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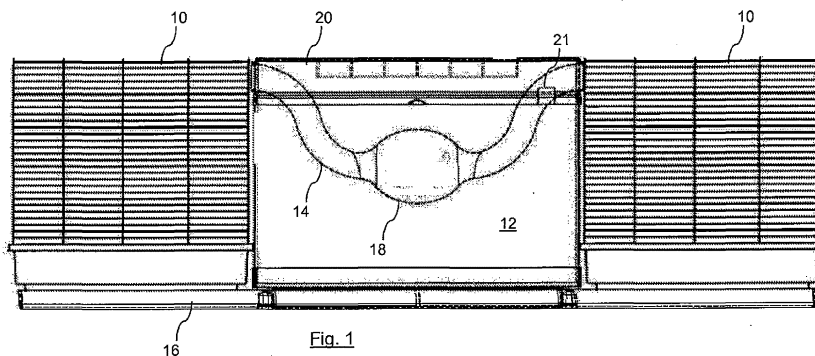
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FR 001383445 A US 6443099 B1
US 6019064 A US 5664524 A
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(54) Title of the Invention: **A structure for housing mammals and fish**
Abstract Title: **A STRUCTURE FOR HOUSING MAMMALS AND FISH**

(57) A structure for housing small mammals and small fish comprises one or more cages 10 for housing the small mammals and a tank 12 for housing the small fish, the tank including a tunnel 14 connected to a cage 10. Advantageously, the tank and tunnel are transparent which allows the pet owner and anyone else viewing the structure to view the mammals as they move from their cage to the tunnel. The structure preferably further comprises a base 16 for locating the tank and each cage. In a preferred embodiment, the structure comprises two cages, and the tunnel is connected to both cages. In this case, the tunnel passes through the centre of the tank and includes an enlarged section 18. The structure provides an interesting environment for keeping pet fish and small mammals such as hamsters.



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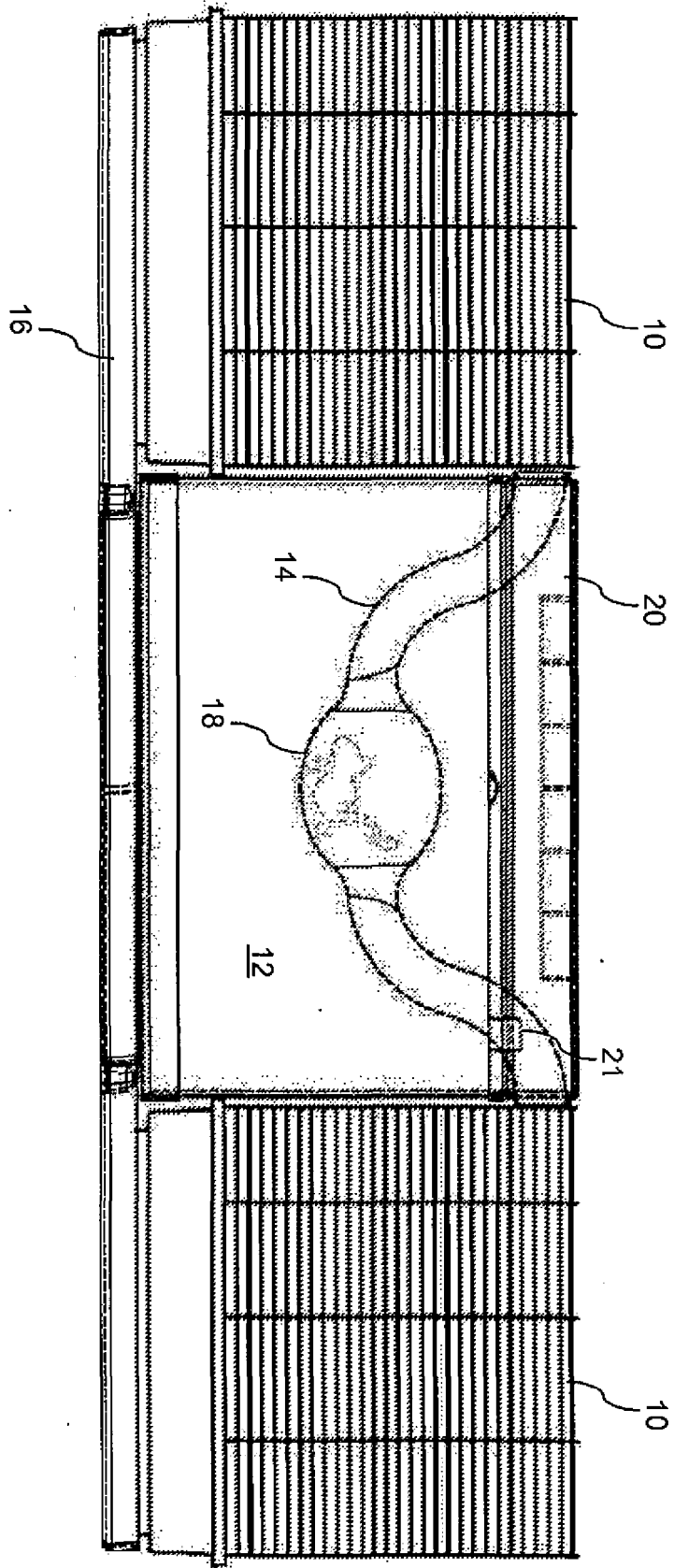


