

Livebearer News

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BRITISH LIVEBEARER ASSOCIATION



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Data Protection Act

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

Committee

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Committee members : Clive Walker; Bill Galbally; Jamie Cole and Kamil Gradzewicz

N.B. Don Kenwood has served the BLA as Treasurer for many years and helped to save the organisation when it was in big trouble. Don is stepping down from the role of Treasurer from the start of January and Kamil Gradzewicz is taking over the role. I would like to express my gratitude to Don for all his work over many years and say thank you to Kamil for taking it on.

Editorial

I'd like to start by thanking J. Sara Fulton for sending me more of her excellent photos and continue by thanking Heather Walford for sending me her article about her experiences with the Tequilla Zoe, *Zoogoneticus tequila*. By a coincidence, I happened to re-read a (very) old copy of "Aquarist and Pondkeeper" magazine at about the same time as Heather sent me her article and it contained an article written by Derek Lambert, one of the original finders of *Zoogoneticus tequila*, so I have copied Derek's article as I am short of new material for this newsletter. I must thank Pat Lambert, mother of Derek, for kindly giving us permission to reproduce Derek's old articles. I must also thank Jon Sanford for his contribution about *Limia islai* and Clive Walker for his article and photos about his wild Bristol guppies, which are well-known to those of us who attend BLA meetings / auctions. And now I have no new material left in store – so come on, let me have your thoughts, experiences, photos and I will include them in future newsletters.

Second :- Many members of the BLA are breeding livebearer species which are rare or endangered in the wild and in some cases this is the main hope for these species avoiding extinction. In the light of this I have always thought of aquarists as being beneficial to fish species conservation. But are we? Possibly not. I would like to hear your thoughts when you have read the abstract from an academic paper that I have copied below.

Third :- As I write, the Covid 19 situation is still very serious and no-one knows how next year will work out. However, in a series of committee meetings via "Zoom" we have planned for a trio of meetings next year. The details are in the "Diary Dates" section but they are, of course, subject to change or cancellation depending on how things work out.

Fourth :- We were unable to have a meeting / auction in the autumn and so many BLA members have been unable to sell their surplus fish and others are seeking some of the rare and unusual species which sometimes appear in our auctions. I have included a "For Sale and Wanted" section in this newsletter and hope that this helps. If you want me to include either fish you want to sell or fish you are wanting in the March newsletter then please email me at the usual email address.

Finally :- May I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy and Covid-free New Year.

Abstract from “Fish and Fisheries” 2016, **17**, 860 to 874

The aquarium hobby is popular worldwide, but it has positives and negatives for freshwater fish conservation. The most damaging impacts of the aquarium trade on ecosystems are overharvesting and invasive species. Consequently, many conservationists and academics have the perception that aquarium hobbyists are generally harmful to species conservation. Without overlooking these major drawbacks of the aquarium hobby, we aim to establish common ground between hobbyists and conservationists by correcting some misconceptions and showing the benefits of serious aquarium hobbyists in the conservation of freshwater fishes and their habitats. Our overview illustrates that the aquarium hobby is not insensitive to the pernicious effects of this enduring hobby on natural systems and that serious aquarists and their associations can directly assist and fund scientific research, increase conservation awareness among the general public and even participate in *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation programmes for native fish species at national or international levels. Whilst the relationship between conservationists and the aquarium hobby has often been antagonistic in recent years, ultimately most biologists and aquarists share a love of the species they study or maintain, and this common interest could be the basis for a more positive and productive relationship.

Experiences with *Limia islai*, by Jon Sanford

I first kept Tiger Limias about 3 years ago. I went to an auction in Basingstoke and thought they were lovely and very interesting. I put them into a 1ft by 8 inch by 6 inch tank with small gravel, sponge filter and A LOT of floating plant to provide coverage as I found they were very shy and timid. I also placed some extra *Heterandria formosa* that I had as tank mates. Both lots of fish very quickly started to produce fry. My first tiger limia fry were only 2 or 3 and seemed so tiny but already had the black stripes and liked to stay in the plant coverage. As I sat next to the tank more and more, the fish seemed to get use to me and would come out a lot more. I found that the pregnant fish would stay below the sponge filter before darting into the plants to drop fry.

