

# 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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**Webmaster** : Alan Dunne

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

## Editorial

I start off with a confession – I’ve only just sent off a cheque for my 2020 membership subscription to Don Kenwood, our Treasurer. If you haven’t yet re-joined, you can pay by Paypal via the BLA website or by sending a cheque for £6 to Don at :-  
154 Kenn Road, Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 6JY

Next I must thank Gary Randall for his article and photos about his new fish house – it makes me wish I had done it right first time. I must also thank Fabien Liberge, of the Association France Vivipare, for his permission to use his article about the *Ilyodon* species. Extra thanks are due as he had to send me all the photos separately. I have no more articles in reserve at the moment so please send me anything you have or the next newsletter will be a bit thin.

Our next event is the Spring Convention on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March, again at the IBM offices in Warwick. This really is a superb location with lots of free parking and a hotel across the road for anyone who fancies attending both days. Steve Oliver has again put a lot of work into organising this event, which is a joint event with the Fancy Guppy UK group and the British Cichlid Association. This is the first time we have had a joint event with the cichlid people and should make the weekend even more interesting. [I would say that, I suppose, as I keep cichlids as well as livebearers.] I hope to see you there and if you do make it, come and say “Hello” so that I can put faces to names. Finally :- Has anyone got any spare of the *Skiffia* sp V188 “Sayula” that I’ve been giving away? I’ve had a population crash and now need to start building them up again!

## Building a fish house with added strength *Text and photos by Gary Randall*

My last fish house/shed was bog-standard and lasted me approximately 16 years. However I was spending much time replacing and repairing timber racking and wood floor due to rot, so by June 2017 it was time to pull my old shed down and rebuild a new one. The only suitable place to put the shed was where the old one stood.

There was another problem: deciding where the fish and tanks would temporarily go. During warmer weather I kept many of my *Goodeids* out in the garden and made space in my other shed for the rest of the fish, I decided to build it to my own specifications. I wanted to build the shed off 16 by 8 foot and that will last and have as little maintenance as possible. I laid a concrete floor/ foundation then built an 8” high wall, then painted bitumen on the inside of the wall and a damp proof course on top of it for the shed to be built on. I used 4” by 2” timbers and made a total of 6 frames for the walls, I use 6” by 2” timbers for roof rafters, spreading the timbers about 16” apart. Once the framework was completed, I added 1-inch thick 8' by 4' plywood sheets to the outside walls and roof to give shed added strength and then finished the outside with wood cladding tongue and groove.

After many problems with a wooden door warping etc I decided it would be much better to fit a double glazed door and window. I insulated the inside of the shed with 4 inch thick polystyrene sheets then lined the walls with vertical plastic cladding so any spillage or condensation with will run off onto the concrete floor. After many years of repairing/ replacing timber I decided to build the racking

out of concrete blocks and concrete lintels. Once I had cemented the lintels and blocks in place I then rendered the blocks and painted them. I finished off the floor with paving slabs, fitted LED strip lighting and then reconnected the electricity. Last of all was to replace all the fish tanks and get the fish re-established by March 2018.



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## Rediscovery of the *Ilyodons*

Text :- Fabien Liberge

Photos :- Fabien Liberge / Michael Köck

Translation :- Google, with a little help from Greg Roebuck

I had lost interest in recent years in the *Ilyodons*. *Ilyodon furcidens*, *Ilyodon xantusi* .... These are two of the few species that were available for the amateur breeder when I fell in love with viviparous species and *Goodeidae*. Simple to breed, they multiply quickly in the aquarium, without any difficulty. In the 1990s, therefore, there were two very different strains with the AVF [Association Grance Vivipare – the French Livebearer group] : *Ilyodon furcidens* and *Ilyodon xantusi* from the Rio Terrero [ref Le Vivipare 1997 no 4]. *Ilyodon furcidens* was less popular due to its rather dull, olive-green coloration, without markings. *Ilyodon xantusi* had a much more attractive appeal. I remember having seen large and magnificent specimens, coloured with brilliant yellow on the body and the fins. And then, over time, new species were offered to me, new “adventures” appearing, and I moved on to other, rarer fish.

