



Amazon Research Center For Ornamental Fishes

ARCOF

Fall 2022 NEWSLETTER

Raffle Winner Alex Lehner Shares His Experience

Peru 2022

When I read about the raffle in March of this year, I immediately had the hope that a long –cherished dream could come true. So I bought a ticket with the certainty that the money, in any case, is for a good cause. When four weeks later the message came that I was the winner I could believe it, only after three times asking did I understand I had won. So on July 20, 2022, Karsten Schönherr and I began our journey with a very long trip from Munich through Paris and Lima to Iquitos. After more than 20 hours we arrived and stayed in a hotel for two nights –hoping one missing suitcase would arrive. Two days later we started our 8 -day tour on the Nanay River with just one suitcase. We had a great time with local fishermen but also some problems.

On the 3rd of August we arrived at ARCOF and received a warm welcome by Renee, Anthony, Carlos, Eric Thomas, from we felt immediately like the beautiful and well- the laboratory, fish room There is still a lot of facility but all looks this time of the year, so places. We were able to woodcats, Ancistrus and Rescue Center, with a met really amazing



Eric, Alex, and Karsten

the whole Team and Pacific University, so friends. They showed us maintained facility with and the public aquarium. work to finish the amazing. Unfortunately the water level was too high for we took a lot of trips to small rivers and other “secret” catch a lot of our most- wanted fishes like Corydoras, killies. Another highlight was to visit the Manatee private guided tour by Leo. We had a wonderful time, people, and saw beautiful places in Iquitos.



Alex, Caros, Anthony, and Karsten

I have the greatest respect of how such a great project like ARCOF can be borne by private people. Their goal is not only research but also working with local aqua-culturists and fishermen and educating the public, including the children, to protect their treasures “the nature of the Amazon”. Hopefully Anthony and his team can open the public aquarium soon without delay. I hope ARCOF gets a lot of support still and I can just recommend the next raffle. I wish everybody all the best and I hope to come back soon.

Alex Lehner

More about the raffle:

The raffle was so well received, that we are planning on making the raffle an annual event to be held in March of each year. Below are some additional pictures of Alex, Karsten and the team during Alex and Karsten’s stay at the research center.

Karsten Schönherr is a well know catfish enthusiast and photographer in Europe. During their stay Karsten kindly agree to do a lecture for the graduate students from Universidad Nacional de la Amazonia Peruana (UNAP). The lecture took place in the auditorium adjacent to the Aquarium. Below are some photos of the event.



Karsten setting up



Karsten and Alex talk in with some of the students



The attendees



Boots are a must when fishing in the waterways around Iquitos! We had some fun when the only boots that fit Karsten belonged to Renee and came with flowers.



Visit to the Manatee Rescue Center and Amazon Forever



Teaching students how to photograph fish using a fish box

Volunteers and Interns



Last summer was the first summer that we had volunteers and students at the center for the entire summer. It was a good experience and we learned a lot. We are excited to share with you that we are now accepting applications for volunteers and interns year-round. 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

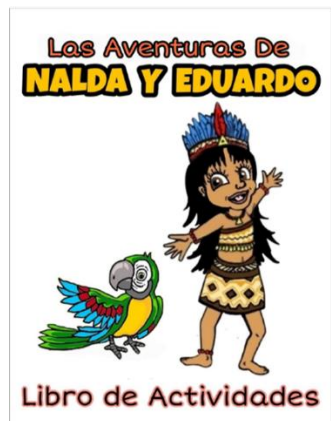


cold running water. The facility has access to laundry services and meals will be provided. There are a limited number of dormitory rooms. Consequently, the number of volunteers and interns we can accept is variable dependent on housing availability. If you are interested in volunteering at the research 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 amaz@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.

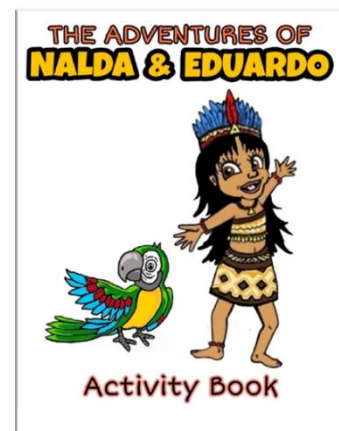
Conservation Education

The following is an update about the 2021 Jim Smith Fund grant to the Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes. The grant was for producing educational materials for the Junior Conservationist program, a program to educate children in and around Iquitos, Peru about the rich ecology of their home.