Sadly my health got bad for a little while and I ended up losing my fish.

Roll on to now and the Tiger limias are now classified as *Limia islai* and I have recently managed to get 2 pairs. All 4 fish are growing very well and enjoy a variety of food from white worm, grindle worm to flake food. They eat pretty much everything you give them. I've found with the ones I have now, since placing a pair of vibrant red guppies in with them they are coming out a lot more and shoot up to the top of the tank at feeding time.

Overall these are my favourite fish to keep and I'm hoping to keep a big colony of these in the future!!!!

Rare Livebearers: *Zoogoneticus Tequila* by Heather Walford

In March 2020, I attended my first ever British Livebearer Association Event. I went with the intention of bringing home something 'really special' as I was frankly getting fed up of breeding Blue Moscow Guppies. I also had two spare aquariums which I wanted to use for a species only collection. After asking around, it wasn't long before I was soon led to a few rare species of *Goodeids*. They were all absolutely stunning but the ones which really caught my eye were the *Zoogoneticus tequila*. I was shocked to learn that this species is currently critically endangered and only kept going by aquarists and conservation work. I went home that night and did some research. I needed to know whether this species was for me. After much thought, I knew this was definitely the species that I wanted to take on. I was told that some would be up for auction the next day. I returned and managed to secure three pairs of *Zoogoneticus tequila* at the auction that the British Livebearer Association were hosting.

Zoogoneticus tequila, Tequila splitfin or simply Tequila fish, is a species of *Goodeid* from Mexico. The specific epithet, *tequila*, derives from the Tequila Volcano, which looms near the type locality. The species was historically only known from the type locality, the Río Teuchitlán in the Río Ameca headwaters and already thought to be extinct in the wild when it had been described in 1998 by Webb and Miller. As far as we know, the original type habitat was a shallow and open lake like expansion of the Río Teuchitlán, 8m in diameter and 1.3m deep. The species preferred depths of less than 1m. The substrates were mainly mud and silt, a few rocks and sand were present. The currents were none to moderate and the water warm. Few plants were reported living there: *Eichhornia*, a broad-leaved *Potamogeton* and a hyacinth-like plant.

In 2000, a tiny wild population was discovered in a small and isolated area of the Teuchitlán Springs. Sadly, this population was so small that it had become inbred and much doubt was cast on the fish's long-term viability hence why the species is currently listed as critically endangered. Additionally, they are also pressured by environmental destruction, invasive species, pollution and habitat degradation. The Goodeid Working Group, Chester Zoo and other organisations started working together with the University of Morelia to do a reintroduction project for this species in 2015. The project used strategies to get the local residents on board, the using of recreation ponds for the acclimation of captive bred fish, the reintroduction of the fish and a monitoring and scientific guidance over 2 years. This project is now at an end and only time will tell if it has been successful as 700 project-bred tequila splitfin were released successfully into the Rio Teuchitlan.

To this date, I have successfully managed to breed my *Zoogoneticus tequila* and currently have 15 juveniles. A lot of time and hard work has gone into each and every one of them. As this species is well known to predate on their young, I had to keep strict watch on the pregnant females in the aquarium to make sure I could separate all the fry which were born before they were eaten. I have found leaving the fry with the parents for the first few weeks is very risky regardless of how many plants and hiding places, since many livebearers will opportunistically eat their fry. Also, the tequila's gestation period is very long at approximately 60 days so if the parents eat a spawn it's a really long wait for more. Interestingly, it is also worth noting that this species gestates fry internally with something similar to umbilical cords and placentas. It's quite amazing to see.

My *Zoogoneticus tequila* are currently kept in a species only aquarium at a temperature of 22 Celsius which will be lowered during the winter time to give them a break from breeding. They are housed in a 200 litre aquarium (with slightly softer water) and they are fed a variety of different foods such as daphnia, Fluval bug bites, Fish Science insect meal, tropical flakes

and livebearer flakes with the occasional sprinkle of vegetable matter. When settled, they are really inquisitive and interesting to watch. This is definitely a species which has truly stolen my heart. Like most rare *Goodeids*, it is a shame little is known about them in the hobby. If you have a spare aquarium, please get in touch with the British Livebearer Association and find out more information about them on <http://www.goodeidworkinggroup.com>



Above :- Adult males are dark olivaceous on the sides, back, nape and top of the head. Mottling is present on the side of the body, which often has a greenish hue as seen in the picture.

