



On Some Early Publications of the Boston Aquarium Society. Part Two: The 1931/1932 Show Publication “The Balanced Aquarium and Its Inhabitants.”

By Lee Finley

Note: This article is dedicated to the memory of my friend Jare A. Sausaman (RIP). Jare's work on the history of New World aquarium Societies and their publications is the gold standard of such works. Based on this, and other contributions, MOAPH has named the museum's library in his honor.

In their history of the Boston (Massachusetts) Aquarium Society George and Frieda Meserve (Circa 1964) noted that the society for some time published some pamphlets for their annual shows to help with expenses. These publications sold for 10 cents each and were also supported by some paid advertisements. Three such publications were noted to have been produced between 1931 and 1934. There are indications that copies of the last of these publications were also available in 1935. This will be discussed in Part Four which will be the wrap up of this series.

The first of these publications, which was available in 1931 and 1932, was titled “The Balanced Aquarium and Its Inhabitants” which was written by Walter H. Chute. It was published in a nine by six and a quarter inch stapled spine format. The cover is of a heavier grade of paper than that of the text. The color of the copy at hand, which is marked “Second Printing”, is green. There are three pages of advertisements (not including those on the covers) and five pages of text. For completeness, there are two small ads on the bottom of the last text page, one of which is for the club. Chute when he was the secretary of the club had published an article of the same name in the January 1921 issue of the club publication “The Daphnian” (Finley, 2025). So, it is presumed that the 1931/1932 publication is a reprint of that original article. No copy of this earlier publication is currently available so there is no way to check this. But the “newer” publication does present at least one slight clue in that Chute does reference his earlier 1920 article on live foods which appeared in the 1920 issue of “The Daphnian.” The person in charge of producing this new publication was Eugenia Shorrock, the club's Corresponding Secretary, a very talented aquarist and publicist. She also took charge of later producing two additional similar publications. These will be covered in parts three and four of this series of articles. It should also be noted that at the time of this 1931/1932 publication Chute was in Chicago (Illinois) serving as the Director of the John G. Shedd Aquarium. Shorrock noted this on the cover of the publication.

As to the year of publication of the 1931 pamphlet, it can be noted that in the Home Aquarium Bulletin (HAB) on page 17 of its premier issue (March 1931) stated that “A very interesting pamphlet has just been brought to our attention.” The club show where this book was offered for sale took place from February seventh to the fourteenth, 1931. This publication was noted in HAB to be “The Balanced Aquarium and Its Inhabitants” which was stated to be “... very well written...”. This Chute piece would have been the first of the series of publications that the club produced up through 1935. This brings us to the hard copy at hand, mentioned above, which is noted to be a “Second Printing.” The club’s 1932 annual show was held again in February 1932 (the sixth through the thirteenth) and a pamphlet of the same title was again available for sale but now noted on the cover to be a “Second Printing”. Not only was it available at the show but the club was also advertising it for general sales to the hobby (at the same 10 cent price) in various aquarium publications. For example, see the April 1932 issue of Aquatic Life, page 346. For additional assistance on dating this volume the advertisement inside the front cover makes the following statement: “After March 1st, 1932 see us in our new store at 761 Center Street”. Such secondary information can always be useful as a dating tool. This specific kind of information, in my opinion, is not something that would have been written in the February of 1931 available publication.

With the above in place what follows for your reading pleasure, and the historical record, is a full copy of the 1932 publication. The original copy of this will shortly reside in the MOAPH library.

