

# Livebearer News

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BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



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### 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** : Paddy Davies email [paddyd99@googlemail.com](mailto:paddyd99@googlemail.com)

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**Webmaster** : Alan Dunne

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

## Editorial

I'd like to start by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy new year [which seems incongruous since I'm writing this at the start of November].

Second I'd like to remind everyone that their membership runs out at the end of the year. You can renew membership either by sending a cheque to our treasurer, Don Kenwood, at the address on page 2 or via the BLA's website using Paypal.

I'd like to thank Nigel Hunter, who produced the article on keeping "tropical" fish outside during the summer months. I'd like to extend a special thanks to a new BLA member, Sara Fulton, who sent me an article on keeping *Zoogoneticus purheppechus*. Much appreciated.

Special thanks also go to Steve Oliver, longtime BLA member and our "Species Control Officer". Steve has been compiling a guide to the different swordtail species with a view to the information being available on our website.

Can I ask all BLA members to email Steve with a list of the species you keep. This will help the BLA to keep track of who has which species, which will in turn help our conservation efforts. Steve's email address is :-

[steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk)

All the best,  
Greg.

## Diary Date

Charity Fish Auction, Braunstone & District WMC,  
Braunstone Close, Leicester, LE3 2GE  
Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Doors open 9.00am.

Many BLA members will be there and the intention is to have a committee meeting. All BLA members are welcome to attend and have their say.

## Report on the Kettering meeting and auction

October 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn Express, Kettering

As usual, this was a joint event with the Fancy Guppy UK group, who were holding their show as part of the Fancy Guppy League. There were some beautiful examples of the guppy breeder's art on view and if I had a fish-room the size of a school gym I would have bid for some of them in the auction. There were also some rare and unusual wild-type livebearers on show, which to my mind are still very attractive, but in a more subtle way.

The convention gave me the opportunity to meet up with several stalwarts of the BLA but it was also good to meet some new members and also to be able to put faces to names of people who previously I'd only communicated with by email. It was just unlucky that the Goodeid Working Group held their annual convention the same weekend and so Paddy and Nigel sent their apologies.

There were a series of talks throughout the weekend. The first one that I attended was given by Dr David Poole, of "FishSCIENCE", during which he showed how to dissect a fish and check it for parasites. Dr Poole explained that the method he showed us was not the text-book method, but a quick

version that he uses as he often has to check 20 or 30 fish at a time for the Environment Agency in order to check whether it is OK to move a large batch of fish.

The fish in question was a roach, about 15cm long, taken from a pond a day or so before the convention and freshly killed. Dr Poole explained that the humane way to kill a fish for this purpose is by using a sharp blow to the head. An overdose of anaesthetic, like MS222, could be used but tends to kill the parasites on the fish making them difficult to see.

Dr Poole first checked the outside of the fish for large parasites such as *Argulus* or trematodes. The roach had none of these. Next the gills were checked – they were bright red showing that the fish was healthy. There were no pale areas or heavy mucous which indicate disease/problems. A small piece of gill tissue was examined under the microscope and a gill fluke, *Gyrodactylus sp*, about 0.5mm long was visible and seen by many of the lecture attendees. A sick fish can show as many as 20 – 30 of these in one view under the microscope. Next a skin scrape was carried, revealing no parasites, and then the belly was cut open and Dr Poole pointed out all the internal organs. The eye of the fish was also examined under the microscope and several more parasites were found. These included *Tylodelphis*, about 1mm long, which have birds as secondary hosts, and *Diplostomum*, about 2mm long, which can cause blindness if a fish is heavily infested and so render it more vulnerable to predation by birds.

And the relevance to us as fish-keepers? I'm not sure that I could sacrifice one of my fish in this way to find out which parasites are present. Dr Poole stressed that if any of us were to find parasites, we would not need to know the exact

species, just the general type of parasite in order to know the type of treatment to use. I found the talk fascinating as I'm sure all the other people in the room did.



A young attendee examines fish parasites under the microscope. *Photo : Bill Galbally*



Dr Poole and some of the audience. *Photo : Bill Galbally* 6

Dr Poole's second talk was about fish diseases and health, how to identify the problem in an unhealthy aquarium and how to treat it.

The first talk on the Sunday was a demonstration of how to build a fish-tank and the second talk was by me talking about the GWG trip to Mexico in February/March 2016.

The auction started with the guppies and many pairs reached high prices; the highest that I heard was £64 for one pair!

