

# BULLETIN

JUNE 2015



**FEDERATION OF BRITISH  
AQUATIC SOCIETIES**  
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# QUARTERLY BULLETIN

**SUMMER 2015**

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**Edited, published and produced for the FBAS website by Les Pearce**

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the June 2015 issue of the FBAS Bulletin. There is a vicious rumour going around that summer is upon us although I must admit that I have not seen too much proof of it. Therefore, there is a heavy inclination towards ponds and water gardening in this issue. We have also started the ball rolling with regards to the Fighter (*Betta splendens*) standards.

In this issue, there is also an excellent article by Paul Corbett about his beloved Black Princes. Helen Richardson of Plymouth & District Aquarists' and Pondkeepers' Society lists her Top Ten Most Time Wasting Things in Fishkeeping. This is a great bit of fun and, if anybody out there wants to make a contribution to the Bulletin and cannot think of what to write about, then why not do a list of your top ten? Maybe your top ten fish or your top ten plants. Perhaps your favourite ten things about showing fish, ten reasons you keep whatever species it is that you keep or, perhaps, your favourite ten species that you have managed to breed. Give it a go and have a bit of fun!

My deepest thanks go out, once again, to Malcolm Goss for his continuing help and support with the Bulletin. Without his invaluable contributions, this issue of the Bulletin would be a much thinner edition.

LES PEARCE (FBAS Bulletin Editor).

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# ELECTRIC BLUE

by MALCOLM GOSS

JACK DEMPSEY  
(*Rocio octofasciata*)

It was in a past issue of the Bulletin (September 2012) that I introduced two Jack Dempseys that I had purchased. That issue carried a photograph of them when they were about 50mm (2 inches) long. At this young age



they were getting along with each other very well and were also getting on well with the other fish in their tank, mainly Corydoras.

Well, cichlids being cichlids, after a few months they started abusing the other fish, including the Corydoras and I removed them all. Then they started having a go at each other so I had to remove the one that was getting knocked about the most. I thought to myself, this is just why I did not want to keep South American cichlids again.



As the best fish of the two has grown, I have found it to be a truly colourful fish. As you can see, it has not lost any of its 'electric blue' as it gains in both age and size. It is currently around 150mm (6 inches).

# MY EXPERIENCE OF KEEPING AND BREEDING THE CHARACODON GENUS

by **PAUL CORBETT**

The genus *Characodon* belongs to the *Goodied* family of livebearing fish. This genus are true livebearers with the unborn young being nourished inside the female's body via a basic placenta known as the 'trophotaenia'. Females, therefore, produce far fewer broods than the more commonly so-called livebearers such as guppies, platies, swordtails, etc. The native habitat of Characodons is Mexico or, rather, it was as it appears that, due to destruction of their natural habitat, these fish are practically extinct in the wild.

The following is an account of my experience in keeping members of this genus. I am fortunate to live in an area of the country where the mains water is ideal for most livebearers with a pH of 7.4 to 7.6.



**ADULT PAIR OF *C. AUDAX*  
FEMALE IS GRAVID**

I bought my first pair of *Characodon audax* from an elderly gentleman from Liverpool called John. This was way back when the now sadly defunct British Aquarists' Festival moved from the old Belle Vue venue, via a year or two at the G.Mex, to the Bowlers venue at Trafford Park in Manchester. The current strain of these

fish that I have as my stock breeders goes back to that original pair. Within a couple of weeks of my getting that pair of 'Black Princes' (as they were known), the female dropped six fry and within a week she was dead, followed a day later by the male. I transferred the fry to one of my show tanks, introduced a mature

box filter and hoped that the fry would survive. As there was no room in the tank for a heater, I placed the fry tank over a larger aquarium with the idea of maintaining the temperature as best as possible.

That failure to introduce a heater/stat, as it turned out, saved the fry. At the time, very little information was available to us 'hobby based' fishkeepers. This was very much pre-internet days and hardly anyone was keeping these little livebearers. I had to find out more and the only person who I thought might be able to help was the legendary Ivan Dibble. I had met Ivan a few times at the old SLAG (Southern Livebearer Aquatic Group, before you get any other ideas) meetings and I gave him a call. All that Ivan could suggest was to keep the fry in a species tank and to keep them on the cool side. This turned out to be superb advice. The fry grew quickly and sexed out in about ten weeks, by which time they were moved to a larger tank which was heated but set to a temperature of 68 - 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

They turned out to be two males and four females and, at about five months old, one of the females produced six fry. The next morning there were four dead fry on the sand substrate and I noticed the two males chasing and trying to eat the remaining two. The survivors were put into one of the old fashioned Perspex fry traps.

There then followed a series of trial and error attempts to breed from the remaining stock. I noticed fairly early on that a good percentage of the fry were apparently still-born. Wrong again! What was happening was that the fry were unable to easily go to the water's surface. I have since found out that they need to do this to promote the development of the swim bladder. They



**STOCK BREED TANK OF *C. AUDAX***



**STOCK BREED TANK OF *C. AUDAX***

were not still-born but were drowning.

I now keep a stock tank of at least four or five males with six to seven females. If you keep only two males, one will harass and dominate the other which then dies from stress. This behaviour only happens when the males are adult and ready to breed. Of the males in the stock breed tank, one is usually dominant but is not over aggressive with the other males if there are enough of them present.