Fig. 1

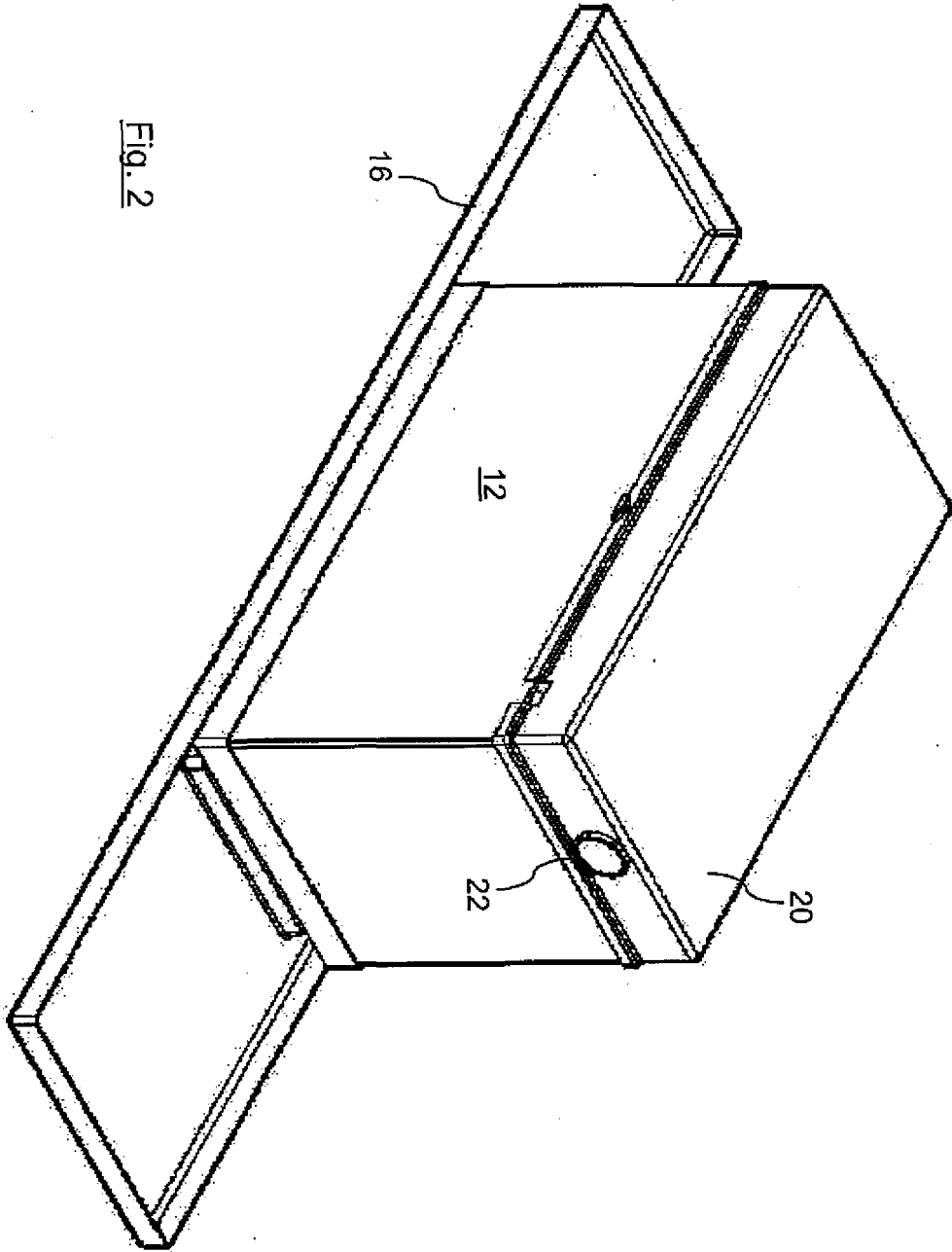


Fig. 2

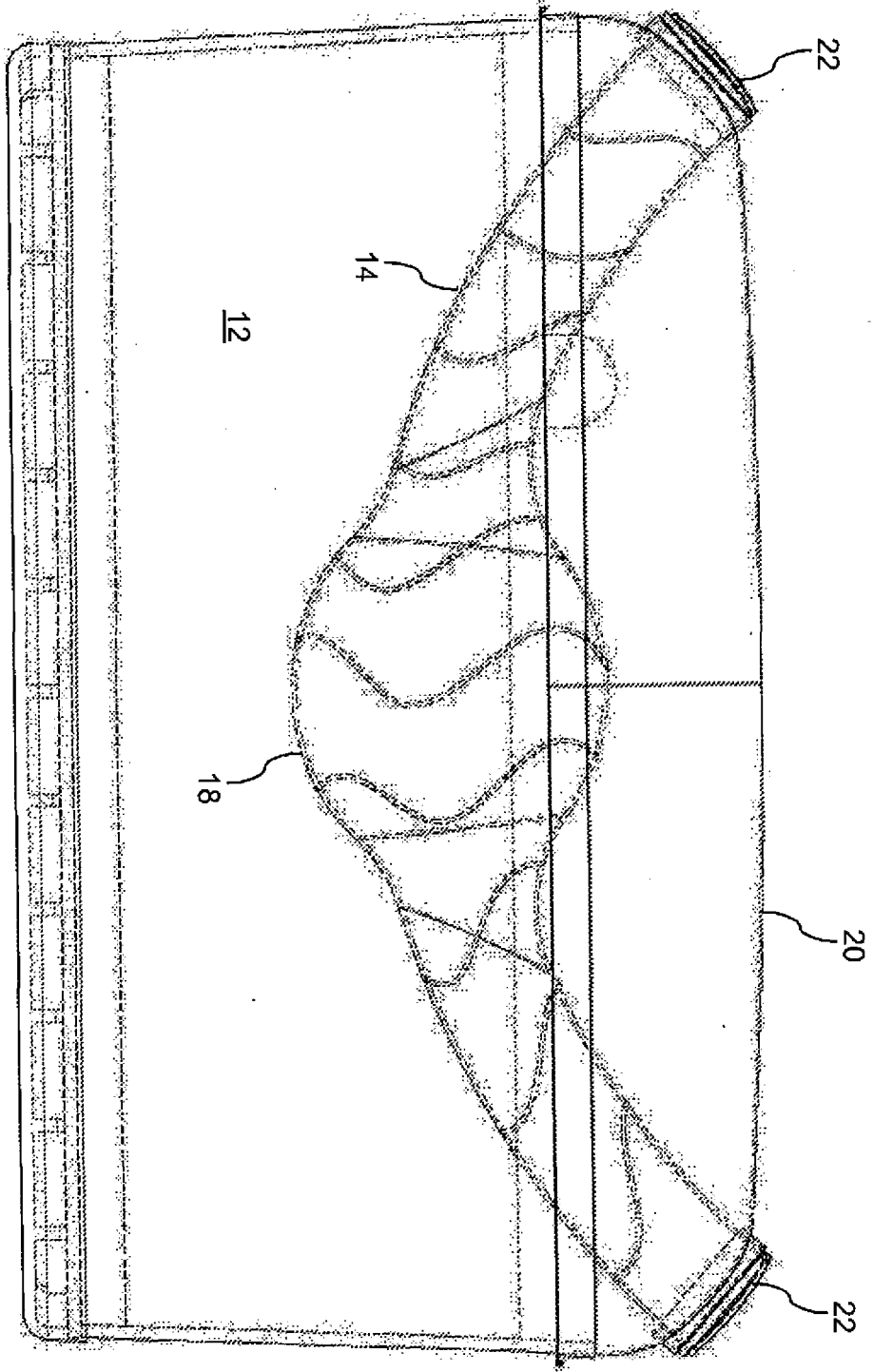


Fig. 3

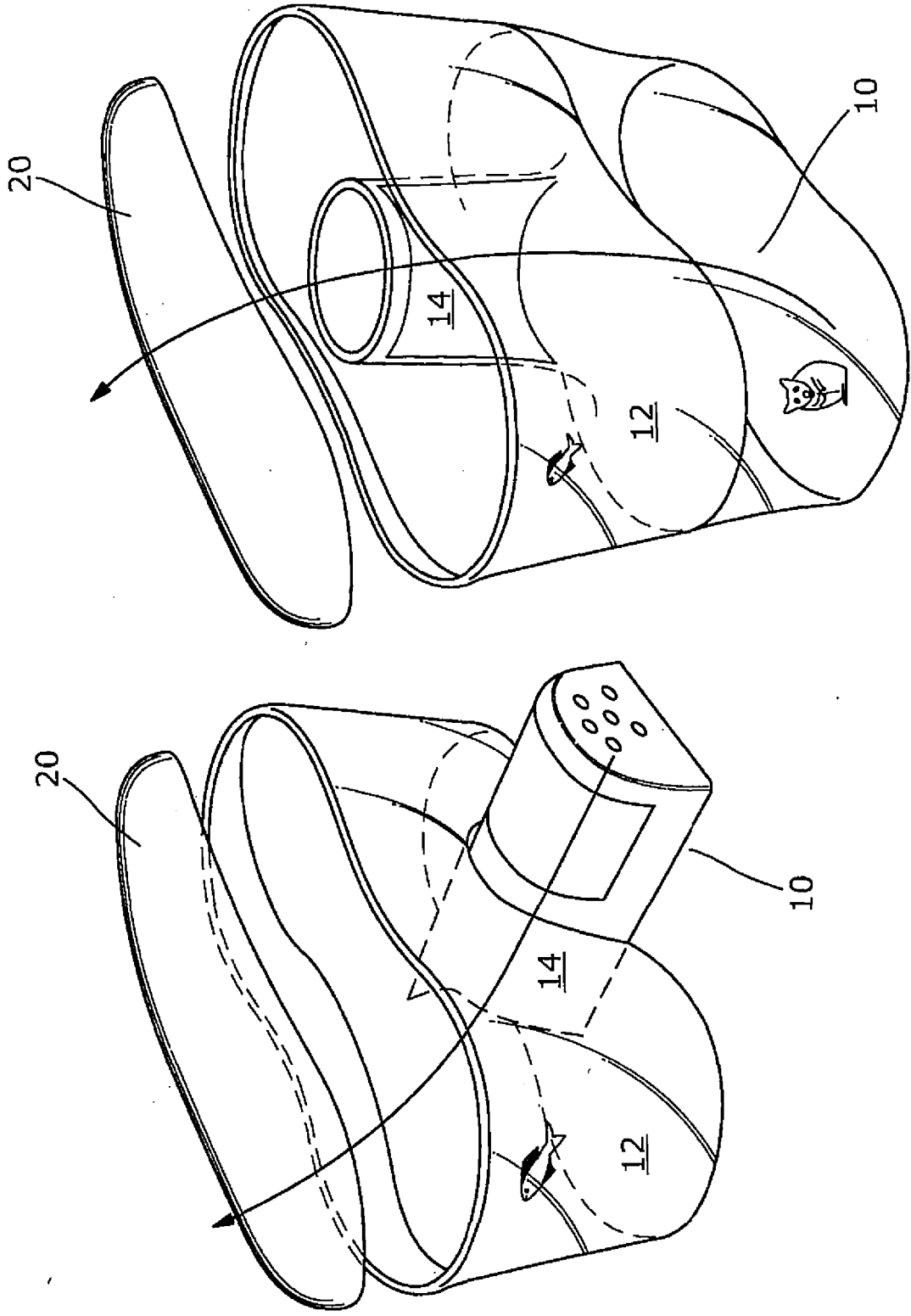


Fig. 4

DESCRIPTION

A STRUCTURE FOR HOUSING MAMMALS AND FISH

5 This invention relates to a structure for housing small mammals and small fish.

 The keeping of pets is very popular amongst both children and adults. Many different types of animals are suitable for being kept as pets including
10 cats and dogs. However animals such as cats and dogs can be expensive to keep as pets and can also place demands on their owners that are difficult to meet in modern working lives. It is also true that in small dwellings such as flats, the keeping of cats and dogs is impracticable. For this reason small fish, both cold water and tropical, are popular pets. Similarly, small mammals such
15 as rodents like mice and hamsters, are also popular as pets. These types of pets are cheaper to look after and require far less day-to-day demands to be attended. However, it can be the case that interest in these smaller pets, particularly for children, can be difficult to maintain.

