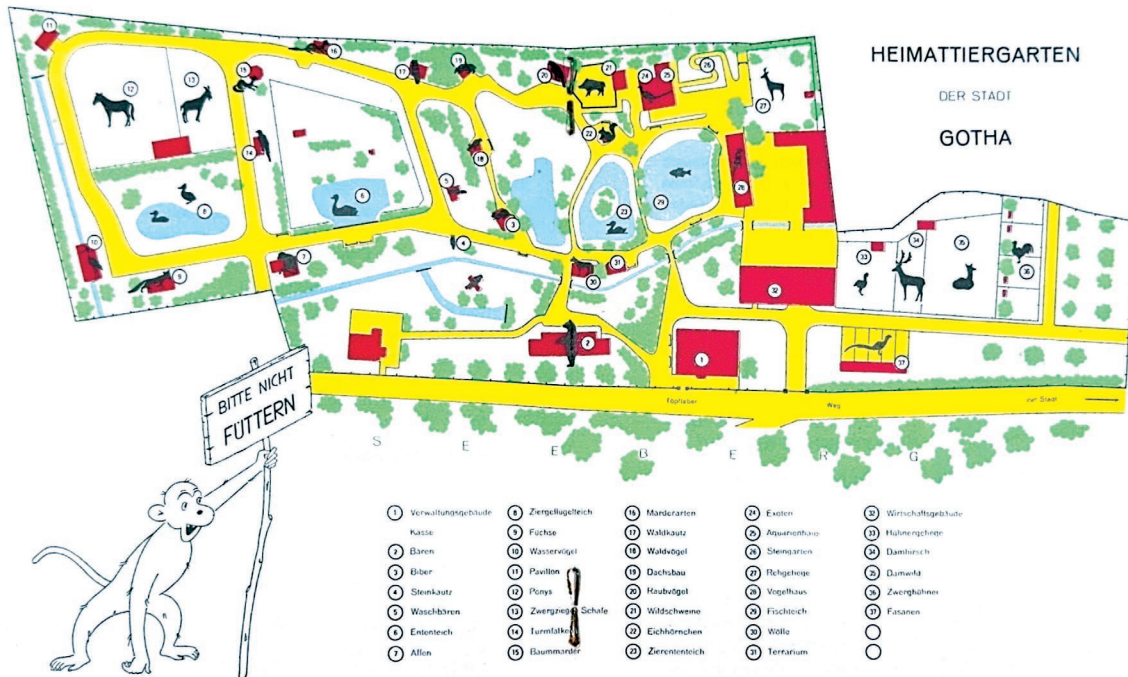
vom 17. August 60. - 31. 10. 61. 4016

	Gelohnte Stunden	Oktober	Gesamt Stunden	Stundeinheiten		Gelohnte Stunden	Wörter	Gesamt Stunden	
✓ Kehl ^{Haus}	44	—	44	M	✓ Widmann ^{lli}	70	—	70	M
✓ Amberger ^{Fisch}	365	27	392	M.B.S.	✓ Bessert ^{Stahm}	45	—	45	M
✓ Fuchs	955	62	1017	M.B.S.G.	✓ Kostler	5	—	5	
✓ Fuchs ^{Heim}	48	—	48	M.	✓ Möller ^{Wald}	3	—	3	
✓ Heinze ^{Alt}	3	—	3		✓ Langlotz	3	—	3	
✓ Alrbig ^{Gast}	319	22	341	M.B.S.	✓ Pfaff ^{Waldweg}	74	5	79	M
✓ Funke	5	—	5		✓ Maacke ^{Haus}	48	—	48	M
✓ Koch ^{Haus}	10	—	10		✓ Cott	6	—	6	
✓ Lephe ^{Haus}	222	25	247	M.B.	✓ Spieß	30	—	30	M
✓ Liebau ^{Pfaff}	56	—	56	M.	✓ Dingelstadt	6	—	6	
✓ Lundershausen ^{Lithgen}	106	2	108	M.	✓ Wagner ^{Enrain}	109	—	109	M
✓ Möller ^{Haus}	55	—	55	M.	✓ " " ^{Haus}	21	—	21	M
✓ Walter ^{Haus}	287	—	287	M.B.	✓ Säuberlich ^{Gast}	15	4	19	
✓ " " ^{Waldweg}	14	—	14		✓ Gessert ^{Hollern}	7	—	7	
✓ " " ^{Monikow}	3	—	3		✓ Hotzel ^{Haus}	6	—	6	
✓ Werner ^{Jochheim}	21	7	28	M.	Langensabner		174		
✓ Gessert ^{Haus}	404	5	409	M.B.S.		3772	4016		
✓ Stengler ^{Haus}	69	7	76	M.					
✓ Feioller ^{Pfaff}	207	8	215	M.B.					
✓ Kreck ^{Pfaff}	47	—	47	M.					
✓ Höttnner ^{Haus}	84	—	84	M.					

