



GAMBUSIA

PUNCTATA

Available to Members only

JUNE. 1979

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Firstly I would like to record my thanks to Dave Cheswright and any others who helped to put the No. 2 Journal together on the occasion of my visit to Mexico at the end March I do not propose to describe the Mexican visit in great detail at this time, as I expect to be giving a talk/slide show on this subject at a future meeting. I must however mention a few points of interest.

The number and quality of fishes brought back was perhaps a little disappointing although Erich Hnilicka in Puebla may be sending more over in the near future, following my visit. Meanwhile, I am quite nicely set up with several strains of wild Xiphophorus maculatus, and we have a few specimens of several other species which may be used for the careful introduction of new blood into existing strains. It was very disappointing not to find X. couchianus, despite a morning spent searching the Huasteca Canyon near Monterrey, and it was interesting to discover a population in a stream between the cities of Allende and Montemorelos in the State of Nuevo Leon. This is well to the north-east of Mexico, not far from Monterrey, and much further north than the normal, so the possibility exists that these helleri have been introduced and are not a natural race. It would appear from my rather inadequate map that the stream would have been a tributary of either the Rio Grande or possibly the Rio San Fernando. Another highlight of my trip was a chance meeting, in Puebla, with Dr. Radda. who was flying home the following day. Quite a surprise

It has been pointed out that there were more spelling errors in the March Journal than were acceptable. I apologise, however, you will have gathered that my chance to visit Mexico, gave me little time to organise things - Dave and his team did very well to pick up the pieces! - but I am afraid that we have not yet reached a professional standard with this publication, and I know that this time, as well, one or two errors have slipped through the daphnia net!!!! It would be a good idea if this journal could be produced so as to reach members a month or six weeks before quarterly meetings, but as yet this has not proved possible, and I'm sorry to say that this time we are late again... My thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue: of course, I need more for the next and future issues, and with the preceding comment in mind, your notes are needed now !

Howard Preston. ^

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that the Author and the Southern Livebearers Aquatic Group
are acknowledged, and two copies sent' to our Editor.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Keith Dryden has managed to arrange the 20th July, 1979, meeting venue, again on a Friday evening. On that night we will be asking members for their views on day of the week and times of future meetings. Keith has offers of various venues for October, which will be the Annual General Meeting (followed I hope by a fishy meeting), and for Jan. 1980.

Thanks are due to Dave Haley for his generous offer to deal with posting of the July meeting notices, etc.

By the July Meeting we will be 363 days old. Many things have happened since our formation in 1978, and I would like to mention some of these but have probably forgotten some so please accept my apologies if you are not mentioned.

Mervyn has got quite a long way in compiling the Species Lists. However he no doubt mentions elsewhere that many members have not sent in details. Please help him to continue with his good work by letting him have regular information.

Ivan Dibble has been up to his ears in water and fishes which keep arriving from Germany. His efforts, assisted by me and others, have -resulted in much breeding activity and several hundreds of fry, etc., being distributed. Ivan, Dave Hanns, Mike Thomas and myself, as you know visited Germany and Ivan has had visits from our German friends since. He is off again to Germany in July. Howard Preston has been to Mexico and has brought back more fishes as well as colour slides. Phill Martin has been busy on photography and we expect to see the results soon. Terry Waller has been hot on the printing press and, you will see elsewhere, busy with a Show stand. Last, but not least, I mention Keith Dryden who has the paperwork job as Hon. Secretary. This job does not involve actual fishes and may not be noticed but his files are full.

I would like to thank Mervyn and Phill in advance for offering to transport and erect a stand at Alexandra Palace, "Aquarist" F.B.A.S. Exhibition on 13th to 15th July. Keith and I are going to help with the erection work and some members have agreed to set up furnished tanks in the stand. I have agreed to arrange for Stewards throughout the 3days of the Show. Please contact me if you are able to put in a couple of hours or more on this important work.

