Introduction to the Fishkeeping Hobby

Category : Beginners Articles
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A short introduction to the fishkeeping hobby - essential reading for novices

Fishkeeping is a rewarding, relaxing hobby, however looking after fish properly is as involved as looking after any other animal and it is important to learn some basics before buying anything.

After reading this article and deciding which area of fishkeeping you wish to pursue, read the articles in that section as well. We also recommend developing a good rapport with your aquatic retailer who will be able to advise you in more detail, including any regional variations, on your chosen hobby.

Your utmost concern must always be the fishes welfare (and as dying fish never look good, probably your only concern). This means learning a little about water chemistry and other things that you may feel are a little too scientific for you. However knowing about potential problems will help you avoid them so it's worth persevering.
This site has divided the hobby into four areas; Coldwater, Tropical, Marine and Pond/Koi. The first three are names given to fish that are usually kept in tanks indoors, pond fish and Koi are kept outdoors.

Coldwater fish are a group of fish that thrive at 50-74Â°F, generally the easiest fish to keep, especially for those who live in temperate climates. Tropical fish are the largest group of fish available and are mostly prettier than coldwater fish. A tropical tank will need heat and lighting to simulate the environment that these fish naturally occur in. Marine tanks are the hardest (and most expensive) environment to maintain and are probably not suitable for beginners.

If you are interested in either Koi or pond fish you should skip to that section now.

In the wild the natural environment provides for a fish's needs. This includes light, warmth, the supply of oxygen and food plus the removal of harmful compounds such as urine and faeces. In the aquarium it is up to you to provided these essentials. Light is usually provided by fluorescent tubes controlled by a timer device, mounted in the aquarium hood. Food requirements vary species to species. Oxygen absorption at the water surface usually needs to be increased via an air-pump or powerhead that often also powers the filtration system.

Aquarium water usually needs both mechanical and biological filtration to remove water borne solids (mechanical) and harmful dissolved toxins via the nitrogen cycle.
These toxins, if allowed to build up, lead to fish stress and death. Some toxins will however remain so partial water changes must be carried out using conditioned water, the frequency and amount vary, ask you retailer for advice.

So along with you tank, we've established that you'll need lighting, a pump/powerhead/filter and possibly a heater. Now you'll need to look in the fish section that interests you the most and have a look at some of the fish available and learn about their natural environment and how to recreate it.

However there is one thing you should keep in mind if you intend to keep more than one species of fish in a tank (a community aquarium), compatibility.

The fish that share a tank need to be compatible with each other. You must check that the fish you choose can share the same water hardness and pH, temperature requirements are similar, the flow of water is suitable and that they won't fight or eat each other.

Avoid the temptation to rush out and buy whatever you fancy, enjoy the planning stage, take your time and you hobby will be far more rewarding as a result.