

Livebearer News

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BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



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Editorial

Welcome to the December issue of "Livebearer News". First of all the usual plea for articles, by email if that suits you best or if you want to write something on paper and sent it to me by snail mail I will type it up for you. My email and snail mail addresses are included in this issue.

Second: The BLA has had a bit of a difficult time recently but we are hoping that things have now settled down and we can have something of a relaunch. Don has once again taken over as treasurer and I seem to have agreed to continue in the role of editor – how did that happen.

Third: A group of BLA members were chatting at the end of the BLA Autumn Convention in Kettering. We agreed that there is a need to know which species the BLA members are keeping and breeding. Steve Oliver suggested that we email all members asking them to list which species they are keeping and breeding so that a list could then be accessed by all members. What do you think about this proposal? Do we have a volunteer to act as a "Species Control Officer"?

Fourth: The Autumn Convention. The new venue worked very well, in my opinion – it was certainly easier to find than the old venue in the middle of Kettering. On the Saturday, there were four talks about guppies and Nigel talked about the contribution that aquarists are making and could make to the conservation of endangered species of livebearers. I am trying to persuade him to write this up as an article for "Livebearer News" as this is a topic that many of us feel strongly about and the "Official" conservation bodies seriously underestimate the skills and knowledge possessed by aquarists. Your comments on this topic would be very welcome.

There were bargains to be had in Sunday's auction. Several

pairs of excellent looking guppies sold for only £3 a pair – less than shop prices for show quality fish! “Wild type” livebearers included *Allophorus robustus*, [which I had never seen in captivity before but which we caught in Mexico in March], several *Limia* species, *Xenotoca variata*, *Heterandria anzuetae*, *Characodon audax* and *lateralis* [one pair of which sold for only £15 – I wished that I had bought them], *Brachyraphis roseni* and *rhabdophorae* and *Xiphophorus milleri* and *xiphidum*. You won’t find many of these species in aquarium shops!

Feedback on *Poecilia salvatoris*

In Issue 47 of “Livebearer News” I reprinted an article on *Poecilia salvatoris* which first appeared in Issue 22 of “Viviparous”. I was contacted by Tom Crane, a BLA member from New Jersey, USA:-

“ As you may know, while the fish Pat wrote up is called “P. salvatoris,” there is a P. salvatoris that looks nothing like Pat’s fish. I have both forms. Pat’s fish is often described as a hybrid which I usually think means hybridized in the hobby. But, then, I see pictures from Rusty Wessel (big US collector in the wild) with Pat’s fish he caught in the wild. And I see pictures in “Aqualog” of both types. Guess it could be a local hybridization. In any event, I’m intrigued by what each of the two (are there more?) types is/should be called “officially” to differentiate the two. If I get some time, I’ll dig into it.

Tom
“PS If you don’t have Aqualog, take a look at the offerings from Goliad Farms in the US. They picture the non-Liberty

molly type. Mine, though, has spots across the top of the body.”

Later Tom contacted me again to add :-

“Just remembered...At one point I was down to only a male salvatoris (non-Liberty) and did not know about possible supply from Goliad. So I crossed him with a Liberty female. Had a huge drop (for me) – 30-35 fry which all survived. As adults, they all look like non-Liberty type – not a red or black color among them.”

Later :-

Correction to this below. Some red-finned males are now popping up.

I’d like to thank Tom for contributing to this issue, it’s great to get some feedback. I did look up the website of Goliad farms [goliadfarms.com] – worth a look for the photos alone and when I get time I’ll read some of their articles.

7th Annual Meeting of The Goodeid Working Group - GWG

The Goodeid Working Group had its 7th annual meeting in Lisbon Portugal on the 1st of October. The GWG is a group consisting of scientists, hobbyists and conservationists that are all interested in helping the plight of Goodeid Fish.

A meeting is held every year, this is always in another place each year which is great as it means that people who cannot travel to this years meeting can hopefully get to the next years meeting. It also means that we can visit institutions in different cities to see what they are doing for Goodeid conservation

This year, 40 members from 12 different countries attended. I travelled with Nigel Hunter to join them.

Part 1: The Arrival

We all arrived at various times on the Friday at Lisbon Airport and were ferried to our hotels by the team of helpers who had generously donated their time and petrol to the cause.

On Friday night, we met up in the central square of Lisbon for a guided tour of the area and a fascinating talk on the history of the City.

Followed by a beautiful traditional meal in a stunning restaurant, where we got a chance to catch up properly with old friends and to meet new members of the group.

