

# Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2021



## Letter from the Founders

I know we have said this previously, who would have thought that the COVID 19 pandemic would have lasted through 2021, and we would still be coping with the aftermath. The year started on a somber note in that we had to continue to keep all of the activities at the research center on hold along with a reduction in staff to a skeleton crew for the first half of the year. Thankfully with the introduction of a COVID vaccine, by the summer of 2021, we were able to travel to the research center to restart the activities associated with the public aquarium. We were very excited to be able to travel, albeit with N95 masks and face shields. However, our enthusiasm was soon dampened when we started facing the "unintended consequences" of a global pandemic. Most significantly, costs associated with the 6' x 21' acrylic panel for the wall tank and the tunnel tank skyrocketed doubling our pre-COVID quotes. We continued to see escalating prices as we met with vendors to secure the glass (for the remaining tanks) and the pumps and filters for the entire aquarium. These issues presented challenges that at times were daunting but not unsurmountable.

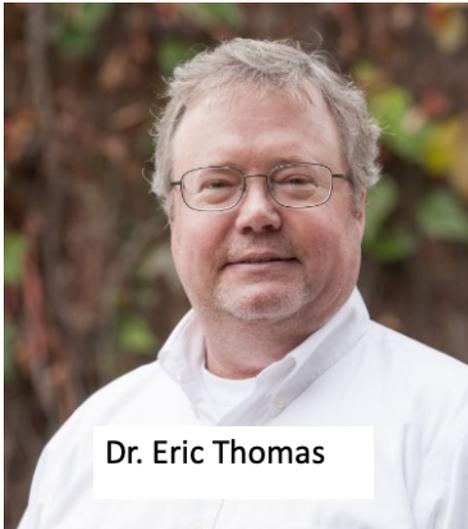
Conversely, 2021 also provided us with the opportunity to look at different approaches to support our followers and broaden our reach. In March we launched the "Talk with Experts" lecture series with a focus on conservation, impacts to the biodiversity, sustainability of the environment, and sustainable breeding. The series has been well received both here in the United States and abroad. In October, Anthony launched a live streaming weekly series focusing on the science and challenges behind fish keeping. This live stream series is doing well with approximately 500 followers. We were able to continue our work on the Tigrinus catfish and began an aquaculture study with the Red Pencil Fish; a fish that has been listed as critically endangered by the IUCN. In closing, 2021 proved to be similar to a roller coaster ride, both exciting and terrifying, but oh so glad when it is over.

- *Anthony and Renee Mazeroll*



## "Talk with the Experts" Program

In March of 2021 realizing the need within the larger fish keeping, scientific, and aquarium hobby community for education and information, the Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes (ARCOF) launched the "Talk to the Experts" lecture series, with live participation by the audience. The eight speakers featured in 2021 provided information on a wide band of topics from how to utilize photography to educate and preserve the environment to electric fishes and the work of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



**Dr. Eric Thomas**

Dr. Eric Thomas, director of graduate studies for the Biological Sciences Department at University of the Pacific, was our first speaker. Attendees for the talks ranged from 40 to 110 participants per talk, with diverse backgrounds including student, professor, and hobbyist. The feedback from the attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. The series is more than we had hoped for. Two unexpected outcomes from this program were: (1) the number of people actively following our work expanded fairly dramatically both here in the United States and abroad and (2) from the expansion of followers into Europe we were contacted and have since entered into a relationship with OS Aquatics in the UK. OS Aquatics, founded by Timothy and Barbara Haywood functions as "boots on the ground" for ARCOF specific to promoting awareness at various events in the UK. Tim and Barbara represented ARCOF at the Aqua 21 conference in Telford, England and continue to support us through a myriad of activities including fundraising.

## The Red Pencil Fish

The conservation of ornamental fish is the prime motive behind the formation and the activities of the Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes (ARCOF). A key element in ARCOF's conservation initiatives is to provide hands-on training to local fishermen on how to establish and maintain breeding ponds (aquaculture ponds) for ornamental fishes. Captive-bred ornamental fish from the Peruvian Amazon can be used to meet the demands of the aquarium industry while allowing threatened ornamental fish populations to reestablish themselves.



