

BAPPING NATIVES



Bryan Stefansky

Saint Paul, MN

Like many who now enjoy keeping native fishes, my roots began in the tropical fish hobby. In the beginning only predators and their voracious feeding habits interested me. However, I soon became intrigued with species compatible in community aquariums. As my interest in the hobby grew—it now encompasses 12 aquariums, two garden ponds, and two livestock troughs (Figure 1)—I decided to join the Minnesota Aquarium Society (MAS). One MAS activity that hooked me immediately was the Breeders Awards Program (BAP). The goals of this program include:

- encouraging members of the aquarium society to breed fish and share knowledge concerning the spawning and rearing of fish.
- providing recognition of the achievements of society members concerning the breeding of fish.
- expanding awareness of and access to a wider variety of species within the society.
- promoting more participation within the society.

HOW BAP WORKS

Species are ranked and assigned points by classes (i.e., Class A [5 points] to Class E [25 points]) dependent on the challenge level required to spawn and rear fry for at least 60 days. Most of my points have been for species in Class B (10 points each), which includes livebearers (i.e. *Limia*, *Phallichthys*, and *Heterandria* in the family Poeciliidae, and members of the family Goodeidae) and mop-spawning killifish. Before I joined MAS, the first native to spawn for me was a pair of Northern Sunfish (*Lepomis peltastes*) (Figure 2). I marveled at how the parents occupied and heroically defended their fry in a corner of a 20-gallon aquarium filled with a school of Carmine Shiners (*Notropis percobromus*). Although there were hundreds of fry initially, I managed to rear 17 through their first year.

Photos by Konrad Schmidt.

In addition to the fishes in my article and a few tropical species (e.g., Wolf Fish), I also keep a Bullfrog, an Umbrella Cockatoo named Zelda, and several chickens. I'm not nuts about Minnesota natives like my father, Konrad, who shanghais me frequently to hold the other end of his seine on his endless series of fish surveys. I do, however, usually get at least one fancy meal out of the deal.



Figure 1. The summer (above) and winter (opposite) homes of my fish.

Table 1. My BAP life-list so far.

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	General Distribution
Goodeids	Butterfly Splitfin	<i>Ameca splendens</i>	Mexico
	Peppered Splitfin	<i>Allodontichthys tamazulae</i>	Mexico
	Goldbreast Splitfin	<i>Illyodon furcidens</i>	Mexico
	Balsas Splitfin	<i>Illyodon whitei</i>	Mexico
	Twoline Skiffia	<i>Neotoca bilneata</i>	Mexico
	Redtail Splitfin	<i>Xenotoca eiseni</i>	Mexico
	Jeweled Splitfin	<i>Xenotoca variata</i>	Mexico
	Tequila Splitfin	<i>Zoogonecticus tequila</i>	Mexico
Killifish	Northern Studfish	<i>Fundulus catenatus</i>	Central and Southeastern US
Livebearers	Western Mosquitofish	<i>Gambusia affinis</i>	Central and Southeastern US
	Blackbelly Limia	<i>Limia melanogaster</i>	Jamaica and Haiti
	Liberty Molly	<i>Poecilia salvatoris</i>	El Salvador
	Endler's Livebearer	<i>Poecilia wingei</i>	Venezuela
Pupfish	Flagfish	<i>Jordanella floridae</i>	Florida

Table 2. BAP continued works in progress and strikeouts.

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	General Distribution
Goodeids	Bold Characodon	<i>Characodon audax</i>	Mexico
	Blackfin Goodea	<i>Goodea atripinis</i>	Mexico
	Golden Skiffia	<i>Skiffia francesae</i>	Mexico
	Blotched Skiffia	<i>Skiffia muipunctata</i>	Mexico
	La Luz Splitfin	<i>Zoogoneticus purhepechus</i>	Mexico
	Livebearers	Cardinal Brachy	<i>Brachyrhaphis roseni</i>
Mangrove Gambusia		<i>Gambusia rhizophorae</i>	Florida and Cuba
Gulf Gambusia		<i>Gambusia vittata</i>	Mexico
Swamp Guppy		<i>Micropoecilia picta</i>	Central and South American
Pupfish	Sailfin Molly	<i>Poecilia latipinna</i>	Southern US and Mexico
	Sheepshead Swordtail	<i>Xiphorou birchmanni</i>	Mexico
Pupfish	Red River Pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon rubrofluviatilis</i>	Oklahoma and Texas



Figure 2. Northern Sunfish. My first native species to spawn in captivity.