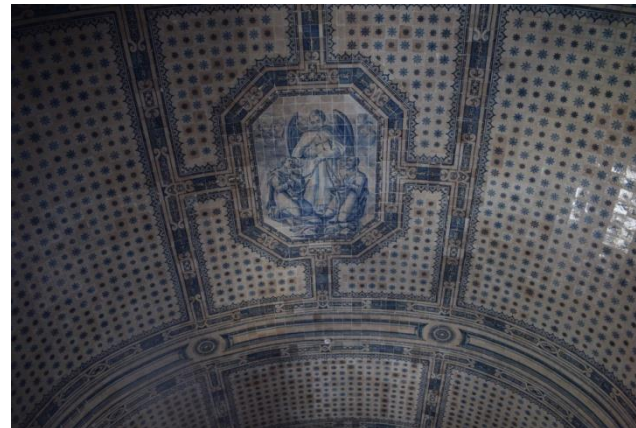
A few of us then snuck off to see a local band that our host Lilliana recommended that we saw, finally ending up in a cocktail bar opposite the hotel where the owner took meticulous care in preparing our drinks.



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Part 2: Saturday, the official Meeting.

Held in the historic Institute de oceanography. This building is an old nunnery and has had several uses over the years, now being a centre for hydrological and oceanographic studies, we were also given a guided tour of the stunning building.



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After a welcome and introduction by Miguel we settled down to the main reason for coming. The lectures.

First Lecture:

Omar Dominguez: Update on the Tequila project:

For me this was the talk I was most looking forward to as it was the eagerly anticipated update on the Reintroduction of Zoogeneticus Tequila to its natural habitat.

This species is extinct in the wild and it is the first attempt to reintroduce an extinct goodeid back to its original habitat.

I was particularly interested in this as I had gone to this area last year with members of the GWG, including Nigel Hunter and Greg Roebuck (see his article in the last issue for more info).

Omar has been involved in the project since the beginning and described the different stages involved in getting the project to the point where reintroduction is now possible.

Site selection followed intensive studies on many possible sites including the headwaters, main river and finally the presa (lake) it drains into.

Surveys for each site included testing water quality, parasite types and the effect they have on the species of fish, trophic structure of the environment. presence of native and introduced species of fish.

Eventually it was decided that the best site was the spring as this is the cleanest area, has least competition from other species and has the best habitat for this species.

He also helped by explaining why we cannot just remove all possible threats from the habitat (for example exotic fish) and why we must look to maintain a sustainable reintroduction that will work in areal environment.

At the same time as this was going on, a project to educate the local village about the issue took place. The fish was given a name 'Zoogy' and the story of it's extinction was told. This got the local children and parents interested in the project and keen to know more. Local helpers were recruited who can monitor water conditions and populations and email the results to the team. This is vital as the project will be more likely to fail if the fish are simply released and then left to their own devices. This was the team can be appraised of the situation without having to travel to the site all the time.

The next stages in the reintroduction is to prepare the fish for reintroduction: this involves a long process of initially breeding the fish in the lab aquariums, then in the lab ponds. then introducing these fish to semi natural ponds in the local botanical gardens at Morelia.

There are now 9000 fish in Morelia, these are descended from 2 pairs originally brought to Mexico from the UK when it was realized that the species had become extinct.

Omar is a great speaker and brought us up to date to where the project is now, which is that the first fish to be introduced will be released later this year.

Hopefully this introduction will be successful and can pave the way for future introductions of extinct species.

Second Lecture:

Miguel Andrade: Cool Fish

Miguel, one of our hosts is a passionate hobbyist who has the difficult problem of keeping Goodies in Portugal, a country in which the temperature varies from freezing to forty degrees C! This is not an easy task. In order to be of most use as a conservationist he favours large ponds where possible in order to breed good numbers of fish.

This was a fascinating talk about how he has monitored the temperature in his set up for many years and how he has evolved his approach to keeping Goodeids in that time. A great talk because I recognise the constant questioning and tinkering that many of us do in order to create more beneficial environments for our fish.

I was also privileged to see his home indoor aquaria and can certainly attest to the condition of his stunning *Allophorus robustus*.

Break and Group photo



Third Lecture:

Gonçalo Costa: Live food:

To be honest with you, I was not that excited about this lecture and was thinking of popping out for a cigarette break, but then I remembered that I don't smoke.

I am glad I stayed as Gonçalo is an engaging speaker, I have heard many talks on live foods over the years, and while they can be informative, they just get a bit samey.

This was different as he has a passion for Bugs and loves to keep and culture them (I think goodeids come second). So

he described many of the common things we use such as microworms, etc. but also discussed mealy bugs, fruit flies and peanut mealworms as well as others. Ensuring that we knew how easy many of these are to rear. Best off all though, he does like to test the fish food so he also described how they all tasted!

Fourth Lecture:

Nigel Hunter: The Quest

I have known Nigel for a few years and this was a talk about the people who started him on his journey with Goodeids and his quest to go to Mexico despite all the odds to see Lake Zacapu and to catch the stunning *Neotoca lermæ* that is found there (ideally the spotted one)..