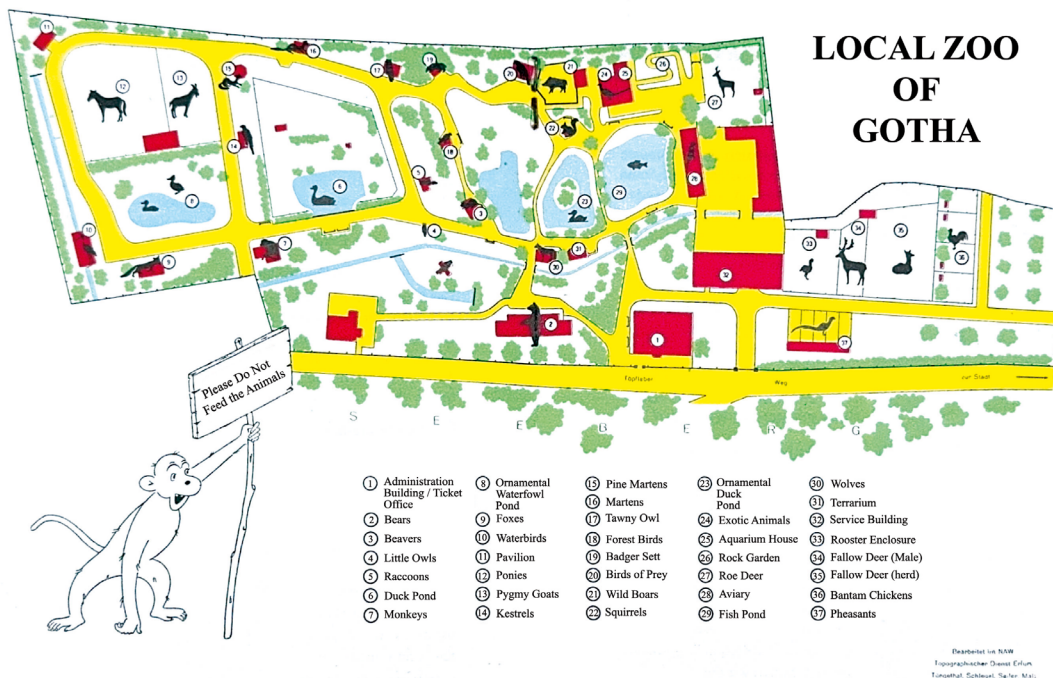
3946

Within the association, every hour of labor on the Danio grounds was meticulously recorded; here is an overview from 1961

Yet the increasingly species-rich Heimattiergarten (little Zoo) could no longer be maintained by the hobbyists alone. Full-time staff provided by the city became necessary. Although the association was granted a consultative role in the facility's development, the sacrifices of its members went largely unrecognized once the site became municipal property. The socialist state assumed control, shaping and managing it according to its principles under a politically approved director. During the 1950s, the aquarists still participated actively, but their involvement gradually diminished.



Site plan of the Gotha Heimattiergarten

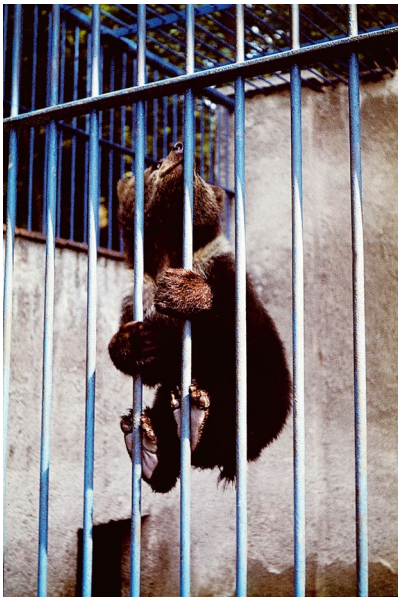


Site plan translated using notegpt.io.

A guidebook to the “Heimattiergarten der Stadt Gotha am Seeberg” records the animals on display, mentioning only in passing the site’s origins as the Danio Club grounds. For a modest entrance fee—0.40 GDR marks for adults, 0.20 for children—visitors entered and were immediately captivated by the bear enclosure. Brown bears were kept in Gotha until 2025, breeding almost annually; their playful cubs delighted visitors, sometimes even escaping to sit atop the enclosure—an unimaginable scenario today.



