Livebearer News

Official Members Magazine of the
BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION

Issue 44
September
2014

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Editorial

.Once again, I am apologising for the late delivery of this magazine. Hopefully this will not deflect too much from your enjoyment.

This issue contains an article regarding a trip to the Czech republic to see breeders, and also a couple of articles of Ataeniobius toweri, one is a republished article documenting a hobbyists personal experience of this species and the other is a profile published by the Goodied working group – together they provide a lot of information on this fascinating fish.

Again we have mostly republished material, I have tried to select articles that will be of interest and reflect the species that are around at the moment. Hopefully the next few years will be a boom time with many more species becoming available, there are a couple of reasons why I think this will be the case.

Higher availability of fish from Europe. This is both through the efforts of hobbyist who regularly visit shows and conventions in Europe, and also through the continuing availability of fish produced in the Czech republic, which are being made available to hobbyists by specialist shops such as Aqualife.

New hobbyist and the return of 'old' Hobbyists. Both area's seem to be increasing, which is great. Even I have got my act together and have refurbished my own fish room.

I hope that you all have an exciting remainder 2015 in your fishrooms!

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Chairman's message

It has not worked out for me this year to get to the two events the BLA held due to family illness and other events. I do feel that I have missed out and will hope that in 2015 things will be better. Fish have been a bit on hold too and I have just been cleaning out some tanks and having a spring clean (well autumn really) to move fish about and clear out some tanks. I am intending to get to the charity auction in Leicester and pick up a few fish. I find when I am up front auctioning I have every intention to bid but usually by the end I haven't got

anything! Not like the ‘old days’ when I would end up with an overflowing box and no empty tanks to put them in. I am sure we have all been there?

Trying to be realistic is best and then only get what you want. Being a keen gardener and collector of carnivorous plants I am often not realistic and buy too much or something that is not suited to conditions but having every intention to keep the conditions right. Like those fish we buy on a whim and never do anything with, they fade and die. So looking forward with 15 empty tanks I need to be thinking what I can realistically maintain and breed before buying so come the future auctions I will look and remember to make a purchase.

Thanks to you members who are keeping with us. We do have funds and are always willing to listen to ways to utilise that to benefit the members and livebearing fish. Please let me know if you have any thoughts or ideas to inject some life back into the organisation.

By Chris Cheswright

Czech Visit By Paddy Davies

Warning:
This Article contain explicit pictures of a cichlid nature!

Hopefully you will all forgive this non-livebearer article. Nigel Hunter and I recently got the opportunity to visit several breeders of aquarium fish in the Czech republic. This was as a guest of Berry Ring (a UK exporter) and Alex Tropicals (A Czech Exporter). It was a fascinating insight into the origins of Czech tropical fish and changed some of my preconceptions.

Unfortunately due to time constraints and a broken down car, we did not get to see any livebearer specialists. However, I thought this article might be useful to show how fish are produced in this country and the quite outstanding care and attention that they are given.

We left Bristol on a wet December evening, and arrived 2 hours later in Prague to really grotty weather! The temperature was just on freezing, so it was wet and icy and windy all at the same time; passengers leaving the plane were falling down like dominoes as they stepped down from the steps onto the icy tarmac. We were greeted by our taxi driver and driven into Prague in a very warm luxurious taxi. My mood improved!

Day 1:
We first visited Thomas, he invited us into his house where he had two quite large fish rooms. He seemed to keep and breed a little bit of everything, Species I remember seeing include;

Rainbowfish:
Melanotaenia trifasciata, M. praecox, M.lacustrus, Chilatherina sentaniensis, C. axelrodi

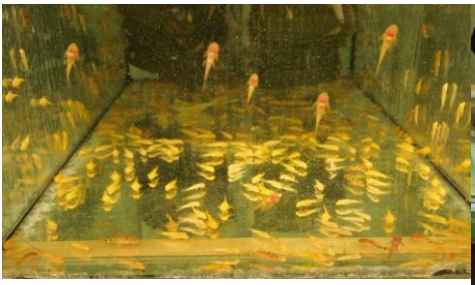
Cichlids:
Jack Dempsey, Electric Blue Jack dempsey, Mayan Cichlid, Oscar, Blue acara

Catfish:
Bristle nose, LDA016, normals, albinoes and golds (in long and short fin forms)
Corydoras, peppered, Albino Peppered, Longfin Peppered, Bronze, Albino bronze

Others:
Piranha
Oryzias woworae

He is a real hobbyist who has a normal job but also a busy hobby. Speaking to us it was clear how passionate he was and he really knew the lineage of his stock, so you can really ensure the quality of the fish.

