

MASWA Newsletter

(August 2000)

ATTENTION: This month's MASWA meeting is Wednesday, **30th August**. Check your calendar, because it could be the day you receive this!!!

This Month's Meeting

The meeting will be held at David Bloch's house. David has had quite a few MASWA meetings at his house and I think everyone will agree that his reef tank is always pretty spectacular. David's tank has a "wave-maker" controlling some of his pumps and he has recently added a DIY Calcium Reactor for calcium and alkalinity maintenance, too. So, there are a couple of interesting things to look at besides just David's aquarium inhabitants...but they are interesting, nonetheless. *(The good news for me is, due to a changed birth schedule (these babies are fickle things) and my wife giving me time off for good behaviour, I may still be able to attend this month's meeting. Now, hopefully the baby doesn't change its mind again and decide to come early – Ed).*

The address is **15 Ramsay Close, Noranda**. The meeting will begin at **7.30pm**.

Last Month's Meeting

The last meeting was at Frank Krause's house. This was an unusual meeting as we had two reef tanks to look at in the same room...Frank's and son Ben's tanks.

Frank's Tank

Frank's tank is 1.5 m long (sorry, I didn't get the other dimensions) and is filtered with a home-made downdraft skimmer. It is kept at 28C and lit by two 10,000K 150W metal halides in custom fittings hanging from the ceiling plus four actinic fluorescent tubes in the open-topped "hood" covering the tank. A Laguna 7000 runs the skimmer and recirculates water from the sump to the main tank. An Eheim 1060 also helps move water within the main tank. This pump is on a timer that gives it regular half hour breaks in operation. Frank changes about 20% of the tank water every 6 to 8 weeks and collects the water himself, generally from around Trigg Rock. Consequently, the tank is kept at ocean salinity level. Frank also collects rainwater and uses this to top-off his tank as it drops in level due to evaporation.

This tank appeared very healthy and to prove it, many animals were reproducing. In the tank were a school of 9 or 10 Chromis a pair of which had recently laid eggs that were on view for everyone to see. Percula Clowns have also spawned in the tank and Frank suspects that two Wavy Grubfish are pairing off and may breed soon, too. Quite noticeable in Frank's tank was a large monospecific patch of Bubble-tip anemones at one end. These anemones probably covered about ¼ to 1/3 of the live rock and had started off as 4 individuals but, through asexual reproduction, were now 9 or 10 large adult specimens. It was quite spectacular to see them swaying in the current and it made the whole tank look very natural.

We learnt the secret of the cleanliness of Frank's tank and it is credit cards. Frank scrapes the glass with the credit card and apparently this is very efficient *(Frank tells us that his tank accepts all major credit cards – Ed)* he also wipes the glass with a new Chux cloth on other occasions. For the silicon joints and under the braces around the edge of the tank, he uses a toothbrush *(Apparently he is able to get the strands of algae out of the bristles and get the brush back into the toothbrush holder quick enough that his wife, Jane, still hasn't realised its her brush he's using – Ed).*

Ben's tank was smaller than Frank's (maybe 1 to 1.2 m in length – I didn't get any of the dimensions here), but by no means any less spectacular. Ben won the tank through the "Great Reef Tank Competition" which was an excellent concept set up by his parents to encourage him to improve his maths skills. Ben's tank runs a little cooler than Frank's at 26C and is lit by one 6500K 150W metal halide also in a pendant hanging from the ceiling. A Laguna 5000 recirculates the tank via two outlets plus it drives a "Tony Special" skimmer. The water changes and salinity are the same as in Frank's tank.

Ben's Tank

Ben's tank was also quite spectacular and Ben gave the group a rundown on all the animals in the tank and what they had been doing. Ben also had Chromis in his tank and these had been caught at Carnarvon. A pair of Banggai Cardinalfish had recently bred, but the father hadn't carried the eggs for very long before eating them. *(This seems to be pretty common with the first batch of eggs that a male Banggai carries after being introduced to a new tank. I suspect that it may be lack of conditioning after being starved in the collector's holding facility and then not fed well in the dealer's tanks. All other things being equal, once males have fattened up, they tend to hold the eggs full term – Ed).*

And the winner is...

At the end of the night, a quick poll was taken to see which tank the members thought was the best of the two. Sorry Frank, you were narrowly edged out by your son. Next time, you'll have to pay more attention to your tank and get a toothbrush onto that 1 cm square patch of algae that we found behind a rock at the back of the tank.