Title page of the zoo guidebook available for purchase at the entrance



In the 1960s and 1970s, I photographed many animals in the Gotha Heimattiergarten; here are some examples: a young brown bear, *Ursus arctos*, climbs the bars of the bear enclosure

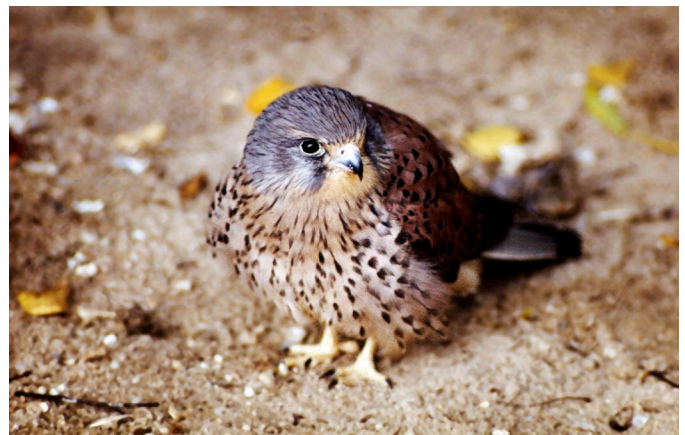


The bear has reached the roof of the enclosure and is now roaming freely about the zoo

In modest enclosures built with postwar means, visitors could observe native wildlife, domestic animals, and a few exotic species—birds of prey, mustelids, waterfowl, gallinaceous birds, and ungulates. Particularly popular was the enclosure for rhesus macaques, *Macaca mulatta*, where young were regularly seen. Water installations for nutria and ponds for fish and waterfowl were also noteworthy. The former club building, hastily rebuilt and unheated, housed aviaries for budgerigars, *Melopsittacus undulatus*, and cockatiels, *Nymphicus hollandicus*. There was also a small aquarium house—a corridor lined with tanks and, at its end, a large terrarium for European tortoises. Heated by steam pipes from a coal stove that had to burn continuously in winter, it exuded a damp, slightly musty atmosphere that I loved dearly.



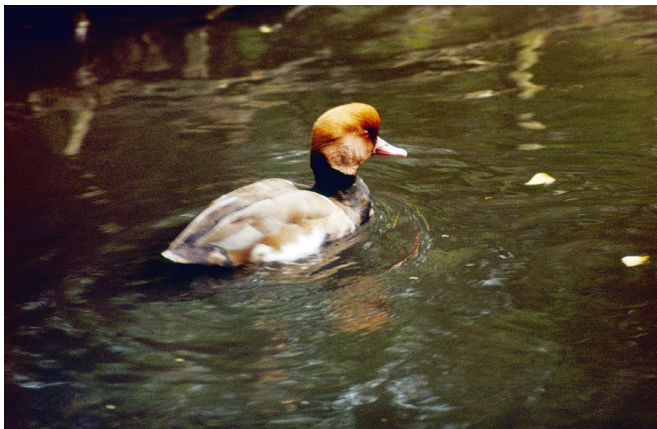
Even the rare western marsh harriers, *Circus aeruginosus*, were exhibited



Common kestrels, *Falco tinnunculus*, were provided with a spacious and well-designed aviary



Red kites, *Milvus milvus*, could be heard from afar with their plaintive, melancholy calls



Red-crested pochards, *Netta rufina*, were the most lively inhabitants of the pond that housed many species of dabbling and diving ducks



Ferruginous duck, *Aythya nyroca*, on the duck pond



In the so-called pheasantry, numerous species and breeds of gallinaceous birds thrived alongside the pheasants



The domesticated form of the Muscovy duck, *Cairina moschata*, known as the Muscovy or Barbary duck, was also kept among the domestic animals



Among European wild sheep, the mouflon, *Ovis orientalis musimon*, held a permanent place in the Heimattiergarten and bred successfully



Among domesticated cattle, the hornless-bred variety of yaks, *Bos mutus*, was particularly rare and highly prized



A very darkly colored Eurasian red squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*



A particular crowd favorite was the enclosure of the rhesus macaques, *Macaca mulatta*, where charming young animals could regularly be observed

The Gotha Heimattiergarten remained largely unchanged until the late 1970s. The aquarium house was later closed to the public without clear reason. As a member of the zoo youth club, I cared for the remaining fish, amphibians, and reptiles as best I could under the circumstances. New enclosures were added—for Arctic foxes, raccoon dogs, and dingoes—and even pumas, lynxes, and eventually Siberian tigers were exhibited, often aging animals from circuses. Some renovations were well executed: the wolf enclosure became a porcupine exhibit, and a former pasture was converted into a habitat for hornless yaks.

sucher des Heimattiergartens erfreuen sich immer wieder am flinken und gewandten Spiel dieses unermüdlichen Kletterers. Schauen wir uns weiter um, so sehen wir den

