

Livebearer News

Official Members Magazine of the
BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



Issue 79

September

2024

CONTENTS:

Page 1: Front cover

Page 2: Contents, Data Protection Act, Committee.

Page 3 Editorial

Page 3: Snippets & Musings from the fish room.

Page 6: Now, about the Merry Widow (*Phallichthys amates*) by *Dan Fromm*

Page 11: My experiences with *Hubbsina turneri* by *Kees de Jong*

Page 14: The red-fin *Priapella* By *Derek Lambert*

Page 20: A slightly higher temperature for *Quintana atrizona* by *Kees de Jong*

Page 23: Diary dates

Data Protection Act:

In order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, we need to inform members that their name, address, email address and telephone number are being maintained on a database, the purpose of which is for the distribution of the Association's magazine and to inform members of forthcoming events. This information will not be provided to any other organisation for any purpose whatsoever without prior consultation. The association agrees to remove any details at a member's request.

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Editorial

I must start this editorial by once again thanking Kees de Jong and Dan Fromm. Kees has been hugely helpful, sending me a number of articles to use, and Dan has both sent me an article and has done the sub-editing job, making the newsletter look much more professional. So thanks again, both of you.

In my previous editorial I asked the question: "When did you last see a Merry Widow, *Phallichthys amates*"? I haven't seen them in an aquarium store, not even my favourite one in Lancashire, in many years and they haven't turned up in a BLA auction in all the time that I have been involved in them. It turns out that Dan keeps them and has done for many years since collecting them himself. [I just love coincidences like that.] However, Dan is in the USA so I am still not aware of any in the UK.

The members of the BLA committee would like the BLA to be more involved in fish conservation but that is not easy when we don't even know what is out there. So how would you feel if I, or any other member of the committee, got in touch with you to ask which livebearers you are keeping? In the past when we have just put out an appeal for the members to tell us which species they are keeping the result has been mostly silence. So would you find it intrusive? A chore? Or would you be happy to be involved? I would love to hear your thoughts on this one.

And still on the theme of conservation – did you know that Chester Zoo Aquarium is to close? It is true that the building is very old and a bit "rickety" but even so this is bad news. They keep and breed a number of fish species which are highly endangered or extinct in the wild. There are no plans to build a new aquarium. What a shame. I have been behind the scenes there a few times and the efforts the staff make are impressive. I have exchanged emails with Becky, my contact there, and she assures me that the staff's jobs are safe and that the fish will go to other institutions but I still wish that the Zoo's management would think again. Another reason for us in the BLA to step up our efforts.

Snippets & Musings

1. I always enjoy BLA meetings. I enjoyed last year's meeting and auction in Carlisle and I enjoyed this year's meeting just as much. The venue is ideal, just a few minutes off the M6 and with tea, coffee, soft drinks and alcoholic ones available. No food this year, unfortunately, but it should be back on for next year. The number of attendees was slightly down from last year, but still over fifty, and with plenty who had travelled down from Scotland. Once again, several of the Scottish guys made a point of thanking the BLA for putting on the event.

The auction was interesting. Livebearing species included *Characodon lateralis* "Los Berros", *Skiffia* sp "V188 Sayula", *Limia nigrofasciata*, *L. islai*, *L. tridens*, *L. grossidens*, *L. melanonotata* & *L. melanogaster*, *Allophorus robustus*, *Neoheterandria elegans*, *Girardinus metallicus*, *Chapalichthys pardalis*, *Xenotoca doadrioi*, *Ilyodon furcidens*, *Jenynsia onca*, *Zoogoneticus tequila*, *Ameca splendens*, *Alfaro cultratus*, *Xiphophorus xiphidum*, *X. evelynae*, *X. andersi*, *X. clemenciae*, *X. continens*, *X. montezumae*, *X. pygmaeus*, *X. helleri* [various different

varieties, both wild and cultivated], *X. variatus*, *X. malinche* and *X. milleri*. There were also lots of guppies, Endlers and other cultivated livebearers.

The top price paid was £110 for a bag of three pairs of *Xiphophorus pygmaeus* of the blue form, which is now rarely seen as almost all of the ones in the hobby seem to be of the gold form.

2. I have never been a big fan of halfbeaks and I suspect that goes for most BLA members too, as we hardly ever see them at BLA events. However, they are livebearers and maybe we should pay them more attention ...

