

Heiko Bleher: 9th lesson

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Dear readers of this great website,

again I am late, what else is new? But mind you, I have stopped to sleep, that helps to accomplish what I want... After my collecting on the Top of the World in August, I had only a couple of days (exactly 2,5 days) with Natasha in beautiful Sardengna

collecting some nice fishes (and got stung by several medusas...) I had to drive to Dubrovnik, for the XII ECI (12th European Congress of Ichthyologists), which takes place every 3 years and this time were 450 speakers, including myself (I talked about the 148 extinct freshwater species in Central Asia, the biggest crime in history of Man to an freshwater aquatic environment - nobody wants to write about it and in the internet is really nothing mentioned on this incredible disaster of those aquatic habitats...).

I drove 2,500 km and back I had to immediately drive to Barca (Catalan name for Barcelona), to the SIZOO (see www.sizoo.com or www.aquapress-bleher.com under latest news) to prepare the 1st. International Spanish Discus Championships. I had invited Jack Wattle (he is already 85, but came, because I asked him and he could not say no to me...) and I even brought some of Andreas Sassis beautiful discus (two of which made a prize for Quality Discus...). BUT I had also an invitation from the Prince Albert II, of Monaco, for the BLUE ACTION NIGHT at Montecarlo in the Oceanographic Building, the aquarium on the 20th. So I drove back 800 km and together with the famous ichthyologists, Gerald R. Allen and Mark Erdmann, we assisted as 11 new discovered fish species names (one from me, a new *Melanoatania* from Batanta Island and 10 marine species) were auctioned to the rich of the world by Christies of London. Only 200 guests from all over the globe had flown in and one paid 500,000 dollars for name on a new shark species, my *Melanotaenia* went for 65,000 dollars and the total moneys were 2.015 million dollars, which goes to protect one of the most pristine areas on planet earth today: The Raja Ampat region in Indonesia.

Anyhow, that same night Natasha who drove with me (but unfortunately could not get in, as limited guests were invited and had in the meanwhile visited the castle and the Casino...), drove back and on the 21st the judgment of the discus was done. Then, my lecture and returned last night and at 4 this morning I drove to Asolo, to see the president and back. Now, in 2 hours and 15 minutes, leaves the train to Lecce...

When we come back on the 30th, the same day I must drive to Duisburg, where I will decorate 2 "Heiko Bleher's Authentic Biotope Aquariums" and hold 5 lectures (from the 3-7th each day one - see www.aquapress-bleher.com under latest news). Then international book fair and on October 13th they do "Heiko Bleher Tag" in Leipzig, Germany from where I fly back to Milan connecting with Natasha to my two remote Amazon trips with great people... arriving Manaus on the 15th and departing on the 17th...

But do not worry, if my collecting vessel does not sink, I am back in time at Malpensa on the 10th, ready for the big event (and Patrizia, I do not see Natasha and myself invited for the great dinner in that evening on the 10th of November? And is there room to sleep, or should I bring my Amazon tent...?).

Now let's see, before I go to lesson 9, a few comments of what I saw:

1. piante - robby996 (why not write your name...): Maybe you can do such a planted aquarium for tank-breed discus but PLEASE not for wilds, otherwise my lessons are wasted time here... (see lesson number 3). PLEASE read carefully... And the worst of all: someone wants to place a Mangrove into a discus aquarium? Did I read correctly??? Why not add salt and corals and make a saltwater fish out of discus (at least they die fast and do not feel so bad, I guess...). Where do you want to go Alex?
2. Bello e impossibile: I do NOT agree. For example see Minerua discus on my website (under Heiko Bleher's Biotopes) and please tell me if those are not bello? And what about Dale's fantastic shaped and colored red turquoise discus - they are sensational and young to (probably between 7-9 month old only). really bellissimi discus, which are surely from the original Homann discus strain in Germany (back in the 1980s - see my book DISCUS).
3. Acquario 3,5 m: My advice: NEVER make a 3,5 m aquarium with only 40-50 cm depth. That is (I am sorry) a crime! At least 1 m deep (better 1,5 m deep) and 100-120 cm high. If you really want it stunning. Otherwise you have a "flat board" and no depth of decoration (which is needed). A biological in-built-filter would also do good (10-15% of the aquarium volume). I advised the decoration for a very large aquarium (authentic biotope for Esquire 360 this year) with a depth of 2,5 meter and people went nuts for it (including Leonardo DiCaprio and Pierce Brosnan).
4. Defe: *Aequidens rivulatus* are NOT Amazonian cichlids, they live on the Pacific coast of the Andies (Colombia-Peru). Never found with discus.
5. Aqualiner: Molto bello your text on *Papiliochromis ramirezi*, but the correct name is *Mikrogeophagus ramirezi* (*Papiliochromis* is not valid).
6. Bioagio: In respect to the *P. altum* reproduction I must say, I do not think from the photos, that those are the *P. altum* Pellegrin, 1904, from the upper Orinoco system. Please look at Patrizia's competition... (although I do not think so): www.mondodiscus.com and click into my text and photos of scalare and altum. There you see the correct *P. altum* I collected in its type locality - those are definitely the correct *P. altum*. And compare yourself. For me the fins are definitely much too short in the Japanese breedings... I still have not seen those fishes I show been breed...
7. L'acquario del mese: no me asembra justo. This is a nice decoration, but not for discus. Unless you want to place babies, or young ones in it.