23 Zierententeich

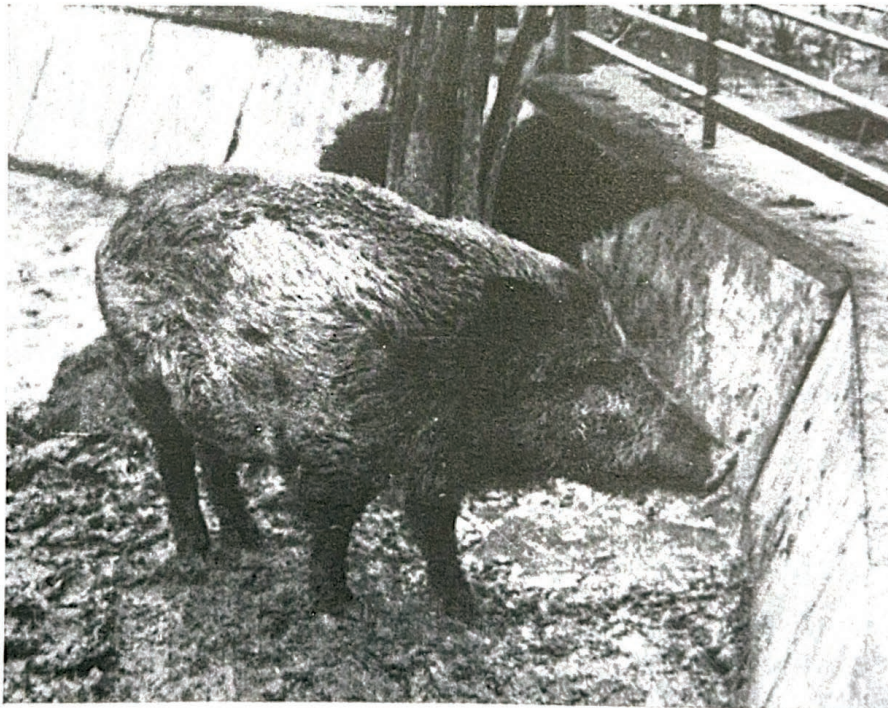
Hier fühlen sich neben unserem heimischen Wassergeflügel die Enten, Wasserhühner, auch Exoten u. a., die schön gefärbten Mandarinenten wohl und beleben durch ihre brillanten Farben das bunte Treiben auf dem Teich noch mehr. Verlassen wir diesen und wenden uns auf dem Hauptweg nach links, so erblicken wir die

24 Exoten.

Blicken wir nach rechts, so finden wir in unmittelbarer Nähe das

25 Aquarienhaus.

Hier wird versucht, den Betrachter die Welt im Wasser darzustellen. Ge-



12

In the site plan, position 25 designates the aquarium house

pfliegte Becken mit heimischen Kaltwasserfischen sowie mit tropischen Warmwasserfischen wechseln in einer bunten Reihenfolge am Auge des Beschauers vorüber. Für die Freunde der Botanik schließt sich rechts ein

26 Steingarten

an, der zum Verweilen einlädt. Im Weitergehen stehen wir vor dem Gehege der

27 Rehe (*Capreolus capreolus*).

Das Reh bevorzugt unterholzreiche Waldungen in Europa und Asien. Als Äsung dienen ihm Kräuter, Blätter und junge Sproßlinge von Laubbäumen sowie junges Getreide. Im danebenstehenden

28 Vogelhaus

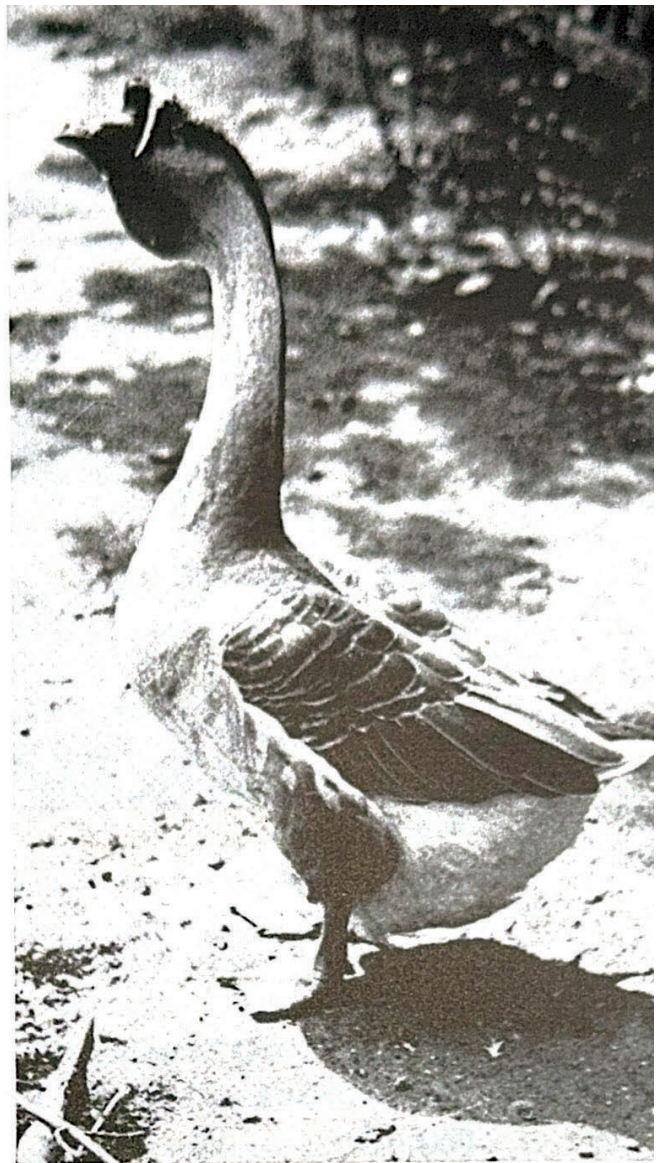
hören wir einheimische und ausländische Vögel mit ihren mannigfachen Stimmen. In bunter, farbenprächtiger Gewandung zeigen sich verschiedene Bewohner des Vogelhauses dem Besucher. Aus dem Hause heraustretend, werfen wir einen Blick über die Hecke auf den