One final point. At our April meeting I asked members who had received Priapella (intermedia) and Limnurgus innominatus (Amarillo) from me over the last couple of years to let me have reports on their success or otherwise. I have received ONLY ONE such report to date. I feel that this sort of information is just what we need, particularly in the case of the Amarillo, Please write to me. Already this year members are

having difficulty in obtaining live fry from the Amarillo. I have obtained 5 broods, resulting in 14 live and over 20 dead. One tip with this fish is to catch the female and leave it in the net, with some plant, hanging on the side of the tank in which she was. Do this when she is quite heavily pregnant and you may have more success. If removing the female from the tank this really needs to be done some 2-3 weeks before birth is expected.

Dave Cheswright

SPECIES IDENTIFICATION: To date, the following, confirmed by Dr. A. Radda, of Austria, is the ON!CY change on name which we have accepted. Poecilia versicolour:- DELETE. This fish is POECILIA PSRUGIAE (synonym Poecilia melanonotata). Probably all our stocks are descended from specimens brought in some years ago by Howard Preston from the Dominican Republic.

No changes in name **will** be accepted unless they are in writing from qualified ichthyologists such as Dr. Radda, J. Chambers, etc.

Dave Cheswright.

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ANOTHER PAGE

by Dave Cheswright

Did you all see page 20 of Practical Fishkeeping, May, 1979 ????

Featured was a pair of Platies , upside-down species, complete with upside-down plants!

Ivan Dibble has been told by Herr Manfred Meyer, D.G.L.Z. , that there, will NOT be a Show in West Germany in 1979. The proposed trip to visit this will not, therefore, take place.

Manfred Meyer also states that he has had about ten members write to him and, whilst he thanks them all, he says that he cannot cope with any more correspondence. He asks that all messages be put through Herr Dibble (!) as P.R.O. so that he has only to deal with one person.

The Newcastle Guppy and Livebearer Society Show is, we understand, to be held on Sunday, 7th October, 1979* but anyone intending to visit it is recommended to recheck this date,

Mervyn Strange and Phill Martin were at the Scottish Aquarists Festival in March. They were there on behalf of Basingstoke A.S. and won the Tableaux competition and the Furnished Aquaria class. Phill took 1st in the Breeders' A.O.S. Livebearers and Mervyn, 3rd.

Mervyn was awarded a Yellow badge by the F.B.A.S. in March, for his many years of service to the hobby.

At the Brighton & Southern A.S. Show on 5th May Mervyn took 1st in Class T, which was also the F.B.A.S. Trophy Class. I took 1st, 3rd and 4th in Class NO-T (Pairs, Livebearers), and 1st in XOT (Breeders', Livebearers), with C. Finnis 3rd and Graham Carpenter 4th. C. Finnis had fishes in other livebearer classes as well as

egglayers and he ended up with top individual points and Best in Show, the latter with a Mudskipper. Mervyn also won Best Livebearer. At Southend, Leigh & District A. S. Show on 28th April several S. L. A. G. members were successful in the Livebearer classes, including Sid Finnis. Graham Carpenter, Karen Turner and myself (sorry if I have forgotten anyone). Terry Waller and Bernard Meech ran a stand for S. L. A. G., which was a very nicely decorated table with a display of several species and great interest was shown by the 300 - 400 members of the public who came to the Show. Terry had printed hand-out leaflets explaining our objects and giving Keith's address as Hon. Secretary for anyone keen enough to write to him asking for membership details. I was so tied up with Southend A. S. work on the Show results, etc., that I could only spend a few minutes (or was it seconds??) at the stand; anyway, many thanks to Terry and Bernard for a fine job. It is widely rumoured that that evening, after the Southend A. S. Show, an unofficial S. L. A. G. meeting took place, with a dozen or so members crowding into Terry Blackmore's fish-shed at Hawkwell!

Mervyn and Phill were at the Bristol Tropical Fish Club Show in April- Mervyn took Class T, and Phill, Breeders Livebearers, which was also judged Best Exhibit.

At Reading Open Show Ivan Dibble won 1st in Class T, with Colin Howe 2nd. Colin took Class NO-T (Pairs, Livebearers) with Ivan 2nd and 3rd and Ray Townsend 4th. Platies and Mollies were won by Tom Mayle and family. Terry Waller won the Furnished Aquaria class and I understand that the fishes were NOT Livebearers!!!!

