

March 01, 2006
Issue 10-01



SKAPA Newsletter

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By Don Harrawood

Algae!!!

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By Ken Austin

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By Elaine Hengen

SKAPA
Appreciating Koi through
Friendship and Knowledge
Since 1996

Celebrating our 10th year

From our President



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Belle Serna, Alfred and Candace Zuno, John and Barbara Collier of Tulsa, OK.

Friends, Happy belated New Year. Time flies as we enter the new year, we have added many new family members and have seen a few leave, we wish them the best continued success, and rest assure your **SKAPA** family will always be there for you.

A few brief words on the progress made during 2005, Thanks to Ken Austin, Don Harrawood, Darrell Dodd and Frank Falcon for putting together a filtration system for the El Paso Zoo Koi pond. SKAPA was also instrumental in donation and construction of the Keystone Heritage Pond. A special thanks to Darrell and Patti Dodd for their extra support and Carol Miller for caring for the Koi. Another major event last year was our annual pond tour, two days, two sides of the mountain, a great effort by club members headed by Robert and Paula Wilson. We had a committee consisting of Don Harrawood (Chairman) Ken Austin, Darrell Dodd and Debbie Hartmann for taking on the Revision of our old bylaws, Thanks to them, last years officers will also served for a second term---**THANKS A LOT BYLAWS COMMITTEE!!!** Anyway our 2006 officers are President Ralph Smith, 1st Vice President Don Harrawood, 2nd Vice President Lalo Aragon, Treasurer Dr. Dennis Reiter, Secretary Elaine Hengen, AKCA Rep Debbie Hartmann, Club Activities Patti Dodd, Librarian Willie Mae Falcon, Web Master/Club Vet Dr. Tom McCabe, Asst. Web Master Jesus Fernandez, Newsletter Editor Darrell Dodd, and SKAPA welcomes John Manns as our new Pond Tour Chairman.

Last but not least, our year concluded with our fun, Festive, and not so filtered holiday party at the fantastic Cattleman's Restaurant. Thanks to Debbie Hartmann, Patti and Darrell Dodd for making sure that all had a great time. In addition to a continued effort to educate our members, thanks to all who submitted articles to our newsletter last year, Don Harrawood, Ken Austin, Darrell Dodd, Elaine Hengen, Linda Doughtie-Lane. To each and everyone of you, please know I appreciate and recognize your efforts and hard work, and let's all work together to continue our successes of **SKAPA**, this being our **10th year**.

As always a big THANK YOU to our sponsors, members, **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS**, as they have chosen to support SKAPA.

THANKS and HAPPY PONDERING,
Smitty

FISH FACT: THE CATFISH HAS OVER 27,000 TASTE BUDS. (WHAT COULD BE SO TASTY ON THE BOTTOM OF A POND?)

Editors Notes:

KOI keeping is becoming more and more popular all over the world and is rapidly growing in the United States. Just to see how popular our hobby is becoming I typed in the word **KOI** into my Google search engine. While I knew there would be many results I was astounded to see that my Google search returned about **26,500,000** results!!!

While we generally think of KOI as an Oriental phenomenon, the Europeans have also been at it for a while. History generally maintains that in approximately 1227 AD, carp breeding was done in Austria and later spread to Germany and France in about 1358 AD and to Denmark in about 1600 AD. Carp were brought from France to America in 1831 and more specifically, to California in 1872. During 1876-87, a large number of carp were brought to America from Germany.

Now that spring is here and water temperatures are warming up, here are some general guidelines for feeding your KOI.

50°F or below:

Fish should not be fed as they are unable to correctly digest food at these temperatures

50°F - 55°F:

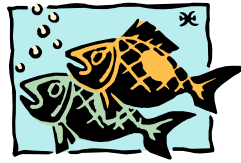
Feed once every three days in the morning. Do not exceed the amount fish will eat within ten minutes. An easily digestible food, e.g., wheat germ, should be used.

55°F - 65°F:

Feed once daily. Do not exceed the amount fish will eat within ten minutes. An easily digestible food, e.g., wheat germ, should be used.

65°F - 85°F:

Feed 2 to 4 times daily. Do not exceed the amount fish will eat within ten minutes.



