

## Livebearer News

Official Members Magazine of the  
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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**Committee members** : Clive Walker; Carl Stewart,

## Editorial

**Three pleas** :- I start this editorial with three pleas :-

1. First the usual plea for articles, typed or handwritten, emailed or by snail-mail. I will happily transcribe as necessary.
2. If you change your email address can you please let me know your new address. I have lost touch with several members in the last two years. When I try to email them I just get a notification that their old email address no longer exists.
3. [But related to number 2] If anyone out there knows of an up to date email address for any of the following will they please send it to me so that I can get in touch with them :- Graham Seddon; C.Pennicot; Mike Francis; Deborah Bull; David Cook, Paul Haddock, Martin Beirne.

Many thanks in advance to anyone who can let me know. My email address is on page 2.

**Three more pleas** :-

4. Bill Galbally, a BLA member, is trying to get hold of a MALE *Xiphophorus helleri guentheri* with red dorsal fin. He has a female already. Is there anyone out there who can help him out?
5. We are trying to establish which species are being kept by the members of the BLA. Our Species Control Officer, Steve Oliver, is putting together a list of who has which species. So far, he has received lists from eleven members. If you have not already done so, please will you email Steve at [steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk) with your list of which species you keep. It would be even better if you could include whether or not they are breeding for you. Thanking you in anticipation.

6. Halfbeaks and freshwater stingrays are also livebearers but I don't see them for sale very often and see articles about them even less often. If you have information about either of these two groups I would love to hear from you.

### **Report on the Basingstoke meeting and auction**

The meeting opened with a talk by Dr David Pool of "Fish Science" [and ex of Tetra UK] on the subject of "Fish and Aquarium Health". Dr Pool started by pointing out that there were many experienced fish-keepers present and that the information that he would give would not be new, but that he hoped to make us think and so be helpful. His talk was split into two sections :-

1. What is wrong with your fish?
2. Treating your aquarium / fish.

Dr Pool opened with the comment that if you can see lots of whitespots on your fish, it is probably too late and the fish will most likely not survive. If you realise that there is a problem, you should ask yourself the following questions :-

1. Have you seen any signs of poor health?
2. Are there any signs of physical damage or obvious parasites?
3. Is the water O.K.? In his experience, 80% - 85% of problems are caused by water quality.
4. Have you recently changed the aquarium conditions in any way?
5. How many fish are affected and how fast did the problem spread? If the answer is only 1 or 2 fish this is probably a non-infectious parasite. If it is a few fish with the number gradually

increasing over a few days then this is likely to be an infectious disease and needs treating quickly. If it is all of the fish, or all of one species or one size, over a few days (or overnight) then this is likely to be down to water quality.

Dr Pool stressed the need not to jump to conclusions and talked through how to work out what the problem is and then what to do to treat diseases.

I would like to express my thanks to Dr Pool for his thought-provoking talk.

Next it was our own Nigel Hunter who gave a talk on fish-keeping outside in the U.K. and elsewhere. He discussed the arguments for and against with lots of photos and examples. I don't want to say too much more as I am still hoping that he can be persuaded to write up his talk as an article for a future issue of this newsletter!

**The auction** went well with every lot sold. The top price was £24 for a gravid female *Belonesox belizeanus*. Other interesting / unusual species which attracted a lot of interest and good prices included *Brachyrhaphis roseni*, *Xiphophorus milleri*, *X. pygmaeus*, *X. helleri* (Hacienda Lescoid), *X. montezumae*, *Limia melanogaster*, *Poecilia wingei*, *Characodon audax*, *Ilyodon cortezae* and *Zoogoneticus tequila*.

### **Thoughts on *Characodon lateralis***

Several years ago I bought a pair of rainbow goodeids, *Characodon lateralis*, at a BLA auction. I got one brood from the pair, consisting of just four fry which turned out to be two males and two females. I don't know what I was doing wrong but I never got them to breed again. In recent years fewer and fewer *lateralis* have turned up at auctions and prices have got

higher. Alan Rothwell recently sold his last pair and Nigel doesn't keep them any more. When I expressed concern to Paddy, our Chairman, that the species might be in danger of dying out in Britain he assured me that there are still several breeders in Europe who keep them. This is important, in my opinion, as this is a species which is highly endangered in the wild and has disappeared from the majority of its former known locations.