References and Suggested Reading

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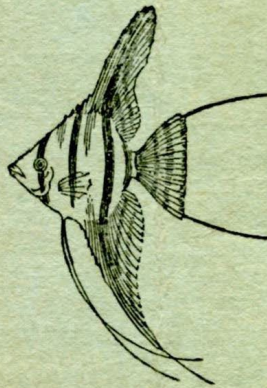
The Balanced Aquarium and Its Inhabitants

By **WALTER H. CHUTE**

Director

JOHN G. SHEDD AQUARIUM,

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The Balanced Aquarium and its Inhabitants

By Walter H. Chute

It is NOT necessary to change the water in your goldfish tank. In fact it is not advisable to do so. It is the sudden change from the temperature of the room to that of the cold water out of the tap that has killed many a gold fish and discouraged many a would-be fancier. Goldfish may be kept in perfect health in what is known to aquarists as a "Balanced" Aquarium for over six months without changing the water, merely adding a small quantity from time to time to replace that lost by evaporation. A "Balanced" Aquarium is one in which there is a sufficient number of growing aquatic plants to furnish the necessary oxygen for the fish to breathe. These plants in turn, in the process of growing, absorb the carbonic acid gas exhaled by the fish, thus keeping the water sweet and pure. This "balance" is helped by the introduction of snails as scavengers. The "Balanced" Aquariums are not only much less trouble to care for than the old-fashioned "globe," but are far more beautiful. The green foliage of the aquatic plants intensifies the bright colors of the fish and when tastefully arranged, the plants themselves make a most attractive bit of water "gardening."

The Best Form of "Aquarium" is a rectangular iron frame tank with slate bottom. These tanks are less liable to break than any other type, and if broken can easily be repaired. They afford greater space for the aquatic plants than any other type. It is advisable to purchase as large an aquarium as possible for the first one. The larger the aquarium, the easier it is to keep in good condition and the more fish it will support. A good size for the home is the fifteen gallon tank, about 24 inches long, 12 inches wide and 14 inches high.

The Most Desirable Aquarium Plants in order of their utility as oxygenators are Sagittaria, Vallisneria, Anacharis, Myriophyllum and Cabomba. Sagittaria and Vallisneria, because of their slow growing and excellent oxygenating qualities, are best of all. Sagittaria is a grasslike, submerged

plant that grows best in subdued light. Strong sunlight has a tendency to turn the leaves of this plant dark green. There are three varieties commonly used in aquaria, Sinensis or Giant, Natans or Common and Subulata or Dwarf. The difference is mostly in the breadth of the leaves. Vallisneria is a propagated form of eel-grass. It grows best with lots of bright light and unlike common eel-grass, it does not die down in Winter.

Anacharis or Elodea, as it is sometimes called, is a very rapid growing plant and an excellent oxygenator. It grows without rooting in the gravel and if left alone will soon fill the top of the aquarium with a tangled mass. As rooted plants like Sagittaria and Vallisneria take a little time to become established after transplanting, it is well, when setting up a new aquarium, to have a bunch or two of Anacharis to supply oxygen while the other plants are getting started. Afterwards, the Anacharis may be kept down by frequent trimming or may be removed altogether.

Myriophyllum and Cabomba are plants frequently offered for sale in bunches at the bird stores. They are very pretty when first put into the aquarium but soon lose their bright colors, unless one happens to have just the right conditions, and even then they are quite apt to grow long and stemmy. Cabomba usually breaks down gradually and fills the tank with bits of floating green.

There are a number of other aquarium plants, frequently used, most of which are more ornamental than useful. Some of the more common are Ludwigia, pretty but apt to lose its leaves; Heteranthera, bright green leaves that are greedily eaten by goldfish; Ceratophyllum, very brittle and liable to break up easily; Fontinalis, a moss like plant frequently found growing on submerged rocks, and several varieties of floating plants. Many of the native plants found growing in the shallow water at the edge of ponds will do well in the aquarium for

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a while but should be removed at the least sign of decomposition.

