

Are You a Badfish Too?

Exploring the toothy side of freshwater aquarium-dwellers BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

Many partake in the hobby of owning carnivorous fish. Whether you personally identify with fast-swimming, meat-chomping predators or you love Animal Planet so much that you want to see it every day, live, in your living room, there are many rewarding and exciting aspects to having your own tank of aggressive fish.

Commonly known as the red-belly piranha, *Pygocentrus nattereri* are sometimes referred to as “the wolf of the water.” These little guys can be found in your local pet store. States such as California and Colorado require permits to own any species of piranha, while some such as Hawaii or Kentucky completely prohibit all species. Oregon has no such regulations, and this is due mostly to the fact that if released into the wild (which one should NEVER do with any fish), the fish wouldn’t survive our cold winter waters.

Though piranhas hold a fearsome reputation in most psyches, they make relatively docile pets. Exceptionally large tanks with big shoals of underfed fish could be potentially dangerous for a human, but said human would also have to decide to stick his/her hand into the tank or go for a swim. “I’ve never in my fifty years of keeping piranhas heard of a fish biting its owner,” says Irving Weiner of Eugene’s Aqua Serene fish supply and pet store. Of course, agitating piranhas for fun is a bad idea and could actually get you (deservedly) bitten.

Smaller tanks of three or four piranhas are ideal for the home aquarium. A good rule of thumb is to get a tank allowing twenty gallons of water per fish and a serious filter, capable of processing more water than your tank holds because piranhas are messy eaters. Water temperature should be between 80 F and 85 F, and your tank décor should replicate the natural environment of piranhas: think Amazon River.

Piranhas prefer live food such as feeder fish or small mice, but frozen foods in the form of bloodworms, shrimp or even chunks of lean beef heart are a good alternative. Ideally, your piranhas should be fed a mix of live and frozen foods. You may have to wait a while for your piranhas to get used to you, as they can be shy about people watching them eat.

In shoals, piranhas swarm their food, tearing it to shreds, but they won’t eat the debris left afterwards — so, like a bad breakup or an ugly party foul, you will inevitably be left to pick up the pieces.

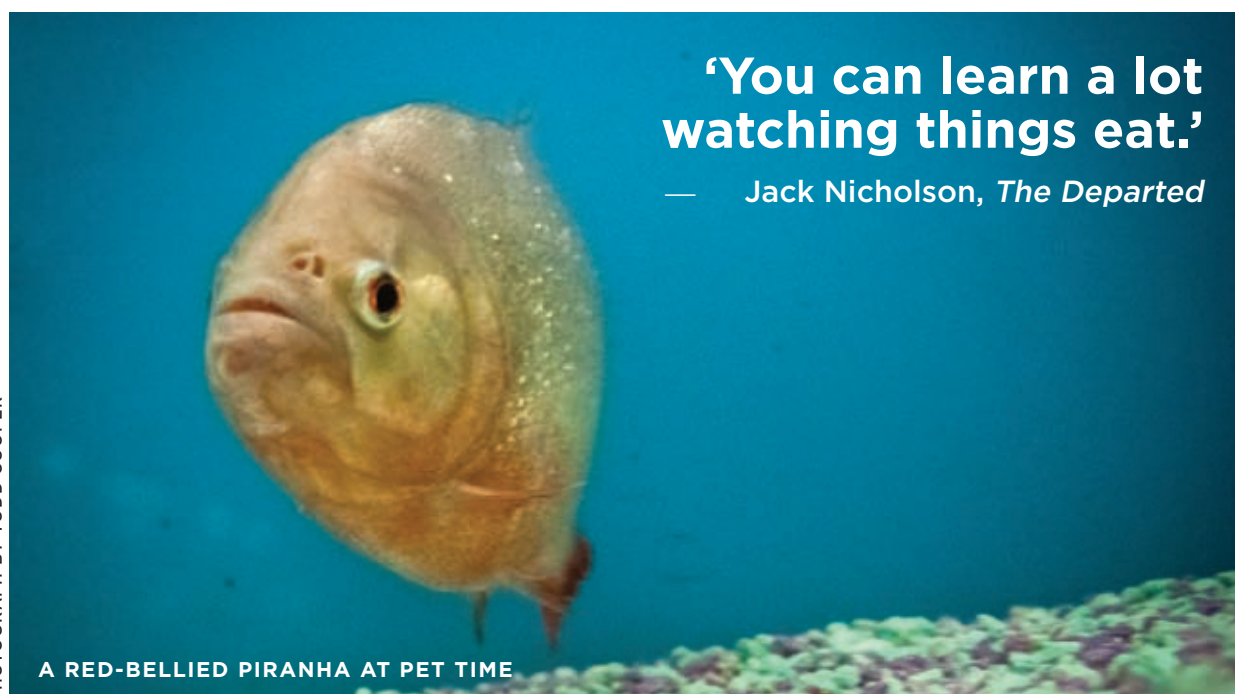
If you want to branch out beyond piranhas, you can also get an *Osteoglossum bicirrhosum*, aka the silver arowana.