In March 2016, during my first trip to Mexico, I did not intend to bring back any fish. The main object of our wanderings was the search for *Allodontichthys* (*A. polylepis* and *A. hubbsi*) as well as for *Allotoca maculate*. So when we caught some *Ilyodons*, like all my friends, I didn't pay much attention to them. It must be said that they let themselves be caught quite easily, were relatively numerous and ultimately hampered us more than anything in our quest. Nevertheless, I noticed that some specimens collected were very pretty, rather colourful and quite attractive; like those of the Rio Contla (*I. whitei*) or

those of the Rio de Las Bolas (*I. furcidens*). There were beautiful and large females and mature males who would not have been out of place in vivipariophile's aquarium. We found a few all over the state of Jalisco. The frustration for me was that I found it impossible to be certain which species it was : *Ilyodon furcidens*? *Ilyodon whitei*? Having never met *I. whitei* yet, I left Mexico saying that all of the coloured specimens I had seen that were so different from the *Ilyodon furcidens* I owned at home were probably *Ilyodon whitei*. Wrong!



Male *I.furcidens* from Rio Las Bolas, photo F.Liberge



Female *Ilyodon.whitei* from the Rio Contla, photo F.Liberge

### Which species are recognised today?

Identifying the *Ilyodons* is not easy. This genus remains complex to study. In the 2000s there was doubt as to the relationship between two of the species known at the time. In an article published in *Le Vivipare* 2007, no 2, Alain Grioché revealed to us that *I. furcidens* and *I. xantusi* probably formed one and the same species and that this species has two morphs that could be distinguished by the shape of their respective mouths (more or less large, more or less turned upwards) but also that the two cohabiting morphs were in the same habitats [sympatric]. This had been observed and demonstrated by the fact that females with large mouths could give birth to young with small mouths and vice versa. Consequently, evolution was still underway with regard to the *Ilyodons*. At the time, there were two other *Ilyodon* species in

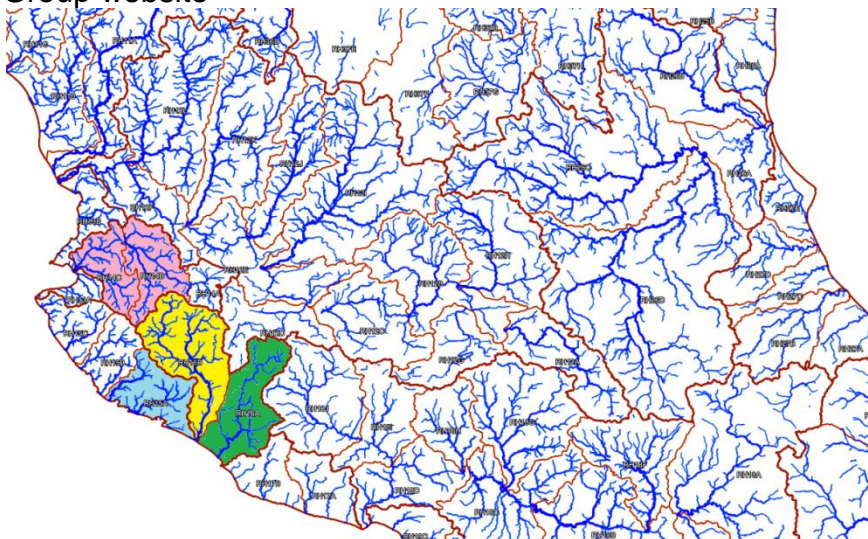
the literature : *Ilyodon lennoni* and *I. whitei*.

In the early 2000s a 5<sup>th</sup> species was described : *Ilyodon cortesae*. It even occurred in the hobby and was presented among others in our 2007 convention [of the AFV].

Today all the cards are shuffled. The work completed by Michael Kock on behalf of the GWG currently distinguishes only two species : *I. furcidens* and *I. whitei*. The ancient species *I. xantusi*, *I. lennoni* and *I. cortesi* have been put into synonymy with *I. furcidens*. But that does not simplify the subject "*Ilyodon*" Now you have to reckon with the ESU, that is to say with the populations which can be considered to be isolated from each other. [See the article on ESU published in *Le Vivipare* no 128.]