One such example of this work is the Red Pencil Fish. The Red Pencil Fish is one of two fish listed as critically endangered by the IUCN in the Iquitos, Peru region. Because of its brilliant red coloring the fish quickly became popular in the aquarium trade and within 10 years became endangered. To date, this fish has not been found outside of the flood plain of the upper Rio Nanay, in the vicinity of the village of Alvarenga. In short, it is range-restricted and could become extinct.

ARCOF has taken on a three-phase multi-year project specific to the Red Pencil Fish. The first phase and the most critical phase of the project was started in the summer of 2021. Approximately 100 Red Pencil Fish were collected and brought to the research center. There the fish have been slowly acclimated to the water differences between the two regions and are being introduced into the center's aquaculture ponds. They are being monitored for stress, disease, and reproduction. Proof that this fish can be raised in aquaculture ponds is a critical step in developing a sustainable breeding program that can be transferred to the local fishers.

## Tigrinus Catfish Rescue

In early 2021 we received a shipment of Tigrinus Catfish (*Brachyplatystoma tigrinum*) that came to the Center via Peruvian customs. These fish were confiscated as part of a larger illegal shipment of fish. The fish were divided between two organizations for care.



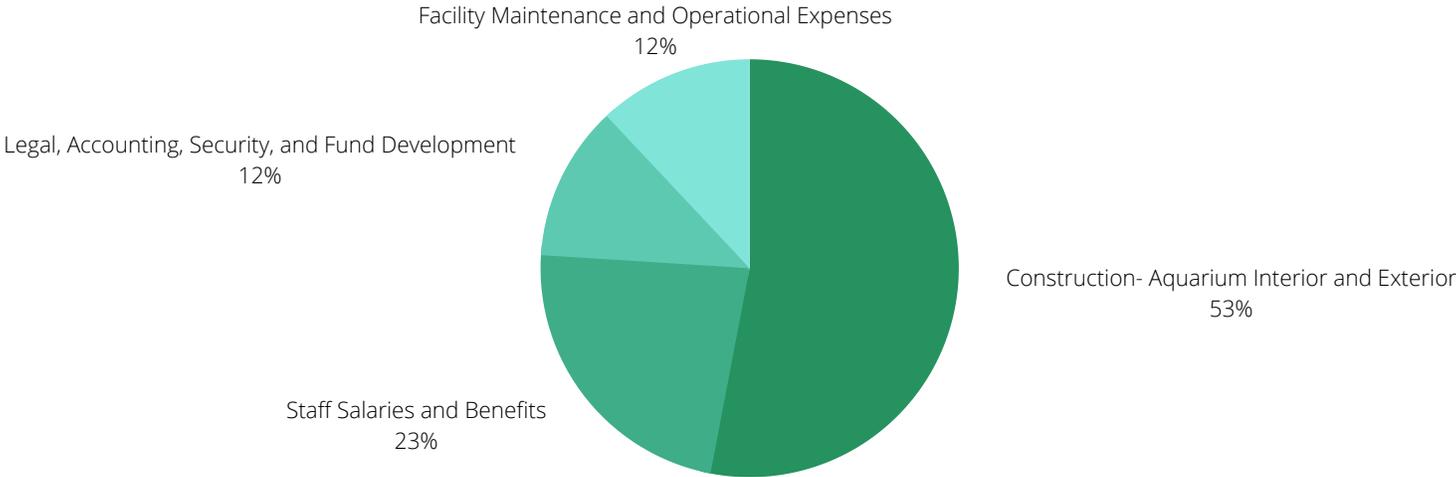
In the summer of 2021, we applied to the Ministry of Fishes to reintroduce the fish under our care. The response we received from the Ministry was a surprise. At that time, we had been caring for these fish for approximately 6 months and all of the fish were doing well. The Tigrinus Catfish is a difficult fish to care for, in part because they are well known to be poor eaters. The Ministry was impressed that our fish were doing so well, subsequently, they asked us to not reintroduce our fish, but to determine if we could develop a sustainable breeding program for this fish. The fish have been in our care for almost a year and all continue to do well. No breeding yet, they are too young, but we will keep you posted.

# Financial Insights



In 2021, our biggest expenses were associated with our ongoing construction of the Amazon Research Center and overall operations.

Our total income for the year was \$128,620.61 and our total expenses were \$67,277.72 resulting in a net income of \$61,342.89.



# 2021 Donor List

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