Arowana are capable of retracting their entire bodies into an S-curve before launching themselves through the water (or air) at very high speeds. Another cool thing is that they actually wield teeth on their tongues.

The *Hydrocynus vittatus* or African tiger fish looks like something from a nightmare.

“You don’t come across a fish that can squash a goldfish’s head as flat as paper very often,” says Aaron Cundiff, fish-keeper at Pet Time in Eugene. The African tiger fish will eat anything you put in the tank and does not play well with others. They are extremely fast swimming and not a good choice for the first-time keeper of predatory fish. **CW**

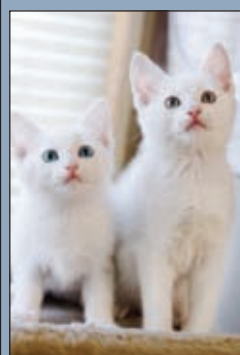
PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COOPER



A RED-BELLIED PIRANHA AT PET TIME

‘You can learn a lot watching things eat.’

— Jack Nicholson, *The Departed*



Smudge and Spitfire. This pair of snow white beauties are ready to go! Smudge is a cuddly lover, while Spitfire earns her name with a feisty, independent “cattitude”. Together they make the purrfect ying-yang duo. #1106-1925, 1926

Pickles and Kimchee Looking for confident, outgoing girls? These ebony twins are very used to kids, other cats and even big and small dogs. Nothing bothers them! You won’t find a sweeter, more snuggly pair of babies! #1106-1784, 1786



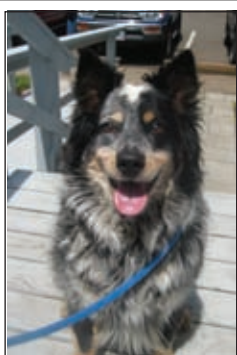
Adopt a Pet

from Lane County Animal Services

3970 WEST 1ST AVE. | EUGENE, OR 97402

(541) 682-3647

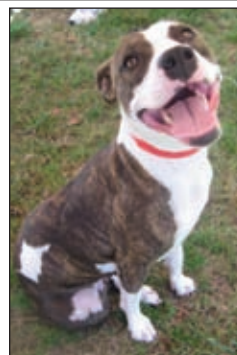
www.lanecounty.org/Animals



Bear I’m an older chubby farm dog, and I’m just getting used to the sights and sounds of the big city. I love other dogs and cats, and am dreaming of a second chance at life, where I can be someone’s devoted pal for my golden years. #1207-0010



Thor, WOW! I am 112 pounds of handsome hunk! I’m a fabulous Rottie that gets along with other dogs and cats, and I have GREAT manners. I’d like to be your guardian and lifelong companion. #1207-0029



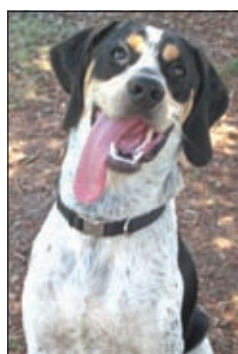
Mitzi, Meet Mitzi! This gem is a medium sized gal with perfect manners! She likes other dogs, cats and kids, and would be a great family dog. This cutie is all smiles, and wants a new home today! #1207-0090



Baby Girl, I’m Baby Girl, an adorable, plump Boxer mix. I LOVE to play, but am not a very active gal. I’d be a great easy going companion in the house, while still knowing how to have a good time with a game of fetch or tug. #1207-0094



Ingrid, Poor Ingrid was terribly neglected, and was lucky to find her way to LCAS. After removing a painful eye and placing her in foster care, she is in great health now! Ingrid is an older Lhasa who needs a loving home that will treat her like the princess she is. #1104-1518



Waldo Where’s Waldo’s perfect home? If the sing-song sound of a Blue Tick Hound is music to your ears, come meet this loveable goofball. He is just a pup, looking for a home that loves hounds and their unique charms. #1207-0005



Duvall Worried about your furniture getting clawed? My name is Duvall, and I will be the perfect indoor kitty for you, as I am declawed. I’d love to be your ultra-affectionate housecat, please! #1207-0063

Make a difference to a dog or cat that needs a loving home

Remember to Love, License and Spay/Neuter Your Pet!



Did you know that Lane County Animal Services saves all of the adoptable animals we receive, as well as providing training and giving medical treatment to our residents that are not-so-adoptable so they can become ready for new homes. You can support our lifesaving mission by donating towards our medical fund (online or in person), or donate much needed supplies. Check out the Wishlist on our website, or at Amazon.Com. LCAS is currently in need of: kitten food, polar fleece (in bolts or blanket size pieces), gently used or new leashes, collars and harnesses and Red Barn semi-moist dog food logs.