Markéta Rejlková works with livebearers at the zoo in Ostrava, Czech Republic and started the *Xiphophorus* Working Group. As part of her job, she recently visited Sulawesi. Below is part of her most recent email to me:

During my last trip, I only visited two lakes and saw 2 species of halfbeaks: *Nomorhamphus towoetii* and *N. weberi*. There were no introduced livebearers, but during my previous trip in May to Lake Poso, I spotted some guppies in fish ponds around the lake (where *Nomorhamphus celebensis* is abundant). They were also found in the lake previously, but I don't think they can spread there, the conditions are not really easy for a guppy (strong currents and waves).

There are also guppies in the legendary spring pool Tilanga, which so far is the only confirmed location of *Oryzias everisi* – see this: <https://sulawesikeepers.org/the-pelvic-brooding-ricefish-oryzias-everisi-hardly-known=and-already-lost/>

After two visits in 2022 and 2023, I can conclude that the ricefish is extinct due to pollution and guppies. I have seen them harassing the (very last) individuals of ricefish ... so sad. *Nomorhamphus rex* also lives there and is still doing well.

Oh no, I have forgotten another halfbeak we observed in Maros area near Makassar, SW Sulawesi. It is difficult to tell apart the riverine species, and we did not try to catch it, just made an underwater video.

Thanks Markéta, and I would love to hear more of your trips to Sulawesi, even though the news about the fish and other water-living species there is often bad.

3. I have recently received my copy of “*Viviparos*”, the magazine of the German livebearer society, the VDA. And very professional and impressive it is too. And there on the front cover is a photo of the attendees at the most recent VDA meeting – including our own Dave Mac and his partner Linda!

4. At the Carlisle event I overheard two gentlemen discussing joining the BLA. They decided that at “twenty-odd pounds” it is far too expensive to be worth joining! I just wish that I had butted into their conversation to point out that membership is actually just £6. Pass the word around if you get a chance, please.

Musings from the fish room

1. I like to transfer gravid females to small tanks with lots of rounded stones and some Java moss in them to give places for fry to hide. After the warm weather, all my small tanks were occupied with fry and I had lots more fry in plastic boxes on the floor. So I left three heavily gravid female *Skiffia* sp “Sayula” in the main tank when I went away for two nights, whilst crossing my fingers. That didn’t work! One female was dead and the other two had dropped with no fry surviving. Much cursing! And then my biggest female *Characodon lateralis* “Los Beros” did the same with no fry surviving. More cursing! And then my female *Characodon audax* “El Toboso” [Black Prince] DID drop in a small tank but only four fry, and one of those was dead and another a “belly slider”. It is getting increasingly difficult to keep this species going – is this the result of being in captivity for too long and too much in-breeding? What do you think? I would love to hear.

2. I owe BLA stalwart Nigel my thanks. I run twenty tanks and use a pond air pump and a “ring main” to supply air to the tanks. The piping was 20mm white “Overflow” tubing and the joints kept blowing apart and I had to use two pumps to get enough pressure to supply all the tanks and the plastic boxes on the floor need even more smaller pumps. All contributing to the electricity bill. So when I was complaining to Nigel about this he just said “Switch to the 40mm tubing”. And earlier this year I finally got around to doing so – and it worked. I now only need one pump for the whole room. So thanks Nigel, and get well soon. Oh, and he suggested the screw-in valves that I am now using.



3. I had an email from my friend and BLA member Brian Dent explaining that he was not getting any fry from his *Xenotoca doadrioi* [San Marcos Redtail splitfin]. And when I thought about it – neither am I. For months, if not the last couple of years, they were dropping plenty of fry but I haven’t seen any for the last two or three months. Several of the females have been gravid but I didn’t separate them out to give birth as I was confident that they leave their fry alone. So what has been going

on? Have the fry just been dying? Or have I got a rogue fish which doesn't obey the rules and predares the fry? What do you think? If you are keeping and breeding this species with no trouble then please let me (and Brian) know what the secret is.

[Gratuitous suggestion from the sub-editor: please see Paul Loiselle's article "The Tricolor Splitfin, *Xenotoca doadrioi* Dominguez, Bernal-Zuñiga and Piller 2016" in LN 74.]

Now, about the Merry Widow (*Phallichthys amates*)

By Dan Fromm



Very poor cell phone picture of a pair of *Phallichthys amates* by Dan Fromm

In Livebearer Notes #78 Greg Roebuck, the editor, asked:

When did you last see a Merry Widow, *Phallichthys amates*? I haven't seen one in years, either in an aquarium shop or at one of the BLA auctions. Are there any left in the UK? Does anyone know? Are they threatened in the wild?