Below :- A newly born *Zoogoneticus tequila* fry after a long wait for the female to drop. She gave birth to 8 fry.



From "Aquarist and Pondkeeper", December 1990 : Reproduced here with the kind permission of Pat Lambert, Derek's mother.

The Crescent Zoe (A New Goodeid Livebearer From Mexico)

Derek Lambert of Viviparous – the Livebearer Information Service, introduces a brand new species discovered during his latest Mexican expedition. (*Photographs by the author*).

Every once in a long while, a new fish comes along which is something REALLY special. The Crescent Zoe is just such a fish. It was discovered by Dr M.L. Smith, C. Rodriguez, L. Butler and me in February of this year. At the moment, we are not certain if we are dealing with a new species or just a colour morph of the better-known *Zoogoneticus quitzeoensis*. Mike Smith and company are working on that side of things, so I will leave the question of the scientific name to the scientists. Until they have completed their work I cannot reveal the collecting site, of course. Suffice it to say, at the moment, that it was a river in Mexico. This river was crystal-clear, with an abundance of plants growing along the banks and in the water. It was about 10m wide and 1.5m deep and absolutely teeming with Goodeid livebearers.

Earlier failures

A number of other scientific collecting teams have visited this location but none have found the new Zoe. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, most scientists spend a very short period of time at a collecting site, something that has often led to them missing one or more species of fish that live in a particular habitat. Secondly, most scientists collect with seine nets that gather many more fish but are prone to miss those which live among the plant roots or are hiding in caves. Pat (my mother) and I re-discovered *Hubbsina turneri* (another Goodeid livebearer) after several scientists had declared it extinct for this very reason.



Original caption :- Crescent Zoe biotope
We now know that this is the Rio Teuchitlan, near
the town of the same name.

Photo :- Derek Lambert

Distinctive colour patterns

When we pulled the first male Crescent Zoe out of the water I knew straightaway that we had found something special. The body coloration was a dark mottled green overlaid with reflective spangles. The dorsal and anal fins were a deep green, terminating in bright lemon-yellow crescents at the edges. The caudal fin was also green for about 4/5ths of its length and bordered in a bright orange crescent. The very edge of the fin was clear. It was for the distinctive crescents in the unpaired fins that we christened our new fish the Crescent Zoe.

The females were basically similar in body coloration, except that there were gold high-lights down the body and few, if any, spangles. The fins were the same colour as in the males, except very much paler; indeed, this colour has only really become visible since the fish have been maintained in an aquarium. Unlike many other Goodeids, the wild colours have not only been maintained in the aquarium, but have even been heightened.

Need for live specimens

My job on this collecting trip was to look after the living fish and make sure they arrived back in New York alive and well. The reason for this was, in part, because scientists now require living fish for some of their work, but also because Mike Smith is not just a scientist but a very concerned conservationist as well. He believes, as many knowledgeable scientists do, that the only way of securing the long-term future of endangered species of fish is to set up breeding colonies in captivity.

We arrived back in America with about 40 live fish from this collection point (all but two of the live fish we collected) and I returned to England with a few of these to start off my own breeding colony.

Once back in England I placed them in a 24 x 10in [60 x 25cm] tank with a pot of aquatic plants at the back. I fed them my normal diet of live brine shrimp twice a day and extra feeds of dry food, beef-heart, frozen bloodworm and an occasional feed of *Daphnia*. The tank received a large water change every week. Within twenty-four hours of arriving back home, the Crescent Zoes were eating everything in sight. To say that they adapted well to tank conditions would be the understatement of the year!

Potential problem

The biggest problem with this fish, both for scientists and aquarists alike, is that it is found with *Zoogoneticus quiteoensis* in the wild and the females are very difficult to tell apart. To verify that we did, indeed, have a new species and not a colour morph of *Zoogoneticus quiteoensis*, it was decided to save the fry from gravid females caught in the wild and to see if they only produced one type of fry. The first fry were born on my way home and numbered some 24. Of the five females I had, only two had live fry after the stress of being moved so close to term. Both broods proved to be 100% Crescent Zoes.

