

# 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

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**Reminder : Subs are due in January**

Subs are still just £6, of which £1 goes to help support the Fish Ark

## Editorial

1. Why do you keep fish? I keep them because I like watching them and their behaviour. I get a kick out of breeding any species, common or rare. But some of the species I keep are either endangered or extinct in the wild. We in the hobby are in a position to make a difference to the future of many species. The Goodeid Working Group works towards the conservation of Goodeids but what about Xiphophorus species? My thanks to Paddy for forwarding the article by Markéta Rejlková & Libor Balnar about the conservation status and aquarium keeping of the Northern Platies. I hope that at least some BLA members will take up the challenge of keeping and breeding these species so that they are preserved and can possibly be re-stocked into the wild in the future.
2. The BLA's autumn convention was a successful and enjoyable occasion [see the report below]. The guppies exhibited in the FGUK show were stunning. If I had a fish room big enough [i.e. the size of a school gym] I would have bought several pairs. However, I have to confess that the winning entries and the unplaced ones looked just as good as each other. What makes the difference? Well, the article by Steve Elliot [forwarded to me by Eddie McNight – thanks Eddie] starts to explain the judging process. The remainder of this article will appear spread over the next few issues of „Livebearer News“.
3. Thanks again to J. Sara Fulton for sending me pictures of the fish that she keeps. The photos are great. I have never yet managed to get a photo of any of my fish that was in focus! If anyone else has photos, or better still photos with articles attached, please send them to me at the usual email address :- [gjrsrr12@gmail.com](mailto:gjrsrr12@gmail.com) Thanks!
4. I hope to meet up with you at the charity fish auction in Leicester in late November. If I don't – then here's wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## Report on the Autumn Convention and Auction

As usual, the BLA's Autumn Convention was a joint event with the Fancy Guppy UK group, who were holding the British leg of the 3.

European Guppy Championship. This year, instead of holding the event in Kettering, it was held at the IBM offices on the outskirts of Warwick, from Friday 28th to Sunday 30th October. The offices, as you would imagine, were excellent; very modern and comfortable, with all the facilities that we needed, and were also free! Many thanks to Bill Galbally for organising the venue.

I didn't arrive until Saturday lunchtime, with the event already in full swing. The guppies had been on show for two days and had already been judged. There were many stunningly attractive guppies in the show and I couldn't tell why some of them were show winners and others were considered to be also-rans. There was also a display of wild-type livebearers.

Later on the Saturday there were two talks. The first was by Jane Handley of the Fancy Guppy UK group. She talked about her visit to her great hero, Stan Stubel, the „father of guppy breeding and showing“ in America. Jane described Stan's methods for keeping and breeding top-class guppies. Among the tips she took from him was to feed brine shrimp to fry about 20 minutes after a feed of powdered fry food; to discard the first brood from any female, keep the second and third broods and then discard the female; cull any female that ate her fry and never to keep more than 10 – 12 fry per tank.

The second talk on Saturday was given by Fred Poeser, who like most Dutch folk spoke perfect English and has a strong sense of humour. This talk was about guppy genetics and was fascinating – though I can't claim to have understood everything. After his talk, we repaired to the bar of the hotel next door until it was time for the gala dinner. On the Sunday, Fred gave a second talk, this time about Mollies and how many species of molly there are. Fred has been to Central America many times for his research on the subject and has made many discoveries. How he finds time to be a full-time biology teacher in a secondary school I'll never know!

Fred was kind enough to let me have a copy of all his slides that he used for the two talks and I am trying to work them up into articles for the newsletter. 4.

Next on Sunday was the guppy auction. The top prices paid were £50 and £44 for pairs which won their classes. However, many pairs of guppies which looked just as good to my eyes sold for just £3 – less than you would pay in an aquarium shop for show-quality guppies! After the guppy auction came the BLA auction. Interesting species included *Characodon audax*, *Zoogoneticus tequilla*, *Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl*, *X. Kallmani*, *X. Cortezi*, *X. Xiphidum*, *Limia perugiae*, *Brachyraphis rabdophora*, *Micropoecilia bifurca*, *Girardinus falcatus* and *Skiffia multipunctatus*. Some of these went for quite high prices but other people obtained fish for bargain prices much lower than you would ever see in an aquarium shop.

