

# Livebearer News

Official Members Magazine of the  
BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



Issue 46  
May  
2016

## CONTENTS

- Page 1** : Front cover  
**Page 2** : Contents  
**Page 3** : Editorial  
**Pages 4 - 9** : Fish Room Profile, Nigel Hunter  
**Pages 9 – 13** : *Gambusia oligosticta*  
**Pages 13 – 15** : Musings from the fish-room.  
**Pages 15 – 16** : Back Issues – appeal from the Editor  
**Page 17** : Diary Dates  
**Pages 18 – 20** : *Gambusia sexradiata*  
**Page 20** : Data Protection Act; Committee Members

## Editorial

Hello and welcome to “*Livebearer News*” Issue 46. Paddy is still very busy so I seem to have accidentally got the job of editor. I hope that I can do the job as well as Paddy did. I must start with the usual plea for articles; if you can write about your experiences with a species or about collecting fish or any other aspect of keeping livebearers I would be very grateful to receive it. My email address and snail-mail address are at the back of this “*News*” but if you don’t have a computer or access to email, then if you write something down and post it to me I will type it up.

In March I went to Mexico to join Paddy and Nigel and five European members of the Goodeid Working Group. We surveyed many different sites and collected a number of Goodeid species. The trip was brilliant but it did raise a number of issues. We visited the pond where *Skiffia V188 sayula* was discovered some years ago and caught only tadpoles and fry of a bass species, probably small-mouthed bass, *Micropterus dolomieu*. The skiffia are presumably now extinct in the wild. Many other species of livebearer are similarly vulnerable. Members of the BLA and other livebearer organisations around the world can help in the conservation of these species by captive breeding them and distributing the offspring. No-one can save every species, but we could all help to save one species. I look forward to hearing the views of other BLA members on this topic.

Fishrooms! I have one and so do several other BLA members. I have visited a few other people’s fishrooms but I wish I had seen Nigel’s before planning mine. I would encourage anyone who finds themselves in the vicinity of Basingstoke to contact

Nigel and try to visit his fishroom. I have never seen so many tanks crammed into such a small space. Paddy has written an article about it for this issue (See below).

## Fish room Profile: Nigel Hunter

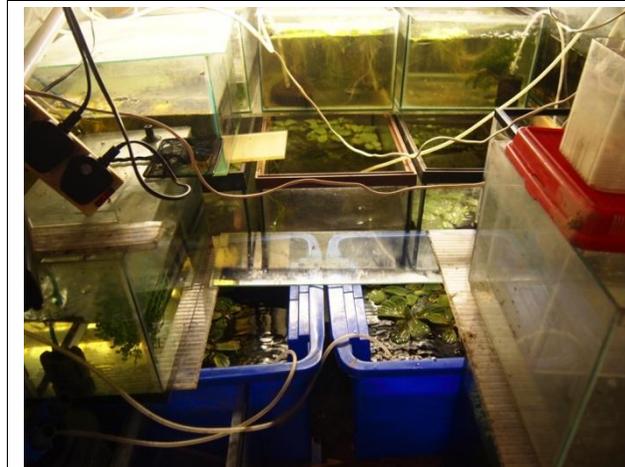
By Paddy Davies

I have been privileged to visit Nigel's fish room several times, it is a shed in the garden of a modest size (about 8'x10'), however it holds probably the largest collections of goodeids in the UK. Nigel epitomises the old school method of keeping fish: he keeps things simple and uncomplicated, his tanks are easy to clean and have good old fashioned sponge filters.

He performs regular water changes and keeps a good eye on his fish. Success is in the results; he has kept many difficult species through multiple generations and has passed his fish to many keepers, including zoos and public institutions.

The pictures may look a bit chaotic, but Nigel knows where everything is and is continually breeding and raising his fish – along with ten of thousands of brine shrimp to feed them with.

As well as his shed, Nigel has several ponds where he houses many goodeids and swordtails in the summer with great success, the colour and vitality of these fish has to be seen.





6

**Q)** Number of years keeping fish?

**A)** 30 years on and off

**Q)** Number of fishrooms you have built?

**A)** 2

**Q)** What is your main fishkeeping interest?

**A)** Conservation Breeding

**Q)** What is your Favourite Fish type of fish to keep?

**A)** Goodeids

**Q)** Species you have not yet kept but would like to?

**A)** None

**Q)** Any future fishy plans?

**A)** Same as now

**Q)** Date this fish house was established:

**A)** 2008

**Q)** Is this the last one?

**A)** No

7

**Q)** Number of tanks?

A) 80-100

Q) Sizes of tanks?

A) 5-200 Litre

Q) Main type of fish kept?

