

Livebearer News

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Data Protection Act

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Editorial

Included in the “Aims” section of the BLA’s website is the following:-

- To provide support to various conservation groups.

Why? Well, plenty of the livebearing species that we keep are in serious trouble, as are many other species of fish. There have been a few articles in “*Practical Fishkeeping*” magazine recently by Michael Edmonstone of the “SHOAL” conservation organisation [shoalconservation.org] which make for thought-provoking reading. Roughly one-third of all fresh-water fish species are threatened to some extent and this includes many of the live-bearing species that we are most interested in. The threats are many and various and include pollution, water over-extraction, climate change and invasive/non-native introduced species. All is not without hope, however, and various zoos and aquaria are working to prevent the extinction of the fish species that we are interested in.

The January 2025 issue of “*Practical Fishkeeping*” has an article from Michael about the work done by a coalition including the Universidad Michoacana San Nicolás de Hidalgo, the IUCN Freshwater Conservation Committee, SHOAL and the Goodeid Working Group to preserve Goodeids and it includes the story of the re-introduction of the tequila splitfin (*Zoogoneticus tequila*) and the golden skiffia (*Skiffia francesae*) into the Rio Teuchitlán. An article in “*The Times*” a few months ago [I didn’t save the date] told the story of how the Zoological Society of London had helped to save the boxer pupfish (no, not a live-bearer) found only in Lake Chichancanab, Yucatan, Mexico, from extinction. Unfortunately, another five species of pupfish, also endemic to the same lake, appear to have gone extinct.

So what can the BLA do? Well, we have given money to the likes of Chester Zoo, Tropiquaria, the Goodeid Working Group and the Xiphophorus Working Group, all actively involved in the conservation of the fish species we love to keep. Anything else? Several members of the BLA are involved in the project to captive breed *Allodontichthys polylepis*; others are involved in the *Allotoca* captive breeding group and we have been setting up a conservation group to increase the numbers of captive *Girardinichthys viviparous*. BLA stalwart Nigel keeps a huge array of species but this involves an enormous amount of work that is not sustainable in the long run.

But there must be more that we could do! Between the members of the BLA, the American Livebearer Association and the various European livebearer associations there is a huge amount of expertise. One problem is that species come into fashion and then after a few years go out of fashion again. To give just one example, I have kept *Brachyrhaphis roseni* for many years but have been down to just four males all this year. None have been brought to any of our auctions and the chances are that I will soon lose the species.

So what should we do? Well, if I knew of someone who had a surplus of female *B. roseni* I could get in touch and try to get hold of some females. The same must apply to many other people about many other species. If we held a register of who has which species it would be much easier to keep species going for the foreseeable future. But would the members of the

BLA mind us having that information? If I emailed you to ask which livebearers you currently keep would you think that was an invasion of your privacy? Would you respond? It would be very helpful to know so please email me with your thoughts at gjrsrr12@gmail.com .

And finally, even though I am typing this in November, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Greg.

Report on the 2025 Autumn Convention at Shenstone Village Hall

I always enjoy the Autumn Convention and this one even more than usual. This was also one of the most international of any of the conventions that I have attended. We had Dan Fromm over from the USA, Kees de Jong from The Netherlands, Mark from Northern Ireland and Alan from Scotland. Pedro from Portugal attended on the Sunday also.

As usual, we gathered at Shenstone on the Friday afternoon and all repaired to the pub next door to the Village Hall for a meal, a drink and good conversation. On the Saturday, the best thing for me (and I suspect for most of the regulars) was just the chance to chat to fellow fish enthusiasts. I, for one, made the most of that chance. On the Saturday afternoon Dan gave us two talks. Now Dan knows more about the genus *Limia* (I suspect) than anyone else. The title of his first talk “Hispaniola Limias are confusing. When I have finished explaining you will understand less.” Was apt, but not really true on reflection. Dan went on to explain that the Island of Hispaniola (which consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic) had 19 species of *Limia* whereas none of the other islands has more than 1 or 2 species. Why? Well, the formation of Hispaniola from two proto-islands, the tectonic activity and the presence of a large lake (which divides into three smaller ones during periods of low water levels) have driven speciation. Dan’s incredibly detailed study of the type specimens of many/most of the *Limia* species, including taking X-rays of them, and his tales of trips all over the island to collect specimens had us captivated.

Dan’s second talk described his objectives and successes from his most recent trips to the Dominican Republic and tied in closely with his first.

The Q & A session with the experts also took place on the Saturday afternoon. Our experts were Dan, Kees and our own Nigel Hunter and Dave Macallister. More lively discussion ensued and this continued well into the evening when we all had a takeaway meal around the table in the Village Hall. The guppy show and wild livebearer show also took place during Saturday.

Sunday started with the AGM of the BLA but the main event of the day was, of course, the auction. Numbers attending were down on previous years but this may have been due to the Catfish Society holding their show/auction at the same time and the Aquarama show which

also took place that day. We have moved next year's Autumn Convention to October to try to avoid such clashes. [See "Diary Dates."]