## Saving the northern platyfish from extinction – in your home aquarium

Markéta Rejlková & Libor Balnar

When we put a female fancy swordtail in a jar to later become the happiest children in the world when our first baby fish were born, we couldn't imagine that one day we would keep the greyest of all livebearers, look for undescribed or extinct species in drying out and often polluted waters, and run a conservation breeding project. But there it is. We don't only read fish stories, we look for them and try to steer them towards a happy end.

Northern platyfish are not the most popular group among livebearers, not to mention their invisibility in the general aquarium hobby. But they are nice little fish, their original biotopes were interesting and often beautiful places, and when you care for them properly, they swim

happily in multiple generations apparently ignorant of the fact that their homes are destroyed and they can never come back. (Or maybe... can we do something?) It is not just the fish as an object, it is the whole story that captivates you.

## The story

If you were a fish, you would probably like to live in a clear water, maybe a spring pool with some aquatic plants and nice surroundings. So did the northern platyfish – yet they found themselves in a wrong place. Semi-arid climate, rapid urban growth, pollution, water extraction... if you survive this and there is still some water left, you have to face the presence of exotic species. And you can imagine what your chances are when brisk, lusty and adaptive species such as the southern relative *Xiphophorus variatus* competes with you, a rather inconspicuous fish.

The history of northern platyfish is sad and intricate. These fish from genus *Xiphophorus* live (or lived) in northwestern Mexico in states Coahuila and Nuevo León, far away from their nearest relative. There are three species described scientifically, and few other populations which were often lost before they could have been examined.

The focal point lies in Monterrey metropolitan area which is inhabited by more than 4 millions of people. This area was home of *Xiphophorus couchianus*, extinct in the wild since 1960's, and some of the undescribed populations. Urban growth engulfed all rivers and springs and the area is extremely polluted, with strong presence of exotic fish species. While it could be the case that there are some forrest streams in adjacent mountains or springs at private property which still hold a platyfish population not affected by hybridization, it is very unlikely. Places like Ojo de Agua de Apodaca have changed over decades and it is hard to imagine that the population originally found there could be

reintroduced one day. But it survived in the aquarium hobby, at least.

Habitats of two other species look much better at first sight. *Xiphophorus gordonii* lives in the protected area Cuatro Ciénegas. The landscape is wonderful and platies still abundant, but the area is very small and isolated. In other pools and rivers in Cuatro Ciénegas there are already invasive species (including jewel cichlids) finding their way through this unique valley. Considering the water requirements of farms and villages and desert nature of Cuatro Ciénegas, *Xiphophorus gordonii* is a very vulnerable species.

*Xiphophorus meyeri* is the northernmost species of the genus. Originally found in a pool (converted to a swimming area in municipal park) and nearby spring, its traces have been lost and if you go to visit these two places, you don't find any single platyfish. Actually the spring is used as a source of water for the city and farms around, and there are years when it gets completely dry. Scary, isn't it?

## The project

Except *X. gordonii* (and possibly the so called "Regio" population which is unresolved yet, both in terms of its identity and current status), all northern platyfish are most probably extinct in the wild. They are kept in aquariums, but scarcely and in low numbers, which is a very dangerous situation. That's why an international conservation breeding project called „**Xiphophorus – Northern Platyfish**“ was initiated under the guidance of ÖVVÖ (Österreichische Verband für Vivaristik und Ökologie – Austrian Association for Vivaristics and Ecology), which had developed a platform for this kind of activities.

