

Livebearer News

Official Members Magazine of the
BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



Issue 54
June
2018

CONTENTS

Page 1 : Front cover

Page 2 : Contents, Data Protection Act, Committee

Page 3 : Editorial

Pages 4 - 5 : Post-script to “Summer holiday” from “Livebearer News” 53, March 2018

Pages 5 – 9 : Saving fry – photos from John Benson

Pages 10 – 14 : *Xiphophorus montezumae*, by Steve Oliver

Pages 15 – 19 : *Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl* by Steve Oliver

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

Treasurer : Don Kenwood; 154 Kenn Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS15 6JY; email donkenwood@blueyonder.co.uk

Editor : Greg Roebuck, email gjrsrr12@gmail.com

Events organiser : Nigel Hunter; email Nigel_w98@yahoo.co.uk

Webmaster : Alan Dunne

Committee members : Clive Walker; Carl Stewart,

Editorial

I messed up! BLA member and committee member Steve Oliver put in a lot of hard work writing species guides to the northern swordtails and then I put his guide to *Xiphophorus continens* in the March newsletter as well as last December’s newsletter. Sorry Steve! To make up for this, I have included his guides to *X. montezumae* and *X. nezahualcoyotl* in this newsletter. Thanks again Steve for your hard work.

I have also to thank BLA member John Benson. He sent me a series of photos showing how he divides tanks or keeps female livebearers from eating their own fry. These photos follow this editorial.

What is your opinion? This used to be the title of a regular column in the old “*Aquarist and Pondkeeper*” magazine. It was always interesting to hear a variety of views on different topics. Since many BLA members are vastly more experienced fishkeepers than I am, I would love to hear your views on any topic, but especially :-

1. Water changes – do they affect the growth rate of fry / young fish?
2. What factors affect sex ratios in different livebearer species? I ask this one because at present I am getting vastly more female *Brachyraphis rhabdophora* than male.
3. Have you ever bought or sold fish over the internet? How did it go? Were the fish OK?
4. Freshwater stingrays are livebearers. I recently found an article in the January 2006 copy of “*Practical Fishkeeping*” which describes how the Maidenhead Aquatics store in St Albans had a female *motoro* stingray give birth to four young in a 3m x 60cm x 90cm display tank. The temperature was said to be 30°C, pH 6.5 – 7.2, hardness 5 - 7°GH and nitrates

less than 10ppm. The owner of Pier Aquatics, in Wigan once told me that he had bred freshwater stingrays [sp not known] in a tank the size of a double bed in his lounge! With a pair on sale in a North Wales aquatic store on sale recently at £500 this is not a livebearer that I am likely to be keeping this side of a lottery win. However, if any BLA readers are keeping them, I would love to hear what success you have had. If you have views which I could share please email me at :- gjrsrr12@gmail.com
Cheers,
Greg

Post-Script to “Summer Holiday – Keeping livebearers outside

“Livebearer News 52 – December 2017” contained an article by our own Nigel Hunter based on the talk that he has given at BLA events, outlining how and why to keep livebearers outside during the summer months. However, there are drawbacks. I have a pond in my garden, about 3m by nearly 2m. When I first dug it out I put goldfish in to it, then we had a visit from a heron and I haven’t kept goldfish since. Last June I released twelve young *Xenotoca variata* in to the pond. I cleared the pond out and emptied it during October, with the temperature down to 11°C. What I found was over forty larvae of the emperor dragonfly [*Anax imperator* – I think], each about 4 to 5 cm long, but only three of the original *X. variata*. Dragonfly larvae are known to be aquatic predators and are equipped with fearsome jaws – if you are a 4cm long *goodeid*. When I mentioned my experience to Nigel, he told me that he

cleans out all his outdoor containers in May, and removes all such possible fish predators. Sounds like good advice to me if you are thinking of giving any of your fish outdoors this summer.

Nigel’s article also brought to mind a story from Guenther Schleussner, who was part of our 2016 GWG trip to Mexico. He told me that he has over a dozen ponds in his garden which he uses to give his *Goodeids* a summer holiday outside. There is also a stream at the bottom of his garden. He looked out of his window early one morning to see a kingfisher beating to death his best male *Characodon lateralis* and then swallowing it. To make matters worse, the kingfisher flew off before he could bring his camera to bear to take its photo. In Britain, cats and herons are more likely predators of your fish in an outdoor container but you might still need to take precautions, e.g. by covering a pond or container with netting.

