

Heiko Bleher: 6th lesson

Lesson number 6, April 13th 2007

Dear readers,

finally I am able to come back. Just last night I arrived after a 20-hour-flight from Jakarta via Frankfurt landing at Linate. It was an incredible expedition I made (and fortunately alone, as hardly anyone would have been able to follow me walking - or better running - during uninterrupted rain across the dense jungle of the ARU Islands and Western Kalimantan). I found fascinating new rainbowfishes (*Melanotaenia* species) and blue eyes (*Pseudomugil* species), as well as very colorful gobies (*Morgunda* species) and barbs (*Puntius* species), as well as many other interesting new aquarium species. In areas no one collected before... but unfortunately they are, in Indonesia, taking down almost all the trees (some hundreds of years old) primary rainforest to plant *Hevea brasiliensis*, the Amazonian, or Para, rubber tree) and for Palm oil plantations... so those fishes I collected will soon be history...

But let me give you my lesson number 6 for wild discus:
I wanted to talk about light and filters.

If some of you have read my book (hopefully), you may have noticed, that discus live in nature NEVER in any area where the bright sunlight penetrates (with rare exception naturally - as there is an exception for everything in live...). Discus must have shade, if from the driftwood, tree trunks, or floating plants. They will always want to have such an area in your aquarium. Please do provide it. Also for hybrids. You may have strong light over it, but you must provide spaces for the discus to be able to go to where there is no direct light from your lamps. And I do not care if you have some a Osram, Philips, Halogen or any other light above your aquarium. Actually the very best for your aquarium would be a light which penetrates from an angle, instead from the top. Your discus will show even brighter colours and also be more happy. This is, as it is in nature and naturally wilds will feel the very best. You can place the lights, as I have done often (and can be seen in:

<http://www.hagen.com/canada/english/aquatic/more.cfm> (NAN u. 2002 Interzoo Heiko Bleher's Biotopes) and also in the Internet. If one opens www.yahoo.com and enters my name - as there is only one Heiko Bleher on our planet (thanks to my mother) - you will find plenty of such information.

With regards to the filter I can recommend definitely for wilds a biological filter. If you use peat moss (remember that it will last at the most 2 month, than one must renew it), that is one of your best things you can have for wilds. If you want to combine it with some wool (but never glass wool) and/or charcoal it is ok. But remember that also the charcoal loses its effect after 1-2 month but can be regenerated in a oven, by heating it up.

Important is that your filter is powerful and should turn over the aquarium water at least every 2 hours. With regards what Scxhmidt-Focke did for filter, I will not anticipate, as you will read extensively in my volume 2 about it.

Also, Patrizia asked me to write about the community fishes of discus, those which are the best to keep with wilds, but this is a chapter for itself. It took me almost 30 pages to give an idea about that in my volume 1, and if anyone really wants to have it good, well done, than please read it. The fact remains, that *Corydoras* or *Apistogrammas* are NEVER in or near an discus habitat and small tetras very rarely. Angelfishes, *Geophagus*, *Heros*, *Uaru*, *Mesonauta*, *Leporinus*, *Stingrays*, and such larger fishes are discus companions in the wild (and many more, but see my book...).

Now, before I go, as I have to hold lectures in the Ukraine, Sweden, Russia, Polen, Australia (where I will collect next) and elsewhere, I want to mention a few things I saw on discuspassion.net.

First of all, I am glad to see the Acquario del mese from Gianluca Pacchini, although I am not a hybrid freak, I still like his decoration and I can see that some of my messages are followed and that makes me very happy. Even the hybrids feel much better in such a nature-like environment than in a fully planted tank... one can see it. And it is also good, that he did not mix them with wilds. Congratulations Gianluca.

Secondly I am also pleased to see the Heckel discus and Royal Blue from Marco Modonnesi - molto bello, anche a te congratulazioni i discus sono bellissimi and you seem to keep them very well. Keep up the good work.

Thirdly I found the article of Dario Amiri with regards to the *Corydoras* reproduction very nice, but wanted to give him some advice:

1. *Corydoras* are found throughout South America east of the Andes (and not only in those countries he mentions).
2. *Corydoras sterbai* (correct spelling) - which actually, with *C. caudimaculatus*, *C. haraldschultzi*, and many other, we discovered (my mother and me...) and later they were described in honor of others...
3. PLEASE use for all of your *Corydoras* ONLY very fine white sand, they need to dig into it... (you can see on one of your photos how they do it.... *Corydoras* always look for microorganisms in the sand, and only live over fine sand throughout their distribution - almost without exception).

And last but not least I am amazed that Aloe vera should be a tonico per discus?! NO succulent lives were discus lives... (see my 80plus pages in my volume 1...).

Now I will depart, and hope to be able not to disappoint you again and make my lesson number 7 next month, in May. Before Aquarama in Singapore...

Best regards,
always

Heiko Bleher