Aim of the project is to strengthen the captive populations and make sure that their size and genetic diversity is as high as possible to allow

species survival. In order to achieve this, we need to bring together all keepers of northern platyfish and also distribute the offspring to new ones. We must secure stocks of all currently known and kept populations. These are:

### *Xiphophorus couchianus* "La Huasteca"

**Origin:** Monterrey area (several locations), Nuevo León, Mexico

**IUCN status:** critically endangered (1996, needs updating)

**Actual status:** extinct in the wild since 1960's

### *Xiphophorus gordonii* "Laguna Santa Tecla"

**Origin:** Laguna Santa Tecla, Cuatro Ciénegas valley, Coahuila, Mexico

**IUCN status:** endangered (1996, needs updating)

**Actual status:** still abundant in very small area with high impact of human activities

### *Xiphophorus meyeri* "Muzquiz" – Spotted

**Origin:** La Cascada / El Socavón, Melchor Múzquiz, Coahuila, Mexico

**IUCN status:** endangered (1996, needs updating)

**Actual status:** extinct in the wild since ? (2018 - not present on any of both known locations)

### *Xiphophorus meyeri* "Muzquiz" – Wild Type

**Note:** same as above; different form, spotting is suppressed by a **Note:** same as above; different form, spotting is suppressed by a recessive allele

### *Xiphophorus* sp. "Apodaca"

**Origin:** Ojo de Agua de Apodaca, Monterrey area, Nuevo León, Mexico

**IUCN status:** n/a

**Actual status:** extinct in the wild since 1990's

**Note:** treated sometimes as a form of *X. couchianus*, though distinct

### ***Xiphophorus* sp. "Regio"**

**Origin:** Río Santa Ana, Monterrey area, Nuevo León, Mexico

**IUCN status:** n/a

**Actual status:** threatened by habitat degradation and hybridization with *X. variatus* (maybe only hybrids existing now?)

**Note:** the taxonomic status of this population is not clear; distinct form not similar to any other northern platyfish, known since 2008 also as "Santa Ana platyfish" or "Tunnel platyfish"

At this moment, six months after the project was launched, we have 11 members from 5 countries and we are still looking for more. Two institutions are also involved and provide their capacity for keeping reserve populations – Ostrava ZOO (Czech Republic) and Haus des Meeres – Aqua Terra Zoo (Austria). As for the fish, some populations are doing better, while some are extremely rare in captivity. If these stocks are lost, nobody can ever see the species live again. I guess you now understand why we need an international cooperation. It is so easy to loose own fish by an accident or negligence – northern platyfish are not low maintenance fish! – and there is no easy source where one can get replacement.

One of the main rules of our project is that the fish cannot be sold. We don't want to make it a commodity or collector's piece. There are aquarists who constantly search for „new“ fish and are willing to pay a lot of money, but this does not guarantee that they can and will care for the fish for next decades. Endangered animals are rare and therefore valued, but is it right to make money on the fact that we have brought them to the brink of extinction? We care about long-term preservation of very vulnerable species, and this is the only criterion when deciding about offspring distribution.

Conservationists would speculate whether it makes sense to preserve species which are extinct in the wild and possibility of their

reintroduction is at least questionable. Well, take a look at the photo of beautiful *X. couchianus* male, perfectly alive now, and be grateful for having the opportunity to speculate – this otherwise extinct species survives in aquariums for more than 50 years. Do you see a reason to give up?

We don't. Not yet.

## **The fish**

All northern platyfish originate in spring pools or headwaters. This gives us clue about preferred environment and optimal husbandry. These are not difficult fish, but they require clean, well oxygenated water with frequent changes. They eat live and frozen food, flakes etc., and appreciate some plant and algae presence in the tank, which provides them shelter and additional opportunity to look for food.

*X. gordonii* lives in desert valley in waters with constant temperature around 30 °C and should therefore not be kept too cold. On the other hand, all other species do not like temperatures over 26 °C, but they can tolerate temperatures around or below 20 °C, optimum being somewhere in between. So they are well suited for unheated indoor tanks in our normal rooms and also for outdoor culture during summer.

Northern platyfish usually stay below 4 cm and are peaceful, yet active. They can live in a tank as small as 60 l, but it is better to give them more room to swim and keep them in bigger groups. A single species tank is a good option, otherwise they can live with small fish that will not bother them. Never mix them with another platyfish or swordtail, they could hybridize which leads to loss of original populations.