*The article below was written by Derek Lambert and first appeared in "Aquarist and Pondkeeper" magazine in November 1994 and appears here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert. Many thanks Pat.*

### **The rainbow goodeids** by Derek Lambert

Of all the fish in the family Goodeidae, the Rainbow Goodeids of the genus *Characodon* are by far and away the most attractive and popular. At present, only three species are recognised, one of which is thought to be extinct (*Characodon garmani*), while the other two are listed as Endangered (*Characodon lateralis*) and Threatened (*Characodon audax*).

All three species come from the more northerly regions of Mexico which were surveyed on the Aquarian Endangered Species Survey '94. This survey was conducted by Arthur Frisby of Frisby Aquatics, Hull, and myself, and gathered much needed information on the status of many desert species; it also turned up some fascinating information about the Rainbow Goodeids.

### **Fruitless search**

The first Rainbow Goodeid habitat which we visited was that of *Characodon garmani* (Parras Rainbow Goodeid).

The natural habitat of this species was in the Parras Valley, which, until the early 1930s, had magnificent spring systems containing several unique species of fish, including *Cyprinodon latifasciatus* (Parras pupfish) and *Stypodon signifier* (Stump-tooth minnow).

Subsequent development of extensive wine factories, a flour mill, rubber mill and textile factory seriously reduced and modified available surface water. Water pollution, and irrigation systems that carried water to irrigated fields, are also thought to have had an impact on the native fish and caused their decline.

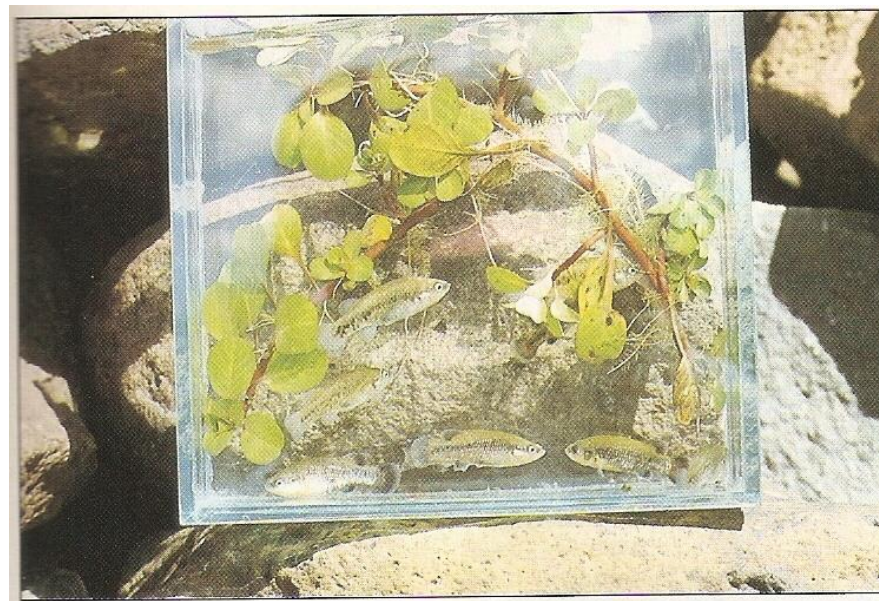
By 1953 a two-day search of the Parras Valley by C.L. and L.C. Hubbs failed to turn up any of these three species. This was confirmed by the eminent Mexican scientist Dr Contreras-Balderas in 1969; all those habitats visited on the Aquarian Survey were also devoid of these three species. We did, however, find *Poecilia reticulata* (Guppies), *Xiphophorus helleri* (Swordtails) and *Gambusia holbrooki* (Eastern Mosquitofish), which are all introduced species to this area of Mexico.

### **Bold collections**

The next species we looked for was *Characodon audax*, the Bold Characodon. This fish – which is also known as the Black Prince in the UK and the Black Rainbow Goodeid in the States – is only found in the El Ojo de Agua de Las Mujeres near the village of El Toboso in the state of Durango.

To reach this habitat we took a dirt track off the main road signposted to El Toboso and drove along this for about 1km before we came to the village called Abraham Gonzalez.