We are very excited to share with you the results of our educational program featuring Nalda the River Princess. In the accompanying pictures you will see



6th grade students (aged 10 to 12) reading the book we produced with the grant money and doing several of the activities during our time at the school. The book is a story that introduces the children to conservation and the damages being done to the environment. It is also a coloring book that allows the children to color many of the characters and then a variety of activities. Nalda, our hero, has basically led a carefree life until she meets Huayo who educates her. They spend some time together agreeing to meet again soon. As she is swimming upriver she comes across some poachers and decides she needs to do something. That is how she meets Eduardo and thus we have our team, a team that the children can relate to.



Our resident director along with our education coordinator and students from the local university were in attendance in the classroom and led the activities. I'm not sure who was more excited, the children who were very engaged or our staff

who were so excited about the hugely positive response from the children in the class. There were 36 boys and girls in this class. In addition to the book, we also gave each child a colored pencil that actually had 4 different colors in one pencil. Our



initial printing was 220 books in Spanish and 30 in English. The next school we will be going to is in Belen a somewhat poorer school but the children are just as excited. I have already started working on Nalda's next adventure.

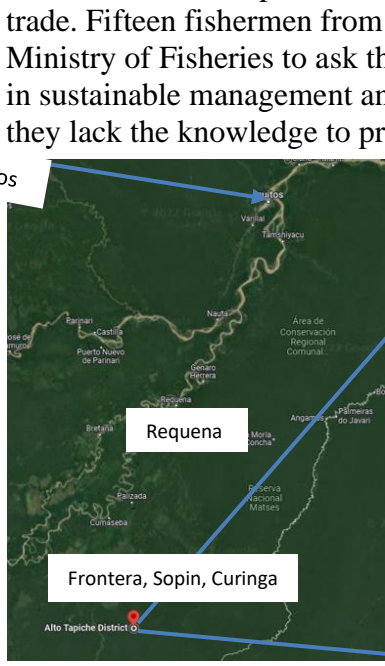


None of this would have been possible without the support of the Jim Smith Fund and their faith in our work for which we are very grateful.



In addition to ARCOF taking conservation education into the classroom; Carlos Chuquipondo, our Resident Director, acted as a judge at a science fair where several different schools from Iquitos and the surrounding area participated. The understanding of the importance associated with preservation of the biodiversity is relatively new and beginning to gain some momentum. Sustainable breeding, recycling, looking at alternatives to littering and/or burning the "trash" are all concepts that are secondary to putting food on the table. The waterways and forests of the Amazon River System have always provided food, transportation, and materials for the peoples living in that region with little thought going into the idea that these natural resources may have a limit.

In late August, Carlos made an exploratory trip to the villages of Frontera, Sopin, and Curinga. These small villages are located some distance from the city of Requena off the Tapiche River and the Rio Blanco. To reach these villages Carlos traveled an additional day by boat, after reaching Requena. The area is remote, the forests are wild and the rivers are abundant with fish, particularly fish exported for the ornamental fish (aquarium) trade.



Fifteen fishermen from each village came together as a group to approach the Ministry of Fisheries to ask the Ministry if they could help them referring an expert in sustainable management and breeding of ornamental fish. The group realizes that they lack the knowledge to provide the care necessary to properly care for the wild caught fish over a period of time and to actually breed these same fish.



We were particularly excited about this opportunity as the ornamental fish found in this area of Peru are fish of ecological and economic importance. Initially, the focus of the fishermen was to improve their knowledge so that the “intermediaries” who buy the fish from the fisherman and go on to sell these same fish to the exporters would stop taking advantage of them and start paying a more competitive price for the fish.



Carlos spent a week with this group and provided three focused educational presentations, with hands on training. The fishermen were very happy with the training and asked for additional training both on site in their villages and at the research center. Since the first meeting in August, a contingent of the larger group of fishermen came to the research center to not only continue their training but to ask for additional training on the establishment of aquaculture ponds in their own villages. Being able to sustainably breed high demand ornamental fish via aquaculture ponds will provide the fishermen with a year-round income as well as relieve the pressure on the numbers of wild caught fish currently removed from the environment.