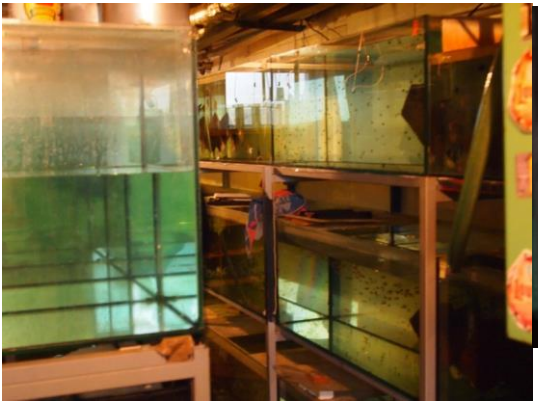
One thing that was common to almost all of the breeders were bristlenose plecs – I think we probably saw 1,000 or more – these were often not even a species the breeder deliberately produced, but they do breed like rabbits and help to provide a bit of income and of course, they help to eat up excess food.

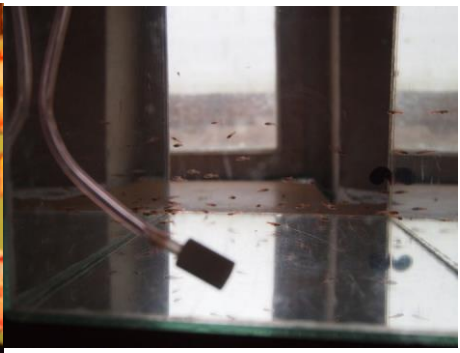


The next breeder name is Oldric However he had a proper fish basement; it was a relatively small area with 3 small rooms interconnected, complete with small ceilings and hose pipes everywhere. It was nice to see a proper 'working fish house' which had obviously grown organically over the years. It had traditional wooden racking and no lighting on the tanks.

The proof is in the pudding though, and we saw some stunning fish, specialising in tetras, barbs and catfish with a few angelfish thrown in for good measure. We saw several tanks of baby cardinals, including a nice gold strain and probably the best green tiger barbs I have ever seen.

He also had a room above a garage where he kept larger tanks and bred angels and corydoras, his gold form of corydoras albino were very interesting, not seen too often in the UK, apparently most of these go to Japan

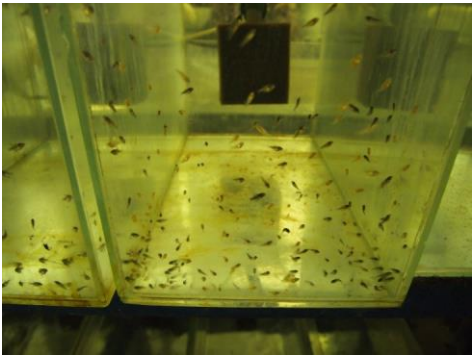
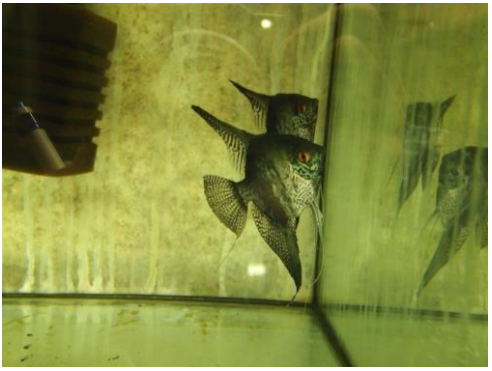





The next one up was Peter Scalare – you may have worked out that he is an angelfish breeder!

Another smallish room with lots of tanks on the ground floor of his house, unlike the others, he just breeds angels – predominately half blacks, blacks, California, and Marbles all with varying fin lengths. I am not a real fan of Angelfish – but tanks of these all growing on look amazing as they all beg for food.



Alfaro huberi (FOWLER, 1923)

N.B. This article first appeared in issue 16 of "Viviparous", the magazine of the Livebearer Information Service, in 1991 and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert.