Interesting species in the auction included *Xiphophorus montezumae*, *X. nezahualcoyotl*, *X. milleri*, *X. kallmani*, *X. alvarezi*, *X. pygmaeus*, *X. xiphidum*, *X. cortezi*, *X. signum*, *Poecilia chica* and *P. wingei*, *Skiffia francesae* and *S. sp* "V188 Sayula", *Priapella intermedia*, *Phallichthys fairweatheri* and *P. tico*, *Heterandria formosa*, *Limia nigrofasciata*, *L. islai*, *L. perugiae*, *L. vittata*, *Scolichthys iota*, *Girardinus metallicus*, *Characodon* sp El Garabato and *C. audax* "Guadaloupe Aguilera", *Xenotoca doadrioi* and *X. eiseni*. The top price of £59 was for a pair of *Quintana atrizona*, which is a species that I have never even seen before and so I hope that the new owner has got them breeding.

Another new *Phalloceros*: *Phalloceros mimbi*

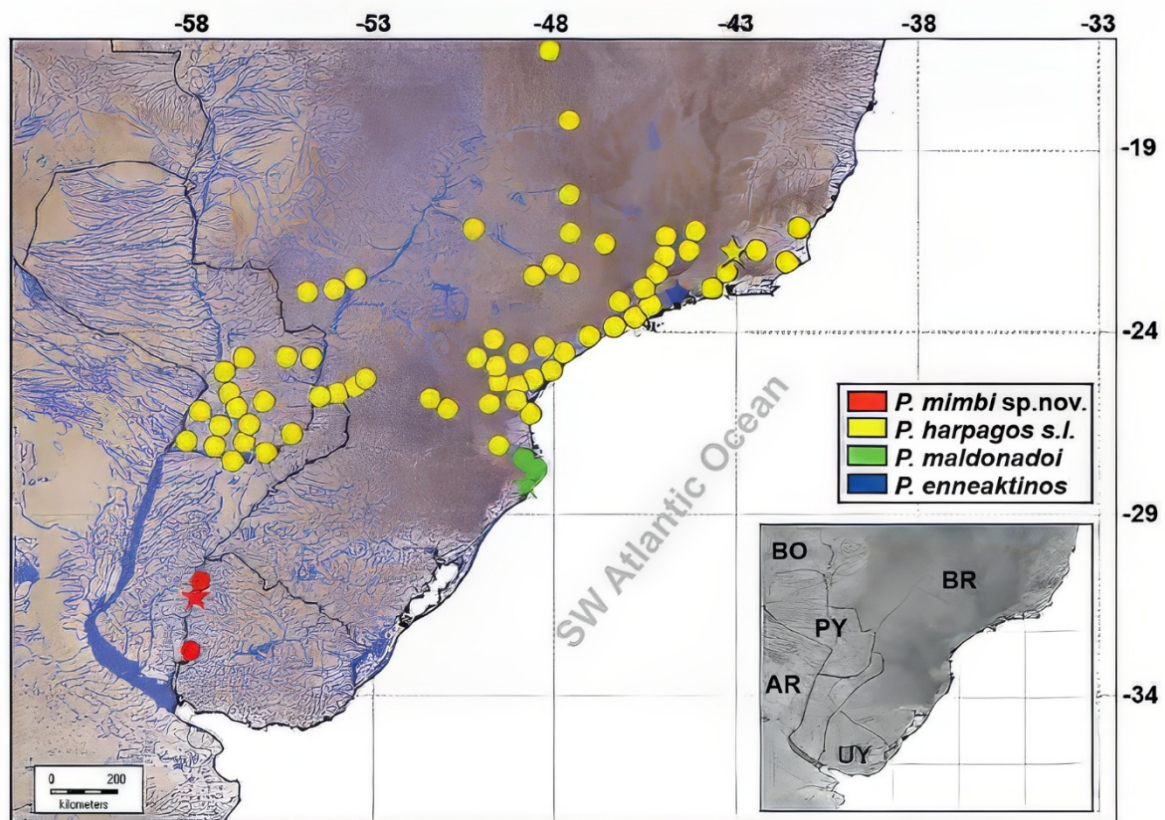
By *Kees de Jong* Translated by Google Translate, with a little help from Greg Roebuck

I had barely introduced (briefly) one new species from the genus *Phalloceros* in an article (de Jong 2025) when another species in the genus came along. The species to which I had just devoted considerable time was *Phalloceros circummontanus*. This is a species from the *P. harpagos* complex from the Brazilian highlands. I was therefore somewhat surprised that other authors (Serra, Scarabino, Gobel & Laufer, 2025) also described a species from the *P. harpagos* species complex at almost the same time. As Slaboch 2025 points out, it is remarkable that the authors also failed to include references to several previous publications on species from the *Phalloceros* genus. Slaboch indicates that it seems as if there is a competition between groups of authors to publish as quickly as possible, and that certainly seems to be the case.