I have continued to save fry from these two females, but allowed nature to take its course with the other three. Of these, two have become gravid on a regular basis, and one has not. The female which has not become gravid also has the normal *Zoogoneticus quiteoensis* coloration which leads to the conclusion that some natural mechanism is preventing the two species from hybridising. The evidence for this is still far too flimsy to prove or disprove anything.

The two females which produced healthy fry were both quite large and have had broods of greater than 20 babies every eight weeks. However, smaller females will obviously produce smaller numbers of fry. The youngsters sexed out at about four weeks old, by which time they had started to develop their distinctive colours. The first brood of second generation babies were born when the females were only three months old, which means that the males have been sexually active at the ripe old age of six weeks!

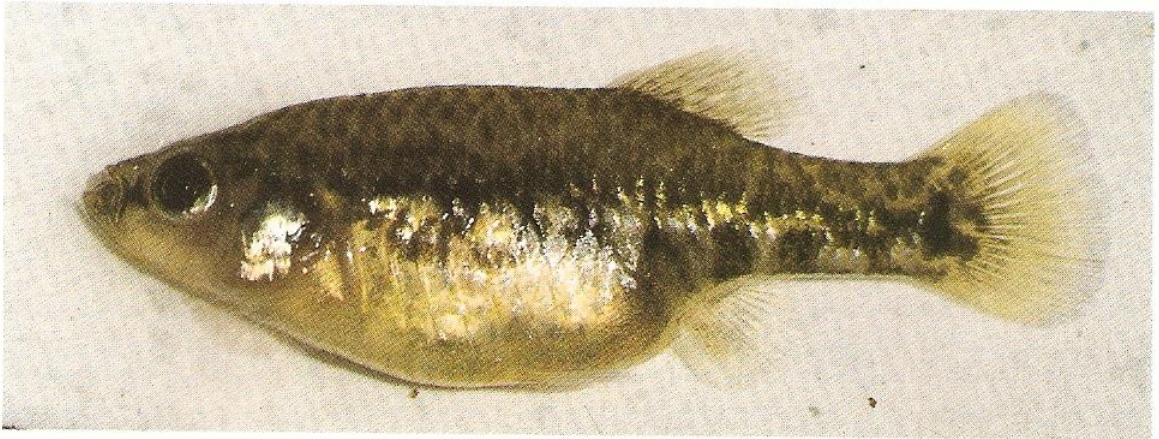
Aquarium behaviour

In the aquarium, the Crescent Zoe has behaved in a similar manner to *Zoogoneticus quiteoensis*, being a little pugnacious with males of its own species. So far, it has not been a problem when kept with other fish, although in general, I have maintained this species on its own. The first pairs of this beautiful Goodeid were distributed at the Viviparous Summer Show. Time will tell just how successful it will be in the aquarium, but if looks are anything to go on, it should be a smash hit.

