



# SOUTHERN LIVEBEARERS AQUATIC GROUP QUARTERLY JOURNAL

## NUMBER 1

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Well, here we are at last! This issue was planned for early in December and so I feel very guilty about unleashing it on you well into the new year but better late than never, I suppose...! Unfortunately such routine tasks as work and fishkeeping not to mention the Christmas and New Year celebrations, cannot be overlooked, and the Journal has had to take it's turn.

I see that David Cheswright has suggested that I volunteered for the Editor's job - but my version of the story is rather different. It was- that late summer Saturday evening at the Rettendon Wheatsheaf When I drunk a number of pints of Ridley's real ale with the Cheswrights, while the lightning of the savage Saffron Walden thunderstorm stabbed the north-western night sky outside. I don't remember too much else about that evening, but I know that I awoke next morning as the Editor!

A large part of this issue is devoted to accounts written by some of our members of their recent travels to Germany (which have resulted in quite a number of new fishes being brought back) - and I'm aware that our friends the N.G.L.S. have scooped us by printing Ivan Dibble's story at least a month before we went to press - but I'm sure you will agree that it's worthy of wider circulation. Never-the-less, it is intended to have rather more "fishy" articles in future journals. I would welcome any letters or comments ( especially printable ones) from readers, while any articles submitted would obviously stand a fair chance of being published!

I do hope that most of you can make it to our January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Southend A.S. meeting hall in Westcliff-on-Sea. I must say that I'm personally just mildly disturbed that this means two consecutive Friday, evening meetings, because I know that Friday is difficult or impossible for some. Obviously, as Dave Cheswright says, suitable halls or rooms are not easy to come by, but I feel that with our present distribution of membership, there is as good a case for gathering in Sheffield as Shrewsbury or Salisbury (for example) and varying the day of the week each time as well as the town if at all possible. Certainly I feel that we should have some Saturday and Sunday meetings for variety, and these would not necessarily have to be in the evenings. Only time will tell, and it's up to you the members, and what I'm suggesting would be in direct contrast to the policy of our successful colleagues of B.A.S.S. (British Aquarists Study Society) who regularly meet in March, May and September each year, always on Saturday afternoons and always in London's Regents Park (in the Lecture Theatre, that is, not on the damp grass!). But let's have your ideas.

Don't forget to bring any surplus fish to Southend on the 26<sup>th</sup>

HOWARD PRESTON

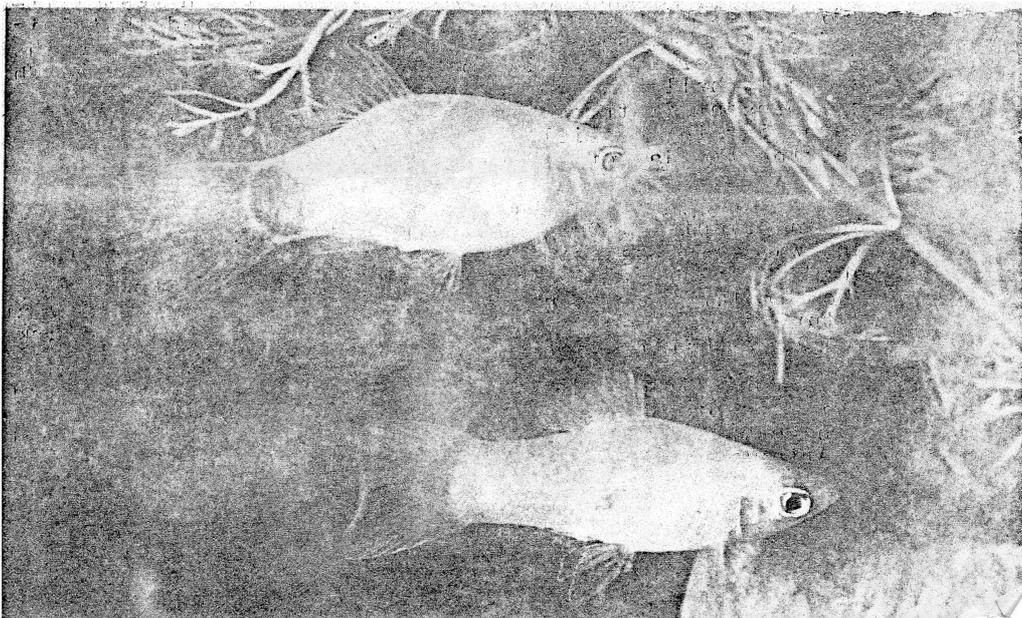
## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At the next meeting on 26th January, 1979, it will be necessary to arrange future meetings. The idea, is that there will be four per annum and any members who have ideas on where to hold these should let Keith Dryden know, if possible, before that date. But, if you do write on this, please have something definite in the way of a Hall or room available, address, cost, date, etc. We have had various suggestions of places and, different days of the week but, so far, no definite addresses or other Information. This is one of the most difficult things to arrange.