Specimens of *Phalloceros mimbi* caught in Uruguay. Males on the left and females on the right. The variation in colour pattern is visible. Image from Serra et al. 2025

Returning to the description of the 23 species in the genus *Phalloceros* by Serra et al., males grow to a maximum of 2.5cm; females can reach a cm bigger in size. The species is distinguished from other species by several characteristics: a hood-like structure in front of the urogenital opening in females, the absence of large papillae on the lower jaw in females, the shape of the hooks at the tip of the male gonopodium, and a conspicuous black spot on the body of both sexes. The body colour is light greyish-brown with a purple iridescent sheen on the upper part of the abdomen and a lighter blue iridescent sheen on the rest of the flanks. This colouration is brighter in males. Both sexes have a reticulated pattern on the body.



Map from Serra et al 2025 showing the range of the species in the *P. harpagos* species complex. The asterisk is the type locality *P. mimbi*. AR=Argentina, BO=Bolivia, BR=Brazil, PY=Paraguay and UY=Uruguay.

The species is native to the middle and lower reaches of the Rio Uruguay in Uruguay and Argentina. It is found there in canals, flooded land and artificial ponds. The type locality is a nearly overgrown, shallow, artificial pond. The pond is located in an area managed by the management organisation of a hydro-electric power plant. No other species of the genus *Phalloceros* are found in the habitat. *P. caudimaculatus* is closest to *P. mimbi*.

In the habitat, the soil has been significantly altered, and many exotic tree species, such as eucalyptus and conifers, have been planted. Only a few populations of the species have been recorded over a 200km radius. Due to the expansion of agricultural land, conservation measures for this species may be necessary.

The species name “mimbi” comes from Guarani (a local language) and means “shiny”. It refers to the light blue sheen on the body.

Like the other species in the genus *Phalloceros*, this one is also difficult to distinguish without a microscope. Its blue sheen makes it seem like a more interesting species within the group. It is unclear whether this species has ever been kept in captivity. It may have been kept under the name *P. caudimaculatus*.

Literature cited:

De Jong, K. 2025. A new species in the genus *Phalloceros*: *P. circummontanus*. Livebearer Notes 82:5-8

Serra, W., F. Scarabino, N. Gobel & G. Laufer 2025. A new species of the *Phalloceros harpagos* species complex (Cyprinodontiformes: Poeciliidae) from the middle and lower Uruguay. Acta Zoológica Lilloana 69(1): 309-326.

Slaboch, R. 2025. New Aquarium fish; *Phalloceros mimbi*. e-akvarium.cz 64: 16-17.

Sub-editor’s comment:

Lucinda 2008 described *P. harpagos* and twenty other new species of *Phalloceros*. Before this publication appeared *Phalloceros* was thought to be monotypic. The only *Phalloceros* species previously known, *P. caudimaculatus*, had an enormous distribution. Lucinda’s *P. harpagos* has a large distribution. That more recent work has split *P. harpagos* into new species with narrower distributions is not surprising.

P. harpagos as described has a mid-lateral ocellus; a black spot surrounded by a silvery ring. The silvery ring is visible in the photos of *P. mimbi* above but can’t be discerned in Lucinda’s figures of preserved specimens; the midlateral spot is visible in them. Fifteen of Lucinda’s twenty one new species have a midlateral spot and seem to be hard to separate visually, i.e., by aquarists trying to decide what their live fish are.

On the one hand, that our understanding of these fishes and their relationships continues to improve is wonderful. On the other, we poor aquarists have no way of knowing which of the many *Phalloceros* species have been in the hobby or even which one(s) we now have. It isn’t that some things are not meant to be known, rather that the means available to aquarists can’t identify these fishes accurately.

Literature cited:

Lucinda, P. H. F. 2008 Systematics and biogeography of the genus *Phalloceros* Eigenmann, 1907 (Cyprinodontiformes: Poeciliidae: Poeciliinae), with the description of twenty-one new species. Neotropical Ichthyology v. 6 (no. 2): 113-158.

<https://www.scielo.br/j/ni/a/363Jf7Z4QPFbbHXG5G9RTvQ/?lang=en>

Livebearing Halfbeaks: The genus *Dermogenys*

(Part II) By *Ulrike Korte*



***Dermogenys orientalis*, population from Bantimurung. (Foto: Hans Evers)**

Most of the halfbeaks offered in our commercial trade and pet shops belong to the *Dermogenys pusilla* – group we discussed in Part I of my “Livebearing Halfbeaks” article in Livebearer Notes 82. Offspring of *Dermogenys collettei* and *Dermogenys siamensis* raised by local aquarists are easily available and well accustomed to aquarium conditions.

You will seldom find other than the above-mentioned species of the genus *Dermogenys* in the aquaristic trade. This does not necessarily mean that these species are rare in their natural habitats.

Commercial importers have to pay for the weight of the water transferred by aircraft (and not for the respective fish). Economically speaking, with this water transfer their focus is on importing as many fish as possible that can be effectively sold in the pet trade.

That is why some basic requirements are eminent for commercial traders when choosing adequate fish for trade shipments:

These fish must be resilient species, enduring uncomfortable transportation circumstances.