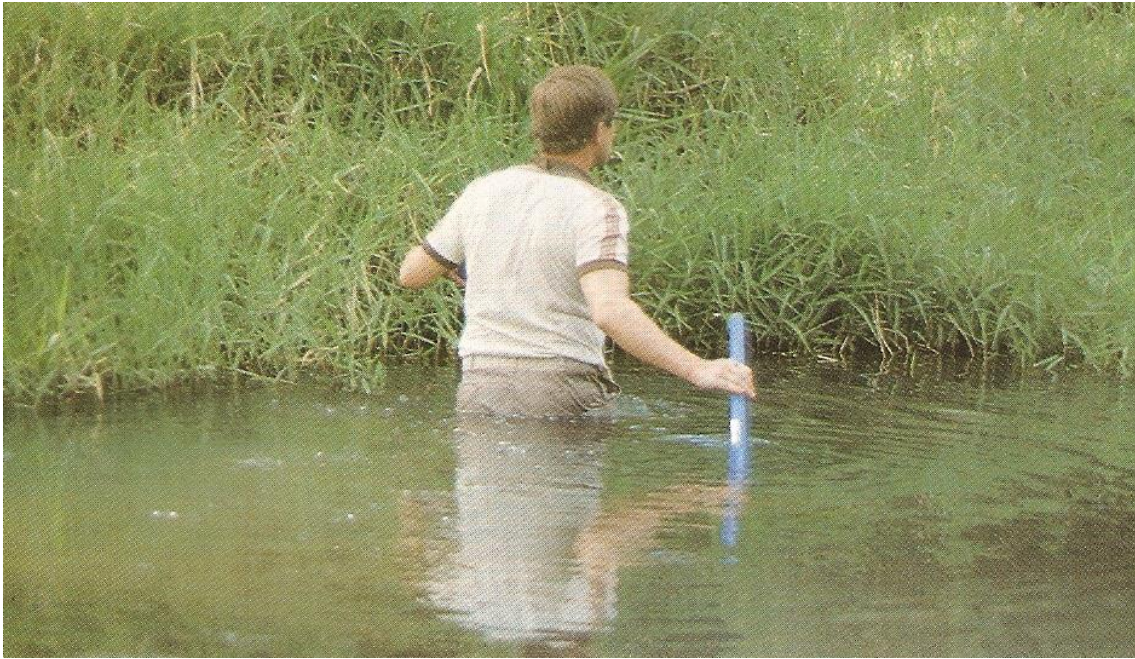
Acknowledgements :- I am grateful to **Dr M.L. Smith** of the American Museum of Natural History for inviting me on this trip, and **Robert McKeand** of Viviparous for acting as my host while I was in America.



Male Crescent Zoe, showing the characteristic fin markings responsible for its common name.



Female Crescent Zoe — virtually indistinguishable from *Zoogoneticus quitzeensis*.



Dr Mike Smith, right in it!

Many thanks to Pat Lambert for giving permission for the BLA to reproduce Derek's old articles in "Livebearer News".



Phalloceros caudomaculatus [Female] Photo : J. Sara Fulton



Phalloceros caudomaculatus [Male] : Photo :- J. Sara Fulton



Phalloceros caudomaculatus [Juvenile] : Photo :- J. Sara Fulton

Why Wild Type Guppies 'Bristol 2010'? by Clive Walker

Answer : Location, Location and any and all other collection details.

The idea was to get you lot to put collection details on your auction lots and to give you something to smile about, Guppies with a location and "collection" year! Whatever next.

Looking through the unsold bags after the auction at Bristol Tropical Fish clubs 2010 Open Show i found six bags of Guppy fry with just a few males starting to colour up as 'wild'.

I bought them all and after giving away a few took home around eighty fish. As they grew I removed two females with coloured tails and one all red male. The rest, somewhat to my surprise, bred true.

I've been told that they have appeared on auction lists in Scotland which is about as far from my south coast home as you can get, so the location message has got through to some extent.

In more recent years I've been getting colour mutations in the fish in the lower, cooler tanks. Until this year there were never very many, just the odd one or two now and again. But this year I have quite a few, the males have colour in their tails either as the start of a single or double sword none extending beyond the end of the tail.

Why is this happening? As I understand it, it could be to do with temperature and the development of colour. Put crudely colour is developed when the fish is still very young at the lower temperature the colour has more time to develop because of the lower metabolic rate of the fry. If that's not right I'm sure someone will correct me.

I have the guppies in nearly all of my tanks, they are very profuse breeders. If I'm separating a female to a dropping tank I add some guppy fry so that the female is not on her own. They work as dither fish.



Original Bristol Guppies : Photo :- *Clive Walker*



The new mutant Bristol Guppies : Photo :- *Clive Walker*



"Note the dark blue spot above the gonopodium in all the males :-
Photo :- *Clive Walker*

Keeping livebearers outdoors

I have kept *Goodeid* livebearers outdoors on a few occasions and they have mostly done very well. The *Xenotoca doadrioi* that spent the summer in a half-barrel outside my dining room window even bred during their sojourn there. The others came in glowing with health. One great enthusiast for keeping livebearers outdoors is our own Nigel Hunter. He has given talks on the subject at a couple of BLA functions in the past. I recently emailed Nigel to find out which species he had kept outdoors this year :-