29 Fischteich.

Wir ergötzen uns am Spiel der Goldorfen und der Rottfedern, die in Schwärmen oder einzeln munter das Wasser zerteilen und zwischen Wasserpest und anderen Pflanzen dahineilen. Die kleine Brücke lassen wir jetzt links liegen und begeben uns zum

30 Wolfswinger (*Canis lupus*)

Dieses hundartige Raubtier ist fast über den ganzen Norden der Erde verbreitet. Es schließt sich im Winter zu Rudeln zusammen und reißt Wild-



visitors to the local zoo are always delighted by the nimble and skillful play of this tireless climber. As we continue to look around, we see the

23 Ornamental Duck Pond

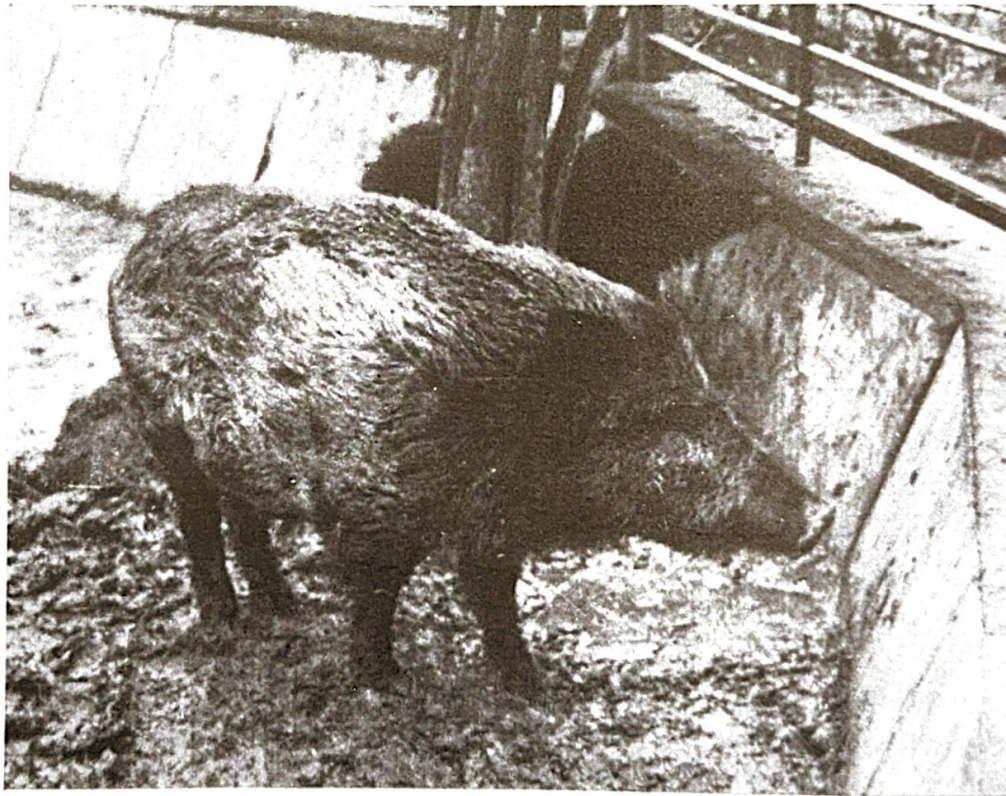
Here, in addition to our native waterfowl, ducks, moorhens, and other exotic species, including the beautifully colored mandarin ducks, feel at home and further enliven the colorful activity on the pond with their brilliant colors. Leaving this behind and turning left on the main path, we see the

24 Exotic Animals

If we look to the right, we find the

25 Aquarium House

Here, an attempt is made to present the world in the water to the viewer.