Family :- Poecilidae GARMAN, 1895

Synonyms :- Priapichthys huberi FOWLER, 1923

Common Name :- Orange rocket

Range :- Atlantic drainages of Guatemala, Honduras & Nicaragua.

Dorsal Fin Ray Count :- 9 - 10

Size :- Males 5cm; Females 7cm

Introduction to the U.K. :- Imported by Ivan Dibble in the late 1980's from America.

Description :- The fish pictured is a mature female about 6cm in size. The dorsal is set well back on the torpedo shaped body which is designed for speed. When frightened this species will jump right out of the water and may end up 10ft away on the floor. It was for this characteristic and the orange colouration towards the rear of the fish that it was given the common name of "Orange Rocket". The back of the fish is iridescent bluish green and there is a prominent black blotch behind the pectoral fins. The mouth is upturned and there is little if any sign of the keel-like scales which are so distinctive in its more common relative *Alfaro cultratus* . The fins are pale orange in colour becoming whitish towards the edge.

Temperament and Care :- This is a peaceful, attractive fish which has caused a number of problems with regard to breeding. Most of these seem to stem from the late age at which they become sexually mature. Many females are a year old before theystart to breed and since they hardly show any signs of being pregnant and will eat as many of the fry as they can find success has been long in coming. However, once they do start to breed, fry are produced every 4 – 6 weeks and can number over50, however 25 – 30 is more normal.

Their aquarium should be large with plenty of swimming room and heavily planted at the surface. Temperatures of betweenn73 – 78 °F [23 - 25.5°C] suit them well and they are able to adapt to most water conditions provided the change is slow. When close to giving birth the females have a convex shape when looked at head on and the grvid spot, which is normally very faint, is slightly darker.

This is a top to mid-water swimming species which will rarely take food from the bottom of the tank. Flake foods are readily taken as are mosquito larvae and Daphnia. If worms are going to be fed, then a floating plastic holder should be used to keep the food in the area of the tank which the fish inhabit. A few Corydoras catfish can be included in the setup to eat food which falls to the bottom of the tank.

Preventing hybrids :- There are no reports of this species having been crossed with any other, however the usual rule of not mixing any species with the same generic (first) name applies to this fish as to all other livebearing fish.

Ataeniobius toweri By Phil Taylor

N.B. This article first appeared in issue 16 of "Viviparous", the magazine of the Livebearer Information Service, in 1991 and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert.

I first obtained a young pair of these goodeids from Ivan Dibble at the Reading A.S. show in July 1990. They were housed at first with some guppies in a small tank 12" x 15" x 12" with a sponge filter, no plants and very little lighting. The temperature was about 74°F [23.5°C]. Even in these circumstances they produced a few fry. There seemed to be no attempt th eat the fry and certainly there was nowhere for them to hide.

Later the parents were placed in a 24" x 15" x 12" tank with a large sponge filter, some Java moss and a piece of bogwood. The female, who was much larger than the male, would chase him whenever he appeared and he spent most of his time hiding. In this tank they have produced several broods, never more than 10 – 12 at a time. The young are left with the parents and are not eaten. There has been a tendency to produce deformed fry which have short, fat bodies rather than the correct 'cigar shape'.

They will eat almost anything, including flake food and peas but bloodworm and tubifex go down particularly well. They are well-behaved and can be kept with other fishes. There is no gravid spot and females do not become particularly fat when carrying young so it is probably better to keep them in a species tank to conserve the fry.

Our tap water is hard with a pH of 7.8 but this fish does not seem too fussy about water conditions. It is an attractive and lively fish.

Observations on breeding Brachyrhaphis terrabensis

A.J.Rothwell

N.B. This article first appeared in issue 16 of "Viviparous", the magazine of the Livebearer Information Service, in 1991 and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert.

I first acquired a pair of Brachyrhaphis terrabensis from Pat and Derek [Lambert] about 18 months ago. These are the real terrabensis not the highland form of B. Rhabdophora .