They must remain healthy when nourished exclusively on dry foods like flakes, pellets, granules or other kibble.

They must be inoffensive and compatible in any community tank.

None of these prerequisites hold for wild-caught halfbeaks.

They tend to respond very sensitively to transportation, though, once acclimated to aquarium life, they are astonishingly hardy and long-living.

They cannot easily be weaned over to industrial/dried foods.

Contrary to their reputation, halfbeaks can be housed with a variety of different species but you have to choose their tankmates carefully.

Sometimes, halfbeaks come in small additional batches together with a shipment of ornamental fish for wholesale or they are accidentally found among the catch of those shipments. There are some halfbeak species in our hobby that have been brought back by travelling aquarists or by biologists undertaking scientific expeditions.

Members of our halfbeak study group are always keen on getting hold of any such uncommon importations. In this group, aquarists and scientists come together to jointly exchange their experience and findings at annual halfbeak conventions.

To comprehensively understand their evolution, livebearing halfbeaks must be seen in the context of their family, the Zenarchopteridae.

For the biologically interested aquarist, maintenance of the different specimens of this family – which are in general of small enough size to be kept in home aquaria – is very intriguing as in this family – besides other evolutionary features – we can track down their consecutive evolution from egglayer to livebearer.

Taxonomy

The family *Zenarchopteridae* contains five genera:

Zenarchopterus

Tondanichthys

Dermogenys

Nomorhamphus

Hemirhamphodon



Zenarchopterus dispar. Photo:- Frank Schäfer.



Zenarchopterus dunckeri. Photo:- Frank Schäfer.



Pair of *Zenarchopterus dunckeri*. Photo:- Frank Schäfer.

Their common ancestor lived in marine habitats as is still the case with allied families, for instance the Flying Fish. For successful reproduction, males and females had to gather during spawning season to lay eggs and release sperm. The success of reproduction depended on two prerequisites: for spawning, both genders had to come together, first, at the same location, second, at exactly the same time – a reproduction pattern that is still very familiar in a lot of today's fish species.

Species of the family *Zenarchopteridae* are secondary division freshwater fishes as their ancestors' origins are marine. Whereas primary division freshwater fishes are salt-intolerant because they evolved in freshwater, secondary division freshwater fishes are salt-tolerant and specimens may not only inhabit freshwater bodies but also brackish water and even occur in marine surroundings.

Zenarchopterus

The genus *Zenarchopterus* contains about twenty species. They are worldwide widespread. Their distribution range – by far the greatest within the family *Zenarchopteridae* – extends from South East Asia to East Africa, from the Somoa Islands to South Japan. They are abundant and colonize the brackish waters of estuaries and deltas. Nevertheless, they can settle in marine environs or immigrate into freshwater streams as well. Their common name “estuarine halfbeak” reflects their lifestyle (in Germany we call them “Mündungshalbschnäbler”).

Zenarchopterus are occasionally commercially available. With a size of around 15 cm, they can be kept by brackish water aquarists in home aquaria, for instance in a tidal setting.

Zenarchopteridae are an evolutionary dynamic group. Their scientific name implies the inseminating organ that is the specific distinguishing mark for this taxonomic assemblage. Their name *Zenarchopteridae* as well as the genus name *Zenarchopterus*, derived from Greek, translates as “the fin that gives life “and refers to the modified anal fin of the male which is transformed into an intromittent organ.

This modification of the anal fin is the beginning development of the andropodium as scientists call it in livebearing halfbeaks. This reproductive organ corresponds to the gonopodium we know from livebearing toothcarps (*Poeciliidae*).

The efficiency of this advancement in reproductive strategies is obvious in several respects:

The male is able to precisely transmit sperm towards the female. Thus, to guarantee the continuity of their respective species, both genders do not need to produce the large amount of spawn they would have to when spawning hit or miss in the open water column and therefore can save a lot of energy.

Furthermore, the female will benefit from opportunities to choose the adequate site and moment to deposit her eggs without the otherwise necessary presence of a male.

We do not know for sure if the deposited eggs already contain embryos or if embryonic development just starts with their deposit. This remains to be explored.

Tondanichthys

We do not know much about the genus *Tondanichthys*, endemic to Lake Tondano in Sulawesi, either, and probably never will as they seem to be extinct.

Research studies based on the morphological structures in the anal fins of male museum specimens deduce that these fish are also internally fertilized or at least internally inseminated.

Dermogenys

Regarding the genus *Dermogenys*, we have already discussed the most popular species Part 1 of this article – *Dermogenys collettei*, *Dermogenys siamensis*, *Dermogenys burmanica* and *Dermogenys pusilla*, constituting clade I of the genus *Dermogenys*, the *Dermogenys pusilla* group.

But why did Amy Downing Meisner erect two clades in this genus in her dissertation (2001)?

Of course, the reason is to be seen in biological issues following a comprehensive scientific scrutiny.