From there we turned off along an even more bumpy track to El Toboso some 7km further on. In the village itself we found



A group of wild-caught *Characodon audax* photographed at the site of capture.

a small trickle of water, but no sign of the spring and pond where the fish had previously been found.

Fortunately, a young lad on horseback showed us the way through scrubby desert to the springs, but unfortunately, we reached this habitat quite late in the day and had to leave before we had completed the survey. However, this gave us the excuse to return the next day and spend much longer than we really should have studying this habitat and fish.

A few small springs bubble up among the trees and the water from these converges into a small stream which flows into a series of pools and finally peters out in the desert, only a few





This is one of the springs at El Toboso which feed the stream and pools which are the only known habitat of *Characodon audax*.

hundred metres away from its source. We tested the water, both at the springs, and in the various pools downstream, and found it to be 120ppm hardness / 100ppm alkalinity / pH7. The temperature of the water in the springs themselves was a constant 21°C (70°F).

We only found Bold Characodons in this habitat, but they were relatively prolific, with the greatest concentration in heavily planted areas with flowing water (these were also the areas with the greatest numbers of insects and crustacean which make up the bulk of this species' diet). While at the habitat, we were able to determine that they were just as prolific as they had always been and the habitat had not significantly altered. Fortunately, no exotic species have, as yet, been introduced.

Our present captive stocks date back to a collection made during the early 1980s (probably 13 April 1983) and have been closely inbred for all of that time. For this reason, we were particularly interested in seeing how the wild fish differed from our captive inbred stocks.

Essentially, they proved to be the same, except in coloration. Our stocks had only a hint of salmon pink in the ventral region and the fins were jet black. The wild fish had red in the males' body and fins, the fins having far less black than our captive stocks. Having maintained and bred this new collection since February, I am certain the difference is purely due to the environment and diet, since the captive-bred F1's (First Filial Generation) look exactly like those of the old strain. During this time, the wild fish have developed more black in the fins, and the red has decreased.

In captivity, Bold Characodons require a large aquarium with plenty of hiding places, since they can be somewhat aggressive. Their diet should contain a mixture of live and flaked foods. With the emphasis on meaty foods. A good carnivore flake should be fed on a regular basis. The temperature should be about 21°C (70°F) and good filtration should be installed; alternatively, regular partial water changes should be conducted to maintain the water quality. Broods are born on a six-weekly cycle and can number over 50 from a large female. However, such large broods are usually of small fry which grow rather slowly and make poorer adults than fry born in more normal sized litters of between 10 and 20 young. While sexable at about two weeks old, juveniles do not start to breed until they reach two months old, with the first litter being produced when the female is about 3½ months old.

### **Red Rainbows**

The third species of Rainbow Goodeid is the Red Rainbow Goodeid (*Characodon lateralis*). This species is found only in the rivers, streams and ditches around the town of Durango and has been in decline for many years. On our survey, we

visited a number of known habitats for this species and can confirm the decline of much of the native fauna in these. The reason for this has been the tremendous growth of the city of Durango since the mid-1960s, leading to an increase in domestic and industrial pollution; there has also been a reduction in the stream flows in the area. Introduced species have severely impacted on the native fish, with the result that of the 11 native species unique to this area of Mexico, it is believed only five still survive.

We did come across a number of populations of *Characodon lateralis* and it was these which gave us our biggest surprise on this trip. All aquarists' knowledge of this species is based on a collection made by Dr R.R. Miller way back in 1969 from a stream at Los Berros. These fish have obviously become very inbred over the years, and males now exhibit a lovely red colour over the whole body and into the fins. Females are a uniform green. Both sexes exhibit varying degrees of black spotting along the lateral line. These black spots can be very large and numerous, producing almost a solid row. Alternatively, they can be just one or two small, almost invisible spots. Either way, the red coloration of the males is pretty uniform in captive stocks.

The first location we found this species at was in the streams and ponds around the village of Abraham Gonzalez. The females of this collection matched those of the captive stocks, except they lacked much of the black spotting. The males, however, not only lacked spotting, but also had little in the way of red coloration. Some fish were a brassy green to blue in colour, while a few had some pallid red in the body and fins. These were certainly nothing like the fish we had in captivity.



River at Los Berros – the original collecting site of *Characodon lateralis*.