Fry is usually not eaten, so it is not necessary to separate the female to get offspring. It can happen that reproduction stops for several weeks or

months, and also the fry number is quite low – count rather with single units, not dozens.

## It is your turn now

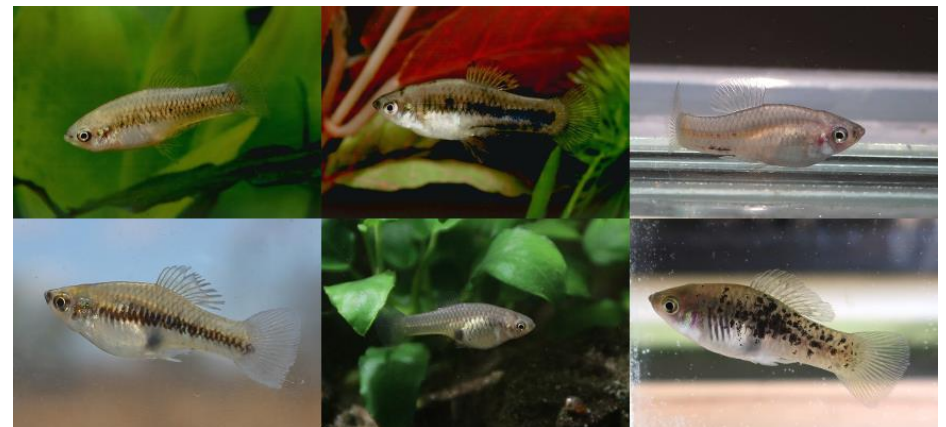
Fishkeeping is not just a hobby, it is a powerful tool to make this world better. Even if you did not fall in love with northern platyfish (hard to believe!), you can be sure that there are people who keep the very last individuals of different fish species in their home aquariums and **save them from extinction**. You can become one of us. It can be rare and difficult species, or one that used to be common, it can be a beautiful fish or less beautiful... Maybe you already keep it? Do you know the situation of your fish in natural habitats? You can find out, and if you discover that it is indeed endangered, start your own project. If it is not, then you have double win: your favourite fish is safe for now, and you can pick another one with less lucky story! Who would not find a place for yet another tank?

If you are keeping northern platyfish or interested in the project, we would be happy to hear from you. Please visit the project homepage for more information:

<http://www.oevvoe.org/xiphophorus-northern-platyfish>



A1 - Aquarium population of *Xiphophorus meyeri*. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



F0 - All six populations of northern platyfish covered by the project. (Photo: Libor Balnar, Norbert Dokoupil, Markéta Rejlková)



F1 - *Xiphophorus couchianus*. (Photo: Libor Balnar)



F3 - *Xiphophorus meyeri*, spotted type. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



F2 - *Xiphophorus gordonii*. Wild male photographed at Laguna Santa Tecla. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



F4 - *Xiphophorus meyeri*, wild type. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



F5 - *Xiphophorus* sp. "Apodaca". (Photo: Libor Balnar)



F6 - *Xiphophorus* sp. "Regio". (Photo: Libor Balnar)



L1 - There are still many rivers and canals in Monterrey, former home of *Xiphophorus couchianus*. However, if you see some of them, you don't dare to come closer! (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



L2 - Laguna Santa Tecla in Cuatro Ciénegas desert valley. *Xiphophorus gordonii* is present in its small inlet and outlet. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)





L3 - Municipal park La Cascada in Múzquiz, former habitat of *Xiphophorus meyeri*. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



L4 - There is plenty of fish in Múzquiz. The pool is dominated by *Herichthys cyanoguttatus* followed by *Gambusia speciosa* and *Astyanax mexicanus*. Photo taken in February 2018 when not a single platyfish was found. While the conditions are apparently good, it needs to be

considered that it is winter season. This popular swimming area is crowded during summer, not to mention the water shortage, which can be really substantial in some years. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



L5 - *Pseudoxiphophorus bimaculatus* is common exotic species in Monterrey area. This one was photographed at Ojo de Agua de Apodaca, now recreational and swimming area. Spring pools no longer house any wild platyfish, but we have seen *Xiphophorus helleri*, *Poecilia mexicana*, many tilapias, turtles, orange koi carp... and crayfish and snails, see the photo. Note that it is the Malaysian trumpet snail, *Melanoides tuberculata*, another exotic species now quite common in Mexico. (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)



L6 - Does the Santa Ana creek hide an undescribed species known today as *Xiphophorus* sp. "Regio"? (Photo: Markéta Rejlková)

**Four more photos** from J. Sara Fulton, included because I liked them!



*Girardinus metallicus*

Black-chinned livebearer,



A catfish – I'm no expert so I don't know which!