New Members

We welcomed three new members to MASWA at the last meeting; Achille, Debbi and Rob. We all wear nametags at the meetings these days, so please, at the next one, go up, introduce yourself and generally make these new members feel welcome.

Seahorse Aquaculture

The society was recently sent a request for information on reliable marine fish wholesalers from Chris Ryan, the managing director of Seahorse Australia. If you think you can help them out, please contact them. You can find them online at www.seahorseaquaculture.com.au

Fish Trap

The society recently bought a Fish Trap for the members. This trap will be available to loan to any financial member. The plan is to loan it out to a member at each meeting. If another member wants to use it before the next meeting, Nathan Cope (ph 0416 09 2000) can be contacted to obtain the details of the member who currently has the trap. The requesting member can then arrange with the holding member when and where they can pick it up. Nathan should be informed whenever the trap changes hands.

A member will be allowed to have the trap for a minimum of two weeks if another member has requested it, but it should be brought back at each meeting regardless. It can then be lent out again. It should be kept in good condition and cleaned before returning it at the meeting or passing it on to another member. It is made out of acrylic, so please, do your best to make sure it doesn't get scratched... it is understandable that it will get some scratching through use, but it is best to keep this to a minimum.

These are currently guidelines rather than rules for the use of the trap, but if conflicts do arise, it may be necessary to tighten up the lending process.

Corals of the World

MASWA members have been given the opportunity to purchase, at a substantial discount, sets of the Australian Institute of Marine Science's new publication, "Corals of the World". This book was written by world-renowned Australian coral biologist/taxonomist, Dr J.E.N. Veron. The three volumes are only available as a set, presented in an attractive slip case. They have been produced using state-of-the-art printing and are section sewn, hard-backed, with strong binding. There are over 450 colour pages, plus an Index, in each volume. They are 397 mm x 210 mm (standard A4) in size.

The set will be released in October this year and will retail for \$265, but marine and conservation associations have been offered them for only \$145 (any profits presumably go to the author and AIMS). That's more than a 45% discount which is an amazing offer considering that book series such as The Modern Coral Reef Aquarium and The Reef Aquarium are around that price for each volume! For more information, including examples of sample pages, see David Bloch at the next meeting.

Orders will be finalised at the next meeting and, so far, we have orders from Nathan, Greg, David, Paul (for Underwater World) and Grant. If you DON'T want your name on the list or you DO want your name on the list but it currently isn't, make sure you see David or contact Nathan by the end of that night.

Raffle Time

Last meeting

Six main prizes were up for grabs at the June meeting; 115mL bottle of Kent "Zoe Marine" vitamin and mineral supplement/food additive, a 250mL jar of Seachem "MatrixCarbon" unique spherical carbon, a 235mL bottle of Kent "Poly.Ox" organic material oxidiser, a 250g jar of Kent Marine "Superbuffer dKh" buffer and KH builder and a jar of Reefs Downunder "InstaKalk" calcium hydroxide.

One of our new members, Debby, took first prize and chose the Zoe Marine after reading what Tony thought about it in the last newsletter. Tony came second and took the Superbuffer dKh. Nathan got the Matrix carbon as third prize. Ronald got the InstaKalk calcium hydroxide as 4th prize and David took the PolyOx as fifth prize.

This meeting

This month's prizes are. A \$2 raffle ticket puts you in the draw to pick one of 5 great prizes!

Memories of Cleaverville – Just North of Karratha

By Frank Krause

The following account is a "warts and all" tale of a coral collecting expedition in a truly remarkable area of our far North-West of Western Australia.

As with visits to most pristine environments one's memories tend to forget the not so pleasant experiences and to dwell upon only the good times.

Examples of the not so good times include; nightly plagues of sand-flies (that cause serious skin infections to any exposed flesh), many days of little sleep, insecticide laden air caused by a mate who has a loathing of Australian Bush flies and a mean trigger-finger with a can of Mortein, a gruelling 23-hour (plus) dash home with the collected specimens that at the journeys end makes you wonder whether it's all worth it.

The reader (at this stage) might well imagine that such an experience might sorely test the novice Coral collector from repeating this adventure. Would you believe though that I'm contemplating doing the exact same trip later in the year?

On with the story...

This tale begins with an invitation from a mate to join him on a Coral & Fish collecting trip to Cleaverville. Having never done this trip, I accepted and fully relied upon Roger (a mate) whom had repeatedly visited the area since the early 80's to make the trip live up to all the wonderful stories he had recounted from past visits. Roger mildly resembling 'Malcolm Douglas' was well equipped for the 3000km round journey. A reliable(?), dare I say, thirsty, petrol-engine powered Landcruiser, towing an off road Jayco pop-top trailer, was to become our home for the next 8 days.