To successfully breed these fish, move the gravid female to a small tank. I use an 8 x 6 x 6 inch show tank with a mature box or sponge filter and some Java Moss or float some Cabomba in the tank. The water depth should be no more than four or five inches with a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit. As soon as the



**18 x 10 x 10 REARING TANK**





### **ADULT PAIR OF *C. LATERALIS***

female gives birth, put her back in the stock tank and keep the fry in their birth tank. I feed the fry twice daily with feeds of finely crushed flake and every other day with newly hatched brine shrimp. The fry should be moved to a larger tank after about three weeks with regular fifty percent water changes taken from the stock breed tank before the transfer. When they are about eight weeks old, I give them a twice weekly treat of frozen bloodworm but maintain a basic diet of good quality flake. When the fry are large enough and have sexed out, I move one male and one female to the stock breed tank from each new brood.

These fish are very quick to sex out and I have known the females to drop young at sixteen weeks old. The downside to this is that the species are notoriously short-lived so they have evolved with early sexual maturity. A young female will usually drop five to eight fry but as the female ages so the brood size increases.

If you fancy a more difficult challenge, try breeding the only other *Characodon*

species, *Characodon lateralis*. These fish are harder to obtain and are more difficult to form a breeding stock. It took me three attempts over the past year to partially succeed. At the present time, May 2015, I have got as far as the second generation of fry.



### **NURSERY TANK WITH GRAVID *C. LATERALIS***

My breed tank stock consists of two adult males and three females. Unlike *Characodon audax*, these two males tolerate each other. With the *audax*, I move the gravid female when she is quite full of mature fry. However, the *lateralis* females appear to drop their fry before they get to the so-called heavily gravid state. I isolate the *lateralis* females as soon as I realise they are gravid. Another difference I am finding is that it is more difficult to introduce young adult males into the breed tank as both of the established males have attacked them. So, at present, I am establishing a second stock breed tank with these young adult fish.

To end with, do not get tempted to interbreed this genus. NEVER, NEVER mix these two species. They are endangered and possibly extinct in the wild and we have to nurture and protect these two species with care.

# A BETTA WAY OF JUDGING FIGHTERS

LES PEARCE

In the last issue, in an article entitled '*True Blue*', Malcolm Goss quite rightly raised the question of standards for the judging of the Siamese Fighting Fish, *Betta Splendens*. The fact of the matter is that more and more fancy varieties of this species are appearing for sale in the UK and, consequently, are turning up on the show bench. Purely from a judging point of view, it becomes extremely difficult to do a high quality fish the proper justice if there is no judging standard for it. The fish tends to be judged against a standard that was intended for a different variety or, worse still, no standard at all and this results in an unwarranted loss of points for finnage, colour or body or a combination of these. This situation is quite clearly not ideal either for the exhibitor, the judge or, indeed, for the promotion of the hobby in general.

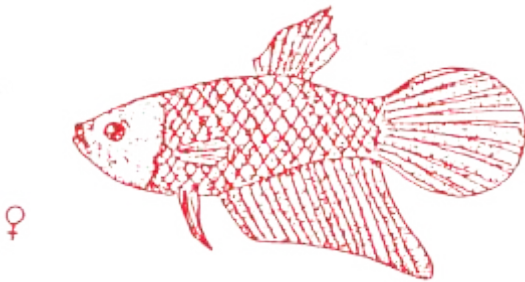
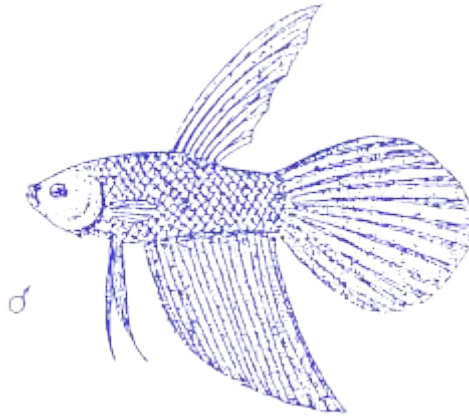
The FBAS Judges and Standards Committee has, in fact, been working on this very issue for some time. Work is ongoing and is by no means complete or comprehensive but should go a long way to addressing this situation. New varieties are appearing all the time making the job of producing guides or standards almost never-ending. In addition to new standards, existing ones sometimes need 'tweaking' or adjusting as we learn more about the various varieties.

New drawings are being referred to as 'judging guides' rather than standards as this gives a greater scope both in terms of updating and altering them when necessary and in interpreting them when judging. A guide is not one hundred percent hard and fast and some discretionary leeway is possible when judging.

In the next few issues, we will print the work that has been done to date. Constructive feedback, comments and ideas are always welcome, it is the only way we will improve them.

To begin with, many people will know that the FBAS has published a standard for Betta splendens for many, many years. In fact, as almost everyone is aware, it is an integral and historical part of the FBAS badge and logo. As such, it is sacrosanct and permanent. We have called this the 'Standard' Fighter Guide and it remains unchanged.

