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Exotics popular with students

Fish ideal pets in small areas

by David Calvert
Battalion Reporter

For students who miss the family pet but can't have a dog or cat because of dormitory or apartment rules, an aquarium of tropical fish may be the answer.

Janette Jacobs, co-owner of Animal World in Bryan, said most varieties of tropical fish make excellent pets.

"Fish make great pets because they are soothing to watch," she said. "Their slow, smooth movements have a calming effect when you watch them."

Jacobs said aquariums can cost anywhere from \$5 to more than \$100, depending on the set-up desired.

"Depending on what you want, you can get out cheap or you can spend quite a bit of money on a set-up," she said. "A goldfish in a plain glass bowl costs less than \$5. A good aquarium with accessories would go for around \$35 to \$50."

"Of course, the more you want in your aquarium, the more it will cost."

Jacobs said the basic equipment needed to start an aquarium are the tank, sand, an air pump and filter, a heater and some type of lighting.

There are two types of lighting: incandescent and fluorescent. Fluorescent lighting usually comes in a full hood which covers the top of the tank. While it is more expensive, the fluorescent system is safer for the fish.

"The incandescent light warms the water when it is on, but if it goes off the water cools down drastically," Jacobs said. "These temperature changes place the fish under stress, which increases the chances of them catching disease. The fluorescent light, however, does not affect the temperature of the water."

Bennie Jacobs, co-owner of

Animal World, said the more popular fish are those which are more exotic or aggressive.

"We sell a lot of Siamese Fighting Fish and Oscars," Jacobs said. "People like these fish because they will eat practically anything: any type of commercial food, insects, or other fish. In fact, Oscars will lunge out of the water at anything that comes near the top of the tank."

Other types of fish that are popular with students are butterfly fish, the elephant longnose and the ropefish.

"It seems the weirder the fish looks, the more popular it is," Jacobs said.

When starting an aquarium, Jacobs said it is best to set up a fresh-water tank.

"A salt water tank is a lot of trouble to work with," he said. "You need a much larger tank. You have to keep adding trace elements. And you continually have to monitor the pH level of the water for the fish to survive."

Jacobs said fresh-water fish are easy to care for.

"As long as the fish is in a stable environment, it can live for as long as three four or years," she said. "Disease and overfeeding are the biggest problems facing the aquarium owner."

When too much food is placed in the tank, the fish cannot eat it all. The excess food sinks to the bottom of the tank, where it nitrifies the sand. This can lead to poisoning of the fish.

"On top of this," Jacobs said, "the owner might suspect something is wrong with the fish and add medicine, usually in large doses."

"When the wrong medication is used, ammonia poisoning usually results."

Jacobs said small amounts of food should be sprinkled into the tank four or five times a day.

Jacobs said the most common



Photo by Karen Salt

Jeanne Petrofes, a junior zoology major, is an aquarium buff. Here she syphons the dirty water out of her aquarium in order to clean the

gravel and tank. With proper care, fish make excellent pets for students who live in apartments or dormitories.

fish disease is ichthyophthirius, usually called 'ick.' Ick is caused by a protozoan that lives in the water.

"Ick is like the common cold for fish," Jacobs said. "It is always present but it only attacks the fish when it is under abnormal stress."

Jacobs said the best way to avoid stress on the fish is to leave it in its accustomed environment

and avoid drastic changes in the temperature of the water.

It is also important not to put anything which has been exposed to chemicals or comes from salt water in an aquarium with fresh water fish.

"People like to place seashells in their tanks," Jacobs said. "The salt from these shells will kill fresh-water fish."

"Petrified wood is another

popular item for an aquarium. Before it is placed in the tank, it should be washed in bleach and allowed to dry in the sun for a couple of days."

Jacobs said that buying a healthy fish from the dealer is important.

"If the fish is diseased when you buy it, it probably won't survive being moved to a new tank," Jacobs said.

Arts Council brings B-CS 'culture'

by Amy Polk
Battalion Reporter

Whether it's enjoying the opera or learning to make a quilt, the arts are an important part of American culture. Arts in the Brazos Valley are no exception.

The Arts Council of Brazos Valley is working in coordination with organizations throughout the community to promote its cultural and artistic interests.

The Arts Council, a non-profit organization, serves as an umbrella for its 13 member organizations, which include MSC OPAS, the Community Singers, Stagecenter, and Friends of the Library.

A yearbook put out by the Arts Council of Brazos Valley describes the council as "dedicated to identifying and publicizing the cultural needs of the people in the Brazos Valley and to drafting and supporting long-range plans for the satisfaction of these needs."

The council was started in September of 1970 on the idea that "union gives strength," as stated in the yearbook. Besides the 13 member organizations, there are 205 individual members who help support the council through donations. An estimated 7,000 people are involved in the council.

Major funding for the council is through a percentage of the

hotel and motel tax levied by the cities of Bryan and College Station. Other sources of funding include county funds, membership fees, fund-raising projects and state grants.

Jody Bates, executive director of the Arts Council of Brazos Valley, said the Council has been very lucky in getting plenty of funds. This year's budget will run \$83,000.

The council is governed by a board of 25 directors. They represent the county, cities, schools, member organizations and local businesses. Of the 25 members, seven are employees of Texas A&M University.

The Arts Council publishes a monthly magazine called Pulse

which keeps members up-to-date on upcoming events.

The council has sponsored a Youth Symphony Concert for 6,000 Brazos Valley students for eleven consecutive years. For the past ten years, with the Bryan-College Station Eagle, they have held a Youth Art Show which involves young artists and craftsmen from approximately 35 area schools in eight counties. Each year they sponsor arts and crafts classes for all ages.

Some of their upcoming events include:

— Friday through March 12, the ten-county Youth Art Show in the Brazos Center

— March 21 — April 3, the

Texas Designer Craftsmen Exhibit in the MSC Gallery.

— April 10 — May 10, Smithsonian Exhibit entitled "The Making of a Goblet," to be held in the Brazos Center.

— April 15 — 18, the Annual Brazos de Dios Festival held at the Brazos Pavilion.

— May 30 — August 22, six outdoor concerts in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Department of College Station.

The Arts Council is currently working with Texas A&M University on a project that would set aside 1 percent of the construction cost of new buildings to be used in the purchase of some type of art for the building.