

# **The Cichlid Chronicles**

**Volume 2 Issue 3**

**Winner of 7 FANS awards**



**PHOTO OF THE MONTH**  
**-Jason Matthews**



**A Look at Lee Nuttall's Central Scene**  
**Natural Habitat in the Aquarium**



## And now a message from our CCY President



### **“Behind every good man is a better woman”-**

As I was speaking to my wonderful Mom on Mother’s day I began to think about all the other women who have made an impact in my life. Obviously my beautiful wife is the foundation and support system of my life. She has been instrumental in getting this club off the ground and helping me make this dream called the CCY a reality. This newsletter you are currently reading would not be possible without her assistance. So I’d like to publicly thank my wife Pamela McLaughlin for her service to the club. And then there is the rest of our CCY family. I mean you take a good look around our meetings and you see such strong and positive women among us. We have natural born leaders in Christina Smith and Elizabeth Bonvillain, a technical wizard in Tonya Kailing, an animal activist in Julie Lovell, a executive level planner and PR manager in Kerry Dilks, an inspirational motivator in Jessica Mell, an abundantly talented crafts maker in Sarah Lockard and well Karen Haas can do it all! I am so proud of the CCY ladies and their impact not only at our club but in the hobby. I think we may find the next Pam Chin or Rachel O’Leary within our very own club. So go ahead CCY ladies and reach for the stars!! This entire month we have been recognizing the amazing women within our club. Let me be the first to stand up say “Thank You!” and give you a round of applause.

On a side note it’s my honor to announce that the CCY newsletter Cichlid Chronicles won 7 FAAS (Federal American Aquarium Society) awards! This is a huge achievement in our first year and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this publication.

This month we have the incredible rock star Rachel O’Leary speaking at our May 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. Rachel is the perfect speaker to help us celebrate the women of the CCY. I hope to see everyone there- I hear Christina, Kerry and Elizabeth may sing a Gun’s and Roses song together..... This should be good!

- Scott McLaughlin



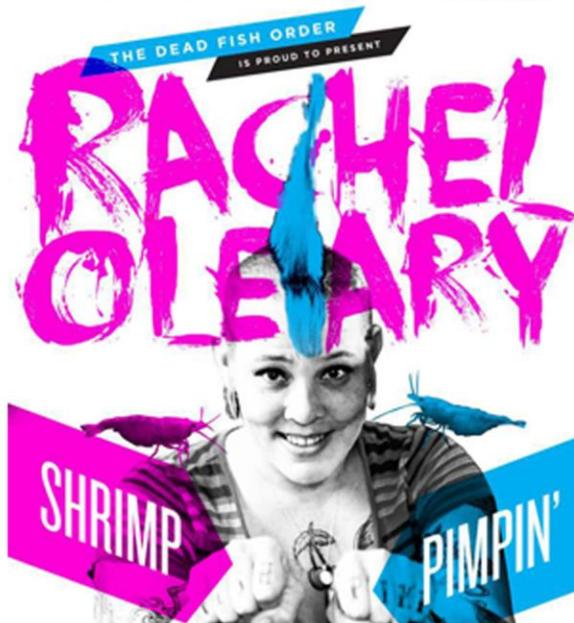
The



**Cichlid Club of York**

PRESENTS

**RACHEL OLEARY**



Saturday  
May, 31st  
2014  
@ 1pm

At the CCY Clubhouse  
50 North East St., Spring Grove,  
Pennsylvania 17362

*You can also catch the CCY...*

May 17, 2014 at the **York Reptile & Pet Expo**

UTZ Arena - York Fairgrounds  
334 Carlisle Ave York, PA 17404

# The Cichlid Circle



## *Interview with Central American Cichlid King Lee Nuttall*

To me there is nothing better than a “correctly” aquascaped tank that represents the natural habitat of a cichlid's origins. I have tried to recreate that in each of my tanks which is why I am such a big fan of the work and tanks of one Lee Nuttall. It is with great pride and honor that I can conduct this interview with Lee as he has inspired me to give my cichlids the very best environment to thrive in. Much like Rusty Wessel and Mo Devlin, Lee Nuttall has been a huge influence on me and this hobby I love so much. Now without further ado, LEE NUTTALL!!