*Xiphoporus montezumae*



*Phallichthys amates*

## **Judging to the IKGH Standards by *Steve Elliott* [With thanks to Eddie McNight for sending it on to me to use].**

I was recently asked to make a presentation to explain judging to the IKGH standards. Time constraints resulted in a re writing of the presentation to only include for a description of the coding system that we use to organise the IKFG guppy show classes. The following is the complete lecture written so that it can be distributed further, especially to those breeders who are not members of the IKGH and so are not familiar with our rules and methods.

So, to begin with, who is the IKGH ? Internationales Kuratorium Guppy Hochzucht. This is German language and is difficult to make a direct translation into English. The best I can make is ‘International Congress for Guppy High-breeding’. There are many guppy clubs across Europe (and indeed the world) and originally, they were each organised independently of each other. Then in the 1990’s several joined together under the banner of the IKGH in order that a European Championship Guppy Show could be organised with a universal set of rules to which everyone would comply. The members of the IKGH are all guppy clubs and not individuals.

The rules that were agreed were not only the House Rules for running of the Association, but also rules for organising guppy shows (for trios), the IHS standard male guppies, colour standards and categories of tail shape types, rules for organising a pairs show and also for female guppy assessment.

The part that we are interested in is known as the IHS the ‘International High – breed Standard’. This is the description and information of the ‘ideal’ guppy to which breeders try to achieve and with which judges use to assess the show guppies.

There is a mechanism by which the document is reviewed every 5 years at which time there is opportunity for the membership to change or amend the rules. This allows the IKGH to be progressive and respond to the wishes of the membership. For example, there are currently 12

tail shapes that are accepted as classes at European Championship shows. There is currently (November 2017) a 13th tail shape that has been proposed and is being voted upon to include or not - the Half-moon Tail.

The current version of the rules is freely available to everyone on the IKGH website.

To assess how the IKGH rules are applied, it is worthwhile to note what other organisations use and do for their guppy contests. I am aware of only 8 different sets of standards around the world. Europe (IKGH), USA (IFGA), Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan and the World Guppy Association (which appears to be based upon that from Singapore). I would respectfully suggest that there are 3 main world regions for guppy shows and they each have their own 'regional' standards. Europe, the Americas and Asia. I would not suggest that any one is better than the others. In my mind they all have good points and not so good points, but at the bottom of it the actual assessment of the guppy is very similar.

The Americas, mainly the USA, is governed by the IFGA, the International Fancy Guppy Association. They tend to favour large guppies, even though they are not always in the best condition (large guppies are usually old guppies and not breeding stock) and being larger may not have best finnage and certainly not the best colour. A guppy possesses a fixed amount of colour cells which are close together in smaller fish and so produce a better and more intense colour, that same number of colour cells is spread across larger fish thus giving less intense overall colour.

The IFGA shows only accommodate triangle tail (delta tail) guppies, Veil tails and Sword tails. The opportunity to show other tail shapes is there for sadly reduced and unrecognised. The triangle tails are all separated by colour form to make up the various classes and the Sword Tail class accommodates Bottom Swords, Double Swords and Top Swords all together in one class.

The IFGA guppy shows are for single male entries, groups of 5

matched males and also groups of 3 matched female guppies. Points are accumulated from the winners during the course of the year to calculate the IFGA champions.

The show guppies are assessed by two judges who discuss and compare the guppies on display to decide the winner. If agreement cannot be found the head judge makes the final decision. They then agree and allocate the points score. The guppies are compared to each other to decide the winners whilst other regions compare the show guppies with their standards for their assessments.