This prompted me to think about the fish, which I've kept off-and-on since 1973 when I first collected it in Costa Rica. I've collected Merry Widows in Nicaragua,

Costa Rica and Panama, now have two tanks of Panamanian fish whose ancestors my wife and I collected in Panama in 2002.

To answer Greg's questions,

I last saw a Merry Widow a few minutes ago.

I can find no sign – a Google search for “*Phallichthys amates*” restricted to information put up in the last year found no offers to sell or keepers' reports – of captive specimens anywhere. Even so, mine can't be the only ones in the U.S. I've distributed Merry Widows off-and-on for decades.

It is not threatened in the wild.

Although the Merry Widow is rare in the pet trade and now seems to be a specialist's fish, I've always seen it as one of the hobby's great classic poeciliids. It is perky, easily kept and bred. I find it very appealing.

Side comment: That Google search made it clear that the two dwarf *Phallichthys*, *P. tico* and *P. quadripunctatus*, are somewhat in vogue and are regularly offered, at least in the U.S.

A great classic poeciliid, but when?

When I was a very young aquarist my introduction to the aquarium literature was W. T. Innes' *Exotic Aquarium Fishes*. In 1956, when I was finally old enough to be allowed access to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's stacks, I read through every edition of *Exotic Aquarium Fishes* the library held, starting with the first, published in 1935. They all had text about *Phallichthys isthmensis* and a photo of a male. So the fish has been known in the U.S. since the 1930s.

Known, for sure, but I don't remember seeing a Merry Widow before I collected some in Costa Rica in 1973. Mind you, until I started collecting fish in the tropics I wasn't particularly interested in livebearers in general and wasn't very aware of any but guppies, mollies, platies, swordtails and the occasional *Gambusia*. If Merry Widows were offered in any of the pet stores I visited back then I could easily have overlooked them.

Sterba (1966) says that *P. amates* was first kept in Germany in 1936, *P. pittieri* in 1906. Meyer, Wischnath and Foerster (1985) give the same dates.

***Phallichthys amates*' taxonomic history is slightly tangled:**

P. amates was first described by Miller (1907) as *Poecilia amates* from specimens collected in the Motagua drainage of Guatemala. Meek (1912) later described specimens collected from the Reventazón drainage in Costa Rica as *Poecilia pittieri*. The scientific community now sees these two as just one species, *Phallichthys amates*, but some hobbyists and traders still regard *P. pittieri* as a subspecies of *P. amates*.

Regan (1913) described it again as *Poeciliopsis isthmensis* from specimens provided by the German aquarist A. Rachow. The collection locality that Rachow delivered

with the specimens was Colón, Panama. This is a mistake of a type common in the aquarium fish trade in the early twentieth century.

P. amates goes no farther east in Panama than eastern Bocas del Toro province. I've seen one fish that had been collected in Colón province catalogued in the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute fish collection as *Phallichthys amates*. It was a male *Poecilia* (*Mollienesia*), probably *P. gillii*. The catalogue entry has been corrected. Hubbs (1924) described the genus *Phallichthys*, using Regan's *P. isthmensis* as the type species. He remarked that " *Poeciliopsis isthmensis* Panama and *Poecilia pittieri* Meek from Costa Rica are probably identical with *Poeciliopsis amates* Miller, from Guatemala and Honduras." And there we are.

Distribution:

P. amates has an enormous distribution. It occurs throughout the Caribbean side of Central America from Guatemala at least to the Río Cricamola in eastern Bocas del Toro, Panamá. Although short-finned Mollies occur from México to Panamá to The Netherlands' ABC islands and to Trinidad, apparently no Molly species is present from Guatemala to Panamá. This prompts the thought that the fishes seen as *P. amates* could be a group of cryptic species.

However, unpublished work I did with Glen Collier, then a geneticist at the University of Tulsa, makes me think that, improbably large distribution notwithstanding, *P. amates* is one species. Our data are not as complete as I'd like – Glen sequenced mitochondrial genes from specimens my wife and I collected across the fish's range from the San Juan drainage of Costa Rica and Nicaragua to the Río Cricamola in Panamá – but the genes we have (~ 1,100 bp of cytochrome B, 12S and 16S) show that across that area *P. amates* is hardly differentiated. There seems to be just one big breeding population in Costa Rica and Panamá. In this respect it is very different from the other Costa Rican and Panamanian poeciliids for which Glen and I have data.