Essential equipment for the trip was to include;

a fat wallet of \$50 dollar bills (our kitty, that would rapidly become depleted of funds), the obligatory three cartons of mid-strength beer, 12 tins of food, basic clothing to suit September's balmy tropical weather, eight hand nets, ten polystyrene foam boxes with plastic liners, about 100m of pre sliced plain butchers paper (to wrap stony corals), ten 20 litre buckets (with lids) for fish, soft corals, *Acropora*, etc., as well as eight DC powered aerators, 15m of airline, 20 air stones, assorted air valving and a 'home built' collapsible fish holding pot.

Additional equipment included;

suitable implements (gimpy hammer, brick bolster & crow bar), to prise the corals from a largely iron ore-based reef, solar panels to charge vehicle batteries and run the fridge (during day light hours), suitable footwear for reef walking and the obligatory flick-rod for a little light game fishing (I lived in hope).

Days 1 & 2

Having planned the trip for over 12 months and making certain that our tidal information for the area was current, we set off with high hopes. Taking two days to drive to our destination, we discussed a range of issues (we sorted out Australia's problems at least twice over) and generally enjoying the scenery. Winter rains had come late but plentiful and the bush was alive with flora and fauna. Areas that hadn't seen water let alone grass were carpeted meadows of flowers.

Day 3

We pull into Karratha to phone the home office (wife & family) to find that "all is well." Visit the local Chicken Treat. Collect two hot chickens and push on up to Cleaverville, approximately 60 - 70kms away.

It's about 2.00pm and we have arrived!!! The ocean is a creamy turquoise in colour (caused by the large tidal movements of this area), the surrounding countryside is mildly undulating with a covering of spinifex and iron-ore outcrops. A prominent lookout (a hill) is nearby which we have chosen to camp near the base of. Two hours later, we have set up our camp, which has a commanding view of the bay. The bay, I'm told, will reveal reef flats filled with corals of many descriptions at around dusk. The tidal movements will govern our existence and sleeping patterns for the next four days. Sleep will become a brief siesta in the mid-afternoons as the tides are occurring early morning and late evening. With day-time temperatures hovering in the mid 30's, it is a comfort to have a pop-top trailer with unzippable canvas ends and mosquito netting that keeps out most of the daytime bugs (except the flies that stick to your back). Sadly the netting would have no affect upon the marauding nocturnal visitors... #%%^&*!*@ sand-flies.

The Reef Walk

That evening after a hurried meal of roast chicken and fresh bread, washed down by a couple of beers, we venture out, armed with nets, buckets, crowbars, torches, and suitable footwear (steel caps) ready for whatever we will come across.

Our first sortie, directly opposite camp, is a bit disappointing, being devoid of the many wondrous corals that we are to see later in the trip. Nevertheless, we manage to collect a few choice specimens from the numerous and coloured *Lobophyllia* and various other brain coral genera. We also collect what I later discover to be a very pleasing and hardy soft coral species. A few clown fish (Tomato), fell to Roger's net as he swept through the anemone-ringed rock pools. Fish were to be a rare commodity on this trip, with only an odd few to be found. A small moray eel and a couple of juvenile painted cray's were to come back to Perth, however. I was to learn that morays grow at a surprising rate in 18 months and are happy to dine on any fish expensive or otherwise in my aquarium.

Having carried out an early reconnoitre, of the area whilst the tide was at its ebb, we chose a couple of reef depressions that would remain full of water and so act as a natural holding area for our specimens for the entire trip.

Day 4

Next morning, as dawn breaks, we head off to the same patch of reef and I receive an education on just how tough corals can be when they remain out of the water on the reef flats. The area we cover is extensive yet "Eldorado", the area that would make patches of the Great Barrier Reef seem pathetic, still eludes us. Roger explains that the mud from tidal creeks nearby and the cyclones that the area regularly receives, creates serious problems for the corals that grow on this iron ore-fringed reef. During this reef walk, I witness an aquarist's nightmare - mantis shrimps as thick as flies and as large as coral prawns scooting between every small rock pool. Large northern species blue-ringed octopuses, along with the odd stonefish, are a constant reminder that we had better watch our step. A few more coral specimens go into our holding area and quite quickly, the tide rushes back to claim the exposed reef flats.