Let's have a look at **clade II**, the *Dermogenys orientalis* – group, which contains six species

Dermogenys orientalis endemic to Sulawesi (Selatan). Some older aquarists may know them under their former synonym *Dermogenys montana*.

Dermogenys sumatrana with their distribution range Sumatra;

Dermogenys bispina distribution range Kudat (north Borneo) and Sandakan (northeast Borneo). *Dermogenys bispina* are plentiful, inhabiting preponderantly slightly brackish waters as is also known from other allied *Dermogenys* species.

Following a DNA-barcoding study from 2018 (Farhana et al.) these two populations which are geographically separated by a high mountain range, may represent two subspecies or even two species of their own.

Dermogenys bruneiensis endemic to Brunei (northwestern Borneo);

Dermogenys palawanensis endemic to Palawan (southwestern island of Philippines)

Dermogenys robertsi (Philippines and Kalimantan, Timur, Borneo).

If some of these species (probably *Dermogenys sumatrana* and *Dermogenys orientalis*) have ever been kept in our home aquaria, they will most likely have occurred in the stock lists under the name of *Dermogenys pusilla*.

While specimens of the *Dermogenys pusilla*-group were commercially imported for the first time already in 1905, the first commercial importation designated as belonging to the *Dermogenys orientalis*-group, namely *Dermogenys sumatrana*, turned up in 1935.

Since then *Dermogenys sumatrana* and *Dermogenys orientalis* have occasionally been imported by their correct names. However, in commerce they are also given fancy names like *Dermogenys* “Red Fin” for a population of *Dermogenys orientalis* from Sulawesi.

In the wake of the hype for the beautiful shrimps of Sulawesi, the colourful specimens of these populations regained attention.

The fundamentals of caring for species from the *Dermogenys orientalis*-group are pretty much the same as described for clade I, the *Dermogenys pusilla* - group.

Concerning their behaviour, aquarists’ experience diverges.

While some aquarists and also retailers complain about their antagonistic attitudes, others report a peaceful and inoffensive disposition of their *Dermogenys* strain.

Especially in some populations of *Dermogenys orientalis* harassment of conspecifics occurs continually. Unfortunately, these are often the most attractive and colourful specimens within this species-group. To avoid fatalities, care strategies involve providing a vast surface area with a lot of hiding places e.g. by floating plants. Surface space of about one square metre, as experienced by a local public aquarium, is definitely too small an area to keep more than one individual of their *Dermogenys orientalis*-stock alive and this regards females as well as males.

Up to now, it is not possible for aquarists to identify the different *Dermogenys* species accurately by eyesight only. Correct determination depends on morphological and meristic data, at best in conjunction with DNA barcoding results.

Reproduction in aquaria

When it comes to breeding, all *Dermogenys* females, clade I (*Dermogenys pusilla*-group) and clade II (*Dermogenys orientalis*-group), practise sperm storage as supposedly all live-bearing halfbeaks do.

As described before, *Dermogenys pusilla* species are easy to breed and the *Dermogenys* of clade II seem to reproduce as readily. At least, females of the wild-caught generation do and they will give birth to promising progeny. Of course, the aquarist keeping them will assume that future upkeep of his *Dermogenys orientalis* strain is granted.

But beginning with F1 generation onwards complications arise as is illustrated in the photo series taken by Dieter Bork, a member of our halfbeak study group.

As you can see in the pictures, the F1 females frequently suffered miscarriages. In the birth process, embryos got stuck in their egg membranes outside their mother's body without being able to free themselves. They remained connected with the motherly abdomen until the female dropped them off a short time after. These embryos were not able to survive.

These are experiences shared by several other halfbeak aquarists.

So why is it that we are successful in breeding *Dermogenys pusilla* species like *Dermogenys burmanica* depicted in the photo but – although keeping them under the same husbandry conditions- we fail breeding species of the *Dermogenys orientalis* clade in the long term?

Comparing the different reproductive strategies in *Dermogenys* of clade I and clade II a study conducted by Meisner and Burns 1997 will shed some light on this phenomenon.

As a result of their research project they classified viviparity in livebearing halfbeaks into five types. They assigned the *Dermogenys pusilla* species group to type I form of viviparity whereas all species belonging to the *Dermogenys orientalis* clade exhibit type II form of viviparity.



Agonistic behaviour in *D. orientalis* females. Photo:- Hans Evers



D. orientalis Bantimuring. Photo:- *Hans Evers*



Dermogenys sp. Lampuaua. Photo *Hans Evers*.



Dermogenys sp Wailanti River. Photo:- *Hans Evers*



The collection site of *D. orientalis* Bantimurung. Photo:- *Hans Evers*



***Dermogenys orientalis*, population from Bantimurung. (Foto: Hans Evers)**

Type I

Dermogenys clade I = *pusilla* species-group

Characteristics

All embryos are at the same stage of development (= there is no superfetation). In each ovary, there are up to 20 embryos. They are provided with large amounts of yolk they live on during maturation. Even latest-stage embryos still dispose of small yolk reserves. Dry weight measurements at a very early and a very late developmental stage revealed that due to the gradually diminishing yolk reserve during maturation, in some populations embryos underwent a decrease in weight of up to 40%. Consequently, populations of the *Dermogenys pusilla* – species group are lecithotrophic meaning the embryo lives almost exclusively on its yolk reserve without depending on uptake of nutrients provided by maternal contribution.