I placed the pair in an 18" x 12" x 12" tank with plenty of Java moss and Java fern for cover and they promptly hid in it (very unusual for "Brachys" as most of these are

certainly not shy and some are quite stroppy). They dived out for live food which I fed on a regular basis and rapidly returned to plant cover where they spent all their time. I used undergravel filtration and plenty of air as they seem to appreciate plenty of oxygen in the water. The pair grew and grew until I was sure they were past breeding and I gave up hope that they ever breed for me. But, returning home from work one evening I was doing my round of the fish tanks when a little terrabensis popped out of the Java moss and promptly hid again. I quickly and excitedly grabbed a net and caught out the parents, removed all the plants and began catching the fry. After a long search I netted out 11 fry which were placed in a separate tank as most of the "Brachys" I know are notorious fry eaters. I reckon I must have caught them a few hours after they were born and before the parents could catch them. This was the only time that pair ever gave me fry; they just grew old and died. I grew my 11 fry on feeding newly hatched brine shrimp. These did not breed until they were a good size. I have only had two more batches of fry from two females and they have not bred for me since. These seem to be a rather difficult species to establish as I passed a few out and they have not been successfully bred either.

So, if you are lucky enough to acquire this beautiful species take care of them because there aren't too many of them around.

Ataeniobius toweri – Species Profile created by the Goodied Working Group

This profile has been reproduced here with the kind permission of the Goodied Working Group

(Meek, 1904)

Original Description:

MEEK, S.E. (1904): The fresh-water fishes of Mexico north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Field Columbian Mus. Publ. 93, Zoological Series 5: pp 138 - 139

Etymology:

The species is named for its discoverer, Dr. W.L. Tower of the University of Chicago. Holotype:

Collection-number: F.C.M. 4519. The Holotype is an adult female of 60.4mm SL (2.38 inches), collected probably by its discoverer, W. L.Tower. **English Name:**

Bluetail Splitfin

Mexican Name:

Mexcalpique cola azul

Synonyms:

Goodea toweri Meek, 1904 **Karyotype:**

2n = 48 2sm/ 46stt (following Uyeno, Miller & Fitzsimmons, 1983) **Size:**

The maximum known SL is 76 mm (Miller et al, 2005).

Terra typica:

Meek wrote in his description simply: Río Verde, San Luis Potosí.

Status after IUCN:
not mentioned
Status after J.Lyons (2011):
Endangered; Comment: Stable since 2000

Distribution and ESU's:
This species comes from the Atlantic Slope and is restricted to the upper Río Verde drainage (elevation 1000-1100m) around La Media Luna and its vicinity near Río Verde and in Puerta del Río (source of Río Verde), south of Villa Juárez (Río Panuco basin) in the state of San Luis Potosí.
Habitat:

Ataeniobius toweri lives typically in quiet water with little or no current. It can be found along shallow margins of lagoons, marshes and ditches, but also in creeks where currents may be moderately strong. It prefers depths to 1m with the water very clear, but it may also be a bit murky. Typical vegetation associated with the Bluetail Splitfin are species of Nymphaea, Scirpus, Juncus and Eichhornia and green algae. The substrate is made of flocculent silt, mud, sand, gravel and rocks.

Dominic Isla documented big schools of this fish in La Media Luna, prefering strong currents.

After L. Wischnath, La Media Luna includes an area with several warm springs and is located about 10km southwest of the city of Río Verde. Water from two caves forms a catchment area or reservoir that the natives call a lagoon. The clear water smells strongly sulfurous and the temperature ranges between 26° and 30°C.

Colouration:

Meek denoted the colour in his orginal description as "dark brownish above, lighter below. Where the light and the dark colors meet the side more or less speckled; a narrow dark shade on middle of caudal peduncle."
This is the colouration of preserved specimens. In life, the colour appears light grey (somewhat silver-grey) with two dark lines, one of them extends from the middle of the eye backwards to the caudal fin, the second one somewhat from the pectoral fin to the lower edge of the caudal fin. Some specimens show a varying number of vertical bars on the posterior half of the body, mainly on the caudal peduncle, extending from the end of the belly to the caudal fin. The number varies from 4 to 11. Breeding males show an azure caudal fin and whitish anal fin, some males become totally light bluish.

Biology:

This species may be reproducing over a long period as individuals 11 and 14mm long were collected between 25 November and 19 March, and pregnant females were taken on 18 May in a ciénega 10km south of Río Verde. Young fish occur in very shallow water (about 5cm) where sedges and grass are abundant. Growth and development progress slowly with sexual maturity occuring in six to seven months.

