

Heiko Bleher: 7th lesson

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Dear members and readers of this nice website,
Dear Patrizia,

I hope you all are well, I have been busy again (am I some times not? I do not remember...). After the return of my New Guinea expedition and my lesson number 6 I did hold lectures in Russia, Ucraina (where I also judged fantastic aquarium displays - probably the best in Europe) and Sweden. But did also visit Discus day and after that I had to visit ZOOMARK 2007... from which I just returned. And before I go to Singapore (Aquarama 2007), fly back to Europe again to give seminars at the PETFAIR in Lodz, Poland, from where I have to fly to Darwin, Australia, for the ANGFA 2007 Convention and to go fishing...(the best) again, I will give you my

Lesson number 7:

First of all I want to repeat once more about the "buying" or "getting" wild discus. I have written about this in my lessons, but it seems to me, that not so many are reading it (although during the latest Turin Book Fair, which just ended today, the statistics say that Italians do read very much...).

It is very – very – important that you know the source of your wild fish and the best is: See your wild discus before you buy it. Look at it on a photo (which every shipper/seller/breeder today can send you by e-mail) before you buy it. Do not do what I saw on this website, for instance what Danny has done. I refer to Risposta 37 II, where I see the pictures of some of the fishes he (and some one else) bought from Hustinx in Belgium. They bought discus in a closed box for a cheap price and that is what they got. The pictures I see, from top down, are: the first two are very old (3-4 years old) blue discus, probably from Manacapuru, one with a eaten anal fin (probably from a Piranha), which would not be a problem, because damaged and grown back fins will not stop the fish from spawning – those are too old for that... The third picture is also a very old Heckel-cross with a fin-defect and the fourth is the only real good (Rio Negro) Heckel discus. So if my figures are correct (from what I see), there is only one good young discus, which he will enjoy – for which he paid then (adding up his mentioned cost) approximately 730 Euros... I say he paid that much for a single good fish, because the others are useless... Had he spend just 350 Euros on a single good discus, he could have saved a lot of money...

On the other hand liked very much what Emanuele did, he had the discus pictures send BEFORE he ordered the discus and got fantastic green discus from the Mamiraua region (west of the Japura river). They were healthy, young and good and he was able to breed them. Well done Emanuele (and I think you paid more than 73 Euros for each one) – the royal green (my name invention in the 1970s) pair is really stunning. And also his babies...

This is just one example and reminds me always of what my grandfather (Adolf Kiel - pioneer of aquatic plants and fishes) told me when I was 5 years old: "Son always remember 'cheap is expensive'..." (but I know: most people will never learn, or better do not want to see it...).

Anyhow, the message which I want to give you all besides pointing out the above today (or better this night) is: – Please do – if possible and if you can afford it – keep everyone of the wild discus species for itself, that is: Heckel with Heckel discus; green with green discus; and blue & Brown with blue & brown. Simply because each one of the 3 species lives in its own chemical water parameter in nature – the parameters divide the species. (See my book chapter 5.) Then, if you take care of that, you will see how well they feel and you will enjoy wild discus even more.

Also: do not forget that everyone of the 3 species NEEDS very fine white sand and some roots...

– Please also, in the case you want to have OTHER fishes with your wild discus, try to keep only those species which they are used to live with. (In detail you find this information in my book.) The other fish species that live with each one of the 3 discus in nature are in general angelfishes (Pt. scalare or Pt. leopoldi – never Pt. altum !), most of the Geophagus species or Stanoperca species. Uaru (specially with Heckel discus) and also Mesonauta or Hyselecara species are good tank mates (to mention a few). Normally Corydoras and small Loricariids do NOT live with discus in nature.

– And NEVER place tank-breed fishes together with wild discus (and naturally never such fishes as: goldfishes or other Eurasian or Asian fishes like loaches, danios, and also never African species like elephant fishes, butterfly or Synodontis species. I mention this here, because I have seen it all...

Unfortunately I do not have much time tonight, but let me mention and comment a few things I saw on the forum:

1. As I mentioned above: wild & hibridi do NEVER mix, that lesson I mentioned on the beginning and now I see that some newcomers are still doing this severe error...
2. Zedisdead (funny name...): you were asking if Echinodorus tenellus can be placed with discus and in fine white sand. YES you can do it, providing you leave some sandy area free, so the wild discus (even if you have hibridi only) can find enough sandy area for them... and
3. I think Kado2002 should NEVER suggest Anubias for discus – Anubias come from Africa and I never found a discus in anyone of the 50 African Countries...

4. Patrizia io mi auguro to eat the pizza Napoletana... but unfortunately on the 26th of this month I am at the Aquarama 2007, in Singapore. But I hope you can offer me a pizza-slide sometime later...
5. Beppe80 you must understand that discus have often on the begin, when they start laying eggs for the first times, problems. It is in their gene. In nature they eat them often the first times until they can be sure no predator comes. They may also not fertilize the eggs for such a reason. These are 'normal' procedures of discus. I have had sometimes a pair that would lay eggs up to 10 times, before they really let them hatch (fertilized them and did not eat them)... But normally after the third time it should already work. This has hardly anything to do with the chemical parameters (as some people suggested to you), nor with anything else. Naturally the water change should not be stopped.
6. Silvan1967: ALWAYS when discus start to breath very fast you MUST change water – best is very much...
7. "Help 2 Disci Mort in 5 Giorni" piccoz, that is – from what I can read – the problem mentioned above. One should (MUST) get his discus ONLY from correct (good) sources. I think you had pigeons which were very weak in the first place and as those are mostly degenerated tank breed discus (specially pigeons), they are sensitive against all kind of bacterias/parasites, etc. Their immun-system is weak and they have hardly any resistance. And normally once they start to spin and/or stand with the head down, there is very little you can do. The only thing I would do: eliminate that stock; clean the aquarium well and get good new stock (best wild, as they are the most resistant/strongest discus).
8. Fabio o Acqualiner ('): Papilochromis Ramirezii is a synonym, the fish from Venezuela and Colombia is called Microgeophagus ramirezi (and remember, in the species name is ALWAYS written in small letters). See also anassinenes, there it is mentioned Microgeophagus for altispinosa, the only other species in the genus. The latter is from Bolivia – although I discovered a third species, still undescribed, many years ago in the Guapore river. But never there is a Microgeophagus found with discus. They live, as almost all dwarf cichlids, in very shallow waters, were discus never go....
9. Alessandro di Sicilia i Federico di Emilia I hope you both had finally gotten my new book and were able to read it. With the websites the problem always happens... although this week we should have our new websites up. You can have a look: www.aquapress-bleher.it.
10. Giambo – last but not least – the Philips lamp you mentioned should be ok for your aquarium, just remember: specially Heckel discus always need some area where they can hide, where they have a shade they can stay away from the bright light... that is very important (see my previous lessons).

Now to all of you good night, until next time

always

Heiko Bleher