Nigel's list of what he has kept outdoors this year :-

Xiphophorus evelynae, *X. kallmani*, *X. signum*, *X. yucatan*, *X. malinche* and *X. helleri* var "koi";
Chapalichthys pardalis, *C. encaustus*;
Characodon audax, *C. carmen* and *C. "amado nervo"*;
Xenotoca lyonsi, *X. melanosoma*;
Xenophorus captivus;
Jenynsia lineate;
Phalloceros caudimaculata one spot;
Ilyodon furcidens;
Girardinichthys viviparous, *G. multimultiradiatus*;
Skiffia multipunctata;
Poecilia .mexicana;
Poeciliopsis gracilis;
Gambusia affinis;
Crenichthys baileyi [*A Goodeid*, but not a livebearer];
plus medaka, Rhodes minnows and *Ellasoma*, *Valencia* and *Aphanius*.

I look forward to having a chat with Nigel to hear how the various species fared and which ones have bred whilst outdoors.



Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl with *Laetacara dorsigera* : Photo : J. Sara Fulton



Xiphophorus nezahualcoyotl : Photo : J. Sara Fulton



Details of Sara's planted tanks. *Photos*



More shots of Sara's planted tanks. *Photos :- J. Sara Fulton*



Zoogoneticus purhepachus, male : Photo J.Sara Fulton



Zoogoneticus purheppechus, pair : Photo J.Sara Fulton
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Zoogoneticus purheppechus, male : Photo J.Sara Fulton



Zoogoneticus purhepachus, female : Photo J.Sara Fulton
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Fresh water stingrays are livebearing fish, so why do we never see them at BLA events? Why don't I know of any BLA member who keeps them?



Fresh water stingray at Pier Aquatics, Wigan

Photo :- Greg Roebuck



Fresh water stingray, pair, at Pier Aquatics, Wigan

Photo :- Greg Roebuck

Ah! Now I know why BLA members never mention Fresh water stingrays. I don't have £1900 spare for a group of four fish, [even if I did have a tank big enough for them or the facilities to grow them on to adult size and get them breeding] and I doubt that many other people do either



Tank label, Pier Aquatics, Wigan

Photo :- Greg Roebuck

However, if you do keep any of these fish, or you know of an article that I could reproduce in a future newsletter, then please do get in touch.

Water for Goodeids [Continued from the September newsletter]

In the September newsletter I included some information provided by Becky Goodwin, who works in the aquarium at Chester Zoo. Just to remind you, Becky sent me the details of the compounds added to RO water in order to achieve a solution similar to the water found in Lakes like Zacapu and Patzcuaro in Mexico. The amounts of the compounds concerned were quite small and a reasonably accurate balance [i.e.scales] would be needed to get the quantities correct. Has anyone out there been tempted to try to adjust the water quality for their *goodeids*? Just in case you have

I sent Becky a copy of the last newsletter and she very kindly replied with further information. I have included part of her reply below :-

Just a thought for the scales: These are pretty similar to ours, ours does have a smaller more sensitive bit but we don't use it at all for goodeids. Just for corals with much lower concentrations, some of which need serial dilutions anyway.

I also honestly think rounding the numbers if needed for weights and/or not using RO/rain water would be ok, maybe not perfect, but still probably a lot better than tap water alone. If I do get chance at any point to have a bit more of a play around with easier options I will let you know.

I'm just aware that costs and difficulties can be the limiting factors when you have to pay yourself, they would be for me anyway. The more I see of them, the more I think they benefit (for example they measurably use things for the water. When nothing of the kind would be affecting conductivity and pH drop much faster than with other species). Maybe even if a few people try somebody will think of something better to make it easier to use and potentially more accessible. Also I don't know how feasible this would be, and the compounds aren't hugely expensive, but we have discussed between several aquariums buying larger quantities and sharing.

https://www.amazon.co.uk/High-precision-Back-Lit-Features-Stainless-Batteries/dp/B01JKX4QAC/ref=sr_1_18?dchild=1&keywords=scale+0.1g&qid=1601560204&sr=8-18