You will see in this issue that some members have recently exchanged Species with our friends in West Germany. This is a contact which, I hope, will be kept up with visits and correspondence in both directions. Perhaps we may in the future need a P.R.O. to handle this side and other contacts if made later. Friendship and co-operation is what our hobby is about, as well as breeding and showing.

It has taken 3 months to get some sort of organisation going and we hope that things will run smoothly from now on. Let Keith know if you have any suggestions as to things you want done and the Committee will look into any such ideas. In the meantime, "Good fish-keeping".

David Cheswright



**THE PURPLE SPIKE-TAIL PLATY (*Xiphophorus xiphidium*)**

**by Howard Preston.**

Way back in about 1960, or it may have been a year or two earlier, an article entitled "The Purple Spike-Tail Platy from Mexico's Rio Soto La Marina System" by Dr. Myron Gordon appeared in the aquatic press. This described in some detail how Gordon and his assistants first discovered the species in north-east Mexico many years previously: but it also enabled me to locate two populations of the "Purple Platy" on my visit to Mexico in February 1974.

With Christopher Lyon, at that time a member of the Southend Aquarists Society, I had spent the last week of our 3-week "holiday" exploring the areas to the north of Mexico City, and we had already found colonies of such rare livebearers as Xiphophorus montazumae and Gambusia atrora, and possibly an even more exciting find, X. pygmaeus, was to be discovered on the return journey southwards to the capital.

On the hot Wednesday morning of 13th February, we left the Los Arcos Courts motel just north of Ciudad Mante and drove north the fairly easy 135 kilometres to Cd. Victoria. The road was the old Pan-American highway, opened in the 1930's from Mexico City to Laredo, Texas, but traffic is not as heavy as might be expected as the newer faster road from Monterrey through San Luis Potosi takes much of the through traffic. The Tropic of Cancer is crossed up in the mountains to the south of Cd. Victoria, and that city is avoided by means of a modern by-pass.

The Purple Platies were there all right, and it was not difficult to catch a few, even though we only had ordinary aquarium hand nets. The purple colouration described by Gordon was not particularly evident but some of the males had striking combinations of yellow and steel blue, and the tail "spikes" were particularly well developed. We just took a few small and medium sized fishes, as we found they usually travelled better than the adults. The pools contained other fishes too but mostly they were "sphenops" Mollies which appeared to have small black spots, but the spots were seemingly of parasitic origin and not a colour pattern!

I spent only a short time in the river bed of the Rio Purificacion because I was anxious for the safety of our other fishes in the heat of the car in the midday sun. Later that day we returned southwards and took a side turning which led east off the main road and was signposted "Hacienda Santa Engracia" and the junction was near Km. 26 north of Cd. Victoria: with little doubt this road ran roughly parallel to the Rio Santa Engracia, but we found little of interest except a dusty village near a level crossing of one of the main lines of the Mexican National Railroad. Then, returning towards the main road, I discovered a tiny stream flowing under the road and no doubt running into the main Rio. Just as Gordon had done many years ago, here we found a few Purple Platies, but they were smaller and less brilliant in colour than the El Barretal colony, maybe though because they were only young fishes. I believe that the few surviving xiphidium in this country at the time of writing nearly five years later are descended from this Rio Santa Engracia collection, but I cannot be sure, as the two stocks may well have been mixed.