Of course, at these and other shows our members are entering as members of their own local Societies which is only right. It is nice, however, to see that S. L. A. G. Members seem to be doing well in the Livebearer classes. I do not regard showing as the most important aspect of our hobby but it does bring Aquarists together who would not otherwise ever meet and, results so far this year do seem to indicate that SLAG Members have some good quality fishes. When you think that most of the Class T species are all descended from a few specimens brought in by Howard and others, this is quite an achievement.

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F. B. A. S. ASSEMBLY MEETING

The Federation held their second assembly for this year on the 2nd June.

The minutes were approved for the previous meeting and the council members read their quarterly reports.

At this moment in time there are 172 clubs affiliated to the FBAS, as opposed to 178 this time last year. There are 19 new societies affiliated including S. L. A. G.

It was mentioned that two clubs have had to cancel their open shows, those being Petersfield A. S. and Dorchester A. S.

There are a wide variety of booklets available from the

Federation and if anyone is interested in obtaining these please let me know.

One thing worth a quick mention is that Dave Cheswright was awarded a silver brooch by the Federation for achieving a total of 45 first place cards in open show competition, (congratulations)

This year, as many of you already know there is going to be a London Show at the Alexandra Palace. SLAG are going to put on a display. If there is anyone available between the 12th and 15th of July, to either build up or dismantle the display we would be grateful for your help.

PHILIP
MARTYN
SLAG
DELEGATE

BRACHYRAPHIS RHABDOPHORA

by Steven Manuel

Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora is one of the most attractive livebearers that have entered the country for some time. The original specimens were obtained by Mr. and Mrs, Renton of the N. G. L. S.

Of the stock they received there was only one female; all the populations throughout the country today are thought to have come from this one female.

My first encounter with this fish came in February of 1978 when a female was given to me by a friend. This was followed by an anxious few months trying to obtain a male, and I finally bought two at the Nailsea A.S. Open Show. These three fish were placed in a small (14" x 8" x 8") tank as a temporary home.

During this time I searched for information on them. I failed! As I treasured these fish I was taking no chances with them and I checked their tank daily. But by the time their larger tank was established the weaker male had died.

The new tank measured 30" x 12" x 15" and was furnished with several large pieces of coal, on which clumps of Java Moss grew. This plant is particularly useful where Gambusias are

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I proceeded to feed my other fish, only to find that my *Gambusia affinis holbrooki* had decided to have their young as well. The carpet received its second soaking of the day!

After I had finished admiring my new fry, which carried a few markings on the body and fins, it was time to give my fish their second meal of the day. To my surprise I found another ten "Brachy" fry,, swimming amongst the Hornwort, and these also were netted out and placed in the plastic tank. After this I checked the female to see if she was all right - and she didn't look any different! She and the male eagerly ate the live tubifex, and I went back to the fry.

From that date I marked off 30 days on the calendar: this is when I thought the next batch should arrive.

All went well for the next month, the fry grew well, and 31 days after the first batch, another 21 arrived. Again this was early in the morning, and again the female took nearly 5 hours to give birth. These fry were also placed in a plastic box. My first batch was now split into two tanks and had been fed on brine shrimp for the last day or two.

By late 1978 the fry were in a new tank similar to that of the adults. They were now feeding on ordinary food, and they grew well.

This continued until I had 5 batches of youngsters at different ages, the smallest brood being 8 and the largest 24. The final batch of 8 youngsters appeared to have had some kind of body deformity: there was a dent just behind the eyes. Ivan Dibble said he thought that it was caused by the young being chilled when young. This could have happened. At this time the original pair was placed into the same tank as the fry. Unfortunately they have now died.

In conclusion let me say that *B. rhabdophora* is a rewarding species if:

- (1) You have a supply of live food. I gave mine live tubifex twice a day, and daphnia and bloodworm when available. Vegetable matter is also appreciated.
- (2) You can give them a fairly large tank where the water is kept flowing, clean and well aerated.

The fry are fairly easy to raise, they are not as susceptible to the effects of cloudy water and the like as other fry are. The adults are

also hardy, I have seen pair kept in a tank 12" x 12" x 8", although I do not recommend this. Some aquarists have said that the males should be kept separately, but I have found this unnecessary, since I have only witnessed friendly spars which resulted in no serious injury or deaths.