In comparison we have the IKGH who are mainly from Europe, but increasingly are attracting clubs from all over the world. There are 12 classes based upon tail shapes and these are separated into three groups that represent the Short Tail guppies, Sword Tail guppies and the Large Tail guppies. The assessment for an ideal size guppy can result in a deduction of (up to three) points if the show fish are oversize. A wild male guppy is about 18mm, the IKGH state that a Short Tail guppy should be 24mm, a Sword Tail should be 25mm and a Large Tail guppy should be 26mm.

Every entry in the show is assessed by all 5 judges. From the 5 scores the highest pointed assessment is removed with the lowest pointed assessment. The remaining three scores are then averaged to give the final score. It is not a perfect system, but it has been described as the most fair system. However, if the show has 240 entries and a judge spends just two minutes with each entry that would be 480 minutes which is 8 hours of hard concentration. This method takes far too long if there are too many entries. The judges compare the guppies with the standards that portray the 'ideal' guppy.

The IKGH originally had shows only for Trios of matched males. This is by far the most difficult and most rewarding of all the guppy shows, the Premier league of guppy shows! More recent times have seen new competitions for pairs of guppies (matched male and female). The European Champion is calculated from the best 4 scores from a possible 5 shows. Another difference from other regions is

that when a guppy is entered into a wrong class, it will be moved to a more appropriate class (by the judges) where the judges are likely to give a better score.

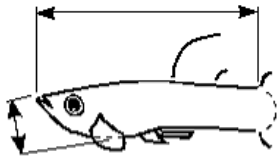
Asia is different from the other two regions by the fact that there is not one overall governing body. Most countries in the region host their shows independently and without any coordination. Many use the standards and classes of the World Guppy Association. This includes mostly triangle tail guppies (classes are made to the colour variations similar to the IFGA) but also additional extended fin guppies such as the Swallow Tail. There can be 24 or more classes. The guppy shows are always for matched pairs (male and female). Like with the IFGA shows, there can be in excess of 600 entries to an Asian show. It would be impossible to point every entry in a reasonable time and so the “sticker” system has evolved. The judges are given coloured stickers and they may award up to three or four stickers to the entries that they consider the best within each class. The tanks with the most stickers progress to the 2 nd round and they are then the ones that are pointed to calculate the 1 st 2 nd and 3 rd in each class. This has further evolved by giving the judges different coloured stickers to prevent ‘over enthusiasm’ of stickers on one entry. An anonymous system has also been employed with the use of electronic tablets to prevent any influence when existing stickered selections are seen and simply copied. If an entry has been entered into the wrong class then it has been my experience that it is simply disqualified.

The one thing in common with all guppy competitions is the method of assessment of the guppy. We simply look at the size, shape and colour of the three main features, the body, the dorsal fin and the tail. We also consider the vitality or condition of the guppies. The number of points allocated to each feature may slightly differ from region to region, but the principle is the same.

Body	Size	8	
	Shape	8	
	Colour	12	
Dorsal	Size	5	
	Shape	8	
	Colour	10	
Caudal	Size	10	
	Shape	20	
	Colour	14	
Vitality		5	
Total		100	

This is the IKGH judges score card (for a male guppy) which shows the features and the marks that are awarded for each.

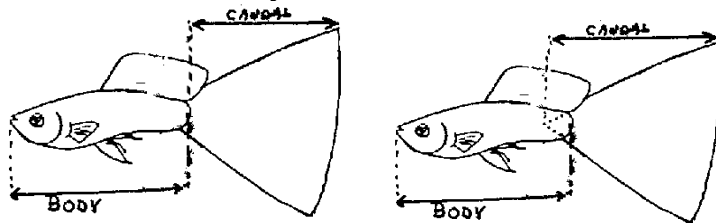
When judging, the assessment begins with the body size and the size of the tail and dorsal are proportionate to that. The following picture shows where the size is measured.



It also shows how the depth of the body is measured, which is ideally  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the body length.