A few other Caribbean slope poeciliids have similar distributions in Costa Rica and Panama but don't go farther north. *Brachyrhaphis parismina* and the very closely related *B. cascajalensis* are one example. We have material for them from some distance east of the Panama Canal almost to the San Juan. *Priapichthys annectens* (broad sense) occurs from at least as far east in Panamá as the Río Guarumo to the San Juan drainage. We have material over that range. *Alfaro cultratus* has a broader distribution still, from the Río Cricamola up to the Río Prinzapolka in Nicaragua. We have it from the Cricamola to the San Juan. On the mitochondrial genes that Glen sequenced, these fishes have diverged across Costa Rica and Panama. *P. amates* has not.

I believe that the dividing line between northern populations sometimes identified as *P. amates amates* and southern populations sometimes identified as *P. amates pittieri* is the Río Prinzapolka of Nicaragua. The Prinzapolka divides other genera. For example, *Alfaro huberi* occurs north of it while *A. cultratus* occurs south of it and goes as far into Panamá as *P. amates*.

I've looked in GenBank for *P. amates* sequences from north of the Prinzapolka, found none. I found, however, cytochrome oxidase I sequences for Merry Widows from Río El Guineo, a south bank afferent of the Prinzapolka; Río El Valencia, an afferent of Lake Nicaragua; and Quebrada Alto de Tigre in Bocas del Toro. GenBank accession

numbers are MG496190, MG496189 and MG937096 respectively. The three sequences are identical. This is consistent with and extends my and Glen's results. It says nothing, though, about the northern population of *P. amates*.

My first Merry Widows:

I went to Costa Rica in 1973 to visit a friend of the family and to try to collect fish for my aquaria. Not knowing better, I used a 4 foot (~1.25 m) cotton seine with ¼" inch (~6 mm) mesh to catch fish. Since then I've learned about nylon seines, which are much more durable. I set the 4 footer I used in CR up with a broomstick at each end. In some situations it was, in effect, a gigantic dip net.

I published an account of the trip and the fish I captured in my local aquarium society bulletin (Fromm 1974, subsequently reprinted elsewhere). Here's a lightly edited version of my 1974 report on collecting and keeping Merry Widows. My 2024 comments are in square brackets:

I collected a number of specimens of *Phallichthys amates* (Merry Widow) in streams near Florencia [Río San Juan drainage]. The largest ones, a few females nearly two inches [5 cm] long, came from a pool in a swift, cool, and very clear stream that was free of vegetation. The Merry Widows stayed close to the banks. *Astyanax*, *Melaniris* (the local silverside) and a *Cichlasoma* that was probably *C. tuba* [now *Tomocichla tuba* and that's what I saw] were in the same pool but tended to stay out in the current. I collected smaller Merry Widows at two other sites. The first was in about five feet [1.5 m] of water in a small, muddy river. The fish were at the surface in a quiet, reedy backwater. The second was in a drainage ditch. The fish stayed at the surface, and oriented into the current. This made it very easy to catch them by slipping up on them from behind, slipping the net under them, and then lifting it up. In the net Merry Widows could be recognized instantly by the vertical black bar through the eye.

After I got the fish home (they survived shipping very well) this black bar had faded out. Like so many other markings on fish, it vanishes when the fish are kept in well-lit tanks with light bottoms, and returns when the fish are kept in dark surroundings. When the fish are kept in dark surroundings, they develop a nice white (outermost) and black edging on the dorsal fin, a number of faint vertical bars, and in addition the soft tissue between the rays in the male's tail and dorsal fins turns dark when the fish is happy or excited. Merry Widows normally carry themselves very erectly. This, combined with their pleasing shape (they are built much like *Xiphophorus maculatus*), makes them very attractive in spite of their lack of bright colours and bold markings,

I have found Merry Widows quite easy to keep. Columbus, Ohio tap water [~330 ppm TDS, pH as high as 11 out of the tap, my tanks ran lower] suits them. They are omnivorous, but apparently require vegetable matter; mine constantly crop the *Riccia* in their tank. The food they like best of all is, of course, their own young. In situ rearing of the young is possible, however. All that it takes is some dither fry that the adult Merry Widows can't catch. Also, litters can be quite small. A confined female produced ten (10! Shocking! Disgraceful!) fry. Honest. No kidding. They can produce fair numbers of fry (40-50). The young are quite easy to raise, and are very, very cute. They show the vertical bar through the eyes, and their dorsal and anal fins are a fine iridescent green over velvety black.