I don't want to go into much depth as I think you should all listen to this talk if he gives it near you, but it is great because it is a

Nigel is a great speaker and you can feel he is passionate and knowledgeable about Goodeids, he is also not afraid to speak his mind, so you get an insight into the plight of the Goodeids. At time he is humorous and at times deadly serious as he urges us all to do whatever we can to help conserve these little fish.

The Auction:

The last part of the official meeting is the auction, and what an auction it was! Many, many rare livebearers, one thing struck me was that most of the fish were sold as groups, rather than as single pairs - this is brilliant as many of these species are

easier to establish when kept in groups and also you will get a (slightly) broader genetic base for your population - we should do this in the UK.

A taster of some of the species available:

Allophorus robustus - Zacapu; *Allotoca goslinei* - Rio Potrero Grande 2002; *Allotoca meeki*- Lago de Opopeo;

Allotoca zacapuensis - Lago de Zacapu; *Aphanius mento*

- TUBCD 05/17 Bor, Turquía; *Aphanius vladkovi*- Boldajji;

Aphyosemion striatum - GEMHS 00/34, Guinea Ecuatorial;

Ataeniobius toweri - Laguna Media Luna, San Luis Potosi, México - *Ataeniobius toweri* - Villa Juarez;

Belonesox belizanus - Aquarium Strain;

Chapalichthys encaustus - Lago de Chapala 2001;

Girardinichthys viviparous - Tecocomulco;

Girardinus uninotatus - Arroyo Norte Las Terrazas

Goodea atripinnis - Maravatio; *Heterandria formosa*- Aquarium Strain; *Ilyodon furcidens* - Rio Terrero;

Neotoca bilineata - Lago de Cuitzeo;

Neotoca bilineata - Rio Querendaro;

Nomorhamphus celebensis - Salopa waterfall, tributary to Danao [=lake] Poso,

Nomorhamphus ebrardtii - Sungai [=river] Summersari, Sulawesi Tenggara,

Pachypanchax playfairii - Mahé;
Phallichthys fairweatheri - Aquarium Strain;
Phalloceros caudimaculatus reticulatus – Aquarium Strain;
Poecilia (Acanthophaelus) cf. wingei (Endler Blue Star);
Poecilia chica - Arroyo Tecolote 2013;
Poecilia reticulata - Aquarium Strain (Half black/white guppies); *Poecilia reticulata* - Trinidad
Poecilia salvatoris - San Lorenzo, Nicaragua 2010;
Poecilia velifera - Cancun 2010;
Poeciliopsis baenschi - Río Purificacion 2013;
Priapella olmecae - Rio de Basura 1996;
Scolichthys iota - Rio Chajmaic;
Skiffia francesae - Rio Teuchitlàn;
Skiffia lermæ - Lago de Zacapu;
Skiffia multipunctata - Lago Camécuaro;
Xenophallus umbratilis - Arenal;
Xenoophorus captivus - Bledos;
Xenotaenia resolanae - Rio Resolana;
Xenotoca melanosoma Granja Sahuaripa;
Xenotoca melanosoma - Rio Ayuquila;
Xenotoca spec. cf. eiseni - "San Marcos East / Loc. 2"

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Xenotoca spec. cf. eiseni - "San Marcos";
Xenotoca variata - Atotonilco; *Xenotoca variata* - Jesus Maria;
Xiphophorus hellerii - Palenque 2009;
Xiphophorus maculatus - Nueva Loría, Quintana Roo,
Xiphophorus pygmaeus - Aquarium Strain;
Xiphophorus variatus - Puente Escalanar 2002;

The meeting was the closed by Miguel and on we went for another fantastic traditional meal.

On the Sunday, we all met up again and went to the Vasco de Gama aquarium, this was a great little aquarium, although I have some reservations over the Loggerhead turtle and the sealion on display.

The last item on the agenda was the impressive Lisbon Oceanarium., it is a great aquarium and worth a visit. One of the most interesting parts was the Temporary Exhibition which houses Takashi Amano's largest planted aquarium - it is about 40 metres long and is exquisitely beautiful and awe inspiring - one of our party cried when he saw it.

The main aquarium is also great and I saw two of the fish on my 'most want to see' list, the Ocean Sunfish and the manta Ray. Wow!

Musings from the fish room

1. Do I over-feed my fish? In Mexico in March we caught some *Ilyodon sp*, probably *furcidens*. The fish that we keep in Britain and think of as *Ilyodon xantusi* are probably also actually *furcidens*. The *xantusi* in my tanks are at least twice the length and probably five times the bulk of the wild fish in Mexico – is this because we feed them too much in our tanks or do we provide optimum conditions for growth with high protein foods? Anyone know the answer?

