

November 2, 2007
Issue 11-07



SKAPA Newsletter

SKAPA
Appreciating Koi Through
Friendship and Knowledge
Since 1996

Celebrating our 11th year

Articles:

KOI Talk
By Don Harrowood

Cold Water Effects
By Ken Austin

Turtle Cove
By Elaine Hengen

**My Chihuahuan Desert
Wildlife Rescue Ponds**
By Carol Miller

From our
President



A warm welcome to our New Members:

April Yancy, Carol and Edward Mounsey

Don't Forget to sign up for the SKAPA annual Holiday Gala at Ardovino's Desert Crossing, One Ardovino, Dr. in Sunland Park. The party will be at 7pm and there will be a special guest entertainer. Please make advance reservations with Patti Dodd at 585-2035 or at Patti1@elp.rr.com.



Welcome to our circle of pond lovers! We look forward to getting to know you and your families and hope you will enjoy our association. We are always so pleased to have new members. We can all mutually benefit from more shared knowledge and experience.

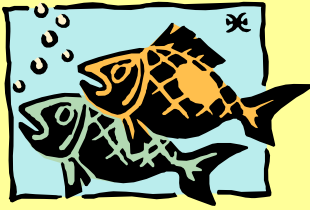
Well, we did it again, another great pond tour. SKAPA's 6th annual pond tour was a BIG SUCCESS and many thanks to each and every one of you who participated and gave your time and talent to make the 2007 SKAPA tour a success. That includes the pond tour committee, volunteers and sponsors. Thanks to our pond tour hosts for opening up their homes to all. We hope you fine folks enjoy the new clear acrylic plaques given to each of you from SKAPA. Thanks to our sponsors: Rhino Self Storage, Mazuri Koi Food, Nash Garden's, First Saving Bank, and new sponsor Jo Ann Matejcek CPA, and as always to PetsBarn for their support thru out the years. A special thanks to our pond tour chairman John Manns and Elaine Hengen for all the hard work put into this tour. From all the pond tour committee a special thanks to committee members Jeanette and Larry Lockard for their extra work.

Thanks to the Las Vegas Koi Club for their warm hospitality extended to me during their 2nd annual Koi Show. I had a great time and met some really cool Koi people. Congratulation to Mike and Leanne Chua of Las Vegas, there beautiful Showa won SKAPA's Friendship Award. Once again Thank you Las Vegas Koi Club, hope to see you guys next year.

2007 Paid Members YTD = 109

Happy Pondering

Smitty



KOI Talk

By Don Harrawood
Koi Health Advisor

KOI NUTRITION

There are many good (and bad) koi feeds available to the Koi Keeper. In general, a good koi food for growth will contain from 32 to 38 percent protein. Protein is the major energy source for koi. This protein should be derived primarily from fish meal, and fish meal should be the first ingredient listed in the contents label. Several less desirable fish foods list plant or animal protein sources as the major ingredient. Koi food should be sealed and stored in a cool, dark, dry place in order to preserve freshness. Old food that is not cared for can become rancid. You should be able to tell if food is rancid by the smell. Fish that are fed a diet of rancid food often results in fatty liver and/or liver cancer. "If in doubt, throw it out." For maximum growth, koi should be fed at least 4 times per day in warm water temperatures. Koi have no stomach and digest their food in about 4 hours. Feed only what they will eat in a few minutes because excess food left in the pond will increase ammonia content of the water. Mix low protein feed (Cheerios or wheat germ) with regular feed in late fall when water temperature reaches the 60 degree range. At 55 degrees, feed all low protein food until water temperature reaches 50 degrees. When the water temperature approaches 50° F. stop feeding, since at that temperature a koi's digestive system is shut down. Normally they will not eat at this temperature, but if they do, it is unhealthy for them, since the food will not digest and will just decay in their intestines. In the Spring, resume feeding a low protein diet (Cheerios or wheat germ) when water temperature has been above 50 degrees for a few days. Gradually mix in some high protein food with the Cheerios as the days and weeks go by, until feeding all high protein foods when water temperatures reach about 60 degrees. As you can see, it is important to be able to determine your pond water temperature, so if you don't have a pond thermometer, you should get one. There are good digital thermometers with water probes on the market (at Nash Gardens and other places) for around \$30. With koi, feeding, water treatments, and medical treatments are all temperature related. For instance, antibiotic treatment of koi in water below 55 degrees has absolutely no effect, since the koi's circulation system is at a virtual standstill.