Type II

Dermogenys clade II = *orientalis* species-group

Characteristics

All species with type II form of viviparity exhibit superfetation with up to three different broods. In a single ovary, there may simultaneously occur up to 36 embryos of different ages in their various developmental stages. A significant amount of yolk reserve as seen in the type

I form of viviparity is not present. Instead, vascularization – especially of the follicle wall – is increased to ensure food supply from mother to embryo. Throughout their maturation, embryos are nourished with nutrients directly derived from the mother. Thus, in the course of gestation, they are dependent on a constantly good nutritional condition of their mother to guarantee their healthy growth. Characteristic of embryos of these matrotrophic species is - compared to their initial weight at the beginning of their embryonal development- a considerable increase of weight at the time of birth.

Measurements on two different populations were carried out which yielded an increase in weight for newborn embryos of 556% in *Dermogenys sp. "Sulawesi "*and even of 1075% in *Dermogenys orientalis* respectively.

So far, in both, in the populations of the *Dermogenys pusilla* species group, as well as in the populations of the *Dermogenys orientalis* species group, the entire gestation period is intrafollicular.

But this seems to be the only feature the two species groups have in common during maturation of their embryos.

The *Dermogenys orientalis* species group clearly shows the origin of the sophisticated evolution of reproductive strategies which is characteristic of live-bearing halfbeaks and thus illuminates why breeding them poses a far greater challenge than breeding species from the *Dermogenys pusilla* clade though by phenotype both clades appear very similar.

Seen in this light, maybe the nearest relatives for *Dermogenys orientalis* species are not the species of the *Dermogenys pusilla* - group but *Nomorhamphus* with type III form of viviparity which we will discuss in a later article.



Female *D. burmanica* (*D.pusilla* group) giving birth. Photo: Dieter Bork



Dermogenys orientalis female, one hour before giving birth, Photo: *Dieter Bork*



D. orientalis, one hour after starting to give birth.



Stillborn fry . Photo: *Dieter Bork*

Literature cited:

Korte, U. 2025. Livebearing Halfbeaks Part I The Genus *Dermogenys*. Livebearer Notes 82:15-23

Meisner, A.L.D. 1998. Reproductive biology, phylogenetic analysis, taxonomic revision, and biogeography of the viviparous halfbeak genera *Dermogenys* and *Nomorhamphus* (Teleostei:Hemiramphidae). Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The George Washington University. UMI 9817625.

-- & John Burns. (1997). Viviparity in the halfbeak genera *Dermogenys* and *Nomorhamphus* (Teleostei: Hemiramphidae). *Journal of Morphology*. 234. 295 - 317.

Experiences with *Poecilia vivipara*, a well-known livebearer rarely kept in the aquarium

Erich Merz. Photos by the author.

**Reprinted from DLGZ Rundschau 3-2025 pp. 106-8; translation by Google Translate
with help from Dan Fromm**



A male *P. vivipara* from my collection.

In this short article, I report on my fortuitous experiences with *Poecilia vivipara*, an attractive, lively little fish that is very rarely found in aquariums, although it is arguably the first scientifically described livebearer and thus founder of the genus name *Poecilia* as well as the family name Poeciliidae (first described by: Bloch & Schneider, 1801).

In the autumn of 2024 (October 24, 2024), the time had come again: the aquarium club in Dürrwangen held its annual aquarium market. My long-time aquarium friend Werner encouraged me to attend. We were at last able to meet again and also indulge in our shared hobby of aquarium keeping.

No sooner had we arrived than the hall in Dürrwangen was full of aquarists of all ages and filled with so many tanks that it was almost impossible to get close to the tanks with the fish on display.

Immediately to the right, Near the entrance, I immediately noticed a tank with live-bearing molly-sized fish, but with a unique coloration I hadn't seen before. Some males had a strikingly bright yellow-orange chest and belly area (unfortunately, I don't have any pictures of the exhibited animals). Otherwise, the body was silvery gray with a few vertical black stripes, a yellow-black dorsal fin, and an equally yellowish caudal fin with black borders. There were no females to be seen in the tank.

During the conversation, the owner revealed to me that they were *Poecilia vivipara*. The origin of these fish also turned out to be somewhat unusual. He caught them in the spring of 2024 in a wastewater canal in Cayenne, the capital of the French overseas territory of French Guiana. The males on display were from there, so the juveniles also offered were the F1 generation of these wild-caught specimens. I couldn't resist and was able to take some juveniles home with me.

My personal experiences, which partly differ from the information in the literature, can be seen as complementary.

Since there was unfortunately no tank available at home, they had to move into a tank with *cortezi* swordtails. This community tank still runs smoothly today.



A female *Poecilia vivipara* from my collection, easily recognizable by its lack of yellow tones and prominent shoulder patch.