**Lee I would really like to thank you for taking the time to answer these questions for our Cichlid Club of York PA newsletter and to give our readers a better insight into why a natural aquascape is better for your cichlids. First what got you into keeping cichlids and Central cichlids in particular?**

No problem Scott and thanks for giving me the opportunity. I initially first got into fish keeping around 1979 when my dad first bought a 3ft aquarium which would be home to a general population of bread and butter fish. Around the early 80's, I can't remember exactly, My Dad's friend had acquired a pair of *Herichthys carpintis*, wrongly labeled in the UK back then as "Texas Cichlid". These fish had spawned many times, where we had the opportunity to acquire around 8 tiny youngsters to add to the very small community tank. Not knowing what fish they would properly grow up to be, over the months, they grew and dwindled most of the community fish. Although there was much negativity surrounding this new type of fish, I was fascinated by their size, behavior and colour. Unfortunately we had to move the fish on and sell the tank before I could see the full potential that these cichlids display.

A couple of years later, this had prompted me to get my own aquarium. Being only 12 years and excited by my new tank, I quickly fell into the trap of buying incompatible species and overstocking. However, in this chaos, two cichlids had paired and deposited eggs. Due to the aggressive nature of the spawning pair of cichlids, everything sharing the tank had to be removed. Looking through an old copy of Herbert R. Axelrod book, I later found out that they were a *Thorichthys meeki* (Firemouth) pair. Witnessing the bi parental care within a small glass box in your bedroom as a young boy certainly had a lasting effect on me that I still feel today whenever my cichlids spawn.



**What sizes do your tanks range in and how many do you maintain currently?**

Many people have a misconception that I maintain numerous tanks looking at different species I have kept and photographed, but in reality, I only have 4. I have 2 medium sized tanks from 4ft and 5ft and two large tanks which are 8 x 2.5 x 3ft wide and 8 x 2.5 x 4ft wide.

**Do you have a favorite Central American cichlid and if so why?**

It's quite a difficult question, as there are so many different genera's to choose from. The small sized centrals, I am very fond of the *Cryptoheros* complex. My favourite of the genus would be *C. nanoluteus*. Medium sized cichlids, I have a fondness for the *Herichthys* complex. My favourite is a tossup between the two media Luna species *H. bartoni* or *H. labridens*, Now possibly described under a new genus "*Nosferatu*"? Moving to the larger species, it would have to be members of the *Paratheraps/Vieja* complex, probably *V. melanura (synspila)*. I believe some hobbyists describe them under the *Paraneetroplus* complex, but that's a different topic.

**What are some of the reasons that creating a natural aquascape for your cichlids is important?**

Apart from aesthetic reasons, I believe when any fish, not just cichlids are kept in a natural setting as possible, they appear more settled and will reward you with stunning colouration and natural behaviour.

**Most of the local pet stores don't have the best decoration selection to create a natural aquascape so what do you recommend to use to create the ultimate aquascape?**

We have the same problem in the UK, many decorations are aimed towards the mainstream or small planted nature aquariums. Rarely does store bought decoration make an impact in a large display aquarium. Large rocks can be sourced from a stone merchant or collected locally from rivers providing you have permission? Make sure that rocks bought from a stone merchant are aquarium safe. Suitable large pieces of wood are also hard to find. You can collect your own providing that they are aquarium safe. When using sand, add different size grades of gravel to create a more natural look. Backgrounds can be very expensive, but gives an almost instant impact when installed, however, they aren't essential when creating a natural display tank.

**Do you focus on more display tanks or do you have tanks for cichlids to breed as well? Or do you let this all happen within your display tanks?**

It depends how you approach the hobby? Personally, I like to keep a display tank based around a few species and let them spawn naturally. I must stress that I only do this in the largest display tanks. When using the smaller tanks, I still like to create a natural display, but keep one breeding pair only and some dithers, usually livebearers. Many serious Central American keepers rarely keep display tanks instead, setup dedicated fish rooms with smaller tanks dedicated to breeding pairs with a plant pot or bog wood for decoration. I think if you are serious about breeding centrals, then this is probably the best approach.