Figure 3. Some of the species I have BAPPED: Flagfish (top left), Butterfly Splitfin (top right), Tequila Splitfin (bottom left), and Goldbreast Splitfin (bottom right).

My first successful native to BAP was the Flagfish (*Jordanella floridae*), which also spawned in a community aquarium where Java Moss was used as a spawning medium. This was soon followed by Northern Studfish (*Fundulus catenatus*), which were produced from trophy broodstock acquired during the 2015 NANFA convention in Oklahoma. I have now BAPPED 14 species (Table 1 and Figure 3), however, my focus has shifted primarily to livebearers occurring in Central America and goodeids in Mexico.

KEEPING SCORE

I currently have 145 points and am working toward my Intermediate Breeder Award. Cumulative BAP award cat-

egories are designed to recognize all levels of experience and achievement, from the novice to the expert, as follows:

- Beginning Breeder Award: 100 points (Figure 4)
- Intermediate Breeder Award: 250 points
- Advanced Breeder Award: 500 points
- Expert Breeder Award: 750 points
- Master Breeder Award: 1000 points
- Grand Master Breeder Award: 1500 points
- Life Master Breeder Award: 2000 points

In addition to the cumulative categories, there are a number of recognition awards including:

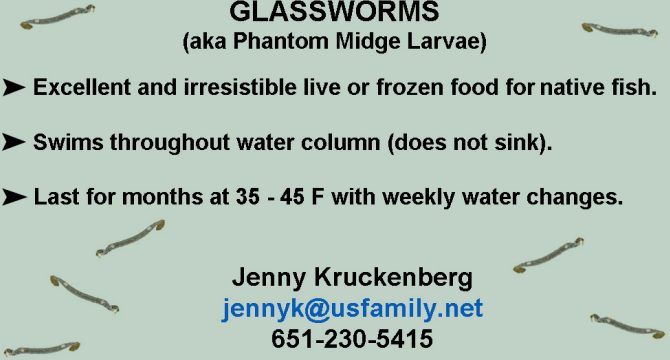
- Rookie-of-the-year
- Breeder-of-the-year
- Specialization
- Diversification
- Marine

WITHOUT CHALLENGES, WHAT REWARDS?

Livebearers are generally easy to get to reproduce in captivity with proper care such as good nutrition (e.g., live and frozen glassworms) and regular water changes. Goodeids generally ignore their fry because of their large size at birth and rearing livebearers and killifish requires little effort provided ample vegetation as cover is provided in community aquariums. However, some species are extremely challeng-

GLASSWORMS
(aka Phantom Midge Larvae)

- ▶ Excellent and irresistible live or frozen food for native fish.
- ▶ Swims throughout water column (does not sink).
- ▶ Last for months at 35 - 45 F with weekly water changes.



Jenny Kruckenberg
jennyk@usfamily.net
 651-230-5415



Figure 3 (continued). More species I have BAPPED: Balsas Splifin (top left), Blackbelly Limia (top right), Redtail Splitfin (bottom left), and Liberty Molly (bottom right).

ing. Some species have proven to be “the bane of my existence,” but where would the reward be if all were a cinch with nary a glitch (Table 2).

EXPANDING HORIZONS

I have found participating in BAP has added an enjoyable and rewarding dimension to keeping and appreciating natives. I wholeheartedly encourage other native fanciers to check their local aquarium societies for BAP where both

native and tropical fish keepers may expand their horizons.

Finally, there is one more activity I now enjoy doing. I frequently visit AquaBid.com to work on my wish list of species and it’s a great resource for hard-to-find natives. I once thought I found a source for the Bulldog Goodeid (*Allophorus robustus*), which is one of the largest species in the family, and is, atypically, predatory. However, I soon realized it was only available to residents of the European Union. I am currently shopping



Figure 4. My Breeder Award certificate and plaque from 2015.

for the Chapultepec Splitfin (*Girardinichthys viviparus*), but the highest bids from earlier auctions are a little expensive for my tastes.

(Editor’s Note: NANFA also has a Breeder Award Program. Visit <http://www.nanfa.org/bap.shtml>)