Living conditions:

Temperature: 23-24 °C

pH: 7

Conductivity: approx. 320 microSiemens

Partial water changes approximately every 2-3 weeks

No salt added

Food: Complete dry food, freeze-dried *Artemia*, *Spirulina*, *Moina macrocopa*

In these conditions the purchased fry grew and finally, at the age of nine months, the time had come: their first litter. In the literature, however, sexual maturity is stated as being reached at just four months, contrary to my experience.

Furthermore, the gestation period is usually stated as approximately 28-30 days. It's different with my fish. So far, my three consecutive litters have been born at very precise intervals of 40 and 41 days, respectively. What was striking was also that the three females all gave birth at the same time, within one day.

The number of young fishes fluctuated between 20 and 25, without increasing. Unfortunately, a relatively large number, namely about 20%, were dead at birth or died shortly thereafter. This is also found in the literature. However, the litter size is usually described as 100 or more. This may, however, be related to the young age of my fish and may change.

Since the parents pursue the young, they are raised separately.

The F1 generation of *Poecilia vivipara* females I acquired is clearly recognizable by the clearly visible black shoulder patch and the larger body size. The males now have the bright yellow-black dorsal fin and a delicate yellowish caudal fin with a black edge. Otherwise, the body is silvery-gray, although the bright yellow-orange pectoral/abdominal band of the parents caught in French Guiana is not yet visible. My males are about 3.5 cm long, the females about 5 cm.

My recommendation: *Poecilia vivipara* are lively and truly beautiful. Observing them is interesting. They are also easy to keep, sociable, and therefore well-suited for community aquariums with fish that require similar conditions. Last but not least, even with aquarium fish that have been around for a long time, even as a hobbyist, you can still gain new insights about one species to share with others.

Sub-editor's comment: More about *P. vivipara*

It is euryhaline and occurs in brackish as well as fresh water. It has an enormous distribution: "Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. Introduced in Puerto Rico (U.S.A.), Martinique (France) and some areas in Brazil." Fricke, Eschmeyer and van der Laan 2025. Phillip et al. 2013 and Kenny 1995 say that in Trinidad it occurs mainly in brackish water; it isn't clear that it exists in Tobago. Fishbase.se, pull of 10/29/2025, reports that it is also present in Guadeloupe, where it was introduced. Barbel-Filho 2018 found it in mangroves in Maceió River microbasin, Fernando de Noronha Archipelago, Pernambuco, Brazil. They suggest it was introduced but can't rule out natural dispersion.

Here are two photos of male *P. vivipara* courtesy of the Brazilian ichthyologist José Luis Birindelli. The first shows the yellow-orange coloration mentioned by Mr. Merz. The second does not.



Male *P. vivipara*, Itatiba, Sao Paulo, Brazil



Male *P. vivipara*, ~ 110 km NW of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

Both fish were collected well inland in fresh water. The Itatiba male was collected ~ 1,400 KM southwest of the Bahia site. Note that some males have the shoulder spot; this fish is not consistently sexually dimorphic as suggested by Mr. Merz. To get a better idea of how variable they can be, see Kempkes and Schäfer 1998 pp. 166-7.

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***Poecilia (Psychropoecilia) dominicensis* (Evermann & Clark 1906)**

Text and photos: Dan Fromm



Male *P. (P.) dominicensis*, Río Jima at Autopista Duarte. The colour in the dorsal could be more intense and the bars don't show.

P. (P.) dominicensis is a small poeciliid that occurs only in the Dominican Republic. It doesn't seem to be well-known in the aquarium hobby or to have been kept often. Its taxonomic history is slightly tangled. Until Rivas 1978 it was confused with the very similar, at least to the naked eye, *P. (P.) hispaniolana*.

I collected *P. (P.) dominicensis* in 2019 from the Río Basima (south slope, a tributary of the Haina), Río Jima and Río Maimón (both north slope). In 2022 Mark Sabaj and I found it in the Río Nigua (south slope); this is the first record of it in the Nigua since the type specimen was collected there in 1905. In the Basima and Nigua the fish were most abundant over soft bottoms, sometimes with vegetation (*Myriophyllum?*), and slow side channels off the main stream. This is consistent with Rivas' 1978 account of the fish's habitat preferences, based on many more locations than I visited. In the Maimón I collected small juveniles near shore in relatively still water and found no adults. I believe they were out in the middle where I couldn't catch them with the gear (dipnet) I use when collecting by myself. In the Jima I got

adults in the current. Both of these rivers had hard bottoms and no submerse vegetation where I collected.

I've kept *P. (P.) dominicensis* from the Río Basima, the Río Jima and the Río Maimón. I kept my Maimón fish in a small tank and neglected them. That group rewarded me by petering out. The other two are still (late 2025) going strong.

P. (P.) dominicensis is easy to keep and very prolific. Adults are very tolerant of juveniles; cull to prevent overpopulation and stunting. My water is moderately soft, ~ 130 ppm dissolved solids out of the tap. My tanks run slightly alkaline. My fish room temperatures run from low 70s (°F) in summer (cooling season) to low 80s (°F) in winter (heating season). I keep my *P. dominicensis* in planted tanks. Java fern, Java moss, etc.