**I see you have various types of Central American cichlids in your tank, how are you able to keep them together without anyone getting hurt or killed?**

Believe me, it has been a learning curve, not every display tank goes smoothly, i.e. when I kept a pair of ex*Cichlasoma istlanum*. Some cichlids just aren't suitable for a community display tank.

I've come to learn, that the size of the tank will play a major factor regarding cichlid phycology...the bigger the better. Height isn't so important, but length and width is. Try not to mix conspecifics, this may work in the beginning, but when cichlids start to mature, problems will arise. Base the community around a large pair of cichlids such as *Paratheraps/Vieja* species, even mild mannered giants like *bocourti* and *pearsei*, then add smaller species like *Cryptoheros* or *Thorichthys* species, even medium semi aggressive species like *Astatheros* and *Rocio*. In my opinion many of the large predatory gupotes are only suitable for species tanks. Try to add fish from juvenile, as pecking orders will be established as your cichlids mature.

I see many examples of display tanks where aggression levels are low, due to over stocking. This may work in theory, but is this really the proper way to keep these wonderful fish?



**I think one of the most important keys that bring your tank to life is the backgrounds. Please tell us about your backgrounds.**

The backgrounds I use are made by a company called Back to Nature. I first became aware of these backgrounds back in 2003. All the backgrounds available are too small for my tank, so I had to compromise by getting two different backgrounds and splicing them together to make one long unique one. The late Joel Malmström (owner of Back to Nature) was impressed with my work, so asked if I could commission some photography artwork for the re-launch packaging. I did and he was generous enough to supply other backgrounds and modules for my needs. The hobby lost a great inspiration when he suddenly passed away. They do add an authenticity to the scape if installed right. I try never to make the mistake of having the background dominate the tank, doing this will not set it apart from other tanks that may use the same background. Instead I use it to compliment by blending other hardscape materials like rocks and wood.

**Do you keep any other cichlids besides central American – say Africans?**

I have kept some West African and South American species, but I always seemed to be drawn back to Centrals. In my opinion, these are the real deal regarding New World cichlid species.

**If you could give one key advice to those hobbyists you have inspired to recreate tanks like yours what would it be?**

Be inspired by nature, not just the countries of the fish you keep, but more closer to home. Many ideas for my aquascapes have been inspired by observing local waterways.



# Kerry's Korner

## **Breeding and Keeping Large Aggressive Cichlids**



**By Kerry Dilks**

Nothing catches the eye of by passers like the larger species of cichlids. These guys are tanks and pack the bite of a raged toddler in tantrum mode. There are a few key things to remember when housing these beasts.

Egg laying cichlids are very territorial and will not stand for any third wheels in the tank. If you take an interest in breeding and do not want to risk the welfare of your other fish house them on their own.

Keep aquascaping minimal as larger fish do a wonderful job of redecorating the tank. Larger faux plants planked to slate rock or driftwood work wonderfully. It will be easy to remove for cleaning and too heavy for the cichlid to move around. You will want to watch your fingers around these guys while cleaning the tank. If feeling uncertain simply use algae pad with long stick or make your own with filter padding attached to PVC pipe.



When the mated pair lay eggs it would be great to include a large clay flower pot, slate, or large stone cave for this purpose. You can purchase terra cotta clay pots at most of your local stores for under \$5.00. I find these simple, sensible, and easy to clean when needed.

There are many occasions when you can wake in the morning to find your female cichlid butchered by the male. It is important to spend time observing behavior of each. Always have a hospital or an "oh sh\*t" tank set up. There will be occasions when the male will color and want to mate with his female companion. Sometimes the female will show no interest resulting in injury or death. If the female shows no interest remove her for the night/day into a holding/hospital tank.





My father taught me some tricks to get said female cichlid in the mood. Do a water change of 25% and redecorate your tank or add something new to the aquascape. Raise temperature slightly to 82 degrees. Net female and place back into tank with her partner. This method has been successful for me almost each and every time. You may find almost instantly or by the end of the day eggs on the way.