Saving fry

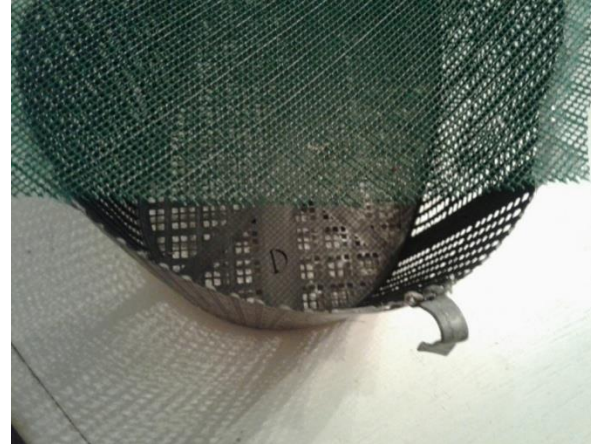
Some species of livebearer completely ignore their newly-dropped fry, others are inveterate fry killers. My personal bugbear is *Brachyraphis roseni*. Most females eat as many of their fry as they can; one that I had recently killed all her fry and didn’t even bother eating most of them. So how do you save the fry of species like this? BLA member John Benson emailed me recently after a conversation by phone to show me how he saves the fry of his *B. roseni*, *B. brachyraphis* and other species. All the photos below are from John.



6



7



Plastic mesh is glued to the top of a pond planter.



8



The female is placed in the planter, which is floating in the tank and the fry can swim through the holes to safety.

9

Xiphophorus montezumae

(Jordan and Snyder 1900)

Etymology:

Xiphophorus: Greek, xiphos = sword + Greek, pherein = to carry;
Montezumae Named after Montezuma the monarch of the Aztecs in
the Aztec Triple Alliance

First description:

Jordan and Snyder, 1900

Notes on a collection of fishes from the rivers of Mexico, with
description of twenty new species". *Bulletin of the U.S. Fish
Commission*. v. 19, pp. 115-147

History:

Group:

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

Type Locality:

Rio Verde [Rio Gallinas] near Rascon, San Luis Potosi, Mexico
Note: -Rio Gallinas is also known as Rio Frio

Distribution:

Northeastern Mexico, Tamaulipas, Northern Veracruz and San Luis
Potosi

Populations:

Rio Gallinas system

Tamasopo

Rascon- includes the El
Quince and Rio ojo
Frio collections

Arroyo La Cienega

Ojo Caliente

Arroyo Cienega Grande

Capuchin

Habitat:

Generally found in streams with strong currents over substrates of
sand, gravel or rocks (Very rarely over mud or clay) with usually
sparse or no vegetation.

Size:

Male 6cm female 7cm

Distinguishing characteristics:

A Large slender swordtail, The Capuchin strain of montezumae sword is the largest of the northern swordtails reaching a body length in excess of 75mm, the sword of the montezumae is generally $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times its body length.

Colour/Pattern Variability:

Fish from the Rio Gallinas system can develop irregular black spots on their flanks that can extend onto the dorsal fin. These black spots / patterns are absent in the other populations.

Males from populations other than that in the Rio Gallinas (Rio Frio) have distinctive dorsal fin patterns.

A few males of all the populations develop a deep bronze to red coloration.

Tamasopo

Males have a bluish sheen to the body and can develop irregular black spots that form into patterns on the flanks which can extend into the dorsal fin. The tail fin possibly has a variablecaudal blotch pattern and has a yellow sword with black edging.

Rascon.

Males have a bluish sheen to the body and can develop irregular black spots that form into patterns on the flanks which can extend into the dorsal fin. The tail fin has a yellow sword with black edging.

Ojo Caliente.

Males have a bluish sheen to the body with vertical stripes. The dorsal fin is light blue. A pale yellow tail fin sporting a pale blue sword edged with black.

Capuchin.Males have a blue/green sheen to the body with a pale yellow tail fin sporting a pale blue sword edged with black. The dorsal fin is yellow and has two rows of black spots, a row along the base and a more irregular row through the center as well as other random spots.No development of block spots on the flanks.

Behaviour:

A peaceful active species

Husbandry:

Can be kept in a biotope aquarium with a gravel and rock base using a power filter to provide the current or a planted community aquarium for similar sized fish

X. montezumae is found at higher elevations than X. nezahualcoyotl and therefore require a slightly lower temperature, Derek Lambert recommended 24 degrees

Breeding:

If well fed and maintained in an aquarium with plenty of hiding places, this species can be flock-bred, however it is recommended to remove the female to a heavily planted spawning tank about a week before birth.

Broods are produced on a monthly cycle with fry numbers of 25 on average.

Remarks

In the early collections *X. nezahualcoyotl* was often misidentified as *X. montezumae* and it is believed that all early work and analysis on *X. montezumae* was in fact carried out on *X. nezahualcoyotl*.

The profile for *Xiphophorus montezumae* includes the collection data that we are more familiar with in the UK, they are El Quince or Rio Ojo Frio. El Quince is a town on the Rio Ojo Frio south of the Nacimiento, (Headwaters or source), I have included these collections as part of the population known as 'Rascon'. The initial data for the Rascon population came from the town Damian Corona roughly five miles south of El Quince, Damian Corona is several miles north of the town of Rascon.