There were only six sellers in the BLA auction and some keen bidding for some species forced prices higher than I would have predicted. Interesting species included *Chapaichthys peraticus*, *Xiphophorus Montezuma*, *Zoogoneticus tequila*, *Phallocerus caudimaculata*, *Characodon audax*, *Brachyraphis roseni*, *Skiffia multipunctatus and sayula*, and *Allophorus robustus*.

## **Summer Holiday – Keeping livebearers outside**

by Nigel Hunter

Like many other enthusiasts I keep a lot of my fish outside in summer, and I believe they benefit highly from that treatment. For me it is a comfortable way to maintain them. and I really like the looks of some planted spots of water inside my garden. So it is advantageous for both parties, and this is why I want to report on the way I keep my livebearers (but not only those) outside.

The pros and cons of keeping fish outside

There are several reasons for doing so, for example the exposure of the fishes to natural light including UV-radiation, the availability of natural food as insects and their larvae, the exposure to Micro bacteria that presumably are more similar to those living in the natural habitats and of course the natural day/night cycle with its temperature variation.

But one must also consider the disadvantages of keeping fish outside. The observation of the fish is quite limited, because one sees his fish only from above – in case they do not hide between the vegetation. Extreme weather conditions might have a negative impact on the fish, and predation from insect larvae, birds, amphibians and mammals can not be controlled.

Containers suited for fish

Keeping fish in purpose-built Koi tanks is a quite luxury way to send your fish on summer holidays. Those tanks are expensive, but often offer the possibility to watch the occupants from the side through a paned wall. Those containers mostly have a capacity of several hundred litres, but the aquatic trade has seen an opening in the market and are selling also smaller units, often completed with pumps and

lighting. Those containers are again quite expensive, but easy to set up and better looking than most of mine. The only set back is the power requirement to keep the equipment running. A more economic solution is to improvise. Many companies use containers that perfectly fit our demands, and sometimes one gets the opportunity to purchase them for a reasonable price. But, almost anything that holds water is appropriate!

### Materials

Those containers mostly are build of plastics, which for our purposes is the material of choice. Plastics are impermeable and flexible to a certain extend, which means that those containers mostly also can be put on a ground which is not perfectly flat, and as a rule it is not easy to break them. Used containers should be checked out properly, because residues from industrial or chemical materials may have unpredictable effects on the fish. Some new containers, i.e. plaster pans, have a strong smell which stems from the exhalation of polyolefins used in the production of the pans. One might be alarmed by that aroma, but it is not harmful for the fish. If I'm unsure whether a container is suited for keeping fish in, I fill it with water and add live food colonies like daphnia, water lice, Gammarus or river shrimps. If they flourish I risk my fish. Certainly it is possible to set up aquariums outside. In this case the location of the tanks has to be chosen carefully, because exposure to direct sunlight might raise the water temperature to a dangerous degree, and, besides, who wants to scratch the algae from the front pane every second day?

### Positioning

Indoors one has almost total influence on the environmental conditions, but outside you will have to consider a sun and

shade balance, and the possible negative influence of things falling from the plants around your chosen place. Rotting fruits that fell unnoticed into the water can expend the oxygen which will kill all the fish, and dropping leaves might release toxic material.

Positioning is also dependent on the size of the container, and the species kept therein. I have containers between 50 – 1000 Litres, and smaller volumes fluctuate their temperature quickly. In contrast, larger volumes are more stable, but they take longer to heat up or cool down. So the combination of volume and positioning has to be considered, and chosen according to the needs of the fish. Some guppies, for example, might favour from a place exposed to a few hours of sunlight, while on the other hand, some goodeids like Girardinichthys will meet with a loss if the temperature rises too high.

Planting them into the ground will give smaller containers temperature characteristics similar to those of larger ones..

This also might be a trade-off for the ambitious friend of dapper gardens, but once they are put into the earth, it will take a lot of effort to maintain or even to move the container.

### Setting up

In early march I set up my containers. I put in some coral gravel or ocean rock as ground, and plant them with water lilies and hornwort. I add some live food cultures, and cover the containers with greenhouse or scaffold nets to keep animals from falling into the water. The fish feel secure underneath the nets, and it keeps out leaves and predators, but lets insects through. When the plants are grown I remove the covers.

