



Ram fish

Aquarium P

Garry
Walter
Highland Heights,
Kentucky

*Photos ©
Garry Walter*



About five years ago, I took a position at the Newport Aquarium as an educator. Within a few months, most of my fellow employees discovered I was a published wildlife photographer. It wasn't long before one of our biologists asked me to photograph a few images of fish and reptiles for a slide show.

Up to that point, I had only used a flash on a roll or two of film out of two or three thousand rolls. I quickly contacted a colleague to get advice about the photographic equipment and technique I needed to obtain successful photos.

Before long, I was photographing some nice images, of all kinds of a wonderful aquatic creatures, in spite of shooting through the 2-1/2 inch thick acrylic. It's actually quite amazing just how well photos can turn out when using the appropriate equipment and technique.

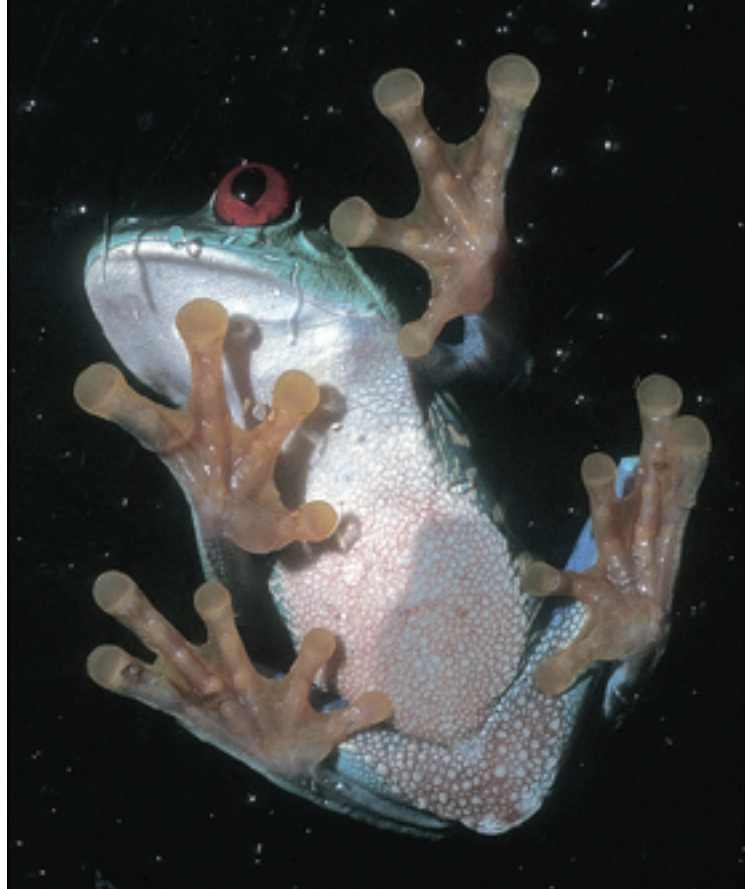
Clark's Clownfish

The only downside is that shadows, flared flash, and small distracting spots can ruin some of your shots. It's easy to concentrate so intently on your subjects that you miss seeing bad backgrounds.

I have a variety of favorite subjects that I check on as I hunt for images. I also have select spots picked out in each enclosure that will produce the best opportunity for outstanding imagery and I concentrate on the selected areas.

After photographing the fish and reptiles for about three years, I have a few tips to pass along to anybody interested in an aquarium safari. It's all relatively simple.

First, if you're really serious, you will need to invest in an off-camera flash bracket. I had one custom-made by a photographer friend, but many camera companies and equipment manufacturers have them available. You will also need a



Red-eyed Tree Frog

hoto Safari

Marine toad



flash cord and a flash. You don't really need a powerful flash unit. I use a Canon 220 EX with my Canon EOS 3 and a 100mm macro lens. Most of my shooting distances will be less than 18 inches, and will use shutter speeds of 60th and 125th of a second at about f8 to f16, depending on the situation. You can use a tripod, but it will slow you down.

While shooting, it is important to get as close to the acrylic as you can—almost touching it. In some cases, you may need to use a damp sponge or soft cloth to clean the area you will be shooting through. Most of the fish visit the same spots over and over again, so you can set up your equipment and wait for their return. As mentioned earlier, it is important to avoid distracting backgrounds.

The final tip is to go early or late, just like a lot of outdoor photography, but for a different reason. This time it is to avoid the crowds. Since I am an employee,



Garry Walter

Any mention of products or services in this article or anywhere else in the *PSA Journal* does not constitute an endorsement or approval of those items.

Guitarfish face



Cottonmouth drinking





Orange Toadfish

I have access to the aquarium before it opens—which is a great advantage. You will want to call ahead and find if your local aquarium can suggest the best time

for a photo shoot. This kind of photography can be a bit iffy—but with practice and patience you can achieve outstanding aquatic photos. 📷

Porcupine Puffer fish