After eggs hatch most egg layers will care for the young and make excellent parents. The fry or most of them will be safe in the tank with both parents in most egg laying species. You do get the occasional swallow of fry or the male making a meal. When the fry are free swimming you can remove them from tank and grow them out in a plastic storage container or five gallon tank. I recommend using sponge filters so the young does not get stuck in HOB filters or canister. The young will also graze on the sponge filter throughout the day. It will help keep your sponge free of food debris and fry won't get lost in your filtration.

If you enjoy personality in a fish, these larger species of cichlids will give you and your family hours of entertainment and education. Yes they can be frustrating at times but rewarding and eye catching at the same.

## Talking Photography By Christina Smith



Hello fellow CCY fans and welcome back for another edition of Talking Photography with your host....Christina Smith. In this episode we will be talking about cameras, their lenses, and which is the best for taking our fishy photography.

Okay, let's get real here for a second. First off if I haven't said this a million times already, there is no 'best' out there. It doesn't matter if you spend millions or you spend \$50. It's all in how you take the photograph. I have seen people shoot some amazing shots with a \$50 Wal-Mart special and then see some really....well, bad shots with a \$800 piece of equipment. To create a amazing piece of art there is one thing all artists need, no mater what media they work in. And that my dear friends is creativity. So back on subject. Lesson one, whether you shoot with Nikon, Sony, Canon, Olympus, etc. Whatever you are comfortable with and you prefer is the 'best for you'. I personally prefer Nikon series, so you will hear me talk more about Nikon then any other brand.

Now that we have settled the camera question. Lets more on to a more important question. What lens in best for aquatic photography.

The quality of the lens and the light are the two most important factors in aquatic photography.



The optics of the lens determines how well the subject transfers to an image on the film. A cheap and dirty lens will not do justice to a beautiful fish or plant.

Many camera manufacturers design their lenses to fit only their cameras. A Minolta lens will not fit a Nikon camera and vice versa. Therefore, the camera body determines the make of the lens. All Nikon lenses will fit all Nikon cameras. Other camera manufacturers do not always make it so simple; some old Canon lenses may not fit modern Canon bodies. There are independent lens manufacturers such as Sigma and Tamron, who make lenses for all makes of cameras.

I think all good fish photographers agree that macro lenses are the best choice for fish photography. Macro lenses are designed to focus closely on small objects. They are capable of very small focusing distances (distance between the subject and the camera.) A good macro lens will be capable of a 1:1 reproduction of the subject. If you focus in close to a subject, say a Neon Tetra, the image of the Neon tetra on the film/slide you get back from the processor can be the same size as the fish was in real life. A 1-inch fish in real life can be 1-inch long on the slide. This ability to go up close is the advantage of macro lenses.



Macro lenses are the most appropriate forms of lenses for this purpose, but they are expensive. A Nikon 105mm f/2.8 Auto Focus macro lens costs about US \$600 if mail ordered and possibly a little more if purchased at the camera store down the street. Canon's macro lens is a little cheaper. Sigma and Tamron manufacture macro lenses in the 90-105mm range that are even cheaper. The usual 35-80mm zoom lenses they sell with the purchase of a SLR camera are not of the highest quality and often produce mediocre images when scrutinized with loupes. These cheap, small zoom lenses are probably what most amateur photographers who are contemplating fish photography, own. If you absolutely cannot afford a macro lens, you may be able to get by with a zoom lens at the longest focal length setting of 80mm on a 35-80mm lens.

If you have adequate lighting by using flashes, you can still generate acceptable images. They may not be of the same quality as the ones produced using macro lenses, but you will still enjoy them. If you have longer focal length zoom lenses in the 200mm range, you may have to back up very far from the fish and it becomes very difficult to properly focus on small fish and your flashes may end up too far away from the subject to adequately illuminate them. Longer lenses require faster shutter speeds and in fish photography, where light is at a premium, faster shutter speeds may not be possible.



Choosing the correct focal length is also critical. If you are going to photograph large fishes like full-grown pike cichlids or *Cichlasoma* species, then you can get by with a macro lens in the 50-60mm range. However, if you are planning on taking pictures of smaller fish, I highly recommend a lens in the 100mm range. Most manufacturers sell a lens in both focal lengths. Nikon makes a 200mm macro lens that is excellent but it costs almost US \$2000 and it is difficult to take pictures of larger fish without backing up several feet away from the tank. If you are using a camera-mounted flash, you need to be about three feet away from the subject. So, I again suggest a lens in the 100mm range.