Below are some questions and answers related to koi nutrition:

- [When Koi Pellets are made they float – how is this done at manufacturing level?](#) Answer: Manufacturers can make koi feed float or sink by juggling the pressure/moisture/heat ratio of the feed in the manufacturing process. If the specific gravity of the food is less than water, the food will float.
- [Some commercial koi foods have red and green pellets in the same packaging – what is the difference between these two different colored pellets?](#) Answer: Color is the only difference.
- [When feeding koi the floating pellets are swept away to the surface skimmer before all the koi collection can finish them – what can be done to avoid this during feeding time?](#) Answer: To avoid this, he may (1) Feed less food at one time in order for the fish to consume the food more quickly and possibly feed a lesser amount several times per day, and (2) Turn off the skimmer during feeding.
- [Which ingredient/ingredients commonly found in koi food can go rancid if the food is old?](#) Answer: Fats and oils.
- [How can you determine old food without a laboratory test?](#) Answer: Old food can be determined by manufacturing dates on the package. (Note: Not all manufacturers put dates on their packages.) Sometimes old food can be determined by smell (rancid) or by sight (webs, mold, etc.).
- [Which part of the food formula produces growth in koi?](#) Answer: Protein is the main ingredient for promoting growth in the koi. In the best foods, this protein is derived from fish meal or other fish products.
- [Why do koi not grow much in winter – if at all?](#) Answer: In winter the water is cold (below 50 degrees F.), koi metabolism is low and they do not eat. This inhibits their growth.
- [Are vitamins in koi food essential?](#) Answer: Yes. Without sufficient vitamins, protein will not function to its full potential.
- [Koi food can be dampened and fed to all size koi – but why is it bad to let the pellets float or stay in water for a long time before being eaten?](#) Answer: Uneaten food will dissolve and pollute the mechanical and biological filters, as well as increasing ammonia levels.

- **Do koi grow to a large size only in a deep pond?** Answer: No, They have been known to grow to tremendous size in small, shallow areas.
- **At what age do koi stop growing?** Answer: Growth slows dramatically at about age 5 – 7 years. Many koi may continue growing to 10 to 12 years, but by a much slower rate. Maximum growth is achieved during the first three years of age.
- **Should koi food have a smell?** Answer: Koi food can have a good and a bad smell. The good smell is the scent of warm fish meal. This food is fresh and should be used. The bad smell is a rancid smell due to the food being old or having been subjected to moisture and/or sunlight. This food is spoiled and should be discarded.
- **How should koi food be stored?** Answer: Koi food should be stored in small sealed containers in a cool, dry, dark area.
- **Why is freshly made food so important?** Answer: Freshly made food is important because it contains essential vitamins and minerals necessary for good koi nutrition. As food gets older, these vitamins and minerals lose much of their potency.
- **Why is feeding stopped at very low water temperatures?** Answer: Koi metabolism slows down drastically in cold water, and they eat very little. When they do eat, the food does not digest properly. Koi in cold water can go for months without feed, and should not be fed until the water temperature rises consistently above 50 degrees F.
- **Is it better to feed koi several times a day or once a day - why?** Answer: In water temperatures above 60 degrees. it is better to feed koi several times a day because they have no stomach for storing food, but have a “straight gut”. They digest their food in about four hours and then will be ready for more. Frequent feeding promotes faster growth.

Any questions about this article should be directed to Don Harrawood, Koi Health Advisor at:
dharrawo@elp.rr.com

Nov. 9 - 11 SAKA (Tucson) 28th annual Koi Show, Vendor Fair & Koi Auction. For more information call: (520) 747-7278 or go to www.sakoia.org.

Nov. 17 SKAPA meeting to be held at the home of Mark and Gail Nash, 269 Fountain at 2pm. It's Pot Luck with Mark behind the Bar-B-Q pit, so bring a side dish to share.

Dec. 12 SKAPA annual Holiday Gala will be held at Ardovino's Desert Crossing, One Ardovino, Dr. in Sunland Park at 7pm. Please make advance reservations with Patti Dodd at 585-2035 or at Patti1@elp.rr.com.