I start to check the water temperature from early may and turn down the temperature in my fish room, and when I feel it is

ime I try a few fish. On a sunny weekend I start with a few males, because males seem to adjust to their new housing conditions more easily. I therefore use a 20 Litre bucket floated in the container until the temperature has equaled. Then the fish are placed in a floating mesh net until I am happy the fish are ok, and finally released. And now: Enjoy! So far I successfully held Goodeids, namely *Zoogoneticus tequila*, *Ataeniobius toweri*, *Xenotoca eiseni*, *Ameca splendens*, *Neotoca bilineata* and *Goodea atripinnis*, outside. The breeding results were not great but the fish looked stunning. I also held some Poeciliids in garden pans, like *Heterandria formosa*, *Gambusia affinis*, *Xiphophorus variatus*, *Xiphophorus hellerii* and even fancy guppies (!), just to name the livebearers.

This year I will try something new. I mounted four wheels under a container, so I can move it from one place to another even when it's filled. In this pan I will try an unnatural setup, using filter balls for shade and for cover. I'm interested in the comparison to a planted container, and i'm curious to know how the water condition in this container will develop, and whether there is any difference in the fish's health.

Through summer

Keeping fish outside does not have to be elaborate. Rain and sunshine will alter the water level, this is why access to a means of topping up the water level if needed is useful, and overflows should be installed. I only top up if necessary on really sunny days, and I do not use any aeration or pumps on my tubs. You can test your water occasionally, but usually you can see or smell problems...

I feed my fish at least once a week just to see the fish are still there. I think that extra feeding is necessary, only the extra

large 500 – 1000 litre containers seem capable of providing enough food for a breeding group. From time to time I remove fallen leaves from the containers, if necessary. Some leaves in the water are ok for live food, but a large amount pollutes the water and harms the fish. Plus, the fish hide in them when it's time to catch them.

If in high summer the temperature rises too high, I use greenhouse or scaffolding netting which gives shade.

### **Time to go home**

How long can fish be kept outside? I do not have an answer to that. I just keep a lookout on the fish, and if they are still active I leave them in the tubs. In 2013, for example, I started taking the fish into their winter quarters in November at a water temperature of 4°C. Taking them inside has to be done much more carefully than taking them outside. The temperature has to be brought up very slowly, otherwise you will lose your fish. Realistically you can expect to have your fish outside for 4 to 5 months. Although they may not breed outside, they will be recharged ready to breed once you have them back in a stable environment.

Keeping fish outside in summer is an easy and affordable way to maintain them in the warm months of the year. Most fish will benefit from that treatment. The costs can be kept down by recycling used containers. Only your space and time will limit you – and always remember to keep enough space for over wintering!



Some suitable containers



Purpose built but expensive koi tanks



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14



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16





In Portugal, not on the south-facing side of the house!

17



18



In Nigel's own garden

## J SARA FULTON

### *Zoogoneticus purhepechus*

I first discovered goodeids when I joined the British Livebearer Association back in May of this year and although I have kept tropical fish for nigh on 43 years these species have never crossed my path, and if they had, no doubt I would have discounted them immediately for being too expensive, too rare and (allegedly) very difficult to keep! At least these concerns can put you off when you are a novice!

Many hundreds of guppies, platies and swordtails later.... this year in fact, I find myself the very proud owner of a lovely pair of *Zoogoneticus purhepechus* (sorry! No common name!) which I purchased this June. The pair have produced 2 broods so far, 6 'fry' in July and 9 more recently last month (October 2017).







I found that keeping my *purhepechus* at (my) room temperature, and during the summer months this ranged roughly 73° - 76°f – resulted in good health, appetite and breeding condition. Expert advice (from a fellow B.L.A member) suggests that these fish benefit from a ‘rest’ period from around October until March at a lower temperature of approximately 60° – 65°f.

I did originally believe my own fish to be their close relative *Zoogoneticus tequila*, but upon submitting photographs to the B.L.A it was proven not to be the case.

Whilst by no means do I consider myself an authority in keeping goodeids I do believe that provided that their individual ‘species’ requirements are met, they are a hugely entertaining and tame fish (mine happily take food from my hand!)

I guess what I am saying is that whether you are a veteran fishkeeper like myself or a relative newcomer to the hobby – provided you are confident and competent at keeping your water parameters just right, there is no reason why you shouldn’t do your bit to conserve these rare and beautiful fish.

## The Northern Swordtails

BY Steven Oliver email [steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk)

Recently I have been researching the *Xiphophorus* species for the Database. Looking for a starting point I began looking through information on various swordtails and platies before finally settling on a group known as the northern Swordtails.