**STANDARD  
FIGHTER  
MALE**



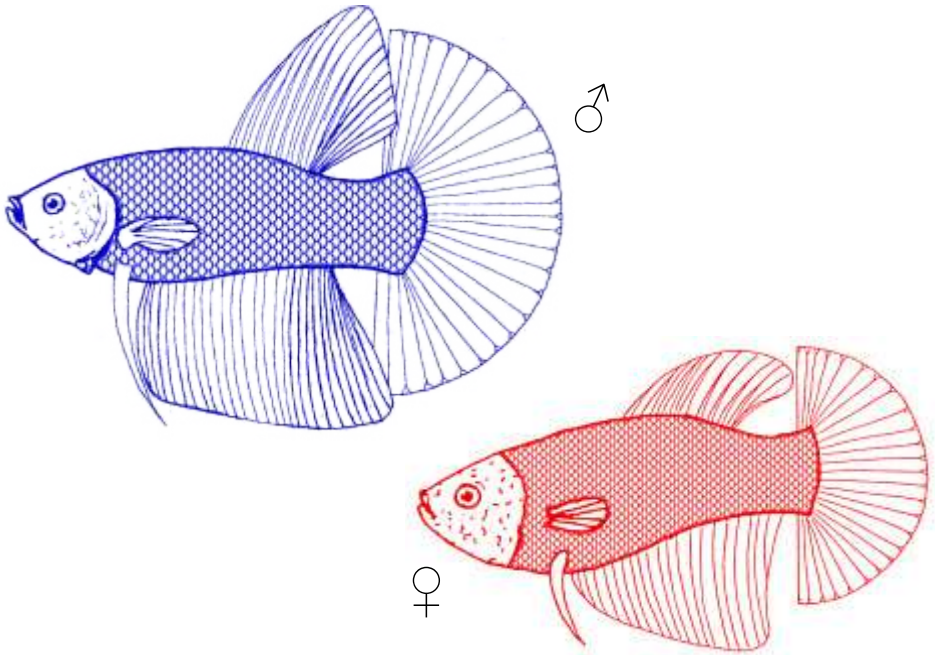
**STANDARD  
FIGHTER  
FEMALE**

Above are the drawings for the male and female 'standard' fighter.

As already stated, over the next few issues of the bulletin we will publish the various other varieties for which we have produced drawings. The first two of these, on the following pages, are the Half Moon variety and the Plakat variety along with their descriptions.

# BETTA SPLENDENS. Regan.

## Half Moon Variety

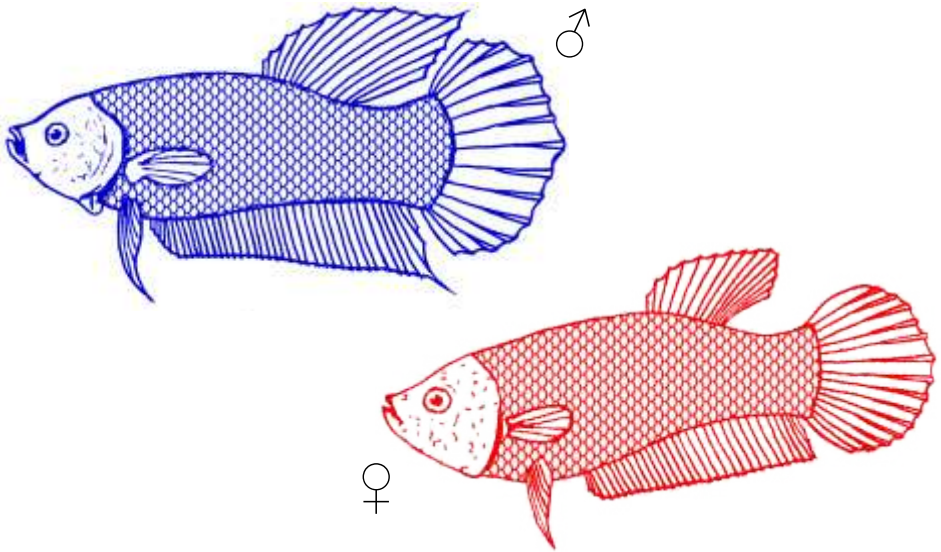


**MALE:** The caudal fin to form a semi-circle with the diameter edge to be as straight as possible. Upper and lower diameter edges to be in line with each other. Caudal diameter to be less than the extremities of the top of the dorsal fin and the bottom of the anal fin. Fin rays of the caudal must not protrude beyond the perimeter edge of the fin. Dorsal and anal fins to be as the guide drawing. All fins to be carried erect. Caudal peduncle to be capable of carrying the caudal fin.

**FEMALE:** As the male except that the caudal fin diameter to be less than three times the depth of the caudal peduncle. Dorsal, anal and ventral fins to be smaller than those of the male and as per the guide drawing. Caudal peduncle to be narrower than that of the male. All fins to be carried erect.

# BETTA SPLENDENS. Regan.

## Plakat Variety



### MALE:

This is a relatively short-finned variety which is somewhat closer to the wild form of *Betta splendens*. The fish should generally present a robust appearance. The vertical height of the dorsal to be no greater than the height of the deepest part of the body. The caudal to be wider from top to bottom than its length and should be 'spade' shaped. The leading edges of the caudal should form an angle of less than 180 degrees. Care should be taken to downpoint exhibits that display traits of the Half Moon variety in their finnage. The dorsal and anal fins to extend above and below the caudal fin respectively and to culminate in a discernable point. The rays of the fins extend slightly from the fin membrane to give the edge of the fins a 'wavy' appearance. All fins should be carried erect.

### FEMALE:

The finnage is generally similar to that of the male but should be somewhat shorter and the terminal points of the dorsal and anal fins are less pronounced. The caudal is more rounded (less discernably 'spade' shaped). The dorsal should not be as high as the body is deep. All fins should be carried erect.