2008 Celebrating our 12th year

Jan and Feb No Meetings

Feb. 8-10 VSKC (Phoenix) 2008 Greater Open Koi and Goldfish Show. For more information call: (602) 502-7125 or go to www.vskc.net.

Remember, you can always find more information and copies of past newsletters on our website at:

skapa.org

Cold Water Effects

By Ken Austin, Master Koi Health Advisor

It is now that time of year in El Paso when your pond water temperature is no longer as warm as it was all summer long. The cooler temperatures will have an effect of both your fish and your pond filter (specifically the bio-converter).

Since fish are cold blooded animals, their metabolism slows down as the water temperature cools down. That means you should be feeding them less. When the water temperature is at or below 62 deg F, feeding once per day is sufficient. At water temperatures below 50 deg F, you should not feed your fish at all until next spring when the water warms up again.

Reduced feeding also helps your filter because at about these same temperatures the bacteria that convert the ammonia to nitrite also become less active. That is OK if you are feeding less – about 2/3 of the ammonia load comes from fish metabolism, so less food means less ammonia for the filter to deal with. Between 62 deg F and 42 deg F there is a dramatic decrease in filter bacteria activity and at cooler temperatures the bacteria is in a dormant state waiting for the water to warm again.

In El Paso there are a limited number of days per year that pond water temperatures are lower than 42 deg F. This is why you should run your filter all year long. There will be at least some bio-activity at the cooler temperatures, and when spring arrives the filter will fully functional almost immediately. Then you can resume the once per day feeding.

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Are Your Dues Up to date?

Your Dues are due January 1st each year.
To receive all of the membership benefits your dues must be current.

Benefits include Informative meetings, Koi Health Advisor services, voting, raffle tickets, reduced subscription rates to Koi USA, annual party, newsletter and discounts at participating vendors.

Contact Don Harrawood dharrawo@elp.rr.com
(915) 833-9339



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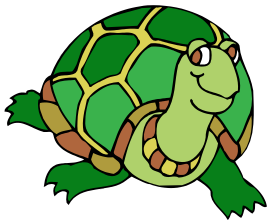
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Turtle Cove

by Elaine Hengen



It's October and outdoor turtles are slowing down and thinking about hibernating. My desert box and three toed box turtles have been digging a lot more than usual, in anticipation of finding the perfect place to sleep through the winter. About half of my aquatic turtles have pretty much stopped eating and the rest are noticeably eating less.

In past years, we have had a few desert box turtles that do not like to bury themselves. They end up in clay pots that we put on their sides in Turtle Town for shelter in the summer and they won't move out. In past years, we have covered them with some sand and lots of hay, with a few more covers when it gets really cold.

We always watch the areas where the boxes dig in. It seems that each winter we will get some very mild weather in January followed by several frigid nights in February. During the warm period, some of the boxes may partially uncover themselves. By knowing where your turtles are hibernating, you can check on them and cover them with old blankets for a few days if necessary.

In past years, I have put food out for the boxes until towards the end of October. You will want to stop feeding box turtles when the high temperatures are regularly falling below 70°. If they can get a lot of warm sun in the day, they'll eat a little longer than if they are mostly in shade. Since they are cold blooded, having a little solar warmth really helps them digest their food this time of year. It is important that turtles digest all of their food and have an empty digestive track before hibernation, so that undigested food does not rot in their intestines. This applies to both land and aquatic turtles.

You should stop feeding your aquatic turtles when the pond water reaches about 65° to 68°, particularly if they are not getting much sun to bask in. If they are sunning a lot, they can eat a little longer—possibly to the end of October. Again, they need to clean out their digestive track before hibernating, so it is very important to monitor the water temperature.

Your aquatic turtles will like to have something to burrow under at the bottom of the pond. This past week, we put some barley straw on the bottom of all three turtle ponds and our aquatics like to get under that. Otherwise, they will hibernate in the pots that we have laying on the bottom of the ponds, so they have something to get into and feel safe.