**Note** : ESU is the abbreviation for "Evolutionarily Significant Unit". Each unit designates an isolated population with different genetic characteristics within the same species. ESUs can be defined by molecular genetics, morphology and or zoogeography to indicate different phylogenetic lines within a species. The abbreviation for an ESU consists of the first 3 letters of the genus, followed by the first 2 letters of the name of the species and a permanent number for each species. Scientists will decide in future whether or not to consider them to be fully-fledged species.

The ríos Coahuayana (green), Armería (yellow), Middle and Lower Ameca (pink), and Purificación/Marabasco (blue) drainages on a Mexico map: Source :- Goodeid Working Group website



*Ilyodon furcidens*, Rio Terrero, photo M.Kock

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**Concerning *Ilyodon whitei*** , the GWG data distinguish the following ESUs which are as many sub-populations :- **Ilywh1** designates both the fish originating from the high Rio Coahuayana which form the clade D as well as the fish from the west of RioRio Balsas (Rio Grande) which form the clade E.

**Ilywh2** designates the fish of the Rio Tacambaro (ex *I. cortesae*).

**Ilywh3** designates the Rio Chacemero fish (ex *I. lennoni*) which also belong to clade E. Fabien notes that the GWG website specifies that this confuses the situation of the *Ilyodon* – a same clade, the clade E, present in two ESUs ..... and one ESU containing fish of two different clades .... For this reason it is recommended that aquarists keep the different populations strictly separated, especially when you know that the ESUs are being fully revised! [Per.comm from M.Kock to F. Liberge].

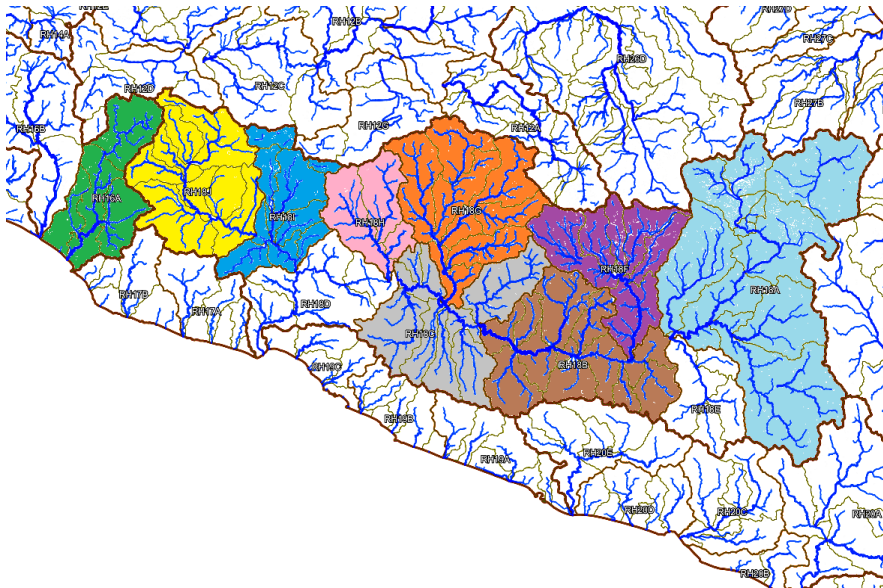


*Ilyodon ex »cortesae*" shown in 2007 at the AFV Congress. Photo Fabien Liberge

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**Ilywh4** includes fish from the middle Balsas (Rios Amacuzac, Cuautla, Cuernavaca and Cutzamala) to form the subclade B2. **Ilywh5** brings together the fishes from eastern Balsas (Rio Atoyac and nearby springs and streams) to form subclade B1.