# 2015 EVENTS DIARY

**All information correct at date of publication.**

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|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| BLA Spring Auction 10am, The Rockingham Ctr, Sheffield Rd, Hoyland, Barnsley South Yorkshire S74 0PY. | 20/03/15    |
| Catfish Study Group Convention  | 19-22/03/15 |
| Derwentside AS Open Show & Auction  | 22/03/15    |
| A.S.A.S. Open Show  | 22/03/15    |
| Greater Manchester Cichlid Group Auction 1.15pm   | 29/03/15    |
| Ryedale A.S. 30th Anniversary Day   | 29/03/15    |
| Castleford Open Show and Auction 1.00pm   | 19/04/15    |
| North East Tropical Society Show and Auction  | 26/04/15    |
| MID-SUSSEX A.S. Open Show   | 26/04/15    |
| West London and Kent B.K.A Auction  | 26/04/15    |
| North East Tropical Society (NETS) Open Show & Auction  | 26/04/15    |
| EASTLEIGH & SOTON A.S. Open Show  | 09/05/15    |
| Bradford Spring Open Show Auction   | 10/05/15    |
| CORBY & D A S Open Show   | 17/05/15    |
| Derwentside AS Auction  | 17/05/15    |
| Glenrothes A.S. Open Show   | 17/05/15    |
| SOUTHEND, L & D A S Open Show   | 30/05/15    |
| Greater Manchester Cichlid Group Auction 11.15pm  | 31/05/15    |
| STAMPS Open Show & Auction  | 31/05/15    |
| BRACKNELL A.S. Open Show  | 13/06/15    |
| Ryedale A.S. Open Show and Auction  | 14/06/15    |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| HOUNSLOW & D.A.S                                | 20/06/15  |
| OASIS Auction                                   | 21/06/15  |
| S.E.CICHLID GROUP/BCA Convention                | 28/06/15  |
| Y.A.A.S Open Show                               | 05/07/15  |
| Castleford A.S. Catfish and Loach Show/Auction  | 12/07/15  |
| N.E.Yorkshire Group (BKA) Open Show             | 19/07/15  |
| N. E. Goldfish Society Open Show                | 19/07/15  |
| TTAA Fish Only Auction                          | 26/07/15  |
| Friends of Yorkshire A.S. Open Show and Auction | 16/08/15  |
| North East Tropical Society (NETS) Auction      | 16/08/15  |
| Castleford A.S.Night Auction                    | 19/08/15  |
| BCA Convention                                  | 06/09/15  |
| Catfish Study Group Open Show                   | 20/09/15  |
| West London and Kent B.K.A Auction              | 20/09/15  |
| FESTIVAL OF FISHKEEPING                         | 3-4/10/15 |
| Bradford A.S. Open Show and Auction             | 08/11/15  |
| Castleford A.S. Night Auction                   | 18/11/15  |

**IF YOU ARE PLANNING OR RUNNING AN AQUATIC EVENT SUCH AS A SHOW OR AN AUCTION THEN WHY NOT GET IT PUBLICISED FOR FREE BOTH IN THIS MAGAZINE AND / OR ON THE FBAS WEBSITE.**

## **CONTACT**

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# BUILDING A NATURAL SWIMMING POOL PART 3

**MICHAEL LITTLEWOOD**

Photos: **ALAN LAMBOURNE**

With summer now here we are keen to finish our natural swimming pool. With the electrics installed, we can now fit our pump. I can recommend Oase pumps which are made in Germany and come with an automatic three year warranty but, if you send off the required paperwork that comes with the pump, this is extended to five years. Place the pump under the decking and make a portion of this like a hinged trap door so that you can carry out any necessary servicing of the pump more easily. It is always useful to have extra pumping power in reserve but generally, the power of the pump is measured by how high you have to raise the water, as when creating a waterfall.. In this case, the pump flow is more or less horizontal. Too much fast flowing water will not only make aquatic plants, including water lilies, stop growing, but could end up with them dyeing altogether.



You could possibly start with six water lilies, placing three each side of the pond. Before placing your plants, including any marginals, completely wash them off with a hose to remove even the smallest portion of duckweed. Floating plants will not keep themselves to the marginal areas and, in a short time, they will spread across the swimming area. Plant the lilies in full sized lily baskets with a good quality aquatic soil. Take your time and enjoy the experience of purchasing your plants and take advice from the labels that come with them. If your lilies are in flower or have mature leaves, set your baskets at a height so that the leaves float on the surface. Water lilies breathe through their leaves so if they are placed submerged, the plant may well die.



Once this has been completed, start up the pump and adjust the flow. A slow, calm looking flow is ideal. Run the pump for at least six weeks, giving the plants a chance to bed themselves in and the water to take on the goodness given off by the plants once they have started growing.

Now is the time take the plunge, literally, and I hope that you really enjoy your new garden attraction with your family and friends.



### CONCLUSION:

*“We expect nature to deal with all our dirty work for us but we make no effort to limit our abuse of her kingdom. Let us therefore resolve to plan and design in harmony with nature.”*

M. Littlewood

Features from this article: ***Natural Swimming Pools*** by Michael Littlewood published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd.