TO BE CONTINUED

*TRIP TO GERMANY*

by Mike Thomas and Dave Cheswright.

Mike had been in correspondence with Herr Manfred Meyer of Frankfurt for several months from early 1978. Herr Meyer is Editor of the Journal of the German Livebearers' Society which covers the whole of West Germany and is also well known in Germany for his scientific work on Livebearers which he carries out as part of his interest in the hobby. Indeed he says that the German aquarists are more scientifically minded and less fishkeepers than the British. Their Journal is, in fact, more like a paper from our Natural History Museum and covers description and identification of Livebearers as well as Society news. It is of high quality printing and there have been two issues in 1978. Their aim is for three or four issues a year but, as you can imagine, the work involved in this is considerable. Their Society has about 150 members and was formed about five years ago. They hold an Annual Show, mainly for pairs of fishes. Our members, Ivan Dibble and Dave Hanns went to the 1978 Show in Hamburg in October and we will leave the reporting of that side to them. Our only remarks re Shows is that the Germans are extremely interested in our system of Showing and have asked for details of F.B.A.S. Show Rules, etc. This request has been passed on to the F.B.A.S. and also the F.G.A. has been asked to contact them on the Guppy side. Herr Meyer and his colleagues have promised to let us have details of all papers available on Livebearers from Germany and the United States. He will also let us know of a contact in Mexico who is available to collect fishes and dispatch them. The cost in Germany for about twenty pairs of fishes and freight by air is about £80 from this source. Whilst we are on this point of correspondence have we any members, fluent in German, apart from Ivan, who can translate?

The German Society's Subscription is £10 per annum. Their Journal costs about £220 per issue to print.

As a result of Mike's contact he arranged a trip for himself, Father (to drive!!!) and George Kane. The arrangements were made at very short notice but they decided to keep costs down and go by ship from Harwich to Hook of Holland and from there by car. George was to have come down from Kirkcaldy in Scotland to Mike's home in Wales and they were due to leave on 2nd November, 1978, by car, stopping at Dave's on the way to pick up additional fishes for exchange on the trip. Mike made all the arrangements and the boat fare was £105, including car. Additional expenses were Passports and Petrol, the total mileage by road, on top of the sea crossing, being about 620 each way. Petrol in Germany costs about £1.10p per gallon, and food seemed to be about double the price in the United Kingdom. The only consolation was duty-free goods on the ship each way. Anyway, this way of travel, whilst taking a long time, is the most economical. Disaster struck six days before the trip when George went ice-skating and tried to demolish the rink, resulting in a broken leg. Panic set in by telephone to Dave and, as Howard Preston happened to be at Dave's home in Wickford, Essex at the time the phone rang, he was given first refusal for the trip - the boat fare apparently could not be claimed back, so perhaps insurance cover should be taken out to cover illness/injuries in the future. Howard, having failed to talk his boss into an extra couple of days holiday, decided against going and Dave agreed to step in as it was a question of two working days only lost. Howard had already applied for an Import Licence for the trip but it had not arrived when we left. He chased this and, thanks to his Father liking train and bus journeys, the Licence was in the hands of Customs and Excise at Parkeston Quay, Harwich, on our return - talk about team work!

So on 2nd November, Mike and his father left Wales at about 11 a.m. and arrived at Dave's around 4 p.m. After a meal and Dave's.

chasing fishes around his shed, we left Wlckford at 7.15 and arrived at Harwich by 8.50 p.m. The ship sailed at 10 p.m. and arrived at Hookof Holland at 5.30 a.m. We were off by 6.15. We then realised that time was different and this changed to 7.15. "Keep to the right" we said, and Mike's father Billy did a good job, only going wrong a couple of times. The 320 miles to Frankfurt and finding Herr Meyer's house took us until 2.30 p.m. He lived in a village outside the main town. The total journey, therefore took about 24 hours. Flying, at greatly increased cost would probably have taken, from Wales, via Heathrow, about 7 hours.