At the moment I am looking for some more females and a few males, of another strain, to mix in with mine before they become weak through inbreeding.

I hope the foregoing has been helpful to some people keeping *Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora* at the present time.

Summary of *Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora*

Distribution: Costa Rica
size: Males 1¼"
females 2"
Food: Eagerly accepts all aquarium food. Prefers live tubifex, bloodworm and daphnia. Some vegetable matter necessary.
Gestation: 30 days
Colouration: Body olive in colour, with 8 to 10 red/brown vertical stripes. Caudal fin with yellow border, deeper in male. Anal fin in female black and yellow. Males gonopodium black. Dorsal marked with three to four rows of small stripes.
Remarks: Male *B. rhabdophora* when kept under optimum are some of the hardest driving males of all the species, and fertilisation presents little problem.
The females show no gravid spot, and when well fed their bodies do not become swollen to any extent during pregnancy.
The fry are hardy and present few problems.

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LETTERS.

Ynyshir, South Wales.

I have just received my copy of the newsletter from S.L.A.G., and see that you wanted some comments on certain species of live-

bearers which we brought back from Germany. The one I would like to comment on is *Jenynsia lineata* (the One-sided Livebearer). I have had another brood of these since Dave Cheswright's article, but I only managed to save 2 from the drop. The thing that interested me was that although the numbers of fry have been small, the size of the fry are about the biggest I have seen since I have been breeding livebearers. The males which I have move the gonopodia to the left when looking from behind, but with my young males, I cannot tell yet as they are not fully mature. The fry which I have seem to be coming out very well, and I have only lost one out of the thirty or so which I have at present.

M. Thomas.

Burnley, Lancashire.

Notes on new species:

- 1). *Xenophorus captivus*. Brought from Hamburg Botanical

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Gardens, October 1978. First fry born dead. Females left alone in tank when pregnant, broods of 24, 26, and 31 live fry obtained.

- 2). *Poeciliopsis viriosa*. A small fish brought from Germany, October, 1978.

Broods of about 14 every 2 to 3 weeks. Several males together "dominant", one has very dark colour while rest remain yellowish.

- 3) *Neoheterandria umbratilis* Brought from Germany October 1978, According to Jacobs this fish is almost indistinguishable from *Brachyraphis rhabdophora*, but it is in fact, completely different in shape and colour. We are informed that this species has been definitely confirmed in Germany and that Jacob's information on it is incorrect. I have found that if the fry are removed within 24 hours they develop swim bladder trouble. This may be due to the change of water from Germany to the U.K. Our water, in my area, is very soft and other members have not had these troubles in harder-water areas of the U.K. I find that "Amarillo" fry sex out as all males. I found that the Amarillos from Dave Cheswright which we took to Germany showed more black colour, the males going completely black, whereas mine show black fins only.

D. Hanns

(NOTE FROM CHAIRMAN: The Amarillo (*Limnurgus innorainatus*) does go completely black at times. I have many males which do but, to date, only one female. Normally the females show black only under belly but this one is, at present, blacker than any of my males)

Hawkwell,
Essex.

Personally I do not think the name of "Southern Livebearer Aquatic Group" is really the best name for our section of the hobby. I would prefer that this group be renamed as the "British Livebearer Aquatic Group"

I think it would be possible to alter the name before too much time, etc., is spent in producing headings showing the Group's present name.

Also I feel it is possible that another group may start a rival group with a completely different outlook to our own, e.g. as regards show rules etc. and any work now being done on species control would in my opinion go to waste.

I would like to hear other peoples' opinions as to whether they agree or disagree with my views. Perhaps a letter to the Editor of our magazine would be possible.