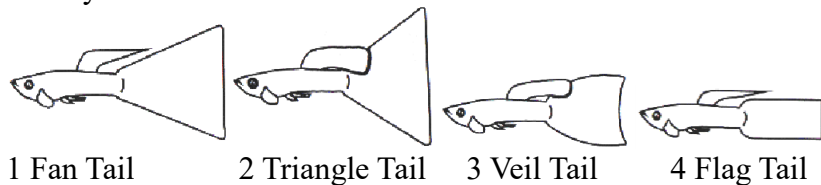
The body length of a short tail is 24mm, the body length of a sword tail is 25mm and the body length of a large tail is 26mm.

An IKGH triangle tail guppy should have an ideal tail length that is  $\frac{8}{10}$  of the body length. The IFGA stated that the tail length should be the same as the body length. However, it is fallacy to say that the tail of an American guppy is larger. The IFGA simply measure the tails a different way. The outer edges are extended in an imaginary line towards the head of the guppy and where the top and bottom lines cross, that is where they measure from!

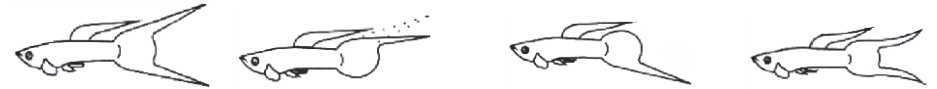


IKGH Measurement of tail  $\frac{8}{10}$  of body IFGA Measurement of tail 1 : 1 with body

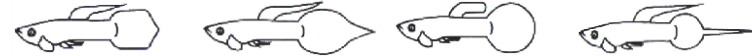
If one of these guppies overlays the other, it will be found that they are exactly the same size.



1 Fan Tail 2 Triangle Tail 3 Veil Tail 4 Flag Tail



5 Double Sword Tail 6 Top Sword Tail 7 Bottom Sword Tail 8 Lyre Tail



9 Spade Tail 10 Spear Tail 11 Round Tail 12 Pin tail

The above represents the 12 tail shapes of the IKGH standards. The dorsal fins can be easily seen and compared. It can be noted that the ideal length of all the dorsal fins is an overlap of the tail by  $\frac{1}{3}$ , with the exception of one – the round tail for which the dorsal should end where the tail starts.

IKGH shows are announced in November for the following show season. There is a reason for this. We all know that the fins of a guppy do not stop growing. An old fish will not only have a longer tail but the dorsal will grow at a greater rate and show a dorsal that is too long. An 'ideal' guppy may have a window of perfection of only six weeks. Thus the IKGH states the show schedule at the beginning of the year to allow the breeders to time their broods for each individual show!!

The assessment of the body shape is described as "robust but graceful". I prefer to consider 'streamlined' as a better description. No humps or bumps, especially above the head, and no bulging of the chest. The 'robust' part of the description refers to the depth of the body including the peduncle area that should not be too long or thin.

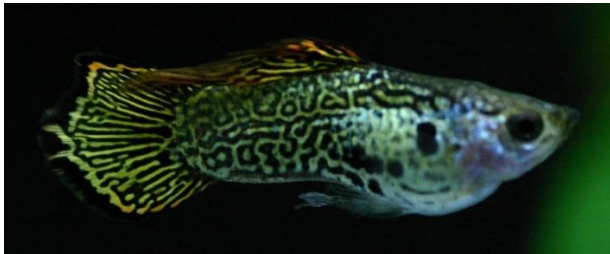
For the tail shapes, you should look to the line drawings, whilst there are written descriptions of the dorsal fins, I prefer to check all the shapes with the line drawings. It is sometimes necessary to help to identify the tail shape of a poor-quality guppy from the dorsal shape. That will be made clear later.

The assessment of the colour is the same for the body, dorsal and tail.

We look at the surface covering, ie the proportion of colour and pattern on the surface, the colour quality and the pattern quality, for which we note if there is sufficient saturation and clear separation of the colours. Colour and pattern are valued jointly as a unit.

The assessment of any guppy requires the deduction of points for bad or poor features. However a good judge will not only take points away when the guppy being assessed is obviously good, but when presented with a guppy that is obviously not so good then the judge will be looking for good features for which points can be added.