Diet:

This species appears to be an ambush predator, waiting for small crustaceens to come close, but on the other hand, a long gut and a lot of filamentous green algae in the habitat suggest omnivorous to herbivorous feeding habits. The related Goodea species are herbivorous.

Remarks:

This is the only species of livebearing Goodeids without showing trophotaenia in young born fry. In 1939, Hubbs & Turner created the genus Ataeniobius for this species. Owing to the apparent lack of trophotaenia, this species was thought by them to be the most primitive Goodeid. Turner stated in 1940, that embryos clearly must absorb nutritents by other means. In 1983, Uyeno et al. suggested that the trophotaenia may have been lost secondarily, but finally in 1989, Lombardi et al. showed that anal processes of near-term embryos, examined by light and electron microscopy, have prototypic trophotaenia. Large embryos and a large finfold, combined with a lack of competition with any other Goodeid, may explain the loss of functional trophotaenia in newborn fish (saving costs of having them?).

Together with its relatives from the genus Goodea, Ataeniobius toweri is the most easterly member of the family Goodeidae.

L.Wischnath predicated this species as difficult in tank keeping due to its sulfurous-water origin. He refers to especially fungal infection.

Brian Kabbes visited La Media Luna in 1999 and pointed to the intensive application of the lagoon as resort and the usage of the outflow to water the surrounding fields. He also documented a partially destruction of the habitat according to that. Recently, the species disappeared from 3 out of 7 historically known sites, and the populations in the remaining 4 are small.

An interesting cohabitant of this Goodeid fish is the Checkered Pupfish, Cualac tesselatus, who has a similar blue-tailed colour pattern.

Last phylogenetically studies on Goodeids revealed Ataeniobius toweri being related with the genus Skiffia and should belong to the Girardinichthyini tribe according with Domínguez, whereas Goodea should belong to the Chapalichthyini tribe (Domínguez, pers. comm. 2012). However, the position of

both genera within the Goodeids is still not solved satisfiable, seeing them somewhere located between both tribes.

A note about the The Goodied Working Group:

The Goodeid Working Group is a non-profitable international Working Group managed and run on a 100% voluntary basis. It was established on 1st May, 2009 in Stoholm, Denmark in response to the critical environmental issues facing the majority of wild Goodeid species/populations, plus the poorly-documented 'disappearance' of many captive collections.
The primary goal of the Goodeid Working Group is to promote collaboration between like-minded hobbyists, universities, public aquaria, zoos, museums and conservation projects in order to maintain aquarium populations of Goodeids while assisting in preservation of remaining natural habitats.

Please go to http://www.goodeidworkinggroup.com/ to find out more.

Habitat Profile: la Mintzita Spring, Micacoan, Mexico

By Paddy Davies

Photos By Erwin Radax

Visit date: November 2014

Habitat description: Manantial (spring system) la Mintzita in the Morelia/Cutizeo basin. Basically a medium sized spring-fed lagoon.

Used by locals for water extraction – this is almost constant during the day, with probably 10 tankers filling up with water in the 3-4 hours we were there – often 3 at a time. Always feels wrong to allow this, however the habitat is still well preserved and does not seem to suffer many ill effects from the water extraction at the moment.

This is a beautiful site, there is one area that is easily accessible for fishing and recreation, but much of the lagoon is overgrown on the edges and more difficult to get around – this provides the fish, birds and reptiles with protection.

The habitat itself was clear with plenty of vegetation at the margins and deeper pools in the centre allowing for a range of different micro habitats, there are lots of water lillies providing surface cover, but also a lot of water Hyacinths – this introduced species can be a real nuisance.

Temperature of the water was 20-23 degrees C.
Fish that we encountered:

Endemic:

Goodea atripinis
Skiffia lermae
Xenotoca cf. Variata (new species under description by Omar Domínguez Domínguez)
Poeciliopsis infans Zoogoneticus quitzeoensis

Introduced:

Poecilia reticulata
Xiphophorus helleri

The only goodied in the lake that we did not see was *Allophorous robustus*, but as this species is quite a secretive predatory fish, this is not particularly surprising and stocks may well be quite plentiful.

Stocks of all the species we found appeared quite plentiful, and for the moment at 15 least this habitat seems pretty secure.

Goodea attripinnis
By Paddy Davies