KOI Talk

By Don Harrowood
Koi Health Advisor

A Few Facts About Koi

1. Their maximum life span is about 200 years in exceptional cases. Normal life span is more like 25 to 35 years if cared for properly.
2. Their maximum length is about 3 feet depending upon blood line and proper care.
3. Koi have no stomach, but have a straight gut. In warm water, koi will digest their food in about 4 hours. For maximum growth, they should be fed what they will eat at 4 hour intervals.
4. Koi will eat many things; however it is best to feed them a well balanced koi food, containing at least 30% protein.
5. The value of a koi mostly depends upon size, pattern, and color. Realistically, a koi is only worth what someone is willing to pay.
6. Koi can withstand a wide range of temperatures and pH values; however a rapid change in either value can cause undue stress and many times will cause death. (Water temperatures from 45° F to 90° F, and pH from 6.5 to 9.0)
7. Koi ponds should have areas that are at least 3 feet deep for koi to hibernate in winter, and should have some shade so they will not sunburn (in very shallow water) in summer.
8. Koi are “schooling” type fish that desire to be with other koi. To keep your koi content, always have more than one koi in your pond or tank.
9. Koi continually excrete ammonia into their surrounding water. If the ammonia level is allowed to become excessive, koi can no longer excrete their waste ammonia and can die from ammonia poisoning. Do not over crowd your pond with fish, and do not over feed. Either condition will add ammonia to the water. A good biological converter will absorb the ammonia and keep your fish healthy.
10. Koi get oxygen from the water through absorption in their gills, where oxygen is absorbed directly into their blood stream. Pond water should be kept well oxygenated all year by waterfalls or other forms of aeration.
11. Koi lay thousands of eggs during spawning season. Male fish fertilize the eggs by spraying the eggs with milt. If the eggs are laid in an open area, they are quickly eaten by the other koi. Baby koi will hatch in 3 – 7 days depending upon water temperature. Less than 50 percent will survive.
12. Koi get along well with other species of fish, as long as the other fish are not aggressive. Koi will eat their young until the fry show some color on their bodies.
13. After transporting koi to another location, float their water bag in the new pond or tank about 30 minutes to equalize water temperature before releasing them. Do not pour water from the bag into the pond or tank. This is a bad practice and can spread disease and/or parasites.
14. Most koi have some parasites. Most parasites are microscopic and cannot be seen without the aid of a microscope. A trained specialist can examine your fish and determine if your pond or fish should be treated to eradicate parasites.
15. Know the water volume of your pond. Koi can be placed under undue stress and sometimes die because the pond owner over dosed their pond with medication algaecides, or other additives. It is important to know the pond water volume when applying these additives. Proper concentrations will generally not cause undue stress to koi.

SKAPA'S CALENDER OF EVENTS

March 18 (Saturday) SKAPA meeting to be held at the home of Liz Hill, 14805 Kingston in Horizon City at 10:00 A.M.

April 1-2 12th annual TKFGS imported fish sale and seminars at Water Garden Gems, just east of San Antonio. For more information, go to: www.texaskoi.com.

April 25 (Tues) SKAPA meeting to be held at ANDALE MEXICAN CUISINE, 3800 N. Mesa D-1 at 6:30 pm . Our guest Speaker will be Dr. Mike Masser of Texas A & M. **SKAPA's KOI PERSON** and **KOI OF THE YEAR** will be selected at this meeting.

MAY 7 Tucson Water plant sale, 8am to 1pm at Reid Park in Tucson, AZ. For more information call (520)760-2393.

JUNE 22-25 AKCA Silver Anniversary Seminar in Buffalo NY, for more information go to www.nfkpc.org or www.akca.org.



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ALGAE !!!!!

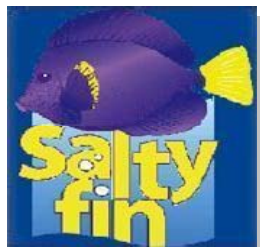
Well here it is, Algae time again and many of us are, or will be, pulling out our hair trying to get rid of that pesky String Algae. I know, I know, not another Algae article. But it is a major problem for most of us and here are some tips that may help.

You may be over feeding your fish. (90% of all algae problems are traced to this) Big, fat and submarine-sized Koi are what we all like to see. If you want to over feed your Koi to insure you get maximum growth you will just have to live with a constant algae problem. Koi are little pigs and they will never refuse food, People who love their fish really enjoy feeding them. It is VERY hard to cut back on the amount of food you feed your fish once you have gotten into a habit. It's easy to train your fish; it's very difficult to train the people feeding them.

You may have too many fish for the size of your pond. The time-tested rule of thumb is to have no more than 1" of fish per 1 square foot of pond surface area for new ponds or water gardens. You can increase that to 2"-3" for established ponds with active bacteria colonies in your biofilter and a healthy plant support system. In time you may find that you can even have more fish. If you have no excess nitrates in your pond you can keep adding Koi to find the edge of what you can support. But, Koi grow and as they grow it will put more pressure on your bio-filtering system. Allow room for Koi growth and keep an eye on any algae outbreak as your first sign that something isn't right.