Herr Meyer spoke some English and his welcome to us, to say the least, was enthusiastic. This we found with everyone throughout our 2 day stay there. Within minutes we were showing him our fishes, a total of about 90, including *Prelapella intermedia*, *Gambusia affinis holbrooki*, *Poecilia versicolor*, *Goodea atripinnis*, *Limnurgus innominatus* and *Cnesterodon*. Mike also took a pair of *Poecilia* for identification purposes - these may be *P. ornata*, but the information on that species seems to consist only of one drawing and the original report from when the species was found. We are awaiting a report with interest as the specimens may or may not be "ornata" and could be a cross. The source of these fishes, which Mike says breed true, to the United Kingdom, cannot be traced and here is a prime example of confusion which could have been avoided with proper records. The British Museum, Natural History, is also checking on this identification. There were many species in Herr Meyer's tanks which we did not have and he was agreeable to exchange for some of ours, all of which the Germans were pleased with but especially the *limnurgus* and the *G. holbrooki*.

Herr Meyer had arranged for us to stay with friends as his was about 50% demolished and being rebuilt. We had some food at Herr Meyer's and he then took us into Frankfurt to Herr Horst Hinz's house. Here again it was straight to the cellar, where most of our German friends seem to keep their fishes, most houses having a cellar.

The advantage is the lower cost of heating and the amount of space. Herr Hinz had about 35 aquaria, many quite large, and there was still room for a table and chairs and several people. He was still installing more aquaria and perhaps the table will have to go later? The first thing that struck one here was the extremely good plant growth. Ordinary fluorescent tubes were over all tanks, with a couple being lit by Gro-lux: this latter type did not seem to have produced any better plant growth. Both here and later we realised that they, in most cases, leave each species in one tank and they flock-breed there so that adults and fry of all sizes are in the same tank. The colour and quality of fishes was good, but the sizes in a lot of cases were smaller than we would expect, the fry being kept with the parents. In some cases, for example, *Prelapella intermedia*, they said that they were "problem fish". They knew that with some species only a few fry are produced, yet they were getting only four or five fry whereas we would hope for about ten, and we are sure that this is because they are being eaten. The real Problem Fish was *Jenynsia lineata* - the One-Sided Livebearer. They had only had a few fry from these and we were very pleased when they offered us two females and four males. Here again, however, we later saw a very large pregnant female in a tank with several males still trying to mate. We did not hold out much hope for a large brood unless the males were removed. This leaving of the fishes to themselves resulting in fewer fry and smaller sizes was about the only criticism we had of their fishkeeping. Beer was produced by Frau Hinz in the cellar and again some of our fishes were given to Herr Hinz.

We were then taken to a pub for a meal and there met Herr Klein, a member, and Herr Baldera the President; Herr Hinz, by the way, is their Vice-President. We then went back to Herr Klein's where there

was more beer and a visit to his cellar. He again had many tanks and many species, including Guppies and several Platy types. This gentleman is retired and is able to devote much time to His hobby. The remainder of our fishes were given to him. We noticed that he had a pair of *Lermichthys multiradiatus*. Dave recognised these, as Howard Preston had brought some from Mexico some years ago, though we had had little success with them. This identification agreed\* with our friend's identification of this pair. However, they were very big and very old looking and we would be surprised if the female produced any fry. Here again was a good plant growth. We thought that here in particular there was an overcrowding in most tanks and this would have worried me if they were mine. As an example, about twelve 2-inch *Xenoporphus captivus* ( a Goodeid ) in an about 18 x 12 x 12 inch tank. The water was not very clean in this tank only, and there was very slight aeration. This latter they recommended for this species, and a temperature of only 70°F. (21C). This was stated to be a "problem" fish and we thought that the method of keeping it was wrong in this case and would cause problems. This species we brought back and it seems to be all right with clean water and medium aeration as are most Goodeas in our experience. Apart from this case and the general remarks above, Herr Klein's collection was most impressive. We were surprised when they asked for *Heterandria formosa* which we had not taken with us. They have a few but need more and new blood. *Brachyraphis rhabdophora* was the other species which, had we known, Mike could have obtained from a friend and taken as well. We have promised to send these later. This just shows that what is fairly common to us is gold dust to others and vice versa. When we finally came home we brought back about 110 fishes and we were so pleased that it was difficult to realise that they were as pleased with what we took for them.