12

Well-maintained tanks—housing both native cold-water fish and tropical warm-water fish—pass before the viewer's eyes in a colorful succession. For botany enthusiasts, a section opens up to the right

26 **Rock garden**

that invites you to linger. As we continue, we stand in front of the enclosure of the

27 **Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)**

The roe deer prefers undergrowth-rich forests in Europe and Asia. Herbs, leaves, and young sprouts of deciduous trees, as well as young grain, serve as food. In the next

28 **Aviary**

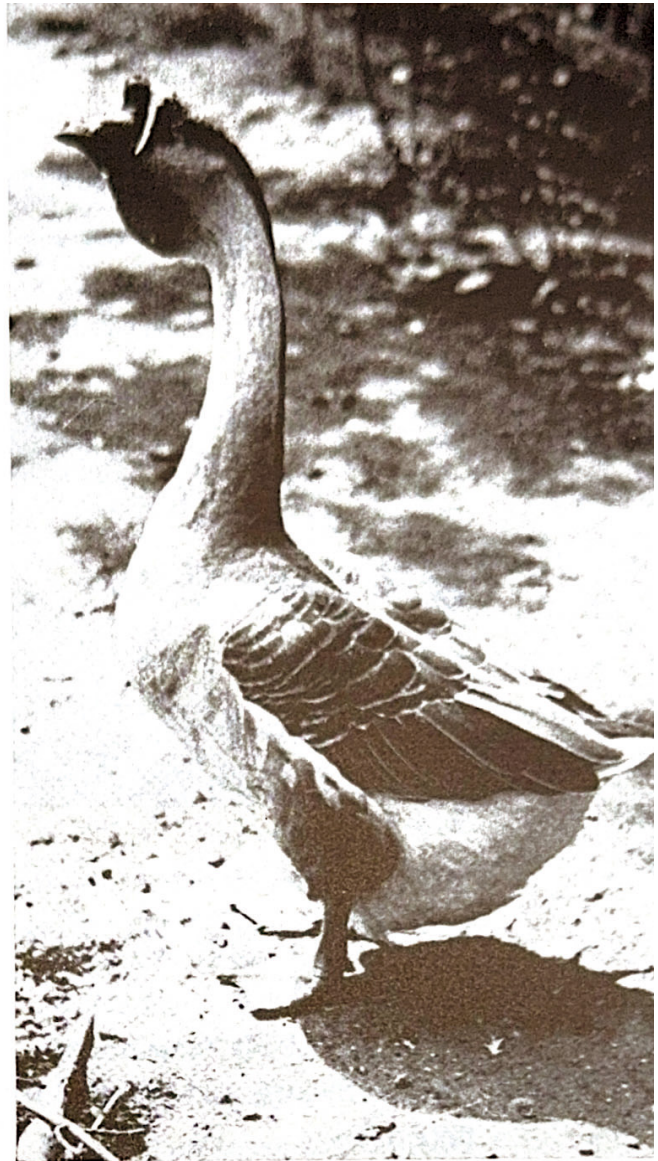
We hear native and foreign birds with their diverse calls. Various inhabitants of the aviary, in their colorful and vibrant plumage, present themselves to the visitor. Stepping out of the aviary, we glance over the hedge at the

29 **Fish pond**

We revel in the play of the gold orfe and the rudd, which lively divide the water in swarms or individually and hurry between waterweed and other plants. We leave the small bridge to our left and go to the

30 **Wolf (*Canis lupus*)**

This dog-like predator is spread almost all over the north of the earth. It gathers in packs in winter and tears wild



Kurt Koch proved an able chairman—now termed “section leader” within the Kulturbund. Records from a club meeting on 17 July 1958 show that he was re-elected, reflecting the renewed emphasis on democratic, collectively accepted decisions after years of dictatorship. Despite ongoing scarcity, Gotha’s aquarists remained optimistic and forward-looking. The same record notes contact with a West German association, enabling an exchange between the GDR journal Aquarien Terrarien and the West German Die Aquarien- und Terrarienzeitschrift. Such exchanges remained possible until the summer of 1961, after which all connections were severed by the GDR leadership.

über Kreuzungen und Schuppenstränge bei
Sabyrinthera.

P.4 Zum Schluss wird noch einiges über die
Dummkuhfahrt besprochen und die Teilneh-
merzahl festgestellt
Gegen 23⁰⁰ Uhr schließt der Freund Koch
die Versammlung.

Schreibführer
H. Mück

Arns Koll
Vorschaftsleiter

Jahreshauptversammlung
Versammlung am 17. 7. 58

Anwesend: 20 Freunde

Beginn: 20⁴⁵

Ende: 23³⁰

Um 20⁴⁵ Uhr eröffnete der Varschaftsleiter die
Versammlung und gibt die Tagesordnung be-
kannt. Sie enthält:

1. Bericht des Varschaftsleiters
2. Bericht des Kassierers
3. Neuwahl
4. Verschiedenes

P.1 Der Varschaftsleiter, Freund Koch, gibt in seinem
Rechnenschaftsbericht über die im vorvergangenen Jahre
geleistete Arbeit einen Überblick.

