

May 14, 2006  
Issue 10-03



## SKAPA Newsletter

### Articles:

Healthy Ponds-Healthy  
Fish  
By Ken Austin

Confessions of a Pond  
Watcher  
By Darrell Dodd

Turtle Cove  
By Elaine Hengen

SKAPA  
Appreciating Koi through  
Friendship and Knowledge  
Since 1996

*Celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> year*

### From our President



**A warm welcome to our new member  
Marianne Schumaker  
We are pleased to have you join us!!!**

Our dinner meeting with Dr. Michael Masser, Pond and Fisheries specialist from Texas A&M, was as always very well attended! We all learn a lot on aquatic environmental issues. I would like to thank Dr. Masser and Dr. Ray Bader also from A&M and all the SKAPA members and guest who attended and making this yet another success.

### 2006 KOI OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Don Harrawood! Don's beautiful Sanke was voted SKAPA's 2006 "Koi of the Year" and will be entered in this years national competition for AKCA's Koi of the Year, to be held in Buffalo, New York on June 22 thru 25, Good luck Don. By the way, 2nd place Koi went to a beautiful Tancho Sanke owned by Ms. Addison L. Christian (Dodd's granddaughter).

### 2006 SKAPA Koi Persons of the Year Patti and Darrell Dodd

Congratulations to Patti and Darrell Dodd who was voted SKAPA koi person's of the year for 2006. The Dodds have been members since 2002. Not only serving as club officers, but since joining SKAPA, Patti and Darrell has fully supported and been active volunteer's for all our special events including Keystone Heritage Park, El Paso Zoo project and SKAPA's annual pond tour. To the Dodds a special thanks from the entire club for all your support and contributions.

Thanks to Southern Arizona Koi Association (SAKA) of Tucson, AZ. for the warm hospitality extended to John Manns, Elaine Hengen, Lalo Aragon and myself at their meeting last month. We had a great time as we met some of there new members and also had a change to get together with some olds friends.

SKAPA recently mailed out postcards from KW Solutions, makers of custom pond nets, helpful during El Paso's hi wind season, they will offer a 10% discount to any SKAPA member that purchases items from them. If you fail to received a card or need more information on these nets, you can go to [www.pondnets.com](http://www.pondnets.com) or call (716) 662-2785.

MAZURI KOI FOOD users can clip there Bonus Program Seal from specially marked packages of MAZURI KOI DIET, In return our club gets \$1.00 for each seal turned in a simple, easy way to earn cash to support the activities and projects of the club. Please support our corporate as they have so generously supported our club.

Did you know that fish can eat up to  
5% of their body weight a day!

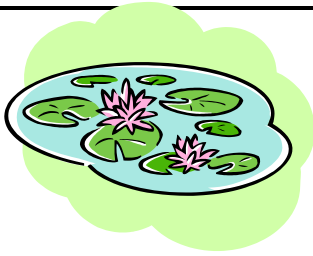
Happy pondering,  
**Smitty**



### Special Summer Feeding

Since their metabolism is in high gear, most pond fish benefit from feedings of high-protein "growth" foods during the summer months. This is the time of year when fish are growing rapidly, developing color, and beginning to store body fat to get them through the long winter, so good nutrition is important.

As always, it is better to feed several small feedings per day, instead of a single large feeding. Fish naturally tend to graze all day, rather than to gorge themselves. It's also best to introduce unfamiliar foods slowly, possibly by mixing it in with their standard diet at first. Uneaten food creates unhealthy conditions.



## Healthy Ponds – Healthy Fish

By Ken Austin

KOI Health Advisor



People of all walks of life become attracted to koi and pond keeping. A pond is a source of immeasurable pleasure. The colors, textures and relaxing environment created allow a total switch off from the hurly burly of every day life. In addition, the pond introduces other life to the yard in the form of fish, amphibians, a greater variety of insects and birds. Another dimension of sound is also created with waterfalls and fountains. Some pond owners unfortunately have to deal with sick fish. Is this a necessary part of pond keeping? Not necessarily.

Water quality is the key to healthy fish. Here are some tips for achieving healthy water and thus healthy fish.

