



Amazon Research Center For Ornamental Fishes

ARCOF

Fall 2023 NEWSLETTER

2023 Raffle Winner

The winner of the 2023 raffle, John Skocilic or better known as Surf City Cichlids on YouTube, elected to defer his trip to the research center until the Summer of 2024. Consequently, we won't be able to share his experience until next fall. That said, please read on for more updates.

The Aquarium of the Amazon

Of all of the projects the research center has taken on, this project has been the most challenging. Beginning with the COVID pandemic and ending with the difficulties associated with having to have several of the tanks remade in China and shipped to Iquitos we were faced with one difficult task after another. To all of you who have remained steadfast we thank you. We could not have come this far without your ongoing support and we are pleased to tell you the Aquarium will be opening to the public in January 2024. Please [click here](#) to see a video of the Aquarium. What you cannot see in the video is that the pumps and filters are on and we are slowly beginning to move the livestock from the fish house to the Aquarium proper.

Anthony and I will be returning to the center in December to help



with the finishing touches in preparation for the grand opening. In addition to the fish exhibits, we will have activities for the children as well as a variety of educational exhibits.

An important part of the interior of the Aquarium is the “Environmental Education Wall”. This wall will hold six 16 x 24 photos of threats to the environment of the Peruvian Amazon River Basin. To the left is a copy of one of the photos depicting the damage done from an oil spill that occurred in 2016 in the northeastern part of the Peruvian Amazon, contaminating at least 30 kilometers of the Chiriaco River. It then spread into the Marañon River, one of the main tributaries that feed the Amazon River. Unfortunately, this part of the rain forest has experienced more than one oil spill, the last one occurring in September of 2022. The damage done by the oil spills is far reaching. In 2016, the Peruvian government sponsored testing of 1,138 people in more than three-dozen communities that were impacted by



the oil spill. The tests demonstrated that about half of the people tested had high levels of lead, arsenic, and mercury in their bloodstreams, which the government said was likely caused by oil exposure. The goal of the wall is to provide education on the bigger issues and how they impact the natural resources as well as education on smaller issues, such as trash disposal. How trash that is thrown into to the street, a stream, or river ends up contaminating that area and causes harm to the animals, fish and fauna that live in the jungle. The narratives associated with each picture will be in Spanish and English.

Volunteers and Interns



We are excited to share with you that we are accepting applications for volunteers and interns year-round. We hosted 5 student interns this past summer along with students from the Universidad Nacional de la Amazonía Peruana (UNAP). Volunteers and interns must be 18 years or older and will be housed in the dormitories that are double or triple occupancy. All dorms have their own bathroom with hot and cold running water. The facility has access to laundry services and meals will be provided. There are a limited number of dormitory rooms. Consequently, the number of volunteers and interns we can accept is variable dependent on housing availability. If you are interested in

volunteering at the research center or doing an internship please go to our website amazonresearchcenter.org. Look for the “Get Involved” tab and click on volunteer/intern. Scroll down until you see the “complete form” button. You can also contact Dr. Anthony Mazeroll directly at amaze@amazonresearchcenter.org for more information. Individuals under the age of 18 will need to be accompanied by an adult and will need to contact us directly for approval.

Conservation Education

In July of this year we hosted our third school event. This event was different in that our student volunteers along with the students at UNAP put a play together developed from “The Adventures of Nalda and Eduardo”. We hosted approximately sixty 6th grade students. All were provided with their own copy of the activity book, a multicolored colored pencil and each one received a free stuffed animal as well as a snack and drink. We’re not sure who had more fun, the student volunteers who put on the play or the students who attended. We have met with the principal of this school and we will be developing a joint program that



facilitates use of the research center and the aquarium to help expand the students’ interest in the sciences and to continue with environmental education. Once the Aquarium is open we will be hosting field trips to the Aquarium for all of the schools in and around Iquitos.



Conservation Projects

- **The Red Pencil Fish** (*Nannostomus mortenthaleri*) – We have submitted a grant proposal to the Segre Foundation to bring ornamental fish aquaculture to the fishing village of Alvarenga. The red pencil fish

is a range restricted fish found solely in the waters in and around Alvarenga. The grant is divided into three parts. The first focuses on a population study utilizing environmental DNA, the second focuses on utilizing the data from the population study to obtain legal protection for the red pencil fish and the third is the actual education and support of the fishers of Alvarenga specific to ornamental fish aquaculture of a different fish, the *Apistogramma pantalone*. In addition to the grant we are continuing with the red pencil fish aquaculture project at the research center. This part of the proposal is solely the responsibility of ARCOF and is focused on the establishment of an insurance population of this species of pencil fish.

- **Tigrinus Catfish** (*Brachyplatystoma tigrinum*) – We have had some significant challenges with this fish. True to its reputation this is a difficult fish to raise. That said we are continuing to move forward. This past summer we added two new aquaculture ponds; (1) for the *Apistogramma pantalone* fish we plan to utilize in the Alvarenga Village aquaculture project and (2) for the *Tigrinus* catfish. We will also keep a few of the *Tigrinus* catfish in the large wall tank in the Aquarium as this fish can grow to just under 2 feet in length.



- ***Apistogramma pantalone*** also known as the Pantaloon cichlid – In order to support the fishers of Alvarenga in their aquaculture project we started an aquaculture project at the research center utilizing the *Apistogramma pantalone*. The goal of our project is to ascertain the most favorable aquaculture conditions for this fish. We are also collecting data on the feeding, mating, and breeding conditions of *Apistogramma pantalone* in order to provide education and training for the fishers of Alvarenga that is comprehensive.
- **Aquaculture in España, Curinga and Frontera** – Last year the fishers of these three small fishing villages approached the research center asking for help in the care and management of the fish they catch in order to have a better quality of fish to sell to the intermediary. A smaller contingent of this group came to the research center a few months after Carlos did their initial education. They expressed a high interest in learning ornamental fish aquaculture at that time. We are submitting a grant proposal to the Sahee Foundation to help support this project. More to come!

Ways You Can Help

- The Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. As such we rely on the goodwill of our followers to help with the expenses of running the center. Please consider any of the following as ways to support ARCOF.
 - **Donate** to the [End of the Year Fundraiser](#) that begins on “Giving Tuesday” November 28, 2023.
 - **Become** a sustaining donor by [clicking here](#).
 - **Become** a volunteer by [clicking here](#).
 - **Check out** our online store at <https://www.amazonresearchcenter.org/shop>