and last but not least:

9. Il signore degli anelli: Best of show in Duisburg 2006 was not the largest, I have seen larger ones in Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Up 22cm TL. But naturally a great leopard it is...

Now my lesson 9:

I have talked about wild vs tank-breed; reliable source (more than once) for discus - very important (your problems with discus starts with its roots: where they come from); no plants and the exceptions are mentioned. This reminds me: I just want to tell Darius "Thank you for "better than Indian Jones" and also wanted to tell you: while getting with a car into an untouched remote Cameroon region a few years back I managed to get across where no one before went. The driver who was with me danced and screamed: "Rambo is chicken-shit against you...because I made it... And I must also tell you: Indian Jones I was called a few times, just last month in Tajikistan climbing almost 5000 m with my Unimog to a lake no one went before as well. But let's see on March 28th next year when Indian Jones 4 comes to our screens. And by the way: Harrison Ford, who sponsored the BLUE NIGHT ACTION and is Chairman at the NGO-Organisation Conservation International, is exactly my age...; I talked about decoration; water parameters; communities; given several advices (as today); and did mention the important steps for successful breeding of wilds. Ok.

Now today I want briefly (as my train now leaves in Lodi in 1,5 hours) mention in this lesson: About raising up babies and a little about food.

The wild babies should (I am, and Schmidt-Focke also was) for leaving the babies with the parents for at least 2, better 4, weeks - or even more. In Thailand I visited a breeder that left them for several months (2-3) with the parents. If by any chance it does not work, use foster parents, that always works, if the original ones fail (rarely, but has happened).

Once you start feeding, make sure you feed (whatever you feed) AT LEAST 6 TIMES PER DAY your discus babies.

Same as your wife's doe for the first month' (or your mother's have done with you - the very same). This should go on for at least 3-4 months, or more. Only when your discus have reached a semi-adult (if well, and very good feed, they will reach it after 6-7 months maximum - if not you are doing something WRONG). Once they are semi-adult you can feed twice, or three times a day, and only if they are adult (normally after 9-12 months) you can feed them only once a day or even some days not at all - as in nature. Also, real adults you can leave without food during your vacation (or times of absence) – up to 3 weeks should be no problem at all – providing you feed these adults well before you go away.

Important is, that what I write here is the following procedure (and should be done carefully as mentioned here):

If I say 6 times per day, that means actually about 18 times, as you have to repeat every feeding session twice. As soon as they eat all what you have given, feed the second time, and also a third time, once that is gone. And this procedure 6-times-per-day. Only doing it this way, you will have babies, which will grow at almost equal size to be nice adults, otherwise (by doing it only a single time with each feeding session), you will have several - if not many - discus babies which stay behind (they smaller, or much smaller).

The same applies for the 2-3 times feeding sessions, and also the one-time feeding session per day. You must just think yourself, or think fish. Not you, nor the fish, will just take a single bite. You will have: primo, secondo e dolce; same with your discus... (only instead of the dolce the discus will eat more natural the third time around... the exceptions you find in my book...).

What kinds of foods I will talk about the next time. Now I must drive and maybe I see some of you in Lecce, if not on November 10th and 11th in the castle like house patrizia has chosen...

alwaysHeiko