

Into The Fishroom

Written by

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One of my favorite experiences in this great hobby is visiting another hobbyists fish room. Over the years I have seen many rooms and many methods of keeping fish. Here I will tell you of the some of my experience. I remember the very first time I went and saw a real "fish room" it was a few years back and it belonged to a friend of mine named Greg who happened to be the species breeder of the year four years running in our local club. His room was like a store and everyone warned me that if I entered Greg's fish room I wouldn't be able to leave without spending some money. The first thing I noticed while walking downstairs to the basement was the 120 gallon planted tank in the family room. It contained boesmani rainbows, Odessa barbs, clown loaches, and all of them full grown making the ones in the pet stores look shameful and little. After staring in awe for about five minutes at the tank Greg asked me if I would like to see the actual room. As I walked in I could hear the buzz of air pumps and filters and bubbling and I loved that sound. In front of me were some thirty plus aquariums and almost all of them contained many fry. As I was looking at his fish and asking about different plants he kept saying "do you have this plant?" and I would reply "no not really I don't have many plants" and he would reach into the tank and pull a bunch out and bag them and hand them to me and I would thank him. One thing I noticed about his tanks was that they were healthy but not pristine looking. I asked him about that and he said that his fish breed better this way. I didn't question it because there were thousands of fry in that room. Some of the tanks had HOB filters with sponge over the intakes, some of them had sponge filters. On a little counter I could see a few bottles of baby brine shrimp hatching and a bucket of nets. Each tank was labeled with a little post it note stating the species, date of acquiring the species, and date of spawn if applicable. I must have spent three hours in that fish room and I left with about 3 bags of plants and 3 bags of newly acquired fish which were taken home and labeled.

A few weeks later another member of the club invited me to come and see his fish. Without thinking I said "of course" and within fifteen minutes I walked into yet another room of wonder. This time it was pretty much a room dedicated to killifish and a few oddball livebearers. It was Lyle's fish room and it was an inspiration to my fishkeeping. One thing I noticed was that the shelving was very professional looking, and all the smaller tanks were controlled by a central air pump system. That day was my introduction to endlers, aphyosemion australe, aphyosemion cinnamomeous, fundulopanchax gardneri, aphyosemion striatum, and many other killifish. I probably spent close to four or five hours in the room because I had always been fascinated by killifish but have never seen any in person. I asked hundreds of questions and saw the techniques of using spawning mops and incubation for substrate spawners. Lyle is a mentor to me in the killifish hobby and has helped me acquire many of the species I keep just for the sake of keeping them going in the hobby and having them locally.

Recently I have had the opportunity to visit one of the most interesting fish rooms in our locality. What makes it interesting is the fishkeeper. Martin, a long time member of our club and one of the first presidents for our local aquarium society, is a retired fishkeeper who spawned his first fish (*Hyphessobrycon flammeus*) over sixty years ago. What I like most about Martin is his unorthodox techniques in keeping fish. His room contained fish ranging from kribensis cichlids, discus, pearl danios, to bala sharks (full grown of course). He told me that all the sand in his aquariums came from our local beach. He also fed some of his fish while I was there and the diet included porridge (dried oatmeal) for some of his larger fish. I thought these methods

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were quite quaint and funny but I did not question them as there were fry in his tanks ranging from discus fry to the celestial danio formerly known as the galaxy rasbora. One of the most interesting parts of this visit was a fantastic voyage that Martin took me on the history of fishkeeping. He has a scrapbook of photos dating back over forty-five years containing pictures of things such as angel fry, discus, and a split level seventy-five gallon aquarium he built in the 1960s.

So as you can see the fellowship of fishkeeping can be a very rewarding and education experience. Anytime I visit another fishkeepers room I learn something new and find a new species that I have never seen or heard of in many cases. I look forward to visiting other rooms with new species and new techniques on keeping and breeding fish. It's a good thing that there are old timers in the hobby that are welcoming to us newbs and willing to share in the experience.