2. Species champions. Several zoos (including London and Chester, but also others I don't personally know about) are involved in fish conservation, including the conservation of livebearers. With some species they are very successful but not with others. In my opinion, this can be a result of the zoo-keepers being zoologists first and aquarists second. Robert J. Goldstein, in his book "**American aquarium Fishes**" writes about the Amistad gambusia, *Gambusia amistadensis*, which was extirpated from its one known habitat but maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service but was allowed to become extinct. Some aquarists, including several members of the BLA, have the knowledge and skills to keep and breed endangered fish species through many generations, in the hope that they may one day be reintroduced into the wild. This might involve devoting more than one tank to a particular species. At the moment I have three tanks devoted to *Skiffia V188 sayula*. As part of the GWG trip to Mexico, I visited their one known pond in March of this year but we found only small-mouthed bass. Would other BLA members be willing to take on the task of breeding other endangered species

through many generations to help to preserve them? I would love to hear a debate on this.

3. Also relevant to number 2 above – species come in and out of fashion? A few years ago *Zoogoneticus tequila* were very much sought-after and fetched good prices at auctions; then there were lots around and the price dropped; now you rarely see them. They are attractive fish (in my opinion) but just went out of fashion. This is a shame as we need to keep a "reservoir" of species like these as they are extinct or highly endangered in the wild.

4. Also relevant to numbers 2 and 3 above. There are lots of poeciliid livebearers that I've never even seen. This includes species from the genera *Brachyraphis*, *Carlhubbsia*, *Cnesterodon*, *Flexipenis*, *Heterophallus*, *Neohetrandria*, *Phalloptychus*, *Priapella*, *Priapichthys* and several more. Is anyone in Britain keeping and breeding any of these species? I would love to see them even if I don't have room to keep them at the moment. I am sure that they would sell well at a BLA auction. The more people that are keeping these species the better in terms of conservation.

5. Why do I seem to lose the knack with some species? I have kept *Zoogoneticus quitzeoensis* (though Nigel will tell you that they are actually *purrhepechus* – another story) for many years. In the past I have had so many fry that I have had to euthanase them. Now I haven't had any breeding success for two years and will have to buy them in again. How can this happen? Your thoughts will be welcome.

6. I intended including the second half of my report on the GWG trip to Mexico but ran out of space – I will include it in the next issue of the "News".

Phaloptychus januarius (HENSEL, 1868)

N.B. This article first appeared in issue 34 of "Viviparous", the magazine of the Livebearer Information Service and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert.

Family :- Poeciliidae GARMAN, 1895.
Synonyms :- Girardinus januarius HENSEL, 1868
Poecilia januarius EIGENMANN, 1907
Girardinus iheringii BOULENGER, 1869

Range :- This species is found from Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande de sul in Brazil, as well as in eastern Paraguay and Uruguay.

Common Name :- Barred Millionsfish.

Dorsal fin ray count :- 9

Size :- Males 2.5cm; females 4cm.

Introduction to the UK :- First imported to Germany in 1912. More recently stocks of this species were imported to the U.K. from both Germany and Scandinavia but the last of these haddisappeared by the end of 1992. Towards the end of 1996 a new trade import from Brazil found its way into the U.K. via Wholesale Tropicals of London.

Description :- The fish pictured are an adult wild caught pair imported from Brazil. The male measures 2.5cm and the female 3.5cm . This species is reminiscent of members of the Poeciliopsis genus with males developing a very long

gonopodium which is curved. The body colour is brownish to silvery gray with a bluish sheen to it. Over much of the body each scale is edged in black producing a net-like pattern and along the flanks there are numerous vertical black bars. These are longer and more pronounced towards the rear of the fish. Old females develop a pronounced high-backed appearance.

Some populations are said to contain black speckled individuals with some males being so heavily marked that they are almost totally black. This form has so far not been included in the recent imports.

Temperament and Care :- This is a peaceful, somewhat shy species which prefers a well-planted aquarium with plenty of cover to hide in. In the wild, it occurs in a range of habitats, some of which are soft and acidic whilst others are brackish. The recent imports seem to prefer a neutral pH and only moderate hardness. The temperature should be set at about 76°F (24°C). Ideally, it should be maintained only with its own kind or possibly with other small, shy livebearers such as Neoheterandria elegans or Quintana atrizona . So far the new imports have thrived in aquaria and are reproducing very well. Fry are definitely born over a period of several weeks, if not continuously like Heterandria Formosa . They do grow well on a diet of Artemia and some have reached nearly 1cm in length after only 5 weeks. These, however, have already started sexing out which might indicate they will not achieve the size of the imported specimens. Only

time will tell for sure.

Preventing hybrids :- Due to the unique structure of its gonopodium it is unlikely this species will hybridise with any other livebearer except the single other species in this genus (Phalloptychus eigenmanni) .