Hospitality flowed throughout our trip. On the Saturday we spent the morning sight-seeing in Frankfurt and the afternoon at the Zoo. In the evening we were taken to dinner at the Henninger Tower revolving restaurant. This tower belongs to a Brewery and has two grain silos built up each side to gravity feed to the brewery. This was a late night and it was about 1 a.m. before we retired for the night. At Herr Hinz, Herr Meyer and his wife stayed until 2.30 a.m. and much wine and beer flowed. Herr Meyer was to catch his fishes for us and bring them to their Society meeting on Sunday morning at 10 a.m. As it turned out he did not get up until about 11 a.m., missed the meeting and turned up at about 4 p.m. at Herr Klein's. The Society, Frankfurt branch, met at a local sports club and about twenty members were there. Luckily a couple spoke quite good English and we had an enjoyable two hours or so. Slides of the Hamburg Show were shown, including those of "Herr" Dibble and "Herr" Hanns who had managed to get in on the slides. As we said we leave a report on this Show to them but one comment was that some fishes were lost, due to the use of Hamburg water, we told our hosts that we always take our own water to other towns to avoid this. Also, as this is their only show, the fishes are not used to bein moved.

We contributed to the meeting costs when a china pig was passed around, which the Treasurer promptly grabbed and put in his briefcase. They had the same trouble as us with the slides having to be rearranged after some came up the wrong way.

After the meeting we were all taken back to Herr Klein's where we ate and spent the rest of our stay. Herr Meyer arrived with his fishes and Herr Kraft, another member, joined us for lunch and the afternoon. Herr Meyer also brought Herr Hinz's fishes with him. We spent the rest of the day in and out of the cellar, packing the fishes and getting ready for leaving. We were a bit worried about finding our way out of Frankfurt and Herr Klein's daughter kindly took us in her car in the

After leaving Dave's we followed signs for the North Circular Road. This normally takes about two hours to drive along, but it all depends on the amount of traffic and luckily on this occasion there was not much so we made good time and got on to the M4 motorway at about 9.45 p.m. from there it was a straight journey all the way. We did, however, stop for a short break to eat some of the sandwiches which Dave's wife, Audrey, had made for us. We arrived home around 12.30 a.m. and then unloaded the fish and began to unpack them. Another death was discovered. It took us some four hours to house the fishes in their temporary tanks for the rest of the night, and then in the morning they were put into larger aquaria which they are still in at the time of writing. They were not fed for the first night but were given a few grindal worms in the morning. All appear to be doing well and all seem to be eating eagerly so we will have to cross our fingers and hope they will breed in the future.

Ivan Dibble and Dave Hanns had brought back about 18 species in October from Hamburg, of which probably 14 were "new" to the United Kingdom. We brought back 20 species and there was an overlap of several, leaving our trip with "new" species numbering 6. We must emphasise that in many cases we have only a few fry and it remains to be seen if we can raise them, find pairs and then breed them: it will be a long time before we see any fry arriving from these. The 6 species we will mention here are:-

- 1) *Jenynsia lineata* ( the One-sided Livebearer )
- 2) *Gambusia atrora* ( which Howard Preston has previously brought in, though we were unable to maintain them )
- 3) *Poecilia caudofasciata*
- 4) *Poecilia latipunctata*
- 5) *Scolichthys greenwayi*
- 6/ *Poeeilia formosa* ( this is the "species" - a kind of natural hybrid - which produces females only and must be bred with *P. latipinna* or *P. sphenops* males.  
Some *P. sphenops* males were also brought back )

Our trip was very successful both in the fishes obtained and in the new friends discovered. We could not thank them enough for their hospitality and we have invited them to visit us next Summer. They in turn have mentioned their Show in 1979 and want to see a good attendance from the United Kingdom.

There are now about fifty species of Livebearers in the United Kingdom. Of these, at the time of writing, Mike has 35 and Dave 40.

Mike's Fish-shed is 9ft. x 7ft. x 6 ft and he has thirty tanks, including one 6 feet long. Twenty-eight of these are devoted to livebearers and the other two to African Cichlids. Fry are firstly placed in the larger tanks and, when a reasonable size, transferred to the adult tanks, most of which are 18" x 10" x 10". Fry must be separated before they reach a sexable size, in order to avoid any cross-breeding. The shed is heated by paraffin.