- Your tap water contains chlorine and that is not good for your fish. Whenever you add water to your pond also add dechlorinator. If you have your own well water that may be ok – but have the water tested for fish safe conditions.
- No matter what kind of filter you have it will accumulate sludge and algae. Cleaning (backwashing certain types of filters) is a frequent requirement. If it has been more than one week since you gave your filter some attention, trouble is just around the corner.
- Replacing water lost due to evaporation is not enough. During evaporation only the H<sub>2</sub>O water molecule evaporates and leaves the pond. Harmful components that can not evaporate are not only left behind, they are in a more concentrated form. Therefore it is essential to remove some of the water on a frequent basis. Once per week or at least once every other week remove some water from your pond and fill the pond back up.
- Fish need the water in your pond but not that accumulation of other stuff on the bottom – fish poop, uneaten fish food, and the dust, leaves and debris that blows in. This is a harmful accumulation of organic material. The better designed ponds minimize any such accumulation. Some ponds have a layer of rock or gravel on the bottom. Even if there is some decomposition of the organic material going on amongst the rocks, that organic material is still in the pond contaminating the water, enhancing algae growth and attracting bacteria that can be harmful to your fish. The bigger the pond and the more rocks or gravel in the pond, the harder it is to remove this accumulation of organic material. You may have to resort the chemical treatments to control the algae, and periodic pond cleaning may be the only way to deal with the accumulated organic material.
- Water quality can be defined in specific parameters for a healthy fish environment. Some parameters have to do with a healthy bio-converter – these are ammonia, nitrite, nitrate and dissolved oxygen. Other parameters have to do with a stable pH – these are alkalinity, hardness and the various pH changes throughout the day. There are parameters that indicate the level of contaminants in the water – these are total dissolved solids, oxygen-reduction potential, carbon dioxide, chlorides and salinity. Do you need to know all these values for your pond on a daily basis? – no. It is nice to know what all of them mean in terms of good water quality. As a member of SKAPA, you have access to one of the Koi Health Advisors, who can provide you with information and training on testing your water for all the parameters mentioned above.



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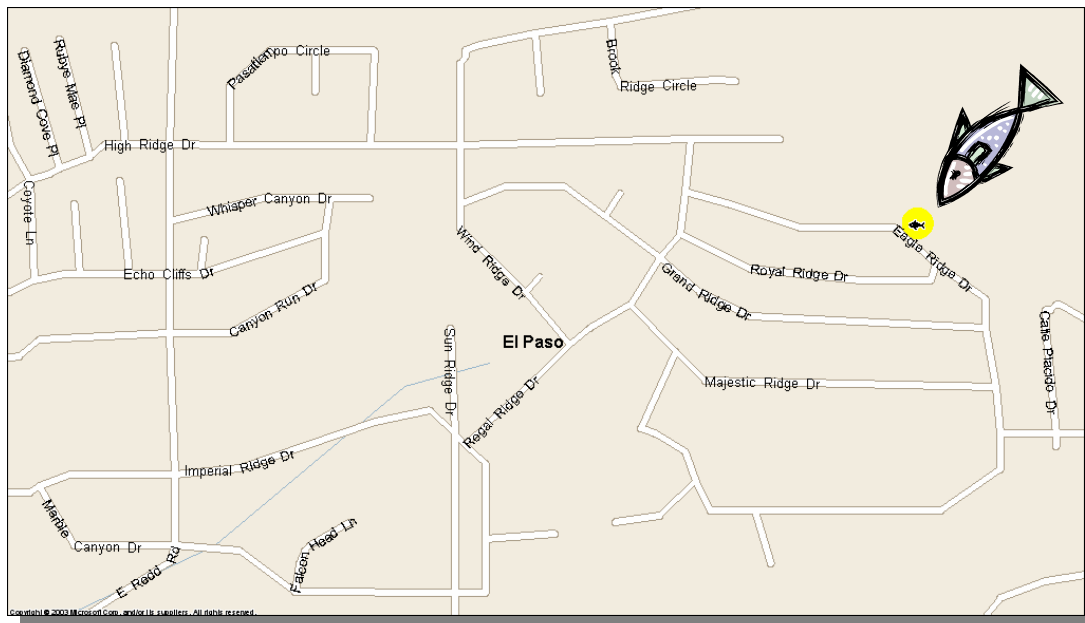
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## Calendar of Events

The May meeting will be held at the home of Don & Nell Harrowood  
1105 Eagle Ridge  
Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 2:30

This will be a very special meeting because Don's pond has recently been redone and was featured on last year's pond tour. His yard was just on the Garden Conservancy's recent tour. Light snacks will be served.



**Don's home on the West Side is very easy to find. From I-10 take the Redd Rd. exit, go east toward the mountain, past Franklin High School until you hit High Ridge, turn right on High Ridge and right again on Regal Ridge. Take the first left at Eagle Ridge.**

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## Fred & Ethel Further Confessions of A Pond Watcher

By Darrell Dodd  
Newsletter Editor

Well it is now the beginning of summer and life in the pond is going at full tilt. The water continues to warm so that the fish will come right up and almost eat out of my hand. Not only does all of the wildlife thrive this time of year but the plants which really make the pond attractive to both animals and humans are in full tilt. The water Iris which in their third year are nearly six feet tall and have already bloomed. The Iris serve to shade the pond and give cover to both fish and frogs. The Bog plants are growing like mad and the Umbrella Plants, Dwarf Cattails, Lizards Tail, Sledge, Taro, Bull Rush and Pickerel Weed are all thriving in the shallow gravel where the web of roots help filter the water to the pond itself. The String Algae in the Bog serves as cover and breeding grounds for Mosquito fish and Tadpoles. The Bog is the only place where the Algae is welcome as it also serves as one of Nature's best filter materials. The Pond is crystal clear and the Spring Algae Bloom in the pond itself has subsided as all of the pond plants develop growth and compete for nutrients with the Algae. Aahh..... Life is good in the Pond.