No more reef walking for a few hours, so I try a spot of fishing at midday. Some medium-sized bluebone and queenfish bust my light tackle on the sharp rocks but I've still managed a couple for the pan. The weather is hot and I venture to swim off the beach to enjoy a quick bathe.

Night comes swiftly and we have a repeat of the previous night's reef walk including the #%%^&*!*@ sand-flies.

Days 5 & 6

There is growing excitement in our camp as we realise that the tides are becoming negative and exposing more and more reef flat. We choose a new area further south of camp to walk over and discover areas (about the size of a modest three-bedroom house slab) covered with turquoise/purple octocoral and intermixed with *Euphyllia glabrescens* and the odd piece of *Catalaphyllia*. This is more like it!!! We venture further out and experience difficulties walking due to the amount of stony corals on the reef. *Acroporas*, *Fungias*, *Lobophyllias*, brain corals, bright yellow *Gonioporas*, *Turbinarias* and other wonderful stony corals abound here. We have finally hit the mother lode and I feel like a kid in a sweet shop - which one do I pick first? How many can I take back to Perth? And, we are only 100 metres south of camp!

Later, that same day, we see a mother whale, with calf, frolicking off the bay. We forget about the sleepless nights and feel that it doesn't get any better. Even the festering sand-fly bites and raw skin caused by hours in wet boots during our numerous reef walks are temporarily forgotten.

Day 7

The alarm goes off at 3.00am. Its time to pack! We must ensure that our best efforts are now employed to make sure all our livestock gets home in one piece. We spend the next 90 minutes packing and then hurriedly break camp. Roger points the 'Cruiser southwards and we spend the next 19 hours swapping drivers every hour to avoid falling asleep behind the wheel. The passenger mustn't sleep, either, as he is spotting for 'roos, emus, cows, donkeys, goats and even camels. This is the part of the journey that really makes you wonder whether it was all worth it. Eventually we arrive back home, having brought back twice the amount of corals that can fit into our tanks.

Feeling like a zombie, we wake up a couple of mates at about 1.00am and they arrive to share in the bounty. We hope that we haven't given away the prize pieces of coral, which will only be apparent once the polyps emerge.

Later that day...

Too late we learn that we have given away the choice corals. It's at this stage that we wonder who has become the winners from the trip. We have arrived home with some painful sand-fly injuries and some rather expensive pieces of coral (when you cost up the trip) but to put it in perspective, there are some unforgettable memories of walking through the Eldorado areas of Coral. But at the end of it, we realise that our mates have scored the jackpot, having only lost a couple of hour's sleep for some magnificent corals.

You may ask at this point, "Does a story like this have a conclusion?" My reply, "Not yet... Does anyone want to fly some corals and a passenger back from Karratha maybe later this year"?

Upcoming Meetings

August 30 th :	David Bloch 15 Ramsay Close Noranda Ph: 9375 2438
September 27 th :	Steve Tofts
October 25 th :	Grant Magill
November 29 th :	Fremantle OceanFarm
December 20 th :	Nathan Cope

MASWA's World Wide Web address

<http://www.wantree.com.au/~conquest/andy/maswa/>

Newsletter and General Inquiries

to Nathan Cope E-mail address: copen@one.net.au
or phone on (08) 9367 9251 a/h or 0416 09 2000 b/h

Membership and Treasury Inquiries

to David Bloch E-mail address:
aquatech@opera.iinet.net.au
or phone on (08) 9375 2438 a/h

MASWA Membership

Currently MASWA requests an annual \$20 donation from members, \$10 for Junior members. This covers the cost of newsletters, drinks, nibbles and other costs associated with the society. Members will receive information sheets and discounts on some products.

Friends in Common

Jan Anderson, David Bloch, Darren & Raqual Collins, Nathan Cope, Andy Dolphin, Tony Fiorentino, Achille Gaglia, Paul Groves, Sid Harrison, Sean Hooper, Frank & Ben Krause, Grant Magill, Phil & Caron Melvin, Phil Searle, Ronald Tan, Steve Tofts, Greg Weryk, Rick White.

If you've paid your money and your name is not on this list, tell David! Members on the web should check they are on the web site members list.

If there is anything you would like to know more about or anything you would like to add to the newsletter, call or send comments to the current editor, Nathan Cope. Remember, this is your newsletter.

DISCLAIMER

The Marine Aquarists Society of WA is a name that we, as a group of friends with like interests have applied to ourselves for the purpose of information exchange. No one person, nor the group as a whole, can be held responsible for liabilities, injuries or other that may result either directly or indirectly as a result of our gatherings or the information exchange therein. The same applies to the information contained in this newsletter.