If you have a full sun pond, be sure to have about 50% of the Surface area covered with Water Lillies or other broad leaf plants and have plenty of submerged oxygenators such as Anacharis, Cobomba Grass and Hornwort to compete for nutrients.

Finally, your pond is not a swimming pool and a certain amount of Algae is healthy for the pond and can actually aid in filtration. The Key is managing the amount of Algae, as you will never get rid of it totally.



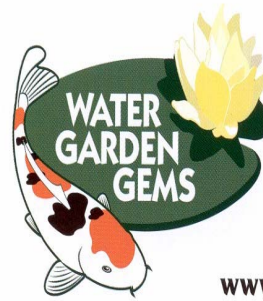
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Cleaning a Pond

(Annual Spring Cleaning)

By Ken Austin, KOI Health Advisor

Assumptions: pond volume less than 1,000 gallons, submersible pump left running all winter, bio-fall type filter/water fall with lava rock media, no rocks or gravel on the pond bottom, no bottom drain on pond, water temperatures are 50 degrees or higher. For other situations, contact one of the Koi Health Advisors for detailed information.

First of all, the muck on the bottom of the pond is probably harboring dragon fly nymphs. Not only are dragon flies fun to watch, they are part of your ponds eco-system. The nymphs can be saved so they can grow into adults this summer. This can be done by taking the time to net out the leaves and muck and pile it on the ground. Watch for a minute or two and you can see the nymphs moving around. Set them aside and put them back in the pond when the cleaning is complete.

Now use a shop vac or a pond vac and go to town cleaning the gunk on the bottom. Clean out any dead plant material in or near the pond. Then do a 50 % to 75% water change, adding sufficient dechlorinator for the volume of water you are adding back in.

The water fall can be cleaned with a high pressure spray nozzle on a garden hose. Spray it down well and put a large Rubbermaid container under the waterfall return to catch the mess coming from it so it does not enter the pond.

The bio-fall filter can be cleaned by first unplugging the pump. The check valve should prevent the biofall from emptying into the pond. Check the pump inlet screen to make sure it is not plugged. Remove the lava rocks and wash them gently with pond water. Lift the mats out - watch out these can be very heavy if filled with muck and hose them down. You can use pond water or tap water for this.

Drain your biofall. If your biofall does not have a drain valve use a sump pump to pump the water out of the biofall, then fill it by turning the pump back on but off again before it overflows and pump/drain it out again. Return the mats and the lava rock turn on pump, sit and relax. Don't panic as there will be some discolored water returning to the pond no matter how hard you try to clean it but the skimmer and biofalls will pick it up again.



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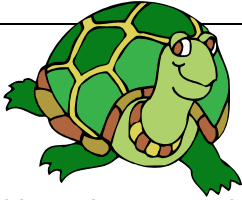
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Turtle Cove

by Elaine Hengen

Spring is arriving in El Paso and soon the turtles will emerge from their winter habitats. In my experience, the aquatic turtles will start becoming active and looking for basking areas before the box turtles come out. This transition from winter to spring is the most difficult and dangerous time for an outdoor water turtle.

In the book *The General Care and Maintenance of Red-Eared Sliders*, Phillippe de Vosjoli writes, "A common cause of turtle death is an intermediate temperature zone, too warm to allow for hibernation yet too cool to stimulate hunger and to allow for the effective function of the immune system. For many turtles this is a range between 66 and 72F. Red-eared sliders kept for prolonged periods of time at these temperatures without a warm basking area stop feeding and develop respiratory infections."

Thus, one of the most important things for a water turtle in the spring is to be able to get out and bask. This will allow them to warm up, start returning to normal functions, and most importantly, to become hungry and be able to digest their food. Last year, one of my painted turtles started eating once the water temperature reached the low 60's. I only fed him a little food at a time and made sure that he was getting out to bask. As a reptile, he cannot generate his own body heat to enable his digestive system to work properly. He is dependent on the warming effect of basking to help him with that.

When the box turtles emerge, the most important thing is to get them proper hydration. They will need water before they will need food. Last year, I brought out 80° water for the turtles to drink and soak in and they loved it. They immediately became more active and alert. As soon as you start seeing your boxes, put out shallow pans of water for them and help them in and out, if necessary. Then you can start feeding them.

The other important thing for turtles emerging from hibernation is to get good nutrients. They haven't eaten in six months, so they need nutritious food, especially green leafy vegetables and yellow and orange vegetables. Each turtle should be given a quick check-up and especially check their eyes and nose. The eyes should be clear and bright, and should not be crusty. The nose should be clean and dry. The nostrils should be open with little or no crusty material at the nose and no discharge.