Figure 2 distribution of *Ilyodon whitei*. **In green** : basin of the Rio Coahuayana (Ilywh1-D), **in yellow** : Rio Tepalcatepec basin (Ilywh1-E), **in dark blue** : du Rio Tepalcatepec-Infiernillo basin (Ilywh1-E), **in pink** : Rio Tacambaro (Ilywh2), **in orange** : Rio Cutzamala (Ilywh1-E), **en grey** : Rio Balsas-Zirandaro (Ilywh3), **in purple** : Rio Grande de Amacuzac (Ilywh4), **in brown** : Rio Balsas-Mezcala (Ilywh4), **in light blue** : Rio Atoyac (Ilywh5).



*Ilyodon whitei* male Rio Tamazula photo M.Kock



*Ilyodon whitei* female Rio Tamazula photo M.Kock



*Ilyodon whitei* female Rio Tamazula photo M.Kock

### **November 2018 – 2<sup>nd</sup> trip – A new meeting with *Ilyodon* in situ**

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018, I arrived in San Jose Del Tule with my companions. We had spent three days in different rivers without catching anything. It was starting to get desperate – there was too much water, you could not see much and there seemed to be no fish. In San Jose Del Tule, however, I redoubled my efforts when I learned from Mike that the stream that passes under the pretty brick arch bridge is the Rio Terrero! [Editor's note : In reality it is a tributary or the Rio Terrero, the Rio trama or Arroyo San Jose Del Tule.]

THE RIO TERRERO! The river whose name sticks to the first viviparous fish widespread within the AFV. It was a great pleasure to be able to admire it, to look at what the bottom is made up of, to see how the banks are covered.... To see how important the flow is. Of course, like many others, I have read many articles, many books .... But there, my feet were in the water and that changed everything. That evening we

caught many *Ilyodons* under one of the piers of the San Jose Del Tule bridge. They were quite small, not very colourful ... really they looked like the bland *Ilyodon furcidents* that we knew in aquaria. That said, as it had been several days since we had caught anything and, as for this second trip I had hoped to bring back some fish, the idea arose in me to collect some. The damage was done: now and for the rest of the trip, I decided to pay a little more attention to the *Ilyodons* that I will meet.

My wait was not long because the next day we returned to San Jose Del Tule, at the foot of an aqueduct this time. The weather was good, the sun was shining and I captured *Ilyodons* like I never thought I would find: they were magnificent! The adult males were metallic, shiny, and I took some thinking that they would probably do well in France.

[Editor's note : this strain is now listed as "*Ilyodon furcidents*, San Jose Del Tule 2018.]



Arroyo San Jose Del Tule (affluent du Rio Terrero), photo F.Liberge 16





Arroyo San Jose Del Tule, photo F.Liberge



Superb male *I.furcoidens* from the Arroyo San Jose Del Tule, photo F.Liberge

The following day, while we were still looking for *Allodontichthys zonitius* , and after having lost our way around the village of Cuauhtémoc, we found in a small forest stream about ten specimens which swam in a kind of small natural pool of a few square meters. There too I decided to bring back some of them. They had bright yellow on the fins and they reminded me of our “*xantusi*” at the beginning. (See the box at the end of this article). [Editor’s note: this strain is now listed as “*Ilyodon furcoidens Cuauhtémoc 2018*”]



*I.furcoidens*, well- coloured from near Cuauthémoc, photo F.Liberge



A small stream near to Cuauhtémoc which holds *I.furcidens*, photo F.Liberge

During another excursion, to the Rio Las Bolas, where we had caught the fish that I had assumed were *I. whitei* in March 2016, this time I managed to catch only five juveniles and again, at the cost of significant effort. They are currently gaining weight. For the summer, I placed 1 male and 3 females in an outside tank of 1000 litres. We will see if they acquire the metallic colours of those that I observed in 2016. [Editor's note : If this strain settles in it will carry the identifier "*Ilyodon furcidens*, Las Bolas 2018 " in exchanges between aquarists.]