The Merry Widows I have now:

My current colony, founders collected near Almirante, Panama in 2002, haven't read my 1974 report and I'm not going to show it to them. They might get ideas about what they should eat. They've done very well on prepared food (Aquarian flake, TetraMin Tropical Flakes). I flock breed them; enough fry survive to keep their tanks overcrowded. Cherry Hill tap water (~ 130 ppm TDS, my tanks run slightly alkaline) suits them. My fish room temperature varies seasonally. ~ 70 °F/21 °C in summer when the air conditioner runs to ~ 80 °F/27 °C in winter when the furnace runs.

We collected the colony's founders from a shallow brook (~1'/30 cm deep, ~ 15'/4.5 m across) with clear water, moderate current, substrate leaf litter and gravel. This is typical Merry Widow habitat in Bocas de Toro Province, Panama but they also occur in marshes. When we caught them, we didn't really want to have Merry Widows again, but they were so lovely I just had to keep some. I'm glad I did.

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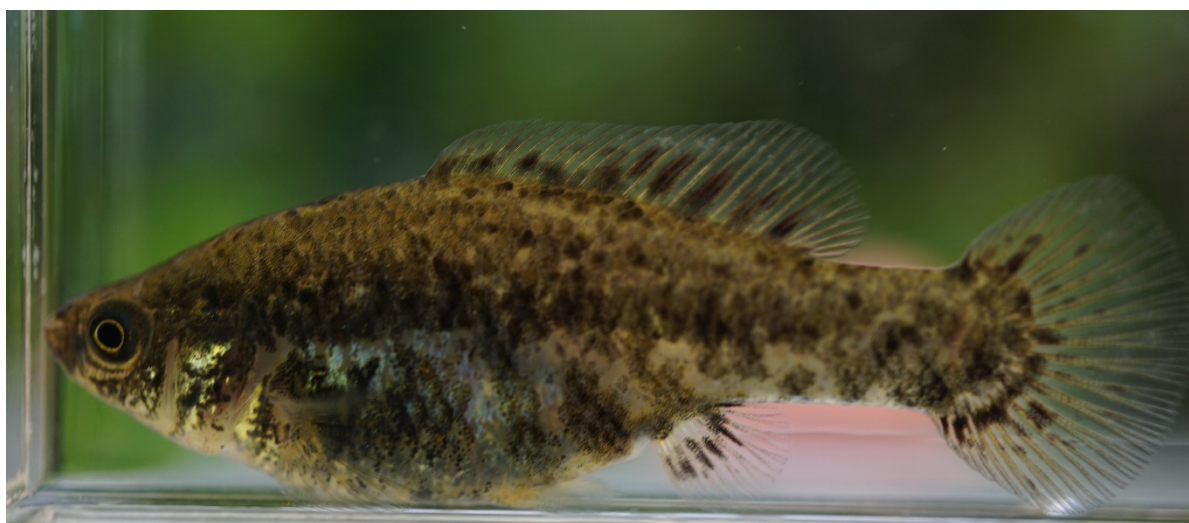
My experiences with *Hubbsina turneri*

Text and photos by *Kees de Jong*



A male of *Hubbsina turneri* with the characteristic broad dorsal fin. The intensity of the spot pattern may vary from time to time.

It has been about forty years since I got my first Goodeids. At that time, not much was known about this group of viviparous fish in the Netherlands. Only a few species had been introduced to the hobby. Within Poecilia Nederland we were able to obtain Goodeids, which we then usually called “highland carp”, from the collection of A.C. Radda through then Chairman J. Vente. However, a number of types of goodeid remained unknown to me for a long time. One of these unknown species was *Hubbsina turneri*, described by De Buen in 1941.



A female. The females are stockier and have a slightly smaller dorsal fin.

The most striking feature of *H. turneri* is its broad dorsal fin. The brown body is covered with dark spots. The males are slimmer and remain slightly smaller than the females. The habitat of the species in Central Mexico has decreased sharply. The species is now only found in Lake Zacapu and some small watersheds nearby, such as those found near the village of Jesus Maria. The first time that I came into possession of live specimens of *H. turneri* was during the trip I made to Central Mexico in 2000. We then caught the species in Lake Zacapu. I took a group of these fish home with me and by breeding these fish I could also make other enthusiasts happy. At some point I got rid of the species. Unfortunately, the species disappeared from the hobby



again and some later imports proved unable to survive in the aquarium. That is why I went on a targeted search for *H. turneri* in Lake Zacapu during my trip in 2023. That worked and I was able to collect a group of 12 small fish with a length of around 3 centimeters. I took this group home with me.