Having chosen the plants, place in the bottom of the tank, which has been previously well washed and rubbed clean with salt, at least two inches of mixed sand and gravel. The gravel should be cleaned by washing repeatedly in warm water until the water runs off clear. Those plants which have roots should be planted in the gravel one at a time with the roots well spread out. The plants which come bunched together may be planted as purchased, only first remove the bit of tinfoil with which they are bound together. The placing of the plants is more a matter of taste than of rule, except that those plants that like the sun should be placed in back of the Aquarium near the window and generally an open space is left in front so that the fish may have room to swim where they can easily be seen. Also it is a good plan to slope the gravel slightly to the front. This allows the humus and uneaten food to collect in the depression where it can easily be removed. To fill the tank, place a large piece of wrapping paper on the plants and slowly pour the water on this. As the water level in the tank rises, the paper will float on the surface and will prevent the stream of water from disarranging the gravel or uprooting the plants. If any of the plants should be uprooted, plant them again and place a few large pebbles around them to help hold them down. Fill the tank to within two inches of the top.

Fish should not be put into a new tank until it has stood three or four days and the plants have started to grow. It is well, however, to immediately introduce two or three snails for each proposed fish. The best snails are Japanese, Potomacs, Copenhagen or Red, and the Ramshorn. These snails help to keep the tank clean, but must not be depended upon to do all the work. It is best, about once a week, to syphon off a little of the water from the bottom. Use a rubber hose holding the end close to the sand and what dirt has accumulated there will be drawn out with the water. Some aquarists use a glass tube, a few inches longer than the tank is deep, on the end of the hose. This is much easier to guide

over the bottom of the tank and the glass tube may be used, without the hose, as a dip-tube. Replace the water with fresh water of the same temperature.

Do Not Place the Aquarium where It will be in the hot sun all day, if you can help it. A situation where the aquarium receives two hours of sun daily, preferably in the morning, is ideal. If, as sometimes happens, one has two windows to choose from, one of which is too sunny and the other too dark, choose the brighter one. It is an easy matter to regulate the light by means of screens or curtains. With strong light the glass, especially at the back, becomes covered with a thick green growth called algae. This need cause no alarm as long as the algae does not grow on the plants. If this occurs, the light is too strong and the aquarium must be shaded or the algae will choke the plants. If the plants are not affected, clean the glass front by means of a safety-razor blade fastened on the end of a stick. Let the algae remain on the back and ends. It harbors food for the fishes and helps to a certain extent to oxygenate the tank.

In Stocking the Aquarium with fish, care must be taken not to put in too many. A good, safe rule is to allow one inch (body measure) for every gallon of water. For instance, a fifteen gallon aquarium should support five fish three inches long, not counting the tail. It is far better to have too few fish than to have too many. When overcrowded or when the water is contaminated by dead snails or uneaten food, the fish swim around and around at the surface, gasping for air and making a peculiar sound called by some aquarists "clucking." Unless some are removed and the water changed they will soon die.

A common cause of trouble in the aquarium is overfeeding. When obtainable, the live foods described in the 1920 Daphnian, are the best foods for all fishes. The common rice wafer food is practically useless. If you have to depend on dried foods, use ground shrimp or any of the prepared foods advertised in this pamphlet. Don't use the same food all the time. Give the fishes a change now and then. Occasionally they will relish a bit of angleworm or raw fish chopped very fine. Feed once a day

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or every other day and give only what the fish will clean up in ten minutes. If there is any food left at the end of that time, take it out and feed less next time. Don't be afraid of starving them. More fish have been killed by overfeeding than by starvation. Sometimes the water will become slightly cloudy from overfeeding. Stop feeding for a few days and the water will generally clear itself. If it does not, of course it will be necessary to change it.

By following these few hints and by the use of a little common sense, a "balanced" aquarium will support its allotment of gold fish for months in perfect health, with very little effort on the part of the owner. Aquariums should be thoroughly cleansed and replanted at least once a year.

Aquarium fish are generally divided into three groups; Goldfish, Tropical or Exotic Fish and Wild Fish. Perhaps the best known group are the Goldfish. Everyone is familiar with the common goldfish sold by the hundreds in every pet shop in the country. Few realize that these fish are from the same stock as the wonderfully developed fancy varieties. The Japanese and Chinese, centuries ago, realized the possibilities that lay in selective breeding of goldfish and in recent years the fancy has gained a strong foothold in America. We are indebted to the Japanese for the showiest of these remarkable fish. The Japanese Fringetail Goldfish, familiarly known as "Japs," are the result of years of intensive breeding. The body is short and round and the eyes flat. The tail is double as are all the fins except the back or dorsal fin. This fin, sometimes called the "sail" is as high as the body is deep. When viewed from the side, a full grown Jap seems to be two-thirds fins and one-third body.