Er fand in der Anlage des Freundes Leghe eine Guppys-
Kolonie statt. Einige Freunde unserer Varschaft
besuchten die Langensalzaer Varschaft und
brachten wertvolle Anregungen für unsere
Arbeit mit. Auch mit einem westdeutschen

Wenn kam eine Verfindung zustande, folgendem ver-
den Fachzeitschriften ausgetauscht. Zum Schluß geht
der Freund Koch der Hoffnung ausdruck, daß sich
mehr Freunde als bisher an der Ausgestaltung der
Fachzeitschriften beteiligen. Er wünscht der neuen Lei-
tung viel Erfolg für ihre Arbeit und stellt sein Amt
zur Verfügung.

P.2 Freund Leyhe gibt einen kurzen Kassenbericht.
Laut Kartei haben wir 32 Mitglieder.

Die Revisoren bestätigen anschließend
die Richtigkeit der Kassengeschäfte.

P.3 Der Freund Wehner übernimmt als ältestes
Mitglied die Neuwahl. Er entlastet den alten
Vorstand der Fachschaft und bittet um Vorkschla-
ge für die neue Leitung. Die Neuwahl ergab, daß
die gesamte alte Leitung wiedergewählt wurde.

P.4 Der von Weimar zu uns gekommene Freund
Seidler erklärt seinen Beitritt zur Gothauer Fach-
schaft. Gegen 23³⁰ schließt Freund Koch die
Versammlung.

Paul Koll

Schriftführer
H. Maith

Fachschaftsleiter

Versammlung am 21. 8. 58

Anwesend: 10 Freunde

Beginn: 20³⁰

Ende: 22⁰⁰

Der Fachschaftsleiter, Freund Koch, eröffnete
gegen 20³⁰ Uhr die Zusammenkunft und
begrußte die wenigen Anwesenden.

Second page of these minutes, noting the journal exchange between East and West as well as the re-election of Kurt Koch as chairman; Kurt Leyhe is listed as treasurer—he later led the association and ultimately became a venerable elder among Gotha's aquarists

across crossings and hatches bouquets of labryinths.
P.4 Finally, some heretic omnibus rides are discussed,
and the number of Lechnick is determined. At
11:00 pm, Fraused Hood closed the meeting.

Recording Secretary

H. Mick

Grund Kach

Head of the Association

Annual General Meeting 17.7.58

Present: 20 friends

Start: 2045 (8:45 pm)

End: 2230 (11:30 pm)

At 2045 (8:45 pm), the department head opened
the meeting and announced the agenda.

It contains:

1. Report of the department head
2. Report of the treasurer
3. Re-election
4. Miscellaneous

P.1 The department head, Grund Kach, gives an
overview in his report on the work done in the past
year.

A "Chuppy" preview took place on the premises of
the friend Legke. Some members of our department
visited the Langensalza department and brought
valuable suggestions for our work. Also with a West
German a connection came about with Joven, since
then trade journals have been exchanged.

In conclusion, the friend Koch expresses the hope that more reasons than before will participate in the redesign of the evening. He wishes the new Hei-trong much success for their work and introduces his chut.

P.2 Friend Leyha gives a brief correspondent report. According to Karter, we have 32 members. The auditor then confirms the accuracy of the cash transactions.

P.3 The friend Welser, as the oldest member, takes over the new election. He relieves the old board of the department and asks for proposals for the new management. The result was that the entire old board was re-elected.

P.4 The Evenno who came to us from Dermar Zeidler declares his accession to the Gather Fach grinding, around 11:30 pm Erennoch closes the meeting.

Secretary

[Signature]

[Signature]