The water quality at this location was 200ppm hardness / 180ppm alkalinity and had a pH of 7.6 . The temperature in the morning was only 18°C (64°F). Apart from the Rainbow Goodeids we found Sunfish, *Gambusia speciosa?*, a pupfish (*Cypridon* sp), *Tilapia aurea* (introduced) and an Atherinid species. Most collections of *Characodon lateralis* came from among the plants, particularly in small ditches with some water flow. The Sunfish were also found in this part of the habitat.

We fished another location near the village of 27 De Noviembre with much the same results. Here, the water quality was 200ppm hardness / 180 alkalinity / pH 8.0 and the water temperature was the same 18°C (c64.5°F) despite it being the middle of the afternoon by this time.

Once again, the remarkable difference in colour between the various males was noted, and the fish were generally found in the same part of the habitat. At this location, we did not find any *Tilapia* but we did find some young carp or goldfish.

Our final location where we found this species was the original one where Dr Miller collected it in 1969. This location is a stream flowing through the village of Los Berros on the other side of Durango. Here, we found the strongly spotted individuals which are the form we have been working with in captivity, but this time we failed to find any red males at all; the closest we came was a yellowy coloured individual. Once again , the Rainbow Goodeids were mostly found among the plants in areas where they would be subjected to some water movement.

We saw some large cichlids but were unable to identify them, and caught some well coloured *Gambusia senilis*, as well as

some swordtails (*Xiphophorus helleri*). Once more. These last species have been introduced to this area of Mexico. The water quality was 250ppm hardness / 240ppm alkalinity / pH 7.0 and the temperature was 19°C (66°F).

In captivity, this species prefers an aquarium with some plant cover and good clean water. It is far less aggressive than the Bold Characodon and can be bred in a colony situation once the adults have become used to the presence of small fry in the aquarium. Their diet should contain plenty of live foods (particularly crustacean, such as *Daphnia*) but beefheart and other rich meaty foods must be avoided, since these can cause digestive problems.

It is now (as I write) about six months since we returned with some wild-caught fish from Abraham Gonzalez and Los Berros and, apart from the few males from Abraham Gonzalez which had red coloration, none of the other males have developed red. The red males from Abraham Gonzalez have now become deeper in colour, similar to those of the old *Characodon lateralis* collection, so it seems that this coloration is affected by environment or diet. Whether all males of this species are capable of producing red or not, has not yet been determined, and the captive-born fry are still too young to exhibit this feature.

**Great potential** At the beginning of this article I mentioned how popular the Rainbow Goodeids are in the specialist hobby, but they also have tremendous potential in the trade as well. The Bold Characodon is already being sold in some shops as a normal community fish and, despite its rather boisterous temperament, it seems to do quite well in such a situation. The Red Rainbow Goodeid, although more nervous, will also live quite happily in a community tank with quieter



species. It will only take a large commercial fish breeder to make the effort to obtain these species for them quickly to become popular fish throughout the hobby.

### **Post Script**

A few years ago a survey team went to El Toboso and found only *Gambusia sp.* The word went round that *Characodon audax* was extinct in the wild. More recently, Michael Köck of the Goodeid working Group led a survey team to the Durango area. He found that there were reasonable numbers of *Characodon audax* at El Toboso. In the same survey, the GWG team found that *Characodon lateralis* still existed in the Los Berros area, at El Ojo de Agua de San Juan, El Ojo de Agua de Los Berros and the tiny spring of La Estancia. The other “ecologically significant unit” [E.S.U.] of *C. lateralis* at Amado Nervo was found to be extinct in the wild.

Once again, this situation highlights the contribution that aquarists can make in conservation. It also shows the importance of passing on site data whenever a *Characodon* species is sold or passed on.

### **Shop visit : Aqualife Leyland, Lancashire**

How good is your local aquarium shop? My nearest is pretty good – the tanks are clean and the fish healthy. The staff are great – they go out of their way to be helpful. The shop has lots of fancy goldfish and plenty of pond and marginal plants and an excellent marine section. Livebearers? I counted eleven tanks of different varieties of guppies, almost as many different varieties of platy and swordtail and three different types of molly. Wild-type livebearers? No- none at all. I’ve been going there for thirty years and never seen any.

An aquarium shop a bit further away has had black-chin livebearers, *Girardinus metallicus*, *Poecilia picta* and has taken and sold a few goodeids from me. Still not great for livebearer fans.