One of the best known imported Japs was sent by the Japanese government to the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893. After the fair it went to Philadelphia and many of our present day Japs are descended from this fish. The best known of the Chinese fish are the Chinese Calico Telescopes. The two outstanding features of these fish are their remarkable eyes and peculiar coloring. The eyes of a telescope project

from its head somewhat like those of a frog and in a good specimen the eyes alone are as large as all the rest of the head. These fish are covered with irregular blotches of color; reds, yellows, greys, browns, black and blue, the general effect resembling the coloring of calico cloth.

Up to a short time ago, both of the above fish were exported in large numbers from Japan and China. Most of them came to this country and American breeders combined the two and produced the Scaleless Calico Fringetails and Telescopes which they later improved to the present standard, Scaleless Calico Veiltail Telescope. This is a fish with the eyes of a Telescope and the body of a Jap Fringetail, with the tails broadened out. The name scaleless is a misnomer. The fish is really scaled, but the scales are transparent and the body colors show through. This gives a softened effect to the color scheme. Sometimes these fish are jet black and are called Mod. Telescopes. Moor Telescopes, however, are not transparently scaled. When blue predominates on these fish they are considered very valuable and the goal of the American breeder is a solid blue Scaleless Veiltail Telescope. A few solid blues have been produced, but not with proper fins and shape.

Another goldfish variety worthy of special mention is the Lionhead. This fish, said to have originated in Manchuria, is devoid of a back or dorsal fin and when full grown, the head is covered with warty protuberances, somewhat resembling the head of a buffalo or lion.

There are numerous other varieties of goldfish most of which represent different stages of the transformation of the common goldfish to the fancy breeds. Each variety has certain characteristics which are rigidly adhered to. Aquarium societies throughout the country hold competitive exhibitions for goldfish at which the fish are judged by a point system, based on the relative value of the shape of the body, size of fins, color, etc.

In recent years, practically all the fancy goldfish in America have been bred and raised here. There are a few Japs and Lionheads imported but they are not so much in demand as the American bred

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Telescopes and the prices are much higher than before the war. It is reported that with the advent of the American style aquarium in Japan there has been a demand created for the American type fishes and a number of American bred fishes have been exported to Japan.

Tropical fish are gathered from all parts of the world. They are sent to the large dealers in Europe and this country by agents who are continually on the lookout for new species. While not so large and spectacular as the goldfish, they are considered by some to be better aquarium fish because of their smaller size and wonderful colors. It would be difficult to name a color that is not found on some species of tropical fish. Coming, as they do, from warm climates, they must be maintained at an even temperature of 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Colder than this is fatal.

Tropical fish are usually divided into groups according to their breeding habits. The principal groups are the live-bearers, the Egg Droppers, the Egg Layers, the Labyrinth or bubble-nest Builders and the Cichlids. In addition, there are a great many species which, on account of some peculiarity of breeding methods or other characteristics cannot be placed in the larger groups.

The Live-Bearers are the best known and the easiest to breed. The young of these fish are born alive and able to swim at birth. If protected from the parents by a thick growth of plants near the surface of the water, they will grow rapidly on the same food as fed the parents and in a remarkably short time will be ready to breed.

Some familiar Live-Bearers are the Mexican Swordtail, the Guppy or Rainbow Fish, the Platypocilia or Moon fish, the Gambusia or Mosquito fish and the Girardinus. Fish of this group are found only on the American continent.