20 It is therefore an object of the invention to improve upon the known art.

 According to the present invention, there is provided a structure for housing small mammals and small fish comprising one or more cages for housing the small mammals, and a tank for housing the small fish, the tank including a tunnel connected to a cage.

25 Owing to the invention, it is possible to provide a structure that will provide enclosures that can support different types of small pets, but will also allow a level of interaction that will increase the interest and amusement of both the pets themselves and the pet owners. Advantageously, the tank and tunnel are transparent which allows the pet owner and anyone else viewing
30 the structure to view the mammals as they move from their cage to the tunnel.

 In a preferred embodiment, the structure comprises two cages, and the tunnel is connected to both cages. In this case, the tunnel passes through the

centre of the tank and includes an enlarged section. The tunnel allows the mammals to pass from cage to cage and is arranged in such a way that the tunnel passes through the centre of the tank. If the tank contains water to its fullest level, then at least part of the tunnel will be under water and the mammals will be able to pass underwater (in the safety of the tunnel) and be close to the fish in the tank. This creates an interesting environment for the pets being kept in the structure and also provides the pet owners and those viewing the structure with an interesting and unusual combined tank and cage arrangement.

As mentioned above it is advantageous that the tunnel is transparent so that the mammals can see the fish and vice versa. Similarly, the tank is transparent and any viewers of the structure can also see the fish in the tank and the mammals in the tunnel. The enlarged portion of the tunnel is sized and located so that the mammals from the cages are encouraged to remain at this location. This provides interest for the mammals and also for the viewers of the structure. Preferably, the tunnel is U-shaped, with the enlarged portion being at the lowest portion of the U-shape.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a side view of a structure comprising a tank and two cages,

Figure 2 is a perspective from above of part of the structure of Figure 1,

Figure 3 is a side view of a second embodiment of a tank for use in the structure, and

Figure 4 is a perspective view from above of two further embodiments of the structure.

A structure for housing small mammals and small fish is shown in Figure 1. The structure comprises cages 10 for housing the small mammals, and a tank 12 for housing the small fish. The tank 12 includes a tunnel 14 connected to both cages 10. The tunnel 14 passes through the centre of the tank 12 and the tunnel 12 includes an enlarged section 18. The structure also

includes a base 16 for locating the tank 12 and each cage 10. The tank 12 further includes a lid 20 and the tunnel 12 forms part of the lid 20. Each cage 10 is connected to the tunnel 12 and the tunnel 14 allows the small mammals that are being kept in those cages 10 to travel from one cage 10 to the other
5 cage 10.

The lid 20 of the tank 12 is designed to provide sufficient space for the integration of a fluorescent light tube and one or more filters for use within the fish tank 12. The lid 20 is also provided with one or more latches 21 for connecting the lid 20 to the body of the tank 12. The latches 21 secure the lid
10 20 in place in order to counteract over-buoyancy caused by the submerged tube 14.

In normal operation, the tank 12 is filled with water and this allows small fish to be housed in the tank 12. The tunnel 14 has a portion which is below the level of the water in the tank 12 and the interior of the tunnel 14 is sealed
15 from the water. This allows the small mammals stored in the cages 10 to effectively be below the water level of the tank 12, without actually being in contact with that water or with the fish contained in the tank 12. The two “worlds” provided by the structure shown in Figure 1 are completely independent and separate from each other, but the fish and the mammals can
20 get close to each other via the tunnel 14.

The tunnel 14 is transparent so that the mammals can see the fish and vice versa. Similarly, the tank 12 is transparent and the pet owners and any other viewers of the structure can also see the fish in the tank 12 and the mammals in the tunnel 14. The enlarged portion 18 of the tunnel 14 is
25 deliberately sized and located so that the mammals from the cages 10 are encouraged to remain at this location and observe their environment. This provides interest for the mammals and also for the viewers of the structure. The tunnel 14 is U-shaped, with the enlarged portion 18 being at the lowest portion of the U-shape. Since the tank 12 and the tunnel 14 are both
30 transparent, the mammals can be seen travelling between the two cages 10.

Figure 2 shows the tank 12 and base 16 in perspective, without the cages 10 being present to help understand the configuration of the overall

structure. The lid 20 of the tank 12 is provided with a hole 22 at either end which form the entrances and exits of the tunnel 14. Caps can be provided to seal the holes 22 when the cages 10 are not connected. The tunnel 14 is formed to be integral with the lid 20 and this means that when the lid 20 is removed from the tank 12, the tunnel 14 is also removed. The base 16 can be seen more clearly in Figure 2. The purpose of the base 16 is to provide the user of the structure with assistance with connecting the cages 10 to the tank 12, as the base 16 locates the cages 10 and tank 12 in their correct relative position and holds them in place.

