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ACA



NEWS



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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By Richard Bireley

Welcome to the summer! It is definitely toasty here in California. It's also typically the doldrums time of year with regard to the fish hobby. But not here! Your BOT is working hard to get the ACA working smoothly and with accountability. We had more

than 30 action items from our last BOT meeting. Various BOT and volunteers are responsible for completing their action items prior to the next meeting. A few action items have due dates well prior to the next BOT meeting. This BOT is working hard to leave the ACA in a better place next year and for years to come.

We have worked through several huge changes this year. Our Webmaster, Megan McGuire created a new modern website and we are working with Megan to get more and more content available to our members and the general public. In addition, our relationship with the CRC officially ended. This is a blow with regard to services for our members. Sadly, it is also fortunate from a financial perspective. Without a significant, new revenue stream, the ACA was looking at insolvency within 3 years. How can that be? The ACA still has plenty of money, right? Well, yes and no. The operating capital, the funds available to manage the day-to-day operations is actually rather limited. Most of the funds held by the ACA are dedicated to research and conservation and cannot be used for general operations. The ACA should target holding about 3 years in operating capital cash reserves in case of down years. However, we don't actually have more than 1 year. We were also forced to move our membership management system to the new website. Along with the issues revolving with our past treasurer, we have had a very full plate. This has definitely led to some complaints. Nobody likes change and there have been so many. Let me be clear that nobody on this BOT foresaw the number and magnitude of the changes and challenges we were going to be faced with. I am proud of this BOT for working through the challenges/problems and dealing with each rationally with the interests of the ACA as the guide to making decisions. Obviously, the financial challenges have been huge. We are only now in a position to create a budget since we had few records from previous years to consult.

Among those critical to understanding our finances is David Fraguglia, otherwise known as D_frag. He has helped tremendously with getting our financial house in order. He is also driving the push to get Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place for officers and the various committee chairs. This is a significant undertaking. David will be running for election again in the fall as he was appointed to his seat in February. We really need his expertise and work ethic back on the board.

Another key piece of this year's BOT is Kapil Mandraker. He brings years of experience and industry knowledge to the table and is helping to keep us on task and moving in the right direction. He will also be running for election in the fall. Please keep Kapil in mind when you see your ballot.

I discussed the convention in Lexington, Kentucky, in my last column. I mentioned that it was a financial success although we still don't have a final tally from the Convention Chair. However, the Convention chair was excited to inform the BOT on several occasions that he had secured sponsorships for all the major expenses. One of the biggest sponsors of the convention was Prestige Aquatics. I was very happy to learn that Prestige Aquatics will again be a major sponsor for next year's convention. Thank you, Prestige Aquatics!

As many of you know, we are going to Milwaukee next year for the ACA convention. Andy Hudson of the Milwaukee Aquarium Society (MAS) is doing a marvelous job as Convention Chair and he has informed us that the American Livebearer Association (ALA) and the Aquatic Gardeners Association (AGA) will be joining us for another fun-filled convention weekend. The International Betta Congress (IBC) will also be putting on a show at the event. Watch the ACA newsletter for convention updates regarding speakers, trips and the cost to attend.

We have had plenty of comments about the website, mostly positive, and many about the content. We are working to add content and I will address this issue in more detail next month. Suffice it to say that the ACA is dedicated to cichlid conservation and as part of that dedication, the ACA intends to prioritize the CARES program. I should have much more information about what that looks like next month.

Finally, nominations for next year's BOT are now open. Please see the note from our Election Chair, Chuck Rambo, elsewhere in this newsletter. We will be requiring candidates to sign a conflict of interest statement in order to be placed on the ballot. As part of our goal of greater transparency, we want candidates to be aware that members of the BOT must serve the ACA and the ACA's best interests. With that said, I don't think this should be viewed as a hurdle. The legal requirements for members of the ACA BOT (or the board of any not-for-profit) are spelled out in State and Federal law. Nothing has changed but we, the ACA BOT, would like potential BOT members to be more aware of what these laws require. I want to personally encourage you to consider running for the BOT. The ACA needs you and your skills. If elected, you will need to attend a monthly Zoom call meeting where business is discussed and you will need to take on a task or two. This is your ACA.

CALL FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEE CANDIDATES 2026

By Chuck Rambo

As the Election Coordinator for the American Cichlid Association, it is my duty to find eight (8), qualified ACA members to run for the available upcoming Board of Trustees elections. The newly elected BOT members will serve a two year term, (2027 and 2028). Some of the tasks they will be asked to participate in include monthly BOT meetings, select / confirm committee chairs, select grant award recipients as well as other ACA business.

Candidates must submit a general address, (town and state) as well as a brief statement of qualifications to the Election Coordinator at elections@cichlid.org, **by no later than September 30, 2026**. The reason for the address is because there is a geographic component to the elections that ensures the best possible representation and also to prevent a local faction from taking over the ACA BOT.