Consultants for the UK: Anglo Aquarium Plant Co. Ltd.  
Strayfield Road, Enfield, EN2 9JE

# THE EASY WAY TO A CLEAR & HEALTHY POND

## LAGUNA - ROLF C. HAGEN

Summer is an ideal time to revitalise an existing pond that has failed, perhaps, to meet your earlier expectations, or maybe to design and install a brand new water garden feature. Whichever route you are thinking of taking, the main feature you will be considering is a simple but effective means of keeping the water in your pond in pristine condition and crystal clear. Nothing sets off a summer garden more than a water feature with colourful fishes, plain to see through the clear water, accompanied by the soothing sounds of a trickling small waterfall or fountain in the background.

Unfortunately such wishful thinking may not always become a reality, as many garden ponds, by mid May or June, have water the colour of pea soup and a mass of other forms of rampant algae colonising the depths to mar the illusion. That is, until recently when the new Hagen Laguna Power Clear Multi pond unit which combines a Three -in-One Pump plus U.V. sterilisation was introduced. This brilliantly designed high performance unit provides industry leading pond filtration powerful water circulation, and highly effective U.V. sterilisation.



Simple to install and maintain the Laguna Power Clear Multi requires only one cable to operate the advanced high performance all-in-one pump, filter and integrated U.V. sterilisation. What's more the multi-specification design of this unit provides dual provision for two fountain heads and a diverter valve to transfer water to a waterfall or other equipment.

The Power Clear Multi comes in two sizes the PT1815 recommended for ponds up to 3500 litres and the PT1816 for ponds up to 7000 litres. Both units have similar specifications with the exception of the size of the main components. The smaller PT1815 model operates using a powerful performance 18w pump with a flow rate of 2,100Lph whilst the larger PT1816 is rated at 30w with a flow rate of 2700Lph. Maximum waterfall height is 1.6m for the smaller unit and 2.4m with the larger more powerful unit. The U.V. sterilising lamp is rated at 9w for both the 3500L and 2700L models and each fits snugly within the pump casing. U.V. sterilisation is provided by the powerful integrated. U.V. bulb which kills algae and is guaranteed to eliminate green water.



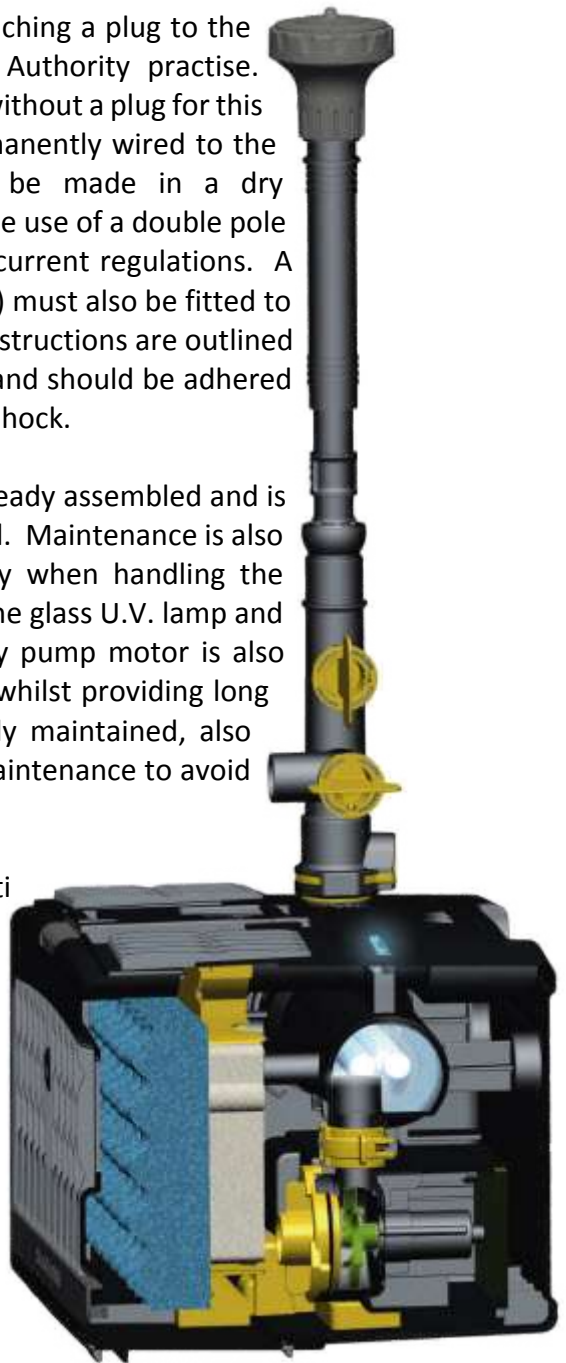
The advanced design, filtration process also features mechanical filtration provided by durable indented foams. These rigid foam pads provide a large surface area due to the convoluted 'egg crate' design which requires less cleaning and maintenance. The biological filtration is equally well designed and achieved using a revolutionary 'Bio Brick' media. This media is formulated using kiln fired clay based material with thousands of small cavities and is perfect for creating a habitat for beneficial bacteria.

Preparing the unit for use presents

minimal difficulties other than attaching a plug to the single cable and following Local Authority practise. This product is purposely supplied without a plug for this reason and is designed to be permanently wired to the mains as the connection must be made in a dry weatherproof enclosure through the use of a double pole switched fuse in accordance with current regulations. A 30m Residual Current Device (RCD) must also be fitted to the mains supply. Further safety instructions are outlined in the product instruction manual and should be adhered to in order to avoid risk of electric shock.