I put the group in an aquarium of 40 x 30 x 50 cm (l x h x d). In the aquarium I shaped hiding places in the form of small flower pots and plants. *H. turneri* is nocturnal and does not feel happy in a brightly lit aquarium. We then caught the species in Lake Zacapu. In nature, the species lives among plants and tree roots. The fish are not always easy to see. Providing good shelters where light does not penetrate is therefore necessary.

A small stream near the town of Jesus Maria in the Mexican state of Michoacan. This stream flows in to Lake Zacapu. *H. turneri* also lives here.



The temperature should be comparable to that in their natural habitat. Here the temperature during the year is between 18 and 21°C. At a lower temperature the fish are less active. A higher temperature is not a problem

temporarily, but is fatal over a longer period of time.

In nature, amphipods (*Hyaella* spp.) are the main component of the fishes' diet. Other small aquatic animals are also eaten. In the aquarium, *H. turneri* likes to eat live food. Water fleas (*Daphnia*) and cyclops suit the species well, but if these are not present, other live food is also suitable. Frozen food is also eaten. Red mosquito larvae are especially popular. So far, I have not been able to get the species used to any dried food. The species lives near the bottom and when feeding they also emerge during the day. As a nocturnal species, they may swim greater distances at night.

Lake Zacapu consists of a number of springs and *H. turneri* lives there in clean and clear water. I change about 50% of the water twice a week. I also do this because I keep the species in a relatively small aquarium and feed the species well, which means that pollution can occur quickly.



A young fish of a few days old looking for food. The trophotaenia have already disappeared.

If I take the above into account, breeding does not cause any problems for me. I regularly see fry swimming in the aquarium. These often stay higher in the aquarium than the larger fish. It is not necessary to separate gravid females. In an aquarium with sufficient hiding places, there will always be a number of youngsters left. The young can immediately be fed with water fleas, Cyclops and artemia naupli [baby brine shrimp].

I hope this information is useful to people who would like to keep this interesting species. The species is less difficult than always assumed, but it does require some attention.

Literature cited:

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The red-fin *Priapella*

By Derek Lambert

[Editor's note – Before she died, Pat Lambert, Derek's mother, gave me permission to use any of Derek's articles that had appeared in the magazine "*Aquarist and Pondkeeper*", now long-since defunct. This article appeared in the November 1991 edition of "*Aquarist and Pondkeeper*". The article was introduced with the line below.]

Derek Lambert of Viviparous – The Livebearer Information Service, introduces a new and very attractive livebearer from a fast-flowing river in Mexico.

In 1990, a new species of *Priapella* was described by Manfred K. Meyer (from Germany) and Hector Espinoza Pérez (from Mexico). It had originally been found by Hector Espinoza Pérez and P. Fuentes in the Rio Agua Fria, 300 metres north of Laguna Escondida, Los Tuxtlas, Veracruz, Mexico. This collection was made on 13 June 1985 and was followed by another made in in 1986 (same collectors) in Laguna Escondida itself.

In 1987, the new species was also found by Manfred K. Meyer, together with E. Muller and A. Martinsen who collected in the Rio de la Palma, about 10km NNW of Sontecomapan, 25km NNE of Lake Catemaco, Veracruz, Mexico. It is from this last collection that the new species was described, with paratypes being drawn from the previous two collections. The species was named after the Olmec Indians who lived in this area of Veracruz, Mexico before the Spanish came.

Essential details:

Nearest relative:

Priapella olmecae is most closely related to the very rare *Priapella bonita* which is referred to as its sibling species. The new species has a larger number of dorsal fin rays and a smaller number of gill rakers of the first arch.

Males of *Priapella olmecae* are also very much deeper in the body than *Priapella bonita*. *P. bonita* is now thought to be endangered in the wild owing to its limited range, habitat destruction and exotic species introductions. This status is borne out by the fact that *Priapella bonita* has not been collected by aquarists for a number of years now despite regular searches of its known habitats.

The search for *P. bonita* goes on, though, with another collecting trip by Viviparous members planned for 1992. Since the rediscovery of the Opal Bumble Bee Goodeid – *Allotoca maculata* Smith and Miller, 1980 – in 1990, after ten years of fruitless searching, anything seems possible. [Sub-editor's comment: IUCN now regards it as extinct in the wild.]