### *But Wait, Something's wrong!!!*

My beautiful Lilies which have now spread out to cover about 40% of the pond with their wide green leaves are strangely devoid of Blooms. Usually I have 25 to 30 multicolor blooms and this year I only count about 8. I also found loose petals floating around the pond. What could possibly have happened to my wonderful Lilies??? They have survived and thrived for 4 years in the pond and have just gotten better every year. Since they are potted in cloth pots with aquatic soil, gravel and rocks on top, the KOI don't even bother them. Their tubers are strong and thick. What was it?? It was Maddening!!!

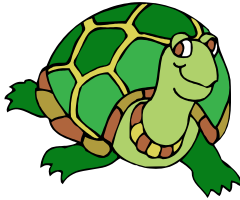
Finally one morning around 6:00 the answer became clear. It was **Fred and Ethel**. Who are Fred and Ethel you say??

Fred and Ethel are a mating pair of Mexican Ducks who appeared at the pond last year. Mexican Ducks are Hybrid Mallards where the Male and Female can only be distinguished by size and the color of their bills. They are attracted by the Mulberries from the tree right next to and partially overhanging the pond.

To my amazement Both Fred and Ethel were happily swimming around the pond handily munching on my beautiful Lily blooms, having had their fill of Mulberries.

While I am not happy about my blooms, I forgive Fred & Ethel as the Pond is a haven for wildlife of all types and soon Fred and Ethel will nest at another location close by, they will be visiting the pond less frequently and my Lilies will once again be in full bloom.

**Online site of the month:**  
**Fun things to do with your fish !**  
**[www.fish-school.com](http://www.fish-school.com)**



## Turtle Cove

by Elaine Hengen  
SKAPA Secretary

It is spring and love is in the air—at least in the turtle world. It does not take long for the male desert box turtles to become amorous after waking up from winter hibernation. In early May, I found one of our female boxes on her back with an injury to her shell. She lost one of the skutes from the edge of her carapace (the top of her shell) near her tail. I can only guess that it was due to some roughhousing by one of the males. Her shell should eventually grow back. In the meantime, I will keep a close eye on her to make sure that the area doesn't become further injured or infected.

In my observations, the box turtles don't seem to have any particular courtship activity. I have occasionally seen a female desert box turtle with her mouth clamped onto a male's fore or hind claw—seemingly the turtle equivalent of, "Not tonight dear, I have a headache."

Aquatic turtles, on the other hand, have a very intriguing courtship ritual, which I have been fortunate enough to witness. Male sliders and painted turtles with the urge to mate will approach the female and get face to face with her. He will then extend his fore claws and vibrate or flutter them about the female's face. The male can also detect the female's scent underwater, thus almost completely ruling out unsuitable inter-species pairings. *Turtles: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual* by Hartmut Wilke, p. 43.

Mature females will often carry and lay eggs even if they are not fertilized. "A female aquatic establishes her eggs in summer and completes their development in springtime, after the winter rest. Before the shell is formed, the eggs are fertilized. This does not require mating each time; many females can store sperm for up to four years. Thus, it could happen that a turtle you acquire already grown, and kept by itself, would lay fertilized eggs after one to three years." Wilke, p. 43.

Both of our outdoor ponds for aquatic turtles are designed to allow the females to get out into a sandy area suitable for egg laying. A female who cannot get out of the water to lay her eggs can become egg-bound, a condition that can be fatal. This is the first spring in the corner pond for our two big female red eared sliders. Both began exploring the walk-out area next to the pond during the first week of May. Previously, they had been oblivious to the fact that they could walk out into this area. No sign yet that they have laid their eggs, but we are keeping a watchful eye.

If your turtle lays eggs, you can check them to see if they are fertilized. Mark the top of the egg and always keep the egg in the same position—don't allow it to roll. Hold the egg upright between your thumb and forefinger in front of a bright light. "If the egg is fertilized, you will be able to detect blood vessels inside at an early stage, and later a darker area that grows as the turtle develops. . . . Fertilized eggs will gain weight over time, whereas unfertilized eggs slowly lose weight as they dry up." Wilke, p. 45.



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