T. Blackmore

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Birmingham, 36

This means of course that the same few people get the better fish at each of these sales. Could I please, as a member of S.L.A.G., make a few suggestions._

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LETTERS (CONCLUDED)

EDITOR' S APOLOGY ! I regret that I cannot at this time print the important second part of Tom Mayle's letter as it has disappeared - temporally I hope - together with some of the notes which I needed for the following article. No doubt Tom Mayle will have some remarks to make in the next Journal ! In the meantime I have decided to carry on without the missing paragraphs to save further delay, J.H.P

THE PURPLE SPIKE-TAIL PLATY (Xiphophorus xiphidium)

(Part 2)

by Howard Preston

In the first Journal I described how in 1974, by following more or less the route taken by Dr. Myron Gordon many years previously, I collected two populations of *X. xiphidium*, one from the Rio Purificacion at El Barretal and the other from a tiny stream near the Rio Santa Engracia. As I have just recently re-visited this region, it seems appropriate to add a little more detail.

Coming south down the Pan-American Highway in 1979 we reached the Rio Purificacion at El Barretal with only about an hour's day-light left. The narrow main stream had completely changed its course within the wide river bed (probably several times during a 5-year period !), and I had to walk nearly half a mile to find a suitable small isolated pool, in this case only a couple of inches deep and a few feet across where at last I found the fish I wanted. I caught only a few fry (together with some baby Mollies); and at the time of writing, 3 months later, there are 5 survivors, in the possession of Dave Cheswright. It was disappointing not to find more Purple Plates, and I had had to work quite hard to get these !

Cd. Victoria where I stayed that night is a not unpleasant small city. New motels are still springing up, not cheap, and no doubt catering for the American tourist trade who are after the much larger fish to be caught in the lakes to the north-east! The coffee served at breakfast has certainly improved anyway !

At the height of the dry season, early in April, the Rio San Marcos flowing through the centre of Cd. Victoria was almost completely dry: possibly a few isolated pools within the wide river bed, but it was not very practical to explore for these in the city centre, where access was difficult if not embarrassing ! And there was really no need, for the fish I wanted could be found in several locations out a few miles to the north.

And on the next morning, I had the chance to prove this statement.

Returning north up the Pan-American Highway for just about 8 km. (5 miles), I spotted a small stream passing under the road. The exact distance and the name of the village will be found in my missing notes, however, it can be identified because it is

about 100 metres south of an "Inspeccion Fiscal" (which seems to be an obligatory stop for truck drivers). Here, after quite a long search, I captured 5 or 6 X. xiphidium, young and adult, but the story does not have a happy ending for most died within the next few days, some succumbing to gill parasites. The last one, back home in May this year, was developing into quite a nice male but died rather suddenly.

It may be concluded that Xiphophorus xiphidium is not a particularly rare species in the region around and to the north of Cd. Victoria in the State of 'Jamaulipas, but it may present problems for the aquarist !

(MORE TO FOLLOW)

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SPECIES CONTROL - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

by D. Kenwood

I hear that Mervyn Strange has now received most of the stock forms, albeit with scant information on most, from members which is an excellent sign that the Group is going to have the full backing of its members. I must admit that I was one of the slow ones and that I have only just returned mine. I hope mine was one of the genuine cases of having little time to sort things out. I have changed stock on a number of occasions, passing, all of one bloodline on to someone else and starting up again with what may be more satisfactory stock.

Prompted by the need for the declaration to be made to SLAG, I have now extracted this data and put it on to stock control cards, which will now be up-dated as I go along and will make it easy for me to extract the information I need in the future. Setting this up has probably been assisted by my office training with a very large National Insurance Brokers, and I appreciate that it may come as a little more of a problem to some other members who may rely principally upon memory. I am the first to admit that my memory is shocking, so everything I need is committed to paper, hence the fact that I have note books dating back to the time I started keeping fish in May 19 57. However, whatever your way of dealing with the problem, I hope that you will make an effort to see that your returns are made promptly when requested as it is essential to have your co-operation so that stocks of all species and variants may be maintained and members are able to trace different blood lines.

Species control must be the most unenviable of jobs in any of our specialist groups, and I feel that every member should do his/her utmost to assist Mervyn Strange with this difficult task. We have all been secretive in the past as far as our sources of fish is concerned and it may be difficult to get people to say where their fish came from because they do not want anyone else "spoiling their patch". Here we must help ourselves, the species controller must treat his returns as strictly confidential and only release the names of members holding stock of a certain species to another member genuinely seeking stock for one reason or another. He should not release to anyone the information on the stock lists he holds and should leave it to the member concerned how much he wants to divulge to the enquirer. This should keep our house in order and leave the onus upon the member.