Priapella intermedia, as the name suggests, has a “shallower” body than *P. compressa*. It also lacks the orange edge to the dorsal fin possessed by the new species.

Location:

The Rio do la Palma is a fairly shallow river averaging approximately 1m (ca 39 in) in depth at the collection site and between 2 to 6m in width (ca6.5 – 19.5 ft). It is fast-flowing and has a pH of about 7.8 to 8.0 and a temperature between 21°C and 28 °C (ca 70 – 82 °F). The Rio Agua Fria is approximately 3 to 5m (9.8 – 16.4ft) wide and 0.3 to 0.7m (12in – 27.5in) deep. At both these locations the new species was found with *Heterandria* (now *Pseudoxiphophorus*) *bimaculata* (Two-spot livebearer), *Xiphophorus helleri* (Swordtail), *Poecilia mexicana*, and *Astyanax* sp.



The collecting site, Rio de la Palma, looking upstream. Photo: Arthur Frisby
First live specimens:

The 1987 collection also yielded some live specimens for aquarists to work with. The first of these made their way to the UK with Ivan Dibble, the International Species

Liaison Officer of Viviparous, in that same year. These proved difficult to adapt to aquarium conditions, but enough fry were obtained to keep the species going.

Further collections in 1988 (Vernon, Geog and Martinsen) and 1990 (Vernon and Frisby) provided extra stock, but this is still a very rare species within the hobby.

Coloration:

The new species of *Priapella* is by far and away the most attractive of the genus so far seen in aquaria. In the wild, the body is a lovely sky blue with an intensely blue iris to the eye.

All the unpaired fins are orange to red and it was this colour that gave rise to the common name of Red Fin Priapaella. Unfortunately, as so often happens, the wild colouration fades in the aquarium, but the orange is still present in the dorsal and caudal fins to some extent, as is the blue body coloration when the fish is seen in sunlight.



The new species – the Red Fin *Priapella* (*Priapella olmecae*). Note the orange edge to the dorsal fin. Photo: *Derek Lambert*



Priapella compressa - note the yellow on the posterior half of the body, plus the deeper body. Photo: *Derek Lambert*

Problem genus:

The *Priapella* genus as a whole has proven something of a problem to maintain in the aquarium hobby. In general, they require large, well-filtered tanks with plenty of swimming room. This mimics the wild habitat of fast-flowing rivers which all members of the genus have been found in.

Diet does not seem to present too many difficulties as they will eat just about anything that comes their way, providing it is either at the surface or sinking in the water. Once it gets to the bottom of the tank they lose interest in it.

The real problem seems to stem from trying to save the babies. Females will not suffer being confined in a small trap, or even a small tank with lots of plants in it, for more than a day or two.

Since the females do not have a gravid spot, it is very difficult to tell when they are ready to drop fry, and if they do drop fry in their colony tank, the other inmates hunt down and eat them as soon as they see them. All in all, this is a difficult problem to solve.

Possible strategies:

Several different strategies have been adopted to get over this difficulty. The one which I prefer, but have never had much luck with, is a large tank with very thick plant cover at the surface but clear swimming room below. This only works if the fish are heavily fed with live food and the plant growth at the surface is very dense.

Another method is to watch the female very closely and, when she drops a brood of fry, make a note of the date. About 25 days later, take the female out and place her in a small tank with plenty of plants in it. The babies should be born within five days. This works but puts the female under some stress, which can result in premature birth of the babies or the death of the female.

Another method which I have seen work quite well is to suspend a wide-mesh net in a large tank with power filtration. The female lives in the net until the fry are born, after which she is returned to her normal tank. Whichever method is adopted, large-scale production of fry has so far proven very difficult and most breeders have been happy just to keep the species going.

Both *Priapella compressa* and *P. intermedia* have proven very successful on the show bench, but they often disappear after just one or two shows. The reason for this is that exhibitors take their fish to and from the show in the show tank. Both these species have very soft mouth-parts and they are damaged by this rough treatment. Fungus sets in and the fish is lost. This can easily be prevented, however, by taking the fish to the show in a polythene bag and then placing it in its show tank. It requires a little more time and effort, but the fish will look better and live longer for it.