Head of Department

Meeting on August 21, 1958

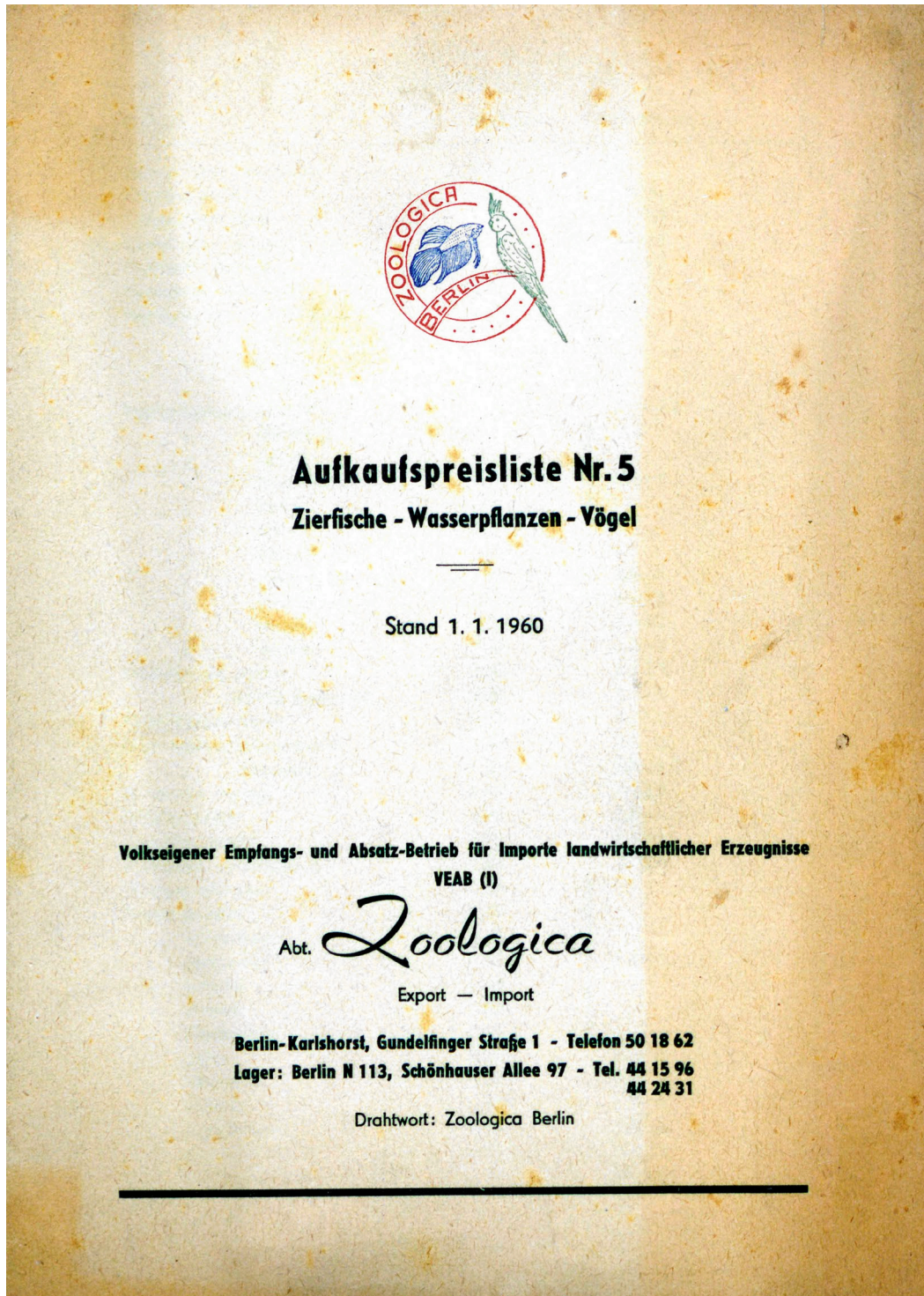
Warm sending: 10 friends

Start: 20:30 (8:30 pm)

End: 22:00 (10:00 pm)

The head of the department, friend Koch, opens the meeting around 8:30 pm and welcomes the few present.

Increasingly, Gotha's aquarists turned to their private breeding activities. Fish breeding flourished, offering lucrative supplementary income by GDR standards. The state wholesale enterprise "Zoologica" in Berlin issued purchase lists to clubs, acquiring young fish for export to Western countries in exchange for hard currency. The GDR mark held little value; foreign currency was essential for acquiring vital goods. Thus, the breeding efforts of aquarists inadvertently contributed to the survival of the socialist state. Further details—along with the fate of the other two open-air aquariums—will be discussed in the next part of this series.



Purchase price list from the GDR's sole zoological wholesale enterprise, "Zoologica"



Purchase Price List No. 5
Ornamental Fish - Aquatic Plants - Birds

As of January 1, 1960

Publicly Owned Receiving and Sales Company for Imports of Agricultural Products VEAB (I)

Abt. *Zoologica*

Export — Import

Berlin-Karlshorst, Gundelfinger Straße 1 - Telefon 50 18 62

**Lager: Berlin N 113, Schönhauser Allee 97 - Tel. 44 15 96
44 24 31**

Drahtwort: Zoologica Berlin

Purchase price list translated using notegpt.io.

Acknowledgments:

My thanks go to my family members (Charly Fuchs), to friends and colleagues in Gotha—especially Uwe Heustock, current chairman of the Gotha Aquarium Society—and to the staff of the Gotha City Archive, Dr. Julia Beez and Dorett Sagner, for granting access to documents, as well as for providing photographs, information, and preserved original artifacts.