Dave's shed is 12ft x 8ft x 8ft and contains about forty tanks, mostly 24 inches and larger, including three 4-foot and one 5-foot aquaria.

In addition there are numerous small tanks used to house pregnant mothers and fry, the latter for the first week or two after birth.

About six of the larger tanks are devoted to egglayers, mostly egg-laying tooth carps, kept by his son, Chris. All livebearer fry which have any remote likelihood of cross-breeding are kept apart from other species right from birth. Heating is by electric fan-heater with thermostat. The temperature range is 70 to 75 deg. Fahr. (lowest in winter).

Emphasis must be put on the point that the number of species kept must bear relation to the number of tanks available. Otherwise, poor quality fishes and the likelihood of accidental cross-breeding, will result.

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#### **ANOTHER TRIP TO GERMANY**

*by Ivan Dibble.*

◆*Actually this visit took place before Dave and Mike's journey just described! - Ed.)*

At the end of September, David Hanns and I were fortunate enough to go to Germany for the D.G.L.Z. Annual Show, and while we were there our host asked me to write up an article on the Show when I returned, for the benefit of all livebearer fans in England. There were, however, so many new experiences and surprises in store for us that it would be necessary to write a book to do it justice, but I will do my best to summarise.

Para missing!!!!!!

We then drove across Hamburg to Gunter's home, a beautiful detached bungalow in the suburbs. Here we met for the first time Gisela, his wife, and his Son and Daughter and were immediately made to feel at

home. I must confess that before I went to Germany, I had some doubts as to the palatability of the German food, but after five days of Gisela's cooking all kinds of German dishes for us I can only say that we lived like Kings, and the warmth and hospitality shown us by Gunter and all his family was second to none throughout our whole visit.

Early Friday afternoon we unpacked and sorted the fish. Some for Gunter and some for exchange and, at his request, we put some of them in the show, although we didn't take fish especially for showing. We arrived at the Show at about 4 p.m. This year it was in a magnificently architected multi-storeyed office block in the centre of Hamburg, which was normally the home of a large Insurance Company.

All the fish at the D.G.L.Z., Show are shown in sexed pairs, although a few tanks had from one to half-a-dozen fish in them: the only ones judged, however, were those with sexed pairs. I had barely finished tanking up my fish in the numbered tanks they supplied before I received numerous requests to exchange or sell, largely I suspect because Gunter had previously warned us which fish would go down best over there, and so within half an hour, all the fish we had benched had either been exchanged or given away to other members, except, of course, those we had promised to Gunter. All these transactions were, in fact, promises to be honoured after the show.- until then the fish were ours.

At this point I was honoured by Gunter and some other D.G.L.Z. officials by being asked to judge A.O.V. Livebearers, and despite informing them that I was not a qualified judge and only a trainee at home, I was still asked to help as a number of judges had failed to turn up.

Under such circumstances, I was naturally very pleased and delighted to help out, so, paired with Herr Fritz Frohlich, who fortunately spoke excellent English, I was initiated into the D.G.L.Z. judging system, which in some ways resembles ours. To elaborate a little, the Show was split into five classes - four for cultivated fish and one for A.O.V.'s, the A.O.V.'s being further subdivided into two classes - Goodeas and others, There were about 350 entries, nearly half of which were A.O.V's.

The Judges judged in pairs, but each marked his own points sheet, after discussing the fish with his partner. The fish were awarded points out of 100 as follows

Out of	30	for	size and body shape	(15 each fish)
Out of	20	for	fins	(10 each fish)
Out of	20	for	condition	(10 each fish)
Out of	20	for	colour	(10 each fish)
Out of	10	for	difficulty of breeding	(10 each fish)

At this point maybe I should say that the whole proceedings takes on more the atmosphere of a friendly get together on both the part of the judge and the competitors, rather than the more needle-like atmosphere that all too frequently tends to be part of the British show scene.