The Power Clear Multi is supplied ready assembled and is therefore particularly easy to install. Maintenance is also simple, although care is necessary when handling the more fragile components such as the glass U.V. lamp and its quartz sleeve. The high quality pump motor is also fitted with a ceramic shaft which, whilst providing long lasting performance when properly maintained, also requires careful handling during maintenance to avoid breakage.

Once installed the Power Clear Multi unit is an easy way to a clear and healthy pond. The PT1815 3500 litre model will comfortably handle up to, for example, 30 small fish such as goldfish (15-35cm) provided the pond has a minimum surface area of around 17m<sup>2</sup>. The larger PT1816 7000 litre model will handle up to twice that number with a minimum surface area of around 30m<sup>2</sup>. Remember though that fish can grow rapidly when conditions are favourable. Gold fish can easily double their size



**POWER CLEAR MULT 3500  
WATER FLOW**

over three years and the biological balance of the pond will soon be upset if no allowance for growth is made on initially stocking.

Returning back to our theme regarding creating a pristine clear pond, populated



by colourful fish, accompanied by the soothing sounds of visually stimulating water movement. It's easy to see it could easily become more believable with the aid of the high performance Power Clear Multi all-in-pump, filter and U.V. steriliser. This newly introduced compact piece of pond equipment guarantees to clear and eliminate green water and offers a host of other extras including fountain heads and waterfall diverter all integrated in one compact unit. The high quality of the components and advanced design ensure that with the aid of this equipment, wishful thinking really can become reality.

For more information and to see the video, visit [www.lagunaponds.com](http://www.lagunaponds.com).

# THE TEN MOST TIME WASTING THINGS IN FISH KEEPING

**HELEN RICHARDSON**

**Of Plymouth & District Aquarist & Pondkeepers' Society**

## 1. WATER CHANGES

Top of the list has to be water changes. I don't mind doing these as I find it very satisfying to see all that gunk coming out of my tanks. But they can take up a lot of time and all that carrying buckets of water! In my house, there always seems to be a small child, a cat or a dog in the doorway. Also, why, after all my years of fish keeping, can I not remember to have a towel handy? Maybe I should have placed my large tanks near a window so I could syphon the old water out into the garden or into a drain. Filling a bucket with old tank water is good for rinsing your filter sponges, though!



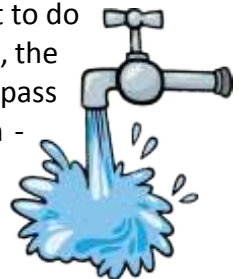
## 2. DOING ELECTRONICS

Second on my list of time wasters, and a personal hate, is messing about with the electrics. I can never find a screwdriver small enough to fit a cable tidy. Then, I always need to get to the wires that have got behind the fish tanks, the ones that refuse to move unless I drain the whole tank down and move it! Even after trying with a knitting needle or some sort of stick, I still end up having to move the tank anyway!



## 3. WASHING GRAVEL

I am sure that we all love washing gravel! I know that it is best to do small amounts at a time but these amounts seem to get larger, the more gravel we seem to have to wash! I have a fantastic tip to pass on. When I was helping a friend, she used a wooden spoon - saves all that work with your hands! Lastly, when washing large amounts of gravel, enlist the help of a cement mixer and a hose pipe - it does work!





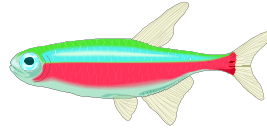
## 4. CHOOSING ROCKS AND BOGWOOD

Continuing on with the 'setting up' theme, my next time waster is choosing rocks or bogwood. If you are setting up a show tank, you may be familiar with this scenario. You may well have visualised the perfect rock or rocks that you require. Then, you spend the next few days, looking very suspicious, loitering around stone walls and hoping that they will fall down as the piece that you want is three rows from the top. If it is very shaky, you could try giving it a kick but be sure you have got steel toe caps in your walking boots first.. Or you could just try a garden centre. But they have the irritating habit of making one big heap, "Oh, I see what I need, there it is near the bottom!"



## 5. CATCHING FISH

The next is catching fish. There are all sorts of tricks that we know like using two nets, but it is a hard job, especially in a planted tank as plants float to the surface releasing clouds of mulm and necessitating a major spring clean and replanting afterwards. If you want to catch all the fish, OK, but if you just want one or two of them, the others somehow seem to know and are quite happy to swim in and out of the net just to wind you up!



## 6. CHECKING ON YOUR FISH

It makes common sense to check your fish every day to make sure they are healthy and that there are no dead bodies to pollute your tank as they would if left unnoticed. But anyone who has more than half a dozen tetras or danios will know that this can be fraught with trouble. Wouldn't it be lovely if we could teach our fish to line up in pairs at the front of the tank once a day to make it easier. But if you find that just one of your fish is missing you have to look for it which, for me, is a time waster which leads me nicely to my next point:

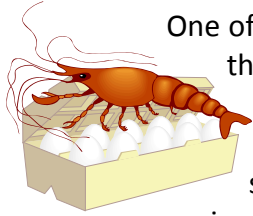
## 7. LOOKING FOR LOST FISH

Looking for lost fish is a chore. Either tiny fish in a large furnished tank or the more secretive fish such as catfish and loach. Sometimes you just know a fish is there but you don't see it for two or three months. Then you get to a stage where you start stripping down the tank, just to make sure it is still alive. The worst culprits in my



tank are a clown plec and a spotted talking catfish. (Shame he does not tell you where he is - Ed). With fish constantly disappearing and becoming shy, when visitors look in the tank they sometimes ask, "Are you going to put more fish in?" I am never sure that they quite believe me when I tell them that there are actually fish in there already.