We are in a very embryonic stage still with the fish we are collecting, even though some of us have been at it for years. We now have the floodgates open for the introduction of new species and races of fish and it is now, before we lose track of these that we should very carefully identify everything we have and which comes in. For this reason, I applaud what SLAG and NGLS are trying to do. We have the opportunity to pioneer this in our own field: why waste it.

We have amongst us some very new and sometimes very inexperienced members and it is very easy for them to be misguided by some of the literature available into making incorrect or haphazard identifications. Take the book "Livebearing Aquarium Fishes" by Kurt Jacobs as an example. At one time regarded as a principal guide, it now transpires that it contains some very misleading details and cross references - perhaps not through the author's fault, but through his use of information provided by previous authors who very often were referring to preserved specimens when making their descriptions and comparisons. Since it is not often practical to work from live specimens when making anatomical examinations, the person making the official description of a fish must have dead specimens available for dissection and microscopic examination. Authors making revisions of genera also have to use the preserved material of other authors. Since colours fade quickly in preserved specimens, one is left with a brownish yellow specimen with just black markings showing where there are any if formalin is the preservative, and a very much paler washed out specimen if preservation is done in alcohol -not the ideal thing to make a colour/colour pattern description from.

One of the other problems associated with identification of species, whether livebearers or others, is the fact that environmental influences have caused different races of the same species to evolve into quite distinct forms. All kinds of influences are involved; quality of water, light, content and availability of food, space, although probably the necessity to adapt to taking advantage of the available food supply plays the greatest role in changing the form of a fish which eventually, after millions of years, causes us to regard it as a separate species if it reproduces these characteristics in consecutive generations. Sometimes two different species will evolve along the same lines and create extremely similar looking fish superficially although anatomically different. Even sexual dimorphism has caused confusion in the past with males and females of the same species being described and named separately on many occasions.

With so many obstacles in our path, what can we do about it? Well, through the excellent work of some of our members, we have been fortunate enough to enlist the services of Herr Radda of Frankfurt and Mr. James Chambers of the British Natural History Museum, who are both willing to examine specimens available for identification. Their assistance has already been sought on the species known to us as *Poecilia ornata*, *P. versicolor* and *Cnesterodon carnegiei*. The results will be published by the Chairman in the Journal.

For the future, I suggest that any fish which is causing concern over identification, and any new unidentified fish, should be sent to either or both of these people as soon as there are sufficient stocks to allow. Arrangements for this should be done through the Chairman so that more than one member does not get in touch with them on the same subject and so cause confusion. This cooperation must surely be in our best interests.

Many members will be aware of my opinions on indiscriminate hybridisation. I agree that there is a time and a place for such experiments but they must be done under controlled conditions if the results are to be of any use at all and care should be taken not to pass the offspring on to anyone else not involved in the same experiments. Most of the hybrids cropping up are, however the result of either ignorance or carelessness. Hybrids are the most difficult fish of all to pin an identification on, since they can show characteristics of both parents as well as its own, so the investigator has a hotch-potch of data to try to match with his written data. This is in turn highly unlikely to include any notes on hybrids. It is obviously far easier to prove identity of a specimen if it is true to "type" than it is to prove it to be a hybrid and of which parents.

There is, therefore, a need for all of us to exercise extreme care in maintaining our stocks, and in segregating the species which are even remotely likely to cross breed. This is a message which I have been preaching for a long time now and I sincerely hope that members will now take notice and take every precaution possible to stop these "accidental" hybrids. It is surprisingly easy to slip up. I think I have been very lucky up to now, but I remember well that in 1975 I was sold some very young Blue Limias at Bournemouth Show, which produced *Poecilia vittata*/ *P. melanogaster* hybrids which in turn grew to colossal size. The cross could not have occurred in my tanks as I had no *P. vittata* then. So many times the obvious question is raised - "what can we keep together?". The answer is not an easy one. I have been asked many times by friends to tell them if it safe to keep certain species together, but I can only be reluctant to pass judgement despite many years of experience. A definite answer can only be given by an extremely competent person who has conducted considerable experiments, both natural and artificial, under controlled conditions to prove that two species were incapable of producing young from an inter - species mating whether natural or artificial.