American breeders have succeeded in interbreeding different species of Live-bearers and the resulting hybrid, unlike most hybrids, are fertile and produce young. Breeding Hybrids is extremely interesting because most of them do not breed true to type, that is, the young do not have the same characteristics as the parents and one

can never tell what new combination of colors and shape the next lot of young will show. Two very striking Hybrids are the Red Helleri and the Black Helleri. The former is bright red with golden stripes and the latter is almost entirely black overlaid with an iridescent green. Both of these fishes, however, bear a large percentage of young true to type.

The next best known group and one of the most popular is the Egg Droppers. Fish of this group are generally of a quiet disposition, very hardy and are rapid swimmers. They drop their eggs while racing wildly about the aquarium. The eggs fall to the bottom and if not devoured by the fish, hatch in two or three days. The best known species are the Danios, of which there are four varieties, the Barbus and the Dace. There are several varieties of Dace found wild in Massachusetts, but of course they are not Tropical varieties.

Perhaps the largest group from the point of varieties is the Egg Laying group. These fish spawn near the surface of the water and the eggs, which adhere to the floating plants, hatch in about two weeks. These fish are rather pugnacious and only specimens of approximately the same size should be kept together. They are represented in the aquarium by the Haplochilus, of which there are 18 varieties, all handsomely colored and all of which are found in Africa or Southern Asia, the Fundulus, 14 varieties, from Africa and America, and the Rivulus, found only on the American continent and sometimes called the American Haplochilus.

The Labyrinth fish were the first tropicals to attract attention as aquarium fish. The first variety to be kept and bred in captivity were the Paradise fish. These little fish were imported from China over fifty years ago and thousands of them have been bred in this country. The Labyrinth fish depends on the atmosphere for its supply of oxygen and frequently comes to the surface for a fresh supply. For this reason they may be kept in a much smaller receptacle than most fish and will live in polluted water where another fish would die.

The male Labyrinth fish builds a nest at the surface of the water, out of bubbles

and, after the female has laid the eggs, he drives her away and takes full charge of the nest and of the young fish until they are able to care for themselves. In addition to the Paradise fish the Labyrinth group includes the Polyacanthus, the Gurnamis and the Fighting Fish.

The Cichlid group are very pugnacious. So much so that, except in the breeding season, even mated pairs must be separated. They are generally larger than most of the tropicals, but have colors equally as vivid. They clean a place on the bottom of the aquarium or on the side of a stone and, after the eggs are deposited there, the parents take turns fanning them. After they hatch, the young are placed in a depression dug in the sand. They are changed to new nests three or four times a day. The parents continue to care for them until they are able to swim and eat freely. Then they must be removed or they will eat their own young. Some of the commonest Cichlids are the Hemichromis, the Acaras, and the Cichlasomas.

Two well known tropicals not included in the above groups are the Haplochromus or Mouth Breeders and the Scalare. The Boston Aquarium Society has adopted the Scalare for the design on its medal.

The female Mouth Breeders take their eggs in the mouth and appear to chew them until hatched. When very young, the baby fish will swim back into the mother's mouth when alarmed.

Tanks containing tropical fish are kept at

an even temperature by electric heaters which may be controlled by an automatic thermostat, or in some cases a small room is kept heated by gas, electricity or other means to keep the proper temperature. During the summer months no artificial heat is necessary and some tropical fish may be bred outdoors in July and August.

American aquarists are beginning to become more and more interested in the wild native fish.

These fish may be kept under much the same conditions as goldfish except that they prefer the water slightly colder. Most of them thrive on the same food as goldfish and what few are carnivorous may be given tiny bits of scraped beef and an occasional earth worm. All wild fish are not suitable for aquarium fish. It is against the law in Massachusetts to keep any kind of food fish in captivity. Those most generally kept are the Sunfish, the Dace, Killiefish, Shiners, Sticklebacks and Darters. Anyone with a net and a little patience can gather a very attractive collection in a short time, in and around the suburbs of Boston.

The list of aquarium fish as given above is as large as practical in an article of this nature, but in all the departments there are many excellent varieties which space does not permit to be mentioned.

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