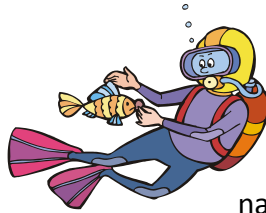
## 8. SEPARATING SHRIMP FROM EGGS



One of the best ways to keep your fish in good condition is to feed them live food. I often hatch out brine shrimp but this entails separating the shrimp from the eggs. Fellow club members say that this is easy - the shrimp will collect where the light shines. Oddly, my Mum's brine shrimp do this beautifully but mine never do. They prefer to collect on the bottom along with the shells. I did ask my Mum to come over and have a serious talk to my shrimps and put the fear of God into them to get them to behave but she just laughed and said that my light wasn't bright enough. (Have you ever thought of very fine pointed tweezers? - Ed.)

## 9. TALKING TO FISH

This is the one that is possibly sure that I can't be the only one to their fish. To me, it seems a Obviously these are one sided conversations (What about that talking catfish, Helen? - Ed). I am thinking of one time, recently, when the Oscar spent the whole evening spitting gravel at me. Was it happy, sad, hungry or what? I never did find out.



personal to me but I am who can be found talking natural thing to do.

## 10. WATCHING FISH

Last on my list is the one thing that wastes more time than anything else and this is watching fish. Is looking at a fish tank rather than a television more interesting, educational and aesthetically pleasing? As I look around there are piles of washing up in the sink, the floor needs vacuuming and there are children clamouring for their tea but can you really tear yourself away from the courting Angels, the flicker and flash of neon tetras? Because isn't that the real reason we all became fish keepers in the first place?



# CARING FOR YOUR POND

## THE GREEN CORNER

Bob Gibbons, Tim Sandall

From RHS - *The Garden*

As the weather gets warmer, the growth of water plants speeds up rapidly so it is appropriate to check that they are not taking over your pond completely. In recent years a growing problem has been posed by introduced aquatic plants, most of which are available from aquatic and garden retailers. These are often incorrectly named and are rarely labelled as invasive. Species marked up as oxygenators such as *Myriophyllum aquaticum*, *M. brasiliense*, or *M. prosperpinacoides* commonly known as Parrot's Feather.

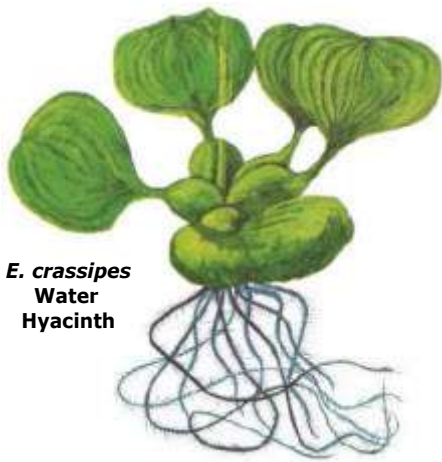


Surface growing invasive plants include *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* (Floating Pennywort), often sold as Marsh Pennywort, the common name of *H. M. brasiliense* Parrot's Feather *vulgaris*, a native British species. First found in the wild in 1990, it now affects more than forty sites, maybe more. *Azolla filiculoides*, Water or Fairy Fern and Fairy Moss is a truly invasive surface plant.



**A. filiculoides**  
Fairy Fern

These alien plants have no natural competitors and few pests and diseases. Where they escape into the wild, they can truly take over, smothering native plants and threatening the survival of native fauna. Conservationists report that these alien species can cause deoxygenating of the water and local flooding by choking drainage dykes and sluices. I, myself, have experienced this in the aquarium with Duckweed covering the whole of the aquarium's surface causing de-oxygenation and subsequently causing the fish to die.



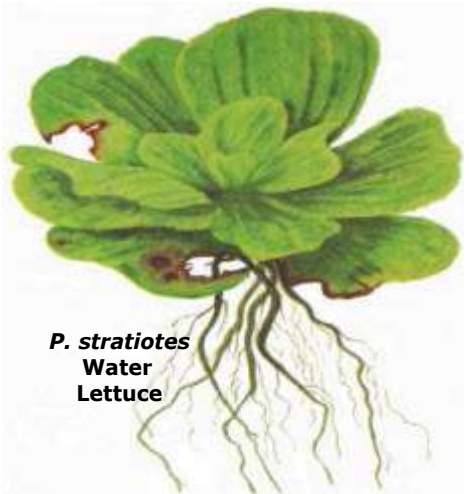
**E. crassipes**  
Water  
Hyacinth

The charity, Plantlife, is urging the government to add species and ban the sale of *Eichhornia crassipes* (Water Hyacinth), *Salvinia molesta* (Giant *Salvinia*), *Pistia stratiotes* (Water Lettuce) and *Trapa natans* (Water Chestnut). At present, these plants are not a problem in the UK but they have serious environmental impact in warmer countries and could become invasive if the British climate continues to warm.