True, the closer related the fish, the more likelihood there is of a cross. Species within one genus are therefore, highest on the list of probables. From there we have to consider related genera and this would require the acquisition of considerable knowledge of the whole family. Even armed with this information there is no guarantee of success or failure to cross bearing in mind that scientists are known to be at variance over the inclusion of some species in particular genera, or even the viability of some genera, and that relatively few experiments have been carried out in this field.

Many members, I know, are keeping species together which I would not risk, and this in the main is brought upon by the temptation to collect every available species without first giving enough consideration to the accommodation available. We must all have done this in our time I am sure and the danger is increasing daily with an influx of new species and new members. Probably it is incumbent upon the more experienced members of our Group to help the others, so I hope that those will come forward

According to the experts I have consulted it is more than improbable that a cross between the members of one family to another would produce young - in fact, there is no report of it ever having been done. So this gives us a little scope, although purely on the grounds of compatibility I would not mix any of the Goodieidae I have kept to date with any Hemirhamphidae.

I would not risk any of the Hemirhamphidae together.

The Poeciliidae are the biggest problem of all, being the largest and most complex family with somewhere near 140 known species. Where does one start?

On top of my list of "don'ts" must be not to keep together any fish known to be of the same genus. Therefore, no Mollies, Guppies, Limias or other *Poecilia* together, or, no Swordtails, Montezumae or Platies, etc., together. I am sure no one would keep the two members of the genus *Heterandria* together in any case ? - or would they !!!! !!

Poecilia species with *Xiphophorus* species (of those we have in this country to date)

Brachyrhaphis rhabdophora with *Poecilia* species/*Xiphophorus* species

Gambusia a. affinis with *Poecilia* species/*Xiphophorus* species

Poeciliopsis (5 & 10 spots) with *Xiphophorus* species

There are quite a few combinations above which could be of some help. It is seemingly a long list, but I have long since given up experimenting. The members of genera above can, of course, only cover those that have been in the country before last October (1978). All new fish must be watched. Probably there are many other combinations but I can only speak from experience. Whatever you do I urge you to think carefully if you really need to keep more than one species together.

Can I now come back to the variability of species, which I spoke about earlier: I would like to discuss this particular point in rather more depth. As I said, one species can vary considerably, according to the various influences placed upon it by its environment, etc. We are left then with various distinct races of a species each with its own genetic bank (I do not propose to go into a deep discussion

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It was established many years ago that different races of this species carry different colour genes, and by crossing the races and could release these genes from their ' ' control* and finish up with colours such as red and black becoming predominant, hence the ancestors of the modern colour varieties of the common aquarium Platy were born. Other Xiphophorus species have shown the same characteristics, so why not other genera?

Poecilia mexicana (sphenops) varies tremendously over its range and so do Poecilia reticulata and Heterandria bimaculata. In view of all the evidence I have unearthed, and backed up by the evidence unearthed by the British and American Killifish Associations in what is the closest related family to Poeciliidae, I am firmly of the opinion that when collections of any fish are made they should be "tagged" immediately with the area of collection so that enthusiasts are able to recognise the races easily and not mix them up which eventually produces a "cultivated" variety of little interest to the serious aquarist. The B.K.A. and A.K.A. the Catfish Association of Great Britain, the British Cichlid Association and the Germans have long since adopted this system and run it successfully. Its success does, of course, rely heavily on the support of those importing fish as well as enthusiasts in our ranks.

Can I therefore, urge everyone to make exhaustive efforts when obtaining new fish to establish the race, tag the fish immediately and very, very carefully to ensure that the race is maintained separately without mixing any other races or aquarium stock with it. The Group can pioneer this movement and set us up properly with genuine stock if we start right now. How about it?!!!!

THE ORIGIN OF THE FISH WE CALL CNESTERODON CARNEGIEI.

by Keith Dryden

This is an account of how the fish we now call *Cnesterodon carnegiei* arrived in the tanks of British livebearer fanciers.