References:

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

Descriptions of Four New Species

Rauchenberger, Kallman & Morizot

Platies and swordtails

Derek and Pat Lambert

Fishbase

Wikipedia

Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl

(Rauchenberger, Kallman & Morizot 1990)

Etymology:

Xiphophorus: Greek, xiphos = sword + Greek, pherein = to carry
Nezahualcoyotl: Named after the poet-philosopher emperor of Tezcoco (Texcoco), considered to be coequal with Montezuma, monarch of the Aztecs in the Aztec Triple Alliance

First description:

Rauchenberger, Kallman & Morizot 1990

Rauchenberger, M., K. D. Kallman, AND D. C. Morizot (1990) Monophyly and geography of the Rio Panuco basin swordtails (genus *Xiphophorus*) with descriptions of four new species. American Museum Novitates 2975, 1–41.

Common Name:

Northern Mountain Swordtail. Affectionately known as Nezzie

Synonyms:

Xiphophorus montezumae montezumae: Rosen, 1960:

Xiphophorus montezumae ((Hamburg, 1964)): Lechner and Radda, 1987:

Xiphophorus, sp. nov.: Zimmerer and Kallman, 1988: 15

History:

Collected by K. D. Kallman, D. C. Morizot, and M. Ryan on 6th April 1985.

X. nezahualcoyotl has previously been confused as *X. montezumae*, some if not all previous reports in the past to experimental work with *X. montezumae* actually refer to *X. nezahualcoyotl*.

Group:

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

Type Locality:

Arroyo Gallitos, 0.5 km west of Gallitos, an internal drainage, Tamaulipas state, Mexico.

Distribution:

Rio Tamesi drainage, San Luis Potosi/Tamaulipas states, Mexico

Populations:

El Salto, Mexico

Puente el Nacimiento

Rio Tamesi Ocampo

Habitat:

Generally found in streams with strong currents over substrates of sand, gravel or rocks (Very rarely over mud or clay) with usually sparse or no vegetation.

Size:

Male 5cm female 6cm

Distinguishing characteristics:

A deep bodied medium sized species of swordtail.

Colour/Pattern Variability:**Males**

A base colour of pale brown, overlaid with a sky blue the lateral line is formed of multiple zigzag lateral lines. Black spots can appear on the body, these can form random patterns which are not identical to both sides.

The dorsal fin base is long and when the dorsal fin is lowered it extends further back along the caudal peduncle

The caudal peduncle is relatively deep with many populations showing a caudal blotch. The sword is yellow with black edging and distinctly upturned (although fairly straight in larger males), sword length is on average just over half the length of the body.

Females

A base colour of pale brown, overlaid with a sky blue the lateral line is formed of multiple zigzag lateral lines. Black spots can appear on the body, these can form random patterns which are not identical to both sides.

Husbandry:

Can be kept in a biotope aquarium with a gravel and rock base using a power filter to provide the current or a planted community aquarium for similar sized fish.

X. nezahualcoyotl is found at lower elevations than X. montezumae and therefore requires a slightly higher temperature, Derek Lambert recommended 25 degrees.

Breeding:

If well fed and maintained in an aquarium with plenty of hiding places, this species can be flock-bred, however it is recommended to remove the female to a heavily planted spawning tank about a week before birth.

Broods are produced on a monthly cycle with fry numbers of 25 on average.

Remarks:

A sister species to Xiphophorus montezumae, Identifiable by having a smaller adult size with a deeper body, a shorter sword that is distinctly upturned.

References:

Monophyly and Geography of the Rio Panuco Basin Swordtails (Genus Xiphophorus) with Descriptions of Four New Species
Rauchenberger, Kallman & Morizot

Platies and swordtails **Derek and Pat Lambert**
Fishbase Wikipedia

Photo courtesy of Juan Carlos Merino

Diary dates

Sunday 1st August : Association of Aquarists in conjunction with the Southern Livebearers Aquatic Group Show and Auction

19

Venue :-
Kempshott Village Hall,
Pack Lane,

Basingstoke,
Hants,
RG22 5HN

Refreshments will be available from 10.30 onwards.
Benching from 10.00 am to 12.00 am
Judging from 12.30 onwards.
More information, including a map of the location, on



the Association of Aquarists website.

BLA open auction.

Date :- 12th August

Venue :- Tollgate Hotel and Leisure Club,
Ripon Road,
Stoke-on-Trent,
ST3 3BS

We have the room from 10.00am to 5.00 pm and we

are aiming to start the auction at 1.00pm
This is an open auction so non-livebearers and
plants can be sold as well as livebearers.

If you are on facebook or twitter can you please pass on the
news about these two events.