A recent exchange of emails with new BLA member Sara piqued my interest and led me to visit Aqualife Leyland, in the Wyevale Garden Centre, on the A581, near Leyland, Lancashire. I was like a kid let loose in a sweetshop! I’ve never seen more than one or two goodeids in an aquarium shop before – here they had four (see end of article for list). Yes they had the usual guppies, platies and mollies, but they also had another fifteen wild-type livebearers. There were some species (e.g. *Jenisia onca*) that I had never seen before.

Aqualife Leyland is not a big shop, but they manage to fit in over 90 tanks, and all the tanks were heavily stocked, clean, and with lively and healthy-looking fish. And if you like fish species other than livebearers? Well I’m a fan of dwarf cichlids and West African cichlids and they had plenty of those as well. This included *Thysochromis ansorgei* that I had not seen for many years.

In the end I bought just a pair of *Pelvicachromis subocellatus* and a female goodeid that I still have not properly identified. I then spent nearly an hour talking to the owner, Steven. He said that he is always on the lookout for unusual species and often attends local auctions to try to get some of the more obscure ones. He could not have been more helpful. On my return visit a week later I took them some more goodeids in return for a mixture of *X. nezahualcoyotl* and dwarf cichlids. I intend going back again soon.



Do you have anything similar in your area? I would live to hear from BLA members about shops in other areas that are worth a visit.

Species list - Livebearers

<i>Micropoecilia picta</i>	<i>Limia perugiae</i>
<i>Ameca splendens</i>	Goodea "Maravito 2007"
<i>Ilyodon whitei</i>	<i>Xiphophorus montezuma</i>
<i>Ilyodon furcidens</i>	<i>Alfaro cultratus</i>
<i>Limia nigrofasciatus</i>	<i>Xiphophorus xiphidum</i>
<i>Jenysia onca</i>	<i>Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl</i>
Rio Yucatan swordtails	<i>Limia</i> sp
<i>Xiphophorus pygmaeus</i>	"Rio Huayan"
Black chin livebearer	<i>Priapella intermedia</i>
Halfbeaks sp	<i>Brachraphis roseni</i>
<i>Brachraphis rabdophora</i>	<i>Neoheterandria elegans</i>
<i>Phalictys amates</i>	<i>Zoogoneticus purrhepechus</i>

(labelled as "tequila")

Interesting non-livebearers

<i>Pelvicachromis subocellatus</i>	<i>Pelvicachromis taeniatus</i>
<i>Pelvicachromis sacrimontis</i>	<i>Ivanacara adoketa</i>
<i>Crenicichla menezesi</i>	<i>Crenicichla regeni</i>
<i>Crenicara filamentosa</i>	<i>Heros rotkeil</i>
<i>Nanochromis dimidiatus</i>	<i>Nanochromis parilus</i>
<i>Thysochromis ansorgei</i>	<i>Guinacara stergiosi</i>
<i>Guinacara geayi</i>	<i>Guinacara dacrya</i>
<i>Biotoecus opercularis</i>	<i>Congochromis sabinae</i>

Also various *apistogramma*, dozens of different catfish and several different killifish.



Part of the Aqualife shop



*Xiphophorus Montezuma* at Aqualife

### **Wanted**

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

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

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


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

Thanking you in anticipation of your help.

### **Diary dates**

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October :- The BLA's Autumn Auction and Show, In conjunction with Fancy Guppy UK's show and the UK leg of the Fancy Guppy League. See poster on Page 20.

Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup> :- Charity fish auction, Leicester. Several of the active BLA members will be attending and selling fish and it is the intention to hold a BLA committee meeting during the event. I will send out details of address and timings when I have them.



**BLA AUTUMN  
AUCTION  
& SHOW**

7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
Holiday Inn Express, Rockingham Rd, Kettering

The Auction will be held on Sunday, further details on timings, hotel bookings, etc. will be released soon.

This get-together will be held in conjunction with FGUK show & Convention

British Livebearer Association  
B. L. A.  
Est 2001

The poster features a vibrant background of green and yellow. It displays several colorful fish species, including a blue and white striped fish, a long-tailed fish, a white fish, a grey fish, and a red and black fish. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical manner, with the event title at the top, followed by dates and location, and then details about the auction and its association with other events.