Anyway, after Ueri Frohlich had explained the system, we proceeded to judge the fish apparently, as far as I could see, without any reference to any fixed standards, as I never saw a ruler or a size sheet used by anyone at any time. Our ideas on size and body shape seemed to be reasonably compatible until we got to the Goodeas other than Eiseni, where we found some discrepancy. This eventually led to us making a discovery of another difference, this time in feeding, as when talking to Herr Frohlich and Gunter later, it became apparent that they had little knowledge of the importance of green food in the diets of many livebearers; but more about that later. The judging continued until after midnight before it was completed.

Saturday morning was spent with Gunter in his fish room finding homes for the rest of the fish we had brought and taking a long look at many species of fish which were new to us, just as Gunter was admiring the fish we had taken over. After a superb lunch with his family, we went

but not the two lectures which came later in the afternoon. These were illustrated by slides; the first was given by Professor Villwock and was on the evolution of Killifishes, and the second, which I must admit I enjoyed the most, was about an expedition the Germans had made to Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, in search of the Half Beak. When talking to Herr M. Brembach afterwards, we discussed many interesting things, for example, these species of fish could be found in a wide range of locations from lowland ponds to fast moving mountain streams. Their temperature requirements were in the main between 22°C and 24°C and not once were any of these fish discovered in brackish water. Also it would seem that in the main in the wild they were not a tap water fish, but rather spent their days under rocks, coming out only to feed. Details later when the book has been translated.

Saturday night was given over to a social evening, which gave the D.G.L.Z. members and their guests a unique chance to get to know each other better, and the cups were also presented at this function, but no award cards for places. The whole evening until 3.00a.m. next morning was very sociable and friendly, and for David and I it was a chance too know and exchange ideas with our new friends. Of course, as one might expect, there was the usual little gathering of D.G.L.Z. Politicians deeply engrossed in politics, but everything was very friendly and there was plenty to eat and drink. A very entertaining evening. Needless to say we slept late on Sunday morning, but after another of Gisela's gastronomical delights, we arrived at the Show in time to take part in the gathering of members in the Hall when they sold off or exchanged their own extra fish they had brought. Later the same day the fish auction took place. Maybe I should explain that the only fish auctioned were those fish which had been entered in the Show. All fish to be sold were marked with a red spot on the points card which was displayed over every tank, so you could go around beforehand and make notes on those you were interested in. The average price paid at auction was £2, but a few specimens did reach £10 a pair. Not long after this finished there was the usual scramble to break everything down and pack it away. Quite a task when you realise that every tank was lit by strip light, and had aeration in it.

On the Monday morning we were privileged to be shown around the tropical fish experimental laboratories of the Hamburg University where they had some 200 to 300 large tanks devoted to various studies of tropical fish, quite a high proportion of which were livebearers. Our host Gunter, who is himself quite a proficient amateur scientist, explained the experiments being carried out, and I also had to explain my own ideas on feeding peas, spinach, etc., to my fish, as I had told Gunter and his friends the ideas I had picked up for myself while keeping livebearers at home. Things that seemed very common knowledge to us in England were entirely new to our host and his friends. As a matter of interest, I have since heard from him and he tells me that after using more green food in their diet for about five weeks now, some of his fish have noticeably improved, particularly the Goodeas; but don't get the impression that all Gunter's fish or all German fish are low by our standards, as they have many magnificent fish, but a few were lacking in sparkle and size, mainly Goodeas and Xiphophorus. From what I saw in Gunter's tanks and have heard from other people who have visited the homes of German aquarists, their best fish rarely see the light of day at a Show. In fact, my impression - and I emphasise that it is only my impression, and I could be wrong - that fish brought to their annual show are chiefly for exchanging or donating for auction, and only a few are brought with a serious intention of winning a cup, but those that are really stand out and make you wonder what our German friends have at home. I say this as most of the fish on show were either exchanged or auctioned.