An alternative design of tank 12 is shown in Figure 3. The tank 12 shown in this Figure is still transparent and is still provided with a lid 20 and tunnel 14, which is formed integral with the lid 20. The tunnel 14 is also still provided with an enlarged section 18. The positioning of the holes 22 for entry into the tunnel 14 are, however, provided in a different position and support connection to different cages 10 from those shown in Figure 1. The structure can be seen as a modular structure that is created by the combining together of different tanks 12 and cages 10. This allows a range of different designs to be supported and a user can choose from different sizes and designs of tank 12 and cage 10 when they purchase the structure.

The principal of the system embodied in the different structures is the same though. Essentially, the modular elements of the structure are constructed so that there is always a tunnel 14 that travels through the water within the tank 12, when the tank is actually filled with water. This tunnel 14 provides the small mammals with the freedom to travel between the cages 10 and allows the mammals to observe the fish within the tank 12 and be observed by the pet owner or anyone else viewing the structure. The enlarged section 18 of the tunnel 14 provides a viewing area for the mammals to pause and observe their surroundings and provides an ideal location for these small pets to be observed by humans.

Two further embodiments of the structure are shown in Figure 4, which illustrate the very wide range of design possibilities that exist for the shape of the tank 12 and the shape and configuration of the tunnel 14. In the left hand

embodiment shown in Figure 4, the tunnel 14 is formed as an arch in the bottom of the tank 14. The cage 10 runs through this tunnel 14 and the mammals within the cage can observe the fish tank 12 from below. The shape of the cage 10 can vary immensely, but is here shown as a log shape on which the tank 12 is standing. In this embodiment of the structure, there is provided only a single cage 10. It is not essential to have two cages 10.

In the further embodiment shown on the right hand side of Figure 4, there is again only a single cage 10 provided, which lies underneath the tank 12. The tunnel 14 provided in this embodiment of the structure is a vertical tunnel that allows the small mammals within the cage 10 to climb upwards to view the contents of the tank 12. The tunnel 14 can be provided with spiral steps and/or ladders to assist the climbing upwards of the small pets. Although only a single cage 10 is shown in this arrangement, a second cage 10 could be provided on top of the tank 12, such that the horizontal tunnel 14 connects the two cages 10 that are above and below the tank 12.

CLAIMS

1. A structure for housing small mammals and small fish comprising:
 - 5 ○ one or more cages (10) for housing the small mammals, and
 - a tank (12) for housing the small fish, the tank (12) including a tunnel (14) connected to a cage (10).

2. A structure according to claim 1, and further comprising a base
10 (16) for locating the tank (12) and the or each cage (10).

3. A structure according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the structure comprises two cages (10), and the tunnel (14) is connected to both cages (10).

- 15 4. A structure according to claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the tunnel (14) passes through the centre of the tank (12).

5. A structure according to any preceding claim, wherein the tunnel
 (12) includes an enlarged section (18).
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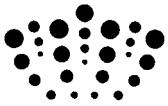
6. A structure according to claim 5, wherein the tunnel (12) is U-shaped and the enlarged portion (18) being at the lowest portion of the U-shape.

- 25 7. A structure according to any preceding claim, wherein the tank (12) further includes a lid (20).

8. A structure according to claim 7, wherein the tunnel (12) forms part of the lid (20).
30

9. A structure according to any preceding claim, wherein the tunnel (12) is transparent.

10. A structure substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB1109480.2
Claims searched: 1-9

Examiner: Mrs Nicola Payne
Date of search: 6 October 2011

Patents Act 1977: Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance
X	1-9	US6019064 A (ALARCON) See especially figures
X	1-9	FR1383445 A (LANAI) See especially figures
X	1-9	US6443099 B1 (BOGGS) See especially figures
X	1-9	US4958593 A (HURLBURT) See especially figures
A	-	US3921583 A (SHORES) See especially figures
A	-	US5664524 A (PIGLIA) See especially figures
A	-	US5230298 A (ARTARO) See especially figures

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

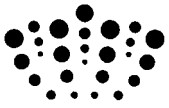
Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^X :

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC

A01K

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report
WPI, EPODOC & Internet



International Classification:

Subclass	Subgroup	Valid From
A01K	0001/03	01/01/2006
A01K	0063/00	01/01/2006