### **Conclusion**

Since this trip in November 2018, I have taken up the observation of the *Ilyodons* again. I have left aside the dull

image of the specimens which circulated widely in the hobby. Nature is full of splendours; why would it be any different in our aquariums. I suppose, however, that it is important to offer them adequate and optimal conditions. Don't be distracted by the fact that they reproduce easily and we must be demanding in our choice of breeders. In particular, it is useless to keep too many fish in tight spaces. In addition, as with more sensitive or more rare species, they should not be deprived of a stay outdoors when the good weather arrives. The contribution of the sun, the diversity of foods that they then find (insects, pollen, fruit, leaves etc) makes all the difference when they are returned to the aquarium for the colder seasons. So, like me, discover or re-discover the beauty of the *Ilyodons*!

### **Which species are the old "*Ilyodon xantusi*"?**

The origin of the *Ilyodon "xantusi"* from the 1990s remains a mystery. It is difficult, if not impossible, to re-weave a lost link. How did the *Ilyodon xantusi* from the beginnings of the AFV arrive in the aquarium environment? Who collected them and when? The Rio Terrero was the name attached to the strain – but was it the same Rio terrero that we know today? Thirty years ago, Google Maps and Google Earth did not exist and cartographic data must have been very scarce. Also, knowing the name of the place where fish were collected was not a priority. The priority was to bring back beautiful fish. Today it is not even certain that specimens of this strain still remain in the aquarium. The specimens collected in Cuauhtémoc strongly resemble it but a few kilometres away, still in Cuauhtémoc but in another arm of the river, the *Ilyodons* were totally different. In the future, genetic analyses will no doubt allow us to see more clearly.

In the meantime, we must respect the following rules :-

1. We must not mix fish of different origins;
2. We must not identify fish on the basis of simple photos and even less on the basis of information transmitted orally in an exchange of fish, a congress or worse, on a classified ads site!

Final note from Fabien :-

Please, just note that since this had been published, a change occurred and it seem that now *Ilyodon* from "Terrero = San Jose del Tule" is not a *furcoidens* anymore but a *whitei*... which is more logical in a certain way (same basin, same river group)

### **BLA Species Maintenance 2020**

*From Steve Oliver*

In my previous letter I laid out my plans to set up a series of endangered species breeding groups with the aim to have at least three registered keepers supporting each group. The first of these groups I am hoping to start is for *Zoogoneticus* tequila.

Why have I chosen *Zoogoneticus* tequila to start this new project?

The answer to this is quite simple,

Firstly *Zoogoneticus* tequila is a very popular fish at the auctions and therefore I can be fairly certain that there is a good group of keepers from around the country looking after this species.

Secondly *Zoogoneticus* tequila is a very hot conservation topic at the moment with the re-introduction of this species into the Rio Teuchitlán. I know with the re-introduction that is taking place things are looking a little bit better for the tequila splitfin, however they are not established yet and things can still go horribly wrong despite the hard work being put into their survival.

So, with the above answers I could be accused of picking low hanging fruit by picking such a popular fish within our hobby - **You would be quite right**, I am picking the easy target and with good reason. The reason is with a good breeding base within the BLA the chances of getting the first of these groups off the ground with a viable amount of responses are greatly increased. The goal of at least three registered keepers for this species is achievable, I believe with the current tequila keepers and potential keepers in the UK we should be able to carry our first group forward.

This is a new project, therefor the format has not been set in stone, it is up to us to establish this first group and mould it

into a viable and effective collaboration. A good response from yourselves now will lay foundations for all the forthcoming projects to follow.

Please contact me, Steven Oliver by email at [steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk) or Facebook messenger with a view to taking this first step on a worthwhile conservation program.

Regards

Steve

**Report on the 8<sup>th</sup> European Convention of the Goodeid Working Group 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019** *Greg Roebuck*

I had been looking forward to this convention since I first heard, a couple of years ago, that it was to be held in Britain. It turned out to be even better than I had hoped!

The convention was held on the premises of Chester Zoo – very handy for me as I live only a dozen miles away. This turned out to be an inspired location – the staff of the zoo really did us proud.

We all met up for a meal and a drink on the Friday evening at an inn near the zoo. It was very good to meet up with Michael Köck and Erwin Radax, from Austria, whom I had first met when I went to Mexico with the GWG in 2016. It was also

good to talk to GWG members from Holland, France, Belgium and the USA.