Turtles are prone to eye problems when suffering from a vitamin A deficiency. Last fall, one of our box turtles, who prefers meat to vegetables, suffered eye problems and vitamin A deficiency and one of our indoor midland painted turtles had the same affliction. Both had puffy eyes and had difficulties in getting their eyes to open. Both required trips to the veterinarian for treatment for this problem as well as intestinal infections. By the way, if you ever need to catch a turtle stool sample, they usually defecate within twenty to thirty minutes after eating.

I have purchased a turtle eye drop that can be used as a preventive for eye diseases caused by Vitamin A deficiency, and plan on trying that out. I have also bought some powdered turtle vitamins and calcium to use occasionally to prevent future problems.



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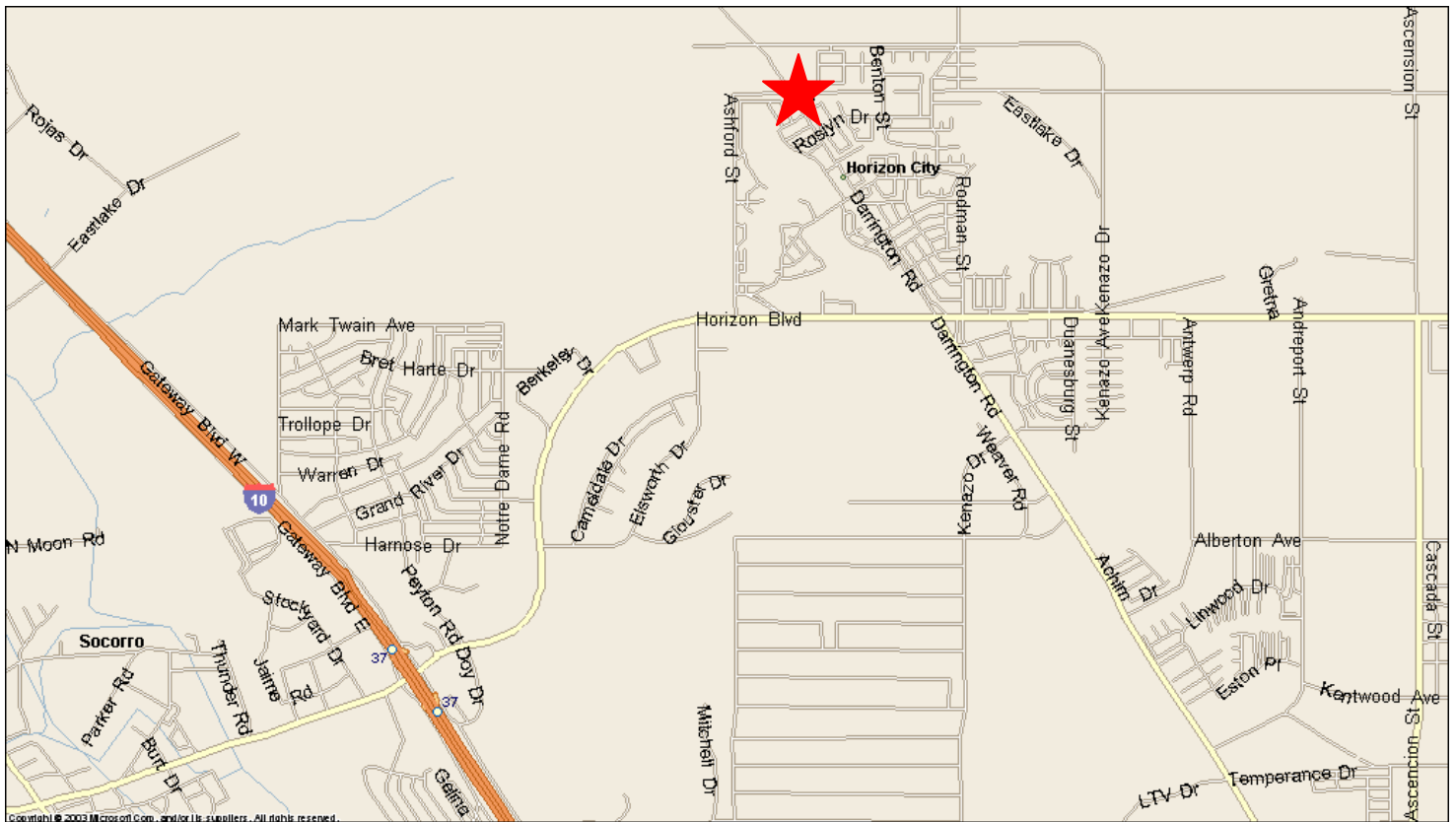


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