After leaving the University, Gunter took us to the Botanical Gardens where they had every conceivable type of plant life from all over the world growing, but the main reason for our visit was because Gunter knew the Curator and had arranged for us to have two species of livebearers, from there we wanted, but it really was an impressive place. The rest of the day was spent sightseeing and shopping and for those of you that way inclined "Yes, we did do this in the Reiberban" but not for what you smutty minded lot are thinking. We returned home late afternoon to prepare the 18 new species of livebearers we had acquired for their journey home. We could have brought more than these

18 species, but they filled our boxes to capacity. The others we left with Gunter who promised to post them to us in the Spring. David and I could never thank Gunter enough for all the work he had put in to make the trip one of the most enjoyable and successful we had ever had and one we shall always remember. He worked ceaselessly to this end in the Spring. David and I could never thank Gunter enough for all the work he had put in to make the trip one of the most enjoyable and successful we had ever had and one we shall always remember. He worked ceaselessly to this end every day of the show and every evening after the show we were entertained most regally by his family, really first class, as was the way he experimented into Hybridisation. We saw many of his hundreds of slides of the gonopodium he had taken himself were really first class as the way he experimented into hybridization.

A very special thanks must go to his wife Gisela, for the wonderful cuisine she set before us, and for all the work she did on our behalf. Both David and I were very sorry to get on the ship to come home, and we are looking forward eagerly to next year.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON SPECIES CONTROL

by Mervyn Strange

At the time of writing we have members who are prepared to keep and maintain stocks with a measure of commitment: the figure (3) in brackets indicates the number of members who have indicated this commitment of the following species:-

<b>Ameca splendens</b> .....	(3)	Priapella intermedia.....	(2)
<b>Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora</b> .....	(3)	Xiphophorus helleri (wild)...	(1)
<b>Cnesterodon carnegiei</b> .....	(1)	Xiphophorus milleri.....	(2)
<b>Cnesterodon decemmaculatus</b> .....	(1)	Xiphophorus montezumae .....	(1)
<b>Gambusia affinis affinis</b> .....	(1)	Xiphophorus pygmaeus.....	(2)
<b>Gambusia affinis holbrooki</b> .....	(3)	Xenotoca eiseni.....	(4)
<b>Girardinus metallicus</b> .....	(1)	Poeciliopsis gracilis.....	(1)
<b>Goodea atripinnis</b> .....	(1)		
<b>Heterandria bimaculata</b> .....	(3)		
<b>Heterandria formosa</b> .....	(2)		
<b>Limnurgus innominatus</b> .....	(1)		
<b>Phallichthys amates amates</b> .....	(2)		
Poecilia (Molly) sphenops (liberty)	(1)		

Obviously we shall have to work towards a greater level greater level of commitment before even these species would be "safe". I would put to you, the members, that each species ought to be kept with a level of commitment by at least three members before we could be assured that the continuation of that species is "safe", a higher number being an ideal. Many other species are being kept by members, as the forms so far received indicate, and several members have brought in many new species which will not become established for some considerable time, and meanwhile it is very important that we should take care that the established species are not lost by default through the more exciting new fishes taking preference.

To those members who have not filled in forms to give us the necessary information, I can only appeal "Please return forms to me, or to any other official." Do not worry if complete details cannot be remembered so far as transfers are concerned; approximate dates are better than none, a little information is better than none, the most important factor is any livebearer received from "original source". Any source outside Great Britain should be considered for this description, other details are secondary, but transfers outside your immediate area may help us to identify blood strains.

I suggest we start at No. 1 within each species for all original sources established, proceeding 2-3, etc., and identify the source by a simple letter code, this to be agreed at a future meeting, along the following lines:-

So an identification may develop as follows:-

Heterandria bimaculata (SE.1) would establish record of a particular strain

Heterandria bimaculata (NE.3) would establish record of a particular strain

If these were brought together, then

Heterandria bimaculata (SE.1/NE. 3) may develop.

Well, it's up to you, the members. There is no desparate rush to commit ourselves, so what we want is sensible, simple ideas to be put to any official.

And so I finish for now with this thought: if a species record/control is to be any use to **you**, as much information as is available should be produced to S.L.A.G. by all the other members - if it is to be any use to them we need the information you have, no matter how little, on paper please - Ta! ,,

Mervyn Strange

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Just a few days after writing the above, Mervyn received a couple more members' completed forms, enabling him to compile a Record Sheet as at 6th December, **1978**, listing over 50 species, and indicating which members had indicated commitment to which fishes, and showing others kept. It is hoped to publish an updated version in the next issue. - Ed.