Acknowledgement: I am grateful to Manfred Meyer for sending me a copy of his latest paper. My thanks also go to Colin Vernon and Arthur Frisby for photographs and information about the natural habitat of this species



Looking downstream, the fast-flowing nature of the Rio de la Palma can be appreciated. Photo:- Arthur Frisby



Two other species found at the same locality: *Poecilia Mexicana* (the largest fish – a molly) and *Heterandria* (now *Pseudoxiphophorus*) *bimaculata* (the two-spot livebearer).

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A slightly higher temperature for *Quintana atrizona*

By Kees de Jong

I have already written a number of pieces about the glass-toothed carp (*Quintana atrizona*). The first time was in 1990 and the last time it was a leaf in the atlas of Poecilia Nederlands. As indicated in those articles, this is a smaller viviparous tooth-carp that can easily be kept in a species-specific aquarium. The drawing is simple. The most striking feature is the small black stripes. The males are significantly smaller than the females. They are often very small. In my memory, the males can grow somewhat larger than the size that we see in today's examples. The species likes to live among plants. All types of smaller food are eaten well. The glass-toothed carp is easy to keep. Breeding usually proceeds without any problems. That is a good thing because the species has not been found in its natural habitat in Cuba for years and it appears to be extinct.

I kept the species for years without any problems, but at a certain point the young stopped coming. The adult fish looked healthy and lively. The trick of putting them in another aquarium didn't work either. I passed them on to Cok van Putten, but he also no longer bred the species.

In the autumn of 2023, Kay Urban gave me a nice group of this fish at the VDA meeting in Leipzig. I immediately gave this group their own aquarium with a water temperature of 23 °C. The fish adapted quickly and seemed to feel very comfortable in this aquarium. A large bunch of Java moss provided shelter and the many small creatures which live in it were an excellent addition to the menu.

Unfortunately, I didn't have a male. I heard from Arjan de Graaf that he only had young when he had raised the temperature to 28 °C. I did that then too. By the way, it is an approach I used more often in the past but haven't used lately. This turned out to be the solution. Soon I saw small fry swimming near the bottom. Apparently growing at a slightly lower temperature doesn't work. Now I have to decide whether I will lower the temperature for a while to give the species some rest.

In any case, I now have youngsters from *Quintana atrizona* again. They grow well so I hope to be able to make someone happy again soon with this nice strain. Cok will be the first to get some.







Diary dates

And of course it is the main event of the year, the BLA Autumn Convention.

When? Saturday 21st September and Sunday 22nd September.

[Though at least a dozen of us are travelling there on Friday 20th to get set up, meet up, have a meal together and socialize.]

Where? Shenstone Village Hall,
Barnes Lane,
Shenstone (Near Lichfield),
WS14 0LT

The site is just a few minutes from the motorway system and easy to find, with ample parking. There is also a pub / restaurant next door with even more parking.

What? Sales tables, a livebearer show, a guppy show, talks, a Q & A session with a panel of experts and, of course, the auction. This takes place on the Sunday. Keep an eye on the BLA website to know which species are going to be in the auction.

On the Saturday?

Free entry! And a chance to see some of the best fancy guppies (in the show) and some very nice wild-type livebearers in their own show. Last year's entries were simply stunning. If you think that your own fancy guppies are good, well, bring them to the show to see how they get on when judged by an expert guppy keeper and breeder!

And what would you like to ask our panel of experts? Between them they have kept and bred hundreds of different livebearers, many of them highly endangered or extinct in the wild. For the last couple of years I have had to think up the questions myself, so some help in this area would be appreciated.

Bargains?

Oh yes. But a lot of the best stuff on the sales tables sells on the Saturday so if you want to buy something better be early.

And the auction on the Sunday?

Yes. You will need to submit your auction list to our Chairman, Steve Oliver, in advance. We are aiming to start the auction by 12.00 o'clock but, "the best laid plans of mice and men" etc.

Goodeid Working Group / Xiphophorus Working Group

On **October 11.-13th**, the 11th Convention of the European chapter of the Goodeid Working Group takes place in Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary. Here the link to the program: [11th Convention of the EGWG](#) and here is the link to register for the meeting: [Registration GWG Meeting](#). The website of the GWG <https://www.goodeidworkinggroup.com/> has more details of both meetings

On **October 23.-26.**, the 2nd International Conference on Conservation of Freshwater Species of Mexico takes in place in Guadalajara. Here is the link to the program: [2nd International Conference on Conservation of Freshwater Species of Mexico](#) and here the link to register for the meeting: [Registration Conservation Meeting](#).