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Digital-Professional-High-Precision-Nutrition-Back-Lit/dp/B0834WWVGY/ref=sr_1_33_sspa?dchild=1&keywords=scale+0.1g&qid=1601560304&sr=8-33-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcmlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUEyRjM5VURDRVQwWDIOJmVuY3J5cHRIZElkPUeWOTExNzE3MU5NTDFJTVQxQ0VPVyZlbnNyeXB0ZWZlbnNyeWMTI0MzQ2M0INWVlQVDBBR09XMzY3aWRnZXROYW1lPXNwX2F0Zl9uZXh0JmFjdGlvdj1jbGlja1JlZGlyZWNOJmRvTm90TG9nQ2xpY2s9dHJ1ZQ==

Many thanks again to Becky for her help and advice here.

Youtube

There is a huge amount of aquaristic material on "Youtube", dealing with livebearers and non-livebearers. I have been in contact with BLA member Jamie Mullen and he mentioned his own Youtube channel "Mountain Goldfish", which you might like to check out.

If you find any other interesting channels on Youtube, which do deal with livebearers then let me know at the usual email address and I will recommend them in future newsletters.

Wanted

John Benson has for sale :-

Limia sp tiger; Limia perugiae, Limia nigrofasciata [=Cuban or humpback limia]; Liberty mollies, Poecilia mexicana; Chapalichthys encustus and Chapalichthys pardalis.

John also wants to get hold of Priapella intermedia and Priapella olmeca; Xiphophorus birchmani and Xiphophorus clemenciae; Carlhubbsia stuarti; Poecilia chica; Limia zonata; Characodon audax; Characodon lateralis; Ilyodon sp "Bumble bee" and "Alpha swords".

You can get in touch with John at :-

benson4045@live.co.uk

Sara Fulton wants to get hold of some Gambusia vittata. If anyone out there has any can they get in touch with her at :-

jsarafulton@virginmedia.com

Alan Lusby has the following for sale:-

X. montezuma 12+ pairs
Characodon audax 6+ pairs
Skiffia multipunctatus 4 pairs
Zoogeneticus tequila 6 pairs
Several pairs of Limia perugiae

However, all of the above are available to callers only.

Alan would like to get hold of X. nezahualcoyotil and X. cortezi and limias vittata, blue and humpback but only if delivered. In each case he would want at least two pairs.rs.

Alan's email address is :-

awlus24@aol.com

Steve Oliver has an abundance of *Xenotoca lyonsi* (Rio Tamazula) fry which he is prepared to give to anyone who wants to start a breeding group: he also has some *Ameca splendens* should any want any and finally he has a small breeding group of *Xenotoca doadrioi* (San Marcos) for any one that wants them.
Steve's email address is :-

steven.oliver63@yahoo.co.uk

Kamil Gradzewicz is looking for *Limia* species, especially *L. zonata*. Kamil would also like to get hold of *Heterandria formosa* and *Neoheterandria elegans*. If you can help Kamil with any of these species his email address is :-

kamilgradzewicz@gmail.com

Heather Walford has loads of blue Moscow guppies for sale. Her email address is :_

heather.walford@outlook.com

Barry light is looking for the following fish :-

PHALICHTHYS TICO

PHAL QUADPUNTATTUS

NEOHET ELEGANS

XIPHOPHORUS BIRCHMANNI

XIPHOPHORUS MILLERI

XIPHOPHORUS XIPHIDIUM

If you have any of these that you can sell to Barry his email address is :-

barrylight48@gmail.com

Greg Roebuck has some *Ataeniobius toweri*. His email address is :-
Gjrsrr12@gmail.com

Diary dates

N.B. In the light of the current Covid 19 situation, these dates should be treated as proposals rather than as firm dates. Unless the Covid 19 situation improves rapidly in the New Year then these events will have to be postponed or cancelled.

1. Late April, possibly Sunday 25th April, in Leicester – venue to be arranged. Show and auction.
2. Mid-summer event, possibly Sunday 18th July, probably in Basingstoke. Show and auction.
3. Autumn show and convention – a joint event with the Fancy Guppy people and possibly also the British Killifish Association and/or the British Cichlid Association. The hope is that this event will take place over a whole weekend, with speakers, a show and auction. It is hoped that it will take place over the weekend of the 23rd to 26th September, in Derbyshire.