After the deadline passes I will present the candidates to the BOT and we will select up to eight candidates to run for the BOT. These candidates will be presented on a ballot for all ACA members in good standing to vote for a maximum of five (5) candidates. The top 5 candidates with the most votes will be put on the 2027, 2028 BOT.

What kind of person runs for elections?

The late Mayor of Palm Springs and Congressman from California Sonny Bono (Yes, that Sonny Bono from Sonny and Cher), said there are two kinds of people that run for office, one wants to be someone and the other one wants to do something. Sonny Bono wanted to do something. He had a restaurant in Palm Springs and he wanted to promote it by placing a sign by the freeway but the local town council wouldn't let him. If you can't beat them then join them. So he used his notoriety to win the mayor's race and then went on to run and win a seat in Congress which he held until his accidental death. While not being a professionally trained politician, he took his political jobs very seriously and was a very active politician. He did such a great job, a section of freeway, an interchange and a wildlife refuge were all named for him. Not a bad run for a nonpolitician.

We are looking for candidates that want to do something. They want to make the ACA better, stronger and continue to promote our mission statement. Your best

ability is availability. Bring your best and let's keep the ACA prospering in these challenging times. I look forward to hearing from you and reading your statement of qualifications.

FEATURED MEMBER: DAVID FRAGUGLIA



David was 8 years old when his parents brought home a 6-gallon hex tank. It was not specifically meant to be David's tank, but ever the responsible soul that he is, he took over its care. Back in the day, David muses, we would wash the entire tank out and scrub it down to make sure that it was clean. More fish met their doom because of that. He started with tiger barbs, easy. He'd ride his bike the four blocks to the local fish store with a backpack to eventually add cories, angels and a pictus cat. At one point there was close to 20 fish shoe-horned into that tiny tank. Sadly, that tank met its demise when, for some reason unknown to David, his mother picked it up by the upper frame, the tank fell and shattered.

Today, David belongs to the Pacific Coast Cichlid Association, the American Livebearers Association and, oh yeah, the American Cichlid Association. He is currently serving on the board of trustees and is the finance committee chair. David has been a very dynamic and hard-working board member. He has drafted 6 standard operating procedure documents and is currently setting up the financial recordkeeping in QuickBooks. Whenever there is a call to volunteer for something, his hand is always up!

While David has not collected in the wild, he has been to Malawi and Palau for SCUBA excursions. His goal is to travel to Lake Tanganyika, Bali, the Great Barrier Reef, The Seychelles, return to Palau and so many other dive locations. David used to do a talk on Lake Malawi. It was a 40-minute underwater video of Lake Malawi filmed with a Hero3. He narrated it in person, and the shots were pretty amazing (the

author can attest to this as she saw him speak.)

Nowadays, David keeps a variety of cichlids as well as plecos, cories, livebearers - a bit of everything. He doesn't exactly have a "favorite" fish, but does love C. demasoni, the first fish he kept with any success. "Love those ornery buggers!" David also shares his home with a dog. "She's a mutt. Mutts are good dogs." He has had a host of other animals over the years, and he is contemplating a snake. He suspects the other members of his household wouldn't be thrilled with that, however.

When asked what advice he'd give someone thinking of entering the hobby, David advises, "Take your time. Noting about fish keeping is fast. Ask question of the people in front of you. Use the resources around you. Buy local, fish shop owners are much more inclined to help new fishkeepers if they patronize the shop and not just comparison shop against online retailers. And, don't believe half of the things on the internet."

David has attended just about every ACA Convention since 2007 when it was last held in Sacramento. He says he has met some amazing people at these events. David comes early and leaves late so that he can lend a hand at conventions. There tend to be things that need to be done and never enough hands to do them.

His parting sage advice is, "Life is what you make of it. Nobody is getting out of here alive, so enjoy it while you can."



July 21-25, 2027

Mark your calendars now for July of 2027 in Milwaukee, WI!

The ACA will be joining forces with the American Livebearers Association and the Aquatic Gardners Association. International Betta Congress will be there with a show, too!

We already have not one, but **TWO** Platinum sponsors! Prestige Aquatics and ChemiPure. ChemiPure is sponsoring with a both a cash donation and products. Prestige Aquatics is going all out and providing cash donations for the event itself, the biotope aquascaping contest AND the hospitality room. Thank you to both organizations for your continued generous support.

There is a fun-filled schedule coming together including:

- the above mentioned biotope aquascaping contest (hosted by the AGA)
- a betta show
- the ACA cichlid show
- the ALA livebearers show
- the KICK room for the kids
- a bowling & pizza party
- a collecting trip and barbecue
- a tour of the UW Milwaukee Aquaculture Lab
- a Saturday swap meet
- 10 talks
- the Saturday night banquet
- the ACA Friday night auction
- the hospitality room
- and, back by popular demand, the Sunday auction!



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