A) Cyprinodonts

Q) Filtration used:

A) Air Powered Sponge

Q) Substrate used:

None

Q) Maintenance Schedule

A) Regular water Changes

Q) Feeding details:

A) As required according to species live, frozen and dried

Q) Any other comments:

A) Too Many tanks and species

8



Gambusia oligosticta (REGAN, 1913)

*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** :- Poeciliidae GARMAN, 1895

**Synonyms** :- Gambusia punctilata FINK, 1971

**Common Name** :- Jamaican gambusia

**Range** :- Jamaica.

9

**Dorsal Fin Ray Count** :- 8 - 9

**Size** :- Males 3.5cm; Females 5cm

**Introduction to the U.K.** :- First imported to the U.K. by Derek and Stephen Lambert in 1983 but this collection eventually died out. A new collection was made by Derek, Pat and Stephen Lambert in 1990, which is slowly being established. Other collections of this species may have been made and distributed under the synonym of Gambusia punctilata.

**Description** :- In the wild this is one of the most beautiful of all the members of this genus with a sky blue body and bright red fins. Unfortunately this colouration fades very quickly in the aquarium to the colour shown in the wild-caught male in the picture. Even so, for a Gambusia, it is still an attractive fish. The body is deep and chunky in the female and there is a gravid spot high up on the side. This becomes blacker as the pregnancy progresses.

**Temperament and Care** :- As with most species of Gambusia this is a somewhat aggressive fish which is best maintained by itself in a large tank with some plant cover. The diet should consist of as

much meat and live foods as possible. Large quantities of brine shrimp in their diet helps to maintain the yellow/orange colouration of the dominant male's fins. A temperature of between 75 - 78°F [24 – 25.5°C] should be aimed for, although they can be maintained at lower temperatures. Broods are born on a monthly cycle in young females, however, as the fish grows older they become more erratic and may go many months before giving birth to a brood of young. Brood sizes range between 10 and 50 depending on the age and size of the female. Since this species will hunt down their fry and eat them, it is best to trap the female or place her in a separate tank stuffed full of plants. In the planted tank a close watch must be kept and the female removed as soon as she has finished giving birth.

**Status in the Wild** :- In 1983 this was a very common species in the Rio Cobra, however, Xiphophorus maculatus had been introduced making a limited impact on the native species. Since that time someone has introduced a Tilapia species and this has taken over many of the habitats that Gambusia oligosticta formerly occupied. It is too early to determine what the long term effects of such

an introduction will be, but they do not look good.

**Preventing hybrids** :- The classification of the Gambusia genus and its related species is in some confusion at the moment. Mary Rauchenberger's paper entitled "*Systematics and Biogeography of the Genus Gambusia (Cyprinodontiformes : Poeciliidae)*" published in "Novitates 2951 - August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989, went some way towards clarifying the issues but still left many problems unsolved. Whatever the final name given to this fish, it is absolutely essential that **ALL** collections of **EVERY** species of Gambusia are maintained as pure collections. Only by doing this can we be certain that no accidental hybridisation takes place in our aquaria.



#### Musings from the fish-room

I have about a dozen fishtanks, but they contain cichlids and a few killies and even a lone bitterling, as well as livebearers. I've been keeping Goodeids for over 25 years, but I have many more questions than answers, so if anyone can give me some advice I will be grateful

#### 1. Hatching brine shrimp

What is the secret to hatching brine shrimp eggs

successfully? I've tried many brands of brine shrimp eggs from different sources and only once had a decent hatch rate with Californian eggs. When these ran out I bought eggs sourced from Siberia, which had about a 20% hatch rate. The latest batch, from TA Aquaculture, also from Siberia, have an approximately 50% hatch rate even though I now add the extra ingredients they recommend on their web-site [sodium bicarbonate, magnesium sulphate (Epsom Salts) and calcium carbonate (powdered chalk)], as well as salt. Does anyone know of a good source of *Artemia* eggs that give a really good hatch rate?

## 2. Ultimate Livebearers

How about an addition to Paddy's series of "Ultimate Livebearers"? I would nominate freshwater stingrays of the genus "*Potamotrygon*". I have seen these offered for sale in Pier Aquatics, Wigan, never less than £100 each and some over £200. Neil, the owner of Pier Aquatics, told me that he had kept and bred them at home, in a tank the size of a double bed. I found a great article by Colin "rurrays" on an American website called "monsterfishkeepers.com". Colin keeps four rays in a 400gal pond in his basement. This is bigger than my entire fish-room and so I suppose stingrays will remain just a dream.

## 3. Fishy stuff on the net

The amount of information to be found still surprises me. I googled "breeding freshwater stingrays" to find the above

article. There is plenty of info on livebearer species at "fishbase.us", Wikipedia, "seriouslyfish" and "practicalfishkeeping.co.uk". What about YouTube? I typed "skiffia" into the searchbox and it came up with 427 films showing different skiffia species. Want to know how to build a fish tank stand? Ted Judy showed me how, on YouTube, and I could have watched dozens of other films also. Ted Judy's site is often worth a look if you're into cichlids as well as livebearers; he keeps several Goodeids and many different cichlids.