It all started about four years ago, one evening at the local aquarium club, when Mac Mackay, who was judging the table show, mentioned that the previous day when he was at the wholesalers (Mac works in a pet Shop), he happened to look into a tank of Guppies which had only just come into the country. It struck him that there were about half a dozen small fish that, although they were livebearers, certainly weren't Guppies. Mac, realizing that they were something new, quickly put them into a polythene bag and took them home to his fish house. Anyway, Mac, knowing that I was a livebearer man, offered them to me.

A couple of days later I called round at John Pollard's house (John like Mac is a member of Kingston A.S., and John and Mac share a fish house in John's garden), to collect the fish and also try and identify them wishful thinking! I studied them and gave my opinion that they could be members of the genus *Poeciliopsis*, and Mac and John agreed with me, saying that they resembled members of that genus.

Anyway, I took the fish home with me: there were two males and four females. The females were about one inch in length but the tiny males were only about half that size. Luckily it wasn't too long before the females started dropping fry, in fact some of the smallest fry that I had ever seen from a livebearer!

About that time I was corresponding with Bob Purdy in Wales who.....

said they sounded interesting and could he have some, so I sent him a pair through the post, and after about a week he wrote to me saying that he thought they were "Girardinus falcatus", a fish commonly known as the Yellow Belly. This name stuck for a few months during which time I had sent them to various other aquarists, including M.Strange of Basingstoke, I. Dibble and D. Kenwood of Nailsea, M. Thomas in Wales, D. Hanns from Burnley, C. Howe of Newbury, T. Noronha of Orpington, also I sent some to H. Preston who X believe passed some over to D. Cheswright of Southend.

Now all these aquarists in turn probably spread them around, so you can begin to see how widespread they were becoming. In the meantime someone had "renamed" them as Quintana atrizona, and although we all now referred to them as Quintana, we weren't really sure. Then after about four or five months under the name 'Q. atrizona', someone, I can't think who, decided that they fitted the description of yet another livebearer called "Phallotorynus fasciolatus", so yet again we had another name for our fish! Till one day Mervyn Strange took one up to the British Museum where Jim Chambers did an examination of it and said that it was a "Cnesterodon", probably decemmaculatus.

Then, shortly after, and not knowing that Mervyn had had an identification on our fish, Dave Cheswright sent some to Jim Chambers who after a lengthy examination decided that they were in fact Cnesterodon carnegiei.

Truly a fish of many names!

REPORT OF MEETING 20th APRIL 1979 (CLEVEDON, AVON)

J. H. Preston

I'm not sure that I'm the best qualified to write about the April meeting. The problem was that I had to work (in Southend) until late afternoon, so the only way I could attend was to pay a small fortune to British Rail and hope that all their trains would run on time. It is only fair to add that they did! It was a pleasant enough journey westwards from Paddington on this sunny April evening; the buffet car was closed (but there was ample compensation later), and at 7.53 p.m. I arrived in the wilds of

Yatton long ago deprived of its Clevedon line by Dr. Beeching. Due to a misunderstanding, it took me quite a while to track down a taxi, so I eventually arrived at the Highcliff Hotel half-way through John Dawes' illustrated lecture.

This was by any standards a most successful meeting, with I think about 44 members present, including 4 from West Germany, and representatives from Liverpool, Burnley, Kirkcaldy, Birmingham, etc. A very good showing! The Table Show, however-, was hardly supported.

Following John's talk, there was a break, and then Manfred Meyer spoke and showed us many of his slides. The meeting was concluded with the customary auction of rare and not so rare live-bearers. Afterwards, a good number of members accepted the invitation to go back to 11 Strode Road where Ivan and the Dibbles had laid on a veritable banquet. The food and the drink and the discussions lasted until until the small hours of the morning. Certain members, including myself and Dave Cheswright, stayed at Ivan's and the next day, Saturday 21st, visited Mike Thomas and family in south Wales, which was a pleasant and interesting bonus to the meeting the night before.

All this augurs well for the future of S.L.A.G.

J.H.P