In outdoor photography, the speed of the lens is critical. For example, a 300mm f/2.8 telephoto lens costs much more than a 300mm f/5.6 lens. This is because the f/2.8 lens was designed to allow much more light, using larger and more sophisticated optics. Consequently, the 2.8 lens can use much faster shutter speeds. With a 300mm lens, this could mean a sharp picture with the 2.8 lens and a blurry one with the 5.6 lens. Fortunately, this does not apply to fish photography where flashes are used. The duration of the flash is about 1/1000th second and this is fast enough to freeze any moving fish and compensate for hand movements.

I use a Nikon D7000 camera body with a Tamron 28-200mm f/3.5-5.6 MACRO lens. I think this lens is worth its weight in gold! Everybody who uses this lens has something similar to say about it, not just fish photographers but others as well. I am so fond of it that I have managed to talk three of my friends into buying this lens. Their spouses don't talk to me anymore. Every image on this site credited to me was taken with this lens. Vivitar has a similar lens but its overall quality is lower.

Here is the highly opinionated information about the choice of a lens maker: I can't deny it but I am a Nikon man! I have been an admirer of the finish and quality of the intricate and detailed components of Nikon cameras and lenses for a long time. I have used Canon lenses and cameras and find them equal performers. However, I find the optics and durability of Nikon lenses to be superior. Most of the professional fish photographers I know in North America use the Nikon 105mm lens. Everyone raves about the images produced using this lens but not about the initial expense.

Many fish photographers use extenders or extension tubes. These are lenses that are attached on the camera between the camera and the lens. They help you get closer to the subject. A 2X extender converts a cheap 50mm lens into a 100mm lens. Rather, the image appears the same size as through a 100mm lens. Buying an extender may be cheaper than buying a larger lens but this

should only be a last resort. Extenders never enhance the image, they often deteriorate it. The biggest drawback is the dramatic loss in depth of field; adding an additional flash can compensate for this. Cheap extenders are like cheap filters, "just a piece of glass" that could reduce the quality of the final image.

I suggest you purchase a UV filter for your lens as soon as you can. UV filters are good protectors against physical abuse. I consider them shock absorbers. Since they are usually not very well made, I unscrew the filter before I take pictures of the fish and screw it back on after the shoot.



A photo of Chris Cornell taken by Christina Smith



PRESENTS

# MATT QUINN



*Saturday June, 28th, 2014  
@ 1pm*

*50 North East St., Spring Grove, Pennsylvania 17362*

# Mo's Masterpiece



Our CCY friend **Mo Devlin** has agreed from time to time to send the Cichlid Chronicles a sneak peak at what he is working on. Believe it or not cichlid fans, Mo has been scaling down from the big bruiser cichlids he is know for to some of the smaller cichlids. Go figure!! Today Mo has provided us with an amazing shot of a pair of *Crytoheros myrnae* cichlids. A beautiful cichlid with some amazing colors. Enjoy the shot and once

again thanks to Uncle Mo for sharing with us his amazing photography!



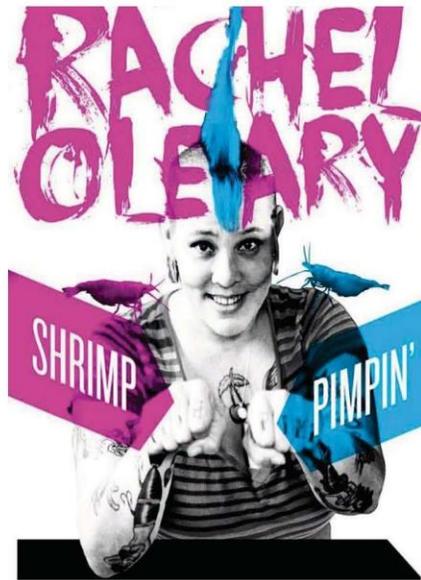
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