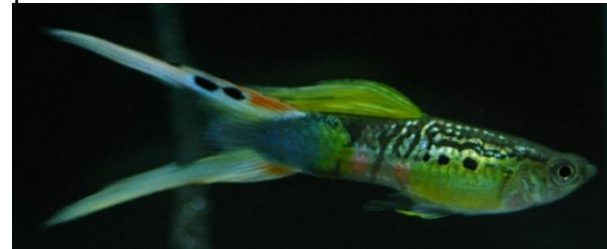
When assessing a guppy with the IKGH rules, the size is assessed by 'estimation'. That means that a ruler is not required! The fins are proportionate to the body size. Colour assessment is discussed elsewhere. The shape is mainly compared to the line drawings. It all seems to be less arduous that it really is. All the rules and example of defects in a guppy are listed and noted individually within the IKGH standard if each tail shape. Many of the defects are actually very repetitive within the standards some of which are as following :



Caudal peduncle too deep making the shape short and stumpy. This fish is also a bit 'chesty' – an indication of too much protein.



Poor shape – not streamlined and with a humpty bumpty forehead – a pet hate of mine.



Dorsal not rising steeply at the beginning



Good example of dorsal rising steeply at the beginning. However the dorsal is too thick and should taper to a sharper point.



The gonopodium often deforms with spear tails making them sterile. We can make a deduction of up to 3 points from the body score. 30



This clearly shows the back edge that has been cut to make straight. Cutting of fins is not acceptable in any region for guppy shows. Sometimes the tail will continue to grow but without colour – this is not a reliable indication of cut fins as many have faded colour at the end edges. As per the next picture.



For IKGH shows, the central part between double swords (an oval shape) can be clear or it can be coloured. For IFGA shows the central part **MUST** be clear. This is in order to prevent cheats from cutting a double sword tails from triangle tails.....



This shows an uneven cover of pattern on the tail and a back edge that is slanted or diagonal.



A better example of an uneven cover of pattern on the tail.



The rear edge of the tail is diagonal. This is as a result of the top edge of the tail being shorter than the bottom edge.





The pattern on the tail is poor again but the main problem is the chesty shape. If you feed a guppy too much protein, especially when it is juvenile and older, then the liver becomes diseased and swells up. The very supple defect that you have to look harder for is the serrated edge. This is a common defect that requires a deduction of points.



When we assess the guppy for a show we must first identify what sort it is so that when it is placed in a show it is positioned with all the other guppies that are the same. This is normal for every guppy region. However, the IKGH ensure that any and all colour types are accepted and are set together for the show with the use of a glorified filing system ie, the coding system. The show results are set out with all the same guppies set together as a small competition within a competition. A single tail shape is split into all the colour forms so that the breeder can then compare how well he has achieved in comparison to all the others of that same guppy description. In order to achieve this all guppies are allocated a code that is based upon their own unique description. Here is a typical example from a German Show results : ***To be continued.***

### Diary dates

1. Charity fish auction, Birmingham, organised by Tim Addis of TA Aquaculture. [World's End Lane, Quinton, Birmingham, B32 1JX; open after the auction, [www.taaquaculture.uk](http://www.taaquaculture.uk)]  
Date :- Sunday 2nd December;  
Time :- Doors open 9.00am; First auction 10 – 11 am.  
Venue :- British Legion Club, 211 Worl's End Lane, Quinton Birmingham, B32 2RX
2. Spring Event :- There is to be a joint FGUK / BLA meeting / show / auction on the 23rd & 24th February at the IBM offices in Warwick. There is the Premier Inn Warwick 100yds away and if you book now they are charging just £29 for the Saturday night. Their prices go up drastically closer to the event!  
There is to be a guppy show and also an Endler's show, as well as a display of wild-type livebearers and a display of three biotopes. It is intended that there will be talks given on the Saturday and an auction on the Sunday. I will email out more details when I have them.
3. Autumn Convention, also in conjunction with FGUK, will ***probably*** be on 24th/25th August, again at IBM Warwick.