Not all aquatics will hibernate well. All aquatics have an ability to absorb small amounts of oxygen out of the water through a membrane located in their mouths and are good at holding their breath by storing up body toxins in their shells. But that does not mean that all of them will like hibernating. Therefore, I will frequently check our ponds to see if the turtles are remaining at the bottom and generally out of sight. Seeing an aquatic turtle at the water's surface frequently throughout the winter is a signal that it is not hibernating well. In March, I found Rose (a large red eared slider) upside down on the bottom of the pond. I was able to get her out in time, and she recovered from her pneumonia. I will keep a special eye on her over the winter.



My Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue Ponds

By Carol Miller



My rehabilitation ponds were on the SKAPA pond tour this year, but the ducks and water birds didn't hang around to meet the visitors. They only come to visit and see what's to eat (They bring their friends, too). Each week I buy about three bags of forty pound scratch for them to eat, and Sun Harvest donates old bread. Some mornings I can count about fifty wood ducks and mallards at the pond. With that many ducks visiting, it's hard to keep that large pond clean.

Spring is the best time to see the ducks swimming around on the pond and hiding in the plants. People will bring them to us as hatchlings. Unfortunately, it is because they are found running around on the highway after their mother has been killed by a car or by a dog. Dog attacks are often the case when the mother duck is leading her ducklings to water, and sadly the mother doesn't make it.

One time, three football players brought an adult duck over from Ascarate Park after their picnic because he was starving and begging for food. They brought him in a large dog carrier all the way to the edge of my large pond to let him out. "He bites," one of the guys said. "How hard can a duck bite?" I wondered out loud, but nobody wanted to reach in and find out.

Before I expanded, I used to have a pond in the back yard (about 15 x 8 ft.) for the ducklings. I began to have trouble when they were old enough to fly away, but didn't know where to go. Sometimes they'd end up back in the street or in the neighbor's yard with dogs chasing them. I've also had two young egrets staying on my roof. For more than a month they came down to the yard every day to get some herring and crab from their food dish. They didn't fly away until finally, a flock of adult egrets flew over on the way to the lake across the street.

Now, I have the larger pond out in the field (about 15 x 30 ft.) and the adult ducks and birds stop there on their daily pond hop between the river and the lake. This is important because when the babies are developed and ready to fly, they have adults to lead them to another body of water. I saw the ducks take off one day for their first time, adults leading the way, younger mallards in the middle, flanked by the smaller wood ducks looking like fighter pilots protecting cargo planes.

It is interesting to observe how the young ducks world changes and enlarges as they grow. First, they are in an egg, then confined to a nest, and then in an incubator for a while. Next I place them in a playpen in the yard because they can't get into the pond until they grow feathers. The ducklings would drown at this stage without their feathers. They have a wading pool in their playpen that I fill with string algae and duckweed, their favorite things to eat. Subsequently, they are allowed onto the small pond in the backyard where they are protected from dogs, cats, and other predators. It is not long before they wander out into the field and find the big pond and the adult ducks. Then it is only a matter of time until they can fly away, and the entire Upper Valley is their territory. If they gather with a group that migrates, it is possible the entire northern and southern hemisphere becomes their territory, primarily from Canada to Central America. However, some of the wood ducks and mallards don't leave this area at all.

Domestic Ducks

One day a brown and white female farm-type duck was brought in a catatonic state. She'd been attacked at one of the local ponding areas by the other ducks. This is a common fate in the spring and summer if there are too many males and not enough females. She would drag herself into the baby pool, float around, and then go to sleep under the bushes. After a while she began walking in the yard with a slowly improving limp. This was just in time to baby-sit two baby ducks that turned up, one purple and one yellow. They had been dyed by the feed store for Easter and then dumped in the park by somebody. Soon their white color began emerging as the dye washed away and their feathers grew out. The female duck loved those two ducklings. She would let them eat first and would then finish what remained. They loved whole wheat bread, sliced grapes, and corn that had been peeled carefully off the cob. She would get into the baby pool and float around calling to them to come in. The ducklings would watch, standing on the side, but still would not get in the water, or make any attempt to bathe. As you might imagine, soon they were brown instead of white. They would follow "mom" around the yard dirty and unwashed. Finally, she got the ducklings to go into the pool, but they would only wade. So then for a long while they walked around looking like they were wearing white shorts and brown shirts. Domestic ducks can't stay with wild ones. So I arranged for all three to move away to live in a nice home with a backyard pond.