The Saturday morning started with a welcome from Andrea Swatman, the head of the aquarium at Chester Zoo, which was followed by injecting coloured polymers into bananas wrapped in condoms! Yes you read that right! Andrea explained that coloured dyes are mixed with a polymer and then injected into live fish. This does the fish no harm and allows researchers to identify individual fish either in captivity or the wild. This allows the study of behaviour [the example given here was mudskippers] in captivity or population dynamics, eg in re-introduction programs, in the wild. Since it wasn't feasible to practise on live fish we had a go on bananas wrapped in condoms and it turned out to be more difficult than it sounds.

Next was our own Shaun Stevens, talking about the breeding and conservation work done with *Goodeids* at the Tropiquaria Wildlife Park in Somerset, where Shaun is Head Aquarist.

Shaun described how the decision to concentrate on *Goodeids* was made and the progress made so far in keeping and breeding these species. He showed lots of slides and videos of the set-up at Tropiquaria.

Dave MacAllister was next, talking about collecting fish in Mexico and Central America, again with lots of slides.

The zoo very generously provided lunch and Michael Köck then talked about the Darter *Goodeids* of the genus *Allodontichthys*. The last talk of the day came from John Lyons of the North American branch of the GWG. He described the challenges faced in building a hobbyist- based *Goodeid* conservation network – the problems sounded very familiar to BLA members. Plenty of fish were exchanged during the evening meal at the nearby inn.

The Sunday started with a tour of the aquarium at the zoo – plenty to see behind the scenes as well as the public areas. Chester Zoo are involved in the conservation and breeding of a number of *Goodeid* species and mostly their tanks are not in the public viewing area. After another nice lunch at the zoo there followed a general look around the zoo and then a trip into the city of Chester. As a post-script, a few of us went to a well-known Aquatics shop in Wigan and then on to meet Pete Liptrot at Bolton Museum Aquarium, which is also involved in *Goodeid* conservation.

Many thanks to Michael for organising the meeting. Special thanks to Andrea, Becky and the other staff at Chester Zoo for looking after us so well and making the convention really special. The next one is in Ostrava, the Czech Republic, in the second half of October 2020 and is in conjunction with the Xiphophorus Working Group.



Steve Oliver has a go at injecting dye into a banana wrapped in a condom.



*Ameoca splendens* in a display tank at Chester Zoo



A marine display tank



*Allotoca zacapuensis* in a tank behind the scenes at Chester Zoo



*Allotoca diazi* in a tank behind the scenes



Madagascan cichlids in a display tank

## Diary Dates

The big one! **The Spring Show.**

Saturday **March 14<sup>th</sup>** and Sunday **March 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Where?** The IBM offices, Birmingham Road, Warwick, CV34 5AH

This is a joint event with **Fancy Guppy UK** and the **British Cichlid Association.**

The event includes :- Livebearer and Endlers shows  
Renowned speakers  
A new "Show and Tell" section  
Biotope displays  
1<sup>st</sup> leg of the Fancy Guppy League  
"Ask the Expert" discussion forum  
Livebearer Auction  
Trade stands  
Cichlids on sale

Hope you can join us!

There is lots of free parking and a hotel across the road for anyone who wants to attend both days.

## **BLA Auction as part of the Mid-Sussex Aquarists Society Show**

April 26<sup>th</sup>

Patcham Community Centre  
Ladies Mile Road  
Patcham  
Brighton BN1 8TA

**American Livebearer Association Convention** takes place in Florida on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June. When John Lyons, of the American Livebearer Association and the North American Goodeid Working Group spoke at the European Goodeid Working Group convention at Chester Zoo he invited any of us who are interested to go to the event in Florida. The details of the event are on the website of the American Livebearer association if anyone is interested.

## **BLA Autumn Show co-hosted with Fancy Guppy UK**

Date :- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September

IBM Offices Warwick  
Birmingham Road  
Warwick  
CV34 5AH

Renowned speakers  
Biotope displays  
Livebearer auction  
Final leg of the Fancy Guppy League  
Goodeid and Endlers shows