Opening of The Aquarium of the Amazon

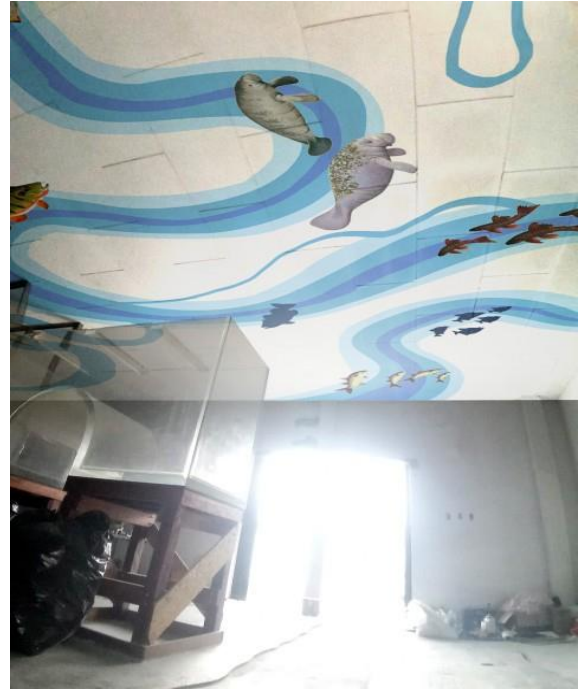
You may remember in our Spring newsletter we announced the opening of the Aquarium, in the Summer of 2022. Unfortunately, after an exhaustive attempt to use materials produced in Peru to construct the larger tanks we were faced with the reality that we could not construct the tanks in such a way that they would not leak. Following a discussion with our Board of Directors, the decision was made to dismantle the leaking tanks (7 in total) and to have them rebuilt utilizing fiberglass. We have since purchased these tanks from a large manufacturer in China. Anthony and I felt strongly that we had made an educated decision regarding the initial construction of these tanks, that regrettably did not work out. As such we have donated monies to the Research Center that will cover all of the costs associated with the fiberglass tanks including shipping.

As we await the arrival of the fiberglass we have not been idle. The floor of the Aquarium was completed to include a representation of the river poured with blue cement. Just follow the river to see all of the exhibits.



We have spent a lot of time discussing ways to make the Aquarium an experience that visitors will enjoy and learn from. The blue in the tile floor represents the river as it meanders through the Amazon Rain Forest. To better help our visitors get a sense of the river and the life within it they only have to look up.

To the right and below is an artist's graphic representation of what the ceiling of the Aquarium will look like. We have contracted with the artist and he will begin this project in



December. Our hope is that visitors to the Aquarium will leave with a better understanding of the diversity of the life within the river and how important the biodiversity of the Amazon Rain Forest is to the overall environment of the earth.

Lastly, we have excavated the road into and out of the research center to allow vehicles such as school and tourist buses as well as any personal vehicles. Although the main form of transportation in Iquitos remains the “moto taxi” or motorcycle we are seeing more and more small vehicles in addition to an increase in tourism.



Talk with the Experts

One of the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic was that fish clubs across the country were not able to meet. In March of 2021, we launched our “Talk with the Experts” webinars featuring guest speakers who were considered experts in their field. This was done as a way to offer an opportunity for those interested to attend a lecture and interact with the speaker following the presentation. The webinars were very well received with good attendance. However, now almost two years later we are seeing that the need has diminished. Consequently, we will still host the webinars but the frequency will be less. Below are the highlights from our last speaker in September 2022.

Dr. Jena Questen, DVM, CertAqV, Board Member US “Aquatic Animal Cases in Fish Veterinary Practice”

Dr. Questen is an accomplished veterinary practitioner and business owner with over 28 years of veterinary experience working with several species. Dr. Questen is the 21st person in the world to achieve the CertAqV designation through the World Aquatic Veterinary Medical Association for proficiency in aquatic animal medicine. She was awarded a three-year appointment to the American Veterinary Medical Association aquatics committee representing private clinical practice-companion aquatic animals 2008-2011; with a second appointment to the aquatics committee and one year as chair from 2011-2014. Dr. Questen served as the chair of the Aquatics Promotion and Outreach subcommittee, AVMA liaison to the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums 2011-2014, while actively participating in the Veterinary Advisory Committee to the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. Currently, Dr. Questen serves on the Executive Board for the WAVMA, as well as the Credentialing Committee (since 2016), and is the current chair of the Education Committee. She now owns and operates a veterinary practice outside of Denver, Colorado (Aspen Park Vet Hospital), the only one in the central US that offers specific hospitalization facilities for fish and other animals.



Ways You Can Help

- The Amazon Research Center for Ornamental Fishes is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. As such we rely on the good will of our followers to help with the expenses of running the center. We would like to share with you that one way that you can help is through Amazon.com/smile. Amazon.com has a program that donates a small percentage of all purchases to the charity of your choice, if this is something you are interested in we are registered on Amazon.com/smile as “Amazon Research Center, Inc.”
- Become a volunteer
- Check out our online store at amazonresearchcenter.org
- Watch for further information on our end of the year fundraiser starting on “Giving Tuesday” November 29th.