Both sexes have a prominent black basal spot in the dorsal fin. In this respect they differ from the *Limia* species with which they occur (*L. perugiae* in the Nigua; *L. versicolor* in the Haina drainage; *L. zonata* on the north slope), whose adult males don't have a black spot in the dorsal. Dominant and courting males have red, sometimes bright, in the dorsal. Females and subordinate males are plainer.



Female *P. (P.) dominicensis*, Río Jima at Autopista Duarte

When *P. (P.) dominicensis* was introduced to the hobby is hard to establish. Trewavas 1948 includes a photograph of a live male that E. Roloff collected and brought home in 1938. She identified it as *Mollienesia dominicensis*. Sterba 1966's entry for *M. dominicensis* states that it was introduced to Germany in 1938 and is not present now, presumably in 1959 when the book was first published in German. Jacobs 1971's entry for *Poecilia montana* mentions Roloff's work and remarks "Being relatively inconspicuous this species has never become popular in aquarium circles." Meyer, Wischnath & Foerster 1995 say that it was first introduced into Germany by Lechner in 1978. Hmm. It would have come from Lechner & Radda's 1978 visit to the Dominican Republic. I've found no evidence that the fish was in the U.S. before 2019.

Names, names, names and confused aquarists

The type specimen of *P. (P.) dominicensis* was collected in 1905 by August Busck, an entomologist, from a brook in the Río Nigua drainage. Evermann & Clark 1906 described it as *Platypoecilus dominicensis*. Myers 1931 moved it to *Mollienesia*, then recognized as a good genus. Myers 1935 p. 311 moved it to *Psychropoecilia*, a new genus. This name is “an allusion to the clear mountain torrents which are the habitat of this species.” The putative *P. dominicensis* on which Myers based his new genus were in fact *P. hispaniolana* Rivas 1978. As an aside, Rivas 1978 reported that *P. hispaniolana* is much more rheophilic than *P. dominicensis*. My observations of these two species in the field – many fewer than Rivas’ – are consistent with this. Finally, Rosen & Bailey 1963 synonymized *Limia* with *Poecilia*.

Since *Poecilia dominicensis* Valenciennes 1846, now classified in the genus *Limia*, has priority over *P. dominicensis* (Evermann & Clark 1906), when they made *Limia* a subgenus of *Poecilia* Rosen & Bailey renamed *P. dominicensis* (Evermann & Clark 1906) *P. montana* Rosen & Bailey 1963.

Those who treat *Limia* as a good genus – I usually do -- call the fish that Evermann & Clark 1906 described as *Platypoecilus dominicensis* *Poecilia dominicensis*, People who treat *Limia* as a subgenus of *Poecilia* call it *P. montana*. That aquarists are confused about these fishes’ names isn’t surprising.

Meyer 2015 accepts *Limia* as good but doesn’t accept *Psychropoecilia* and places the three Hispaniolan *Poecilia* (*dominicensis*, *elegans* – not discussed in this article – and *hispaniolana*) in *Poecilia* (*Mollienesia*). This is not consistent with recent molecular phylogenies, e.g., Alda et al. 2013 and Palacios 2017, which place them as sister to *Limia* and “*Limia* + Hispaniolan *Poecilia*” as sister to *Mollienesia*.

Lee, Platania & Burgess 1983 proposed the common name Tiburon *Limia* for *Limia dominicensis* (Valenciennes 1846), which occurs on the Tiburon Peninsula in far southwestern Haiti. More recently, a *Limia* I believe is *L. sulphurophila*, which is endemic to the Dominican Republic, has entered the hobby and pet trade under the names Tiburon *Limia* and *Limia tridens*.

This misidentification has compounded the confusion. See, for example, . <https://akvaristalexikon.hu/akvariumi-halak/elevenszulo-fogasponyok/poecilia-dominicensis.html> (in Hungarian. Google Translate handles the text well enough but loses the images) is a good example of this confusion. The fish figured on the page is neither *Limia dominicensis* (Valenciennes 1846) nor *Poecilia (Psychropoecilia) dominicensis* (Evermann & Clark 1906). The distribution map, text and photos are wrong for both fish. The synonymy is mistaken too. My best guesses are that the photos show the fish circulating in the trade and hobby as “Tiburon *Limia*” and “*Limia tridens*” and that it is actually *Limia sulphurophila*. Given the difficulty of finding good information on the ‘net and recognizing it as such, this muddle is not surprising.

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Diary Dates

The following dates are subject to confirmation but I will include confirmed dates, addresses and further details in the March issue of “Livebearer News”.

1. Spring meeting: 19th April, Bristol.
2. Summer meeting #1: 7th June, Basingstoke.
3. Summer meeting #2: 19th July, Carlisle.
4. Autumn Convention: 24th and 25th October, Shenstone, Nr Lichfield, Midlands.