Control of invasive weeds can be difficult and in the UK, no herbicide is approved for aquatic use by gardeners. In small ponds, excess oxygenators can be removed by hand or with a rake. Remove floating plants with a rubber rake or hose them to the pond edge. On larger ponds, a boom in the form of a thick rope can be skimmed across

the surface. Removed weed should be stacked beside the pond overnight to allow creatures to return

to the water. Invasive pond plants should be thoroughly composted, buried or burnt as they can regenerate vegetatively from fragments of a stem.



**P. stratiotes**  
Water  
Lettuce



**P. crispus**  
Curled  
Pondweed

Plants recommended, being native to the UK, include *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (Frogbit) and *Hottonia palustris* (Water Violet). Useful oxygenators are *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort), *Lobelia dortmanna* (Water Lobelia), *Ranunculus aquatilis* (Common Water Crowfoot) and my favourite, *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed).

# GIANT CATFISH

## FROM LAKE KARIBA

**MALCOLM GOSS**

**Edited from a report by JOHN WILSON**

Amongst all of the wildlife found in Africa is the most enchanting and diverse water wilderness, the massive Lake Kariba. Most of its northern shoreline is bordered by Zambia with Zimbabwe along its southern banks. Kariba's charisma originates from the mighty Zambezi River. During the fifties, it was dammed across the gorge in the township of Kariba and, over a period of time, this has formed 200 miles of aquatic nature reserve.

Here, it is an offence and, incidentally, I can tell you it is also downright dangerous, to go ashore. Huge crocodiles bask on the mud and the sandbanks in the midday sun. They are often camouflaged with clumps of weed and flotsam on their backs. Within the lake lie some of Africa's largest fish. Many aquarists are acquainted with the large catfish *Heterobranchis longifilis*, known locally as the Vundu. It also contains the predatory Tiger Fish, Bream, Eels, and Tropical Pike. The lake contains more than 100 species in all. Elephants, Buffalo, Baboons, Hippos and Water Buck can all be seen here. Water Hyacinth forms a marginal canopy for long stretches along the banks.



**Sharp Toothed Catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*)**

As a catfish enthusiast, one is looking for the large Sharp Toothed Catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) found in many parts of Africa. However, the locals were talking about another catfish, very similar to the *Clarias*, that they claim reaches weights in excess of 100 lbs. To catch these, locals use egg sized balls of blue soap, yes, blue soap and big 3 x 2 inch cubes of luncheon meat. We

concentrated our efforts close in around Kariba's irregular shoreline among low branches full of high-jumping Tiger Fish that were hunting *Tilapia*.



Photo: The Express Sport

We could see the movement of what appeared to be a large dorsal fin, just like you would see a shark. Straight away, we lowered the largest net that we had, weighted down so it would sink. I could not believe our luck as this giant of a fish turned and swam right over it. We had no idea what the fish was. We shouted, 'pull', and the net came into the boat and the fish with it. We could clearly see it as a catfish which we identified as *Heterobranchis longifilis*, easily mistaken for a species of *Clarias*. However, *Heterobranchis* has two dorsal fins, one behind the other, where the *Clarias* has just one. This catfish was truly a monster and was about 50 lbs in weight, a bit short of the 100 lbs catfish that have been caught there but a big fish all the same!

I have never seen this species on the show bench although *Clarias* were quite common at catfish shows some years ago. Can you buy one? Well, I have only ever seen a real one at a shop which was run by the late "Catfish John". I asked how much the fish was to buy. John replied, "Well, it's not quite ready for sale yet!"

To all those who knew John, that was the same answer for all of his rare catfish.

# EXCERPTS FROM ROLF C HAGEN REPORT ON THE

# LONDON PET SHOW

## Fluval Aquatics

- The Fluval stand was a major draw, with a selection of beautifully aquascaped aquariums on display, thanks to the assistance of our friends at UKAPS and Amwell Aquatics. A central feature display showcased predatory piranhas, a stunning Motoro stingray and shoals of monos.
- The Edge, chi and Spec nano aquariums were displayed alongside their larger cousins Roma, Vicenza, Fresh and Reef, all stocked with a host of colourful fish and invertebrates.
- We invested in a new gantry stand system for the Fluval and Exo Terra stands which looked fabulous and will be used at large events for several years to come.
- An iPad was set up with full access to the Fluval website and a screen played the latest expedition video.
- There were also plenty of experts on hand, including representatives from the Federation of British Aquarist Societies, to field any questions on fish, aquascaping and aquarium care so visitors could leave with the knowledge they need to start a fish keeping hobby.
- Consumers were able to buy Fluval products at the event thanks to one of our retailers, Seapets, who took a stand within the Animal Zone area.









## Laguna

- The Laguna pond area offered a tranquil and relaxing garden area, including a display pond stocked with Koi and powered by the new Powerclear Multi all in one pump and filter system.
- Visitors could also read "how to" project sheets on building their own pond and water features.
- An iPad with access to the new Laguna website was on hand and the Powerclear Multi promotional video played throughout the event.





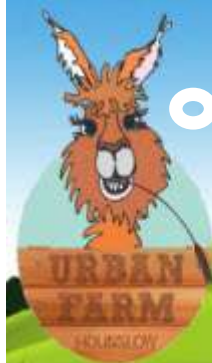
**LONDON  
PET  
SHOW**

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