The northern swordtails live in and around the Panuco river basin and are separated from the southern swordtails by a geographical dividing line known as The Trans-Mexican volcanic belt. The northern swordtail group is made up of three clades and these are the Montezumae clade, the Cortezi clade, and the Pygmaeus clade. The Montezumae clade is the most northerly of the all the clades and is made up of *Xiphophorus montezumae*, *Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl* and *Xiphophorus continens*.

Presently there are nine species of northern swordtail and because of their location they are affectionately known as the ‘Panuco swordtails’.

I have put some profiles together for the Montezumae clade which I hope you will find informative, I would very much appreciate any additional information or photographs you can provide to improve the profiles. (Full credit given for any photographs used).

## *Xiphophorus continens*

(Zimmerer and Kallman 1988)

### **Etymology:**

*Xiphophorus*: Greek, xiphos = sword + Greek, pherein = to carry

*Continens*: Greek, conto = short + Latin, ensis, = sword

(Reference to the very small sword developed in males of this species.)

### **First description:**

**Zimmerer and Kallman 1988**

**American Museum Novitates Number 2975, June 27, 1990.**

Monophyly and Geography of the Rio Panuco Basin Swordtails  
(Genus *Xiphophorus*) with

Descriptions of Four New Species

Mary Rauchenberger, Klaus D. Kallman and Donald C. Morizot

### **Common names**

El Quince Swordtail ; Short sword platyfish

### **Synonyms**

*Xiphophorus* sp. Nov. Zimmer & Kallman 1988.

### **Group:**

*Xiphophorus continens* is one of nine northern swordtails and belongs to the Montezumae clade, consisting of *X. montezumae*, *X. nezahualcoyotl*, *X. continens*

### **Type Locality:**

The Nacimiento of the Rio Ojo Frio at El Quince, north of Rascon, Rio Gallinas-Rio Panuco drainage, San Luis Potosi, Mexico

Collected on April 27, 1984, by K. D. Kallman and D. C. Morizo

### **Distribution:**

Headwaters of the Rio Ojo Frio, north of Damian Carmona, Rio Panuco drainage, San Luis Potosi. Mexico

### **Populations:**

Rio Ojo Frio, El Quince, San Luis Potosi. Mexico.

### **Habitat:**

Fast flowing river, with high aquatic vegetation with a stony river bed.

### **Size:**

Males 2.5cm, Females 3.5cm

### **Distinguishing characteristics:**

It is a small, slender species, with a slender caudal peduncle. The sword is barely noticeable with a maximum length of 1 millimetre

### **Colour/Pattern Variability:**

A small slender species, the body colour is pale golden brown with a darker brown midlateral stripe. There are one or two less prominent zigzag stripes above the midlateral stripe. The underneath section is white from the mouth to the anal fin.

The dorsal and caudal fins are clear to pale yellow, all other fins are clear.

Males do not develop a sword greater than 1 mm.

### **Behaviour:**

Not a shy fish when settled, will happily swim around the front of the aquarium looking for food.

### **Husbandry:**

A well planted aquarium with a temperature of 21 – 22 degrees C

### **Breeding Notes:**

After a gestation period of 24-28 days, female produces 10 to 20 young,

### **Remarks**

The overall shape and appearance of this species is most similar to *X. pygmaeus* and was assumed to be closely related. Closer scrutiny has found that *X. continens* shares characteristics found in *X. montezumae* and *X. nezahualcoyotl*.

### **References:**

**American Museum Novitates Number 2975, June 27, 1990.**

Monophyly and Geography of the Rio Panuco Basin Swordtails (Genus *Xiphophorus*) with

Descriptions of Four New Species  
**Kallman & Morizot**

**Rauchenberger,**

Platies and swordtails  
**Lambert**

**Derek and Pat**

Fishbase

Wikipedia





Photograph courtesy of Dave Macallister

### **Wanted**

John Benson, a BLA member from Southport, Lancashire wants to buy the following species :-

*Brachyraphis holdridgei*; *Phallichthys fairweatheri*;  
*Xiphophorus birchmani*; *Carlhubbsia stuarti*;

If anyone has any of these species and has some that they can sell to John, please will they email him at :-

[benson4045@live.co.uk](mailto:benson4045@live.co.uk)

Thanking you in anticipation of your help.

Wanted Large airpump for fishhouse required 60lpm approx.

Please contact Clive Hawkins [clivehawkins52@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:clivehawkins52@yahoo.co.uk)

If anyone wants to advertise fish for sale, or that they want to find, can they email me before the next issue of "Livebearer News" is due out and I will include their advert. My email address is on page 2.

Greg