## Back Issues [Editor again]

I have recently started growing orchids (bear with me – this is relevant, I promise) and several species seem to do well in my fish-room. One or two species have not done so well so I looked on the internet and got conflicting advice. Two (different) websites gave completely opposite instructions on "*Zygopetalum mackayi*". I finally got some advice I trust from a guy who works in our local garden centre but imports, keeps and propagates orchids. Similarly with fish, there is plenty of conflicting advice available on the internet but the best information comes from people who have kept livebearing species here in Britain.

With this in mind, I would like to put together an index of species covered in "Livebearer News" but I don't have copies of all issues. I am missing the following issues :-  
1 → 5, 7,8,9, 21, 24 → 29, 40 and 41.

Can anyone lend me these issues? Or if you don't want to lend them to me, can you scan them and email them to me at [gjrsrr12@gmail.com](mailto:gjrsrr12@gmail.com)

The ideal situation (in my opinion) would be for all issues of "Livebearer News" to be available for BLA members to access on the website. Is there anyone out there with the skills to implement this?

### **Diary Dates**

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2016,**  
Southern Livebearer Aquatic Group  
Open Show  
At Kempshaw Village Hall,  
Pack Lane,  
Basingstoke,  
Hants,  
RG22 5HN

Benching from 10.00 to 12.00;  
Judging from 12.00;  
Talks by specialist speakers;  
"Limited Lots" livebearer auction.

The show manager is our own Nigel Hunter; email [nigelhunter65@talktalk.net](mailto:nigelhunter65@talktalk.net)

**7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2016,**  
BLA Autumn meeting, in Kettering. The exact venue is still be announced.

Gambusia sexradiata HUBBS, 1936

*N.B. This article first appeared in issue 22 of "Viviparous", the magazine of the Livebearer Information Service, in 1993 and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert.*

**Family** :- Poeciliidae GARMAN, 1895

**Synonyms** :- Gambusia nicaraguensis  
sexradiatus HUBBS, 1936

**Common Name** :- Papaloan mosquitofish

**Range** :- Rio Nautla, Veracruz, Mexico, south to the Yucatan Peninsula, and in the Usumacinta basin, Guatemala, and possibly into northern Honduras.

**Dorsal Fin Ray Count** :- 6 - 8

**Size** :- Males 3cm; Females 4cm

**Introduction to the U.K.** :- First imported to the UK from Germany by Ivan Dibble in the 1970's, however, several populations are now in circulation in the hobby.

**Description** :- The fish pictured is a mature female. Males have a slender body with an upturned mouth. The gonopodium is large in relation to the body and is usually held at a 60 degree angle.

Body colouration is silvery-grey with a blue sheen, and there is a prominent black stripe through the eye. The dorsal and caudal fins are distinctly marked with rows of black spots. Females of this species are similar in colour, however, the body is more robust and the anal fin is rather large in relation to the body. The body is much deeper than the male's. The edges of all the fins are electric blue in reflected sunlight.

The scientific name is derived from the number of dorsal fin rays most commonly seen in this species – 6.  
**Temperament and Care** :- For a Gambusia species this is a relatively peaceful species, even so, it should not be maintained with slow moving species. Coming from relatively low-lying areas of Mexico it prefers temperatures in the mid to upper seventies (F) and will tolerate temperatures as high as 80°F. Adults like plenty of live food in their diet or the addition of some meat. In the wild they generally eat insect larvae and other live foods only occasionally picking at algae.

Large broods of up to 40 young are produced on a monthly cycle and whilst it is possible to flock breed this species in a heavily planted tank, best results are obtained if the female is placed in a maternity tank with lots of plant cover at the surface and shallow water of some 10cm depth. The babies are produced at night in most cases and will be found hiding in the plants at the surface. Females never look heavily gravid but they do take on a more squared off shape when close to term. The gravid spot at this time becomes darker and larger.

**Preventing hybrids** :- This species, in common with all Gambusia, will hybridise with other species of Gambusia, Flexipennis and Heterophallus.



*Gambusia sexradiata*

**Data Protection Act**

In order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, we need to inform members that their name, address, email address and telephone number are being maintained on a database, the purpose of which is for the distribution of the Association's magazine and to inform members of forthcoming events. This information will not be provided to any other organisation for any purpose whatsoever without prior consultation. The association agrees to remove any details at a member's request.

**Committee**

**Chairman** : Chris Cheswright email [cheswright@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:cheswright@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Treasurer** : Chris Cheswright email [cheswright@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:cheswright@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Editor** : Greg Roebuck, 5 Fairholme Avenue, Neston, Cheshire, email [gjr12@gmail.com](mailto:gjr12@gmail.com)

**Events organiser** : Nigel Hunter; email [nigelhunter65@talktalk.net](mailto:nigelhunter65@talktalk.net)

**Webmaster** : Alan Dunne

**Committee members** : Clive Walker; Carl Stewart, Dai Jones

Email [wildun1964@gmail.com](mailto:wildun1964@gmail.com)