

FishChannel: A Site for Sore Eyes

Let me be your guide to FishChannel and tell you what I like.

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What do I like about FishChannel? Well, of course, I like writing my weekly blog Ebb and Flow. If you haven't noticed, I try and write about some of the issues not just facing the hobby but the world at large, particularly as it relates back to the hobby. Sometimes I go from a micro to macro examination and back to micro again when discussing some issues. Here are some of the other things on FishChannel that I like and while away my time with.

Games. I especially enjoy the memory card game and the fish jigsaw puzzles. These mental distractions can momentarily help me to forget my troubles. I've been trying to crack the 1,200-point mark in the memory game, which I finally accomplished on May 13, 2009. Not bad for a middle-aged crank who suffers from bouts of short-term memory loss. The jigsaw puzzles are lots of fun as well. I like to slide the bar over to the highest degree of difficulty, so it takes me a while to complete them. The one designed by our in-house illustrator (the other two jigsaw puzzles are based on photos) I find to be the most challenging. My 6-year-old daughter Hailey likes to do them too, but I make sure the degree-of-difficulty bar is slid all the way to the left. Even with that, she can sometimes turn into a pint-sized berserker if things don't exactly go her way (i.e., the monitor freezes up, the wireless mouse locks up or I lend a hand without being asked – seems the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree).

Exclusives. I find the online exclusive sections to be invaluable, and there are some really boss (how's that for a rad word) portable document files, or PDFs, you can download for free. All you need is a decent color printer. We try and tout these in the magazine every month so as to encourage FAMA readers to invest a little of their time in checking out FishChannel – and we like to give them a little something for their trouble. I am especially proud of the FAMA Green Tips "Things You Can Do To Save Reefs." This handy one-pager contains 18 actions you can take as an individual hobbyist to help oceans and coral reefs. The online version allows you click onto 16 reef-friendly sites that offer even more activities you can involve yourself, your family and friends in. Download "Things You Can Do To Save Reefs" today and attach it to a tackboard to serve as a reminder that you have the power to make a difference. Better yet, attach it to an e-mail and send it to hardcore and closeted coral reef conservationists alike.

These exclusives are continually in development, so look for new materials each month. Coming in June, FishChannel will be offering a downloadable PDF "Reef Tank Maintenance Schedule." This is being sponsored by Premium Aquatics, and it promises to be one of our most popular downloads ever. The Maintenance Schedule is a beautiful, one-page tool that every reef aquarist will want to download every month to keep track of their daily, bi-weekly, monthly, semi-annual and annual maintenance chores. And if you tend to get a bit foggy when it comes to your setup's upkeep, the Maintenance Schedule lists the chores under the frequency (daily, weekly, etc.) with which they must be addressed.

Videos. One thing I really do enjoy about the Internet is its ability to fold many different mediums (print, sound and video) onto individual user pages. FishChannel is continually offering video links as well as occasional in-house videos produced by our associate web editor. You might want to check out a video of a trip I took about 10 years ago, when I journeyed to the central part of the west coast of Florida to go swimming with manatees. There are plenty of fish to look at on this clip too. The clip is under my "Cavorting With Sea Creatures" blog, which was posted on March 20, 2009.

Found among some of the other videos on FishChannel is one of a large barreleye fish, with a "transparent, fluid-filled shield" covering its head. As it lumbers along, one wonders how this underwater "Baby Huey" keeps from becoming snack food for larger predators. Perhaps it just inhabits too deep a realm for most large predators to access it. The video was shot by a remotely operated vehicle, or ROV (fancy name for an unmanned submersible), at a depth of between 2,000 and 2,600 feet, in California's Monterey Bay.

There are several other nifty videos at the FishChannel archives. One shows exactly why you never want a mantis shrimp in your main display tank. There are two video clips showing mantis shrimp as they make short work of some unlucky crabs.

Community. Finally, I enjoy hearing what those of you in the hobbyist community have to say about what you see, read and experience on FishChannel. Believe it or not, I enjoy hearing from you and reading your comments. If you have questions or want to see something on FishChannel that currently isn't there, let me hear from you. I'll see what I can do for you.

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