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# N.G.L.S.



JOURNAL OF  
THE NEWCASTLE GUPPY  
AND LIVEBEARER SOCIETY

#### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Once again, over the weekend, June and myself were on the move. This time along with members from South Shields Society we made the journey to the All Livebearer Show at Basingstoke. The Basingstoke club has long been known for its well organised and well attended shows and this years show was no exception. The standard in the A.O.S. classes was well above average and contained practically all the known varieties currently available in this country. The one observation I made was while the A.O.S. are increasing in number on the show bench, the normal cultivated varieties, (Platies, Swordtails, Mollies and Guppies) seem to be losing their popularity, especially the Guppies, and I hope that this is not a persistent trend. Best Fish in Show was a nice little *Brachyraphis rhabdophora* and Best Exhibitor was Tony Noronha, who is one of our corresponding members.

To the hosts, the members of Basingstoke society, Mr & Mrs Jim Ford, who put us up on the Saturday night and Mr & Mrs. C.A.T. Brown, who provided me with a bed on the Friday night, I would like to extend our thanks for a most enjoyable weekend, and I know I can speak on behalf of the South Shields Society when I say that they will always be made welcome any time they feel like coming up North.

I think one of the most enjoyable things in the hobby is travelling around the country meeting people with similar interests and comparing notes. At our own show in Newcastle unfortunately, I hadn't the time to talk to everyone I wanted to, so as an exhibitor at Basingstoke, I had the opportunity to chat to the many members of our Society who turned up, and even managed to enrol one or two new ones. Don Kenwood was at the show and gave me some very interesting material about *Aneca splendens* along with an article for the newsletter. Also I met Tim Driver, from Norfolk, who has been in contact with the British Museum to obtain identification of the fish we have been calling the Indonesian Halfbeak, and he has promised to pass on the information for the next newsletter. This is the type of thing our newsletter is for, to pass on information, so keep your letters and articles coming in and I'm sure you'll all benefit.

We have just heard from Herr Entlinger. He is very interested in obtaining a uniform method of judging livebearers throughout Europe and the U.S.A. With this in mind he has sent me a copy of their judging standards for *Xiphophorus*. At the moment I am in the process of getting them translated and when this is done an appraisal will be published and comments from you, our members, will be asked for.

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We have received further information about the Longridge & District A.S. Open Show (with 9 livebearer classes) on September 11th, 1977. This Society is prepared to accept postal entries from N.G.L.S. MEMBERS ONLY. Anyone wishing to enter their fish in this way should contact Mr. R. Durhan, 12, Birchfield Drive, LONGRIDGE, Preston, Lancs, PR3 3HP, as soon as possible, to enable provision of show tanks etc.

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#### CONTENTS.

Page 1	Chairman's Letter	By Doug Renton.	N.G.L.S.
" 2	Identification Sheet.		
" 3	Collecting Livebearers in Barbados.	By Joseph Morano.	A.L.A.
" 4	Experiences with the Platell Guppy.	By Sam Croft.	F.G.A.
" 5	<i>Aneca splendens</i>	By Charles Gilman.	U.S.A.
" 6	Guppies Galore	by Ron Hill	N.G.L.S.
" 7	"Oits and Bobs"		
" 8	Trouble	by Gordon Martin	N.G.L.S. President.
" 9	Fish Treats from the Table.		
" 10	Exchange Column		
	International Shows.		

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*Handwritten signature in red ink: J. J. ...*

**QUINTANA ATRIZONA**  
**Black-barred Livebearer**

- Family :- Poeciliidae
- Genus :- Quintana
- Distribution :- Cuba, only found in a restricted area near Havana.
- Habitat :- Still water and slow-flowing streams.
- Size :- Male -  $\frac{3}{4}$ " Female -  $1\frac{1}{2}$ "
- Coloration :- This is one of the most transparent livebearers. The whole body is almost as transparent as glass with the backbone, swimbladder & other organs visible. Both sexes are yellowish-olive with blue iridescence in incident light, with the front belly being a silvery-white. There are 3 - 9 blackish transverse bars along the sides, which can vary in size and position. The middle bars sometimes extend into the anal fin. These bars sometimes disappear, depending on the mood of the fish. The lower edge of the caudal has an indistinct black line and the dorsal has a dark, crescentic marking and a blackish border. Caudal fin is yellowish and the ventral and anal fins of the female have bright pale blue outer edges.
- Temperature :- 75 - 82 F.
- Gestation :- 5 - 8 weeks. Fry are born over a period of days.
- Diet :- Live food, dried food, algae and other vegetable matter.
- Editor's remarks :- A peaceful, warmth-loving fish, needing a densely planted, well lit tank. These fish are very easily scared so it would be preferable to keep them in a small tank on their own and great care should be taken when moving them.

*Handwritten signature in red ink: H. K. ...*  
 Information from "Livebearing Aquarium Fishes"

.....  
 This species is now being kept in this country and the Editor would like to invite any member who is lucky enough to have some of these fish to let us know how they are keeping them, if they have succeeded in breeding them and any other information relevant to the species.

This article has been written from the point of view of someone who had a long standing desire to collect and observe tropical fish in their natural environment. I have always been primarily interested in livebearers. However, my special area of interest has always been in 'natural' livebearers, that is to say, while there is undoubtedly beauty in a red wag platy, or a hi-fin swordtail, or a veil-tail guppy etc: my particular fascination has always been in what the 'original' fish looked like.

The few opportunities I have had to observe wild stock livebearers were always full of surprises. The wild stock green swords I saw had far more brilliance of colour and majesty of form than any domesticated variety I have ever seen. I think a wild stock green sword is one of the most beautiful of all aquarium fish. Wild platies are generally described in aquarium books as "drab olive" fish. However, a stock I once maintained were generally strange in colour, with all kinds of surprising highlights. I tend to see much more of beauty in these surprising and subtle brilliances than I do in the more obvious colourations to be found in domesticated livebearers.

Having had the experience of seeing wild stock platies and swordtails, I still maintained an abiding curiosity about wild guppies. What would they look like? How much and what kinds of colouration would I find in the males? What was the nature of their environment? Many aquarium books dismiss wild guppies as being drab, colourless fish. I felt, too, that there would be something refreshing about meeting an aquarium fish on its own terms for once, and not just through the sterile walls of a dealer's display tank. As a result of all these feelings and ideas, I decided to combine a vacation in Barbados with my first attempt at fish collecting. I had read that wild guppies do occur in Barbados. The guppy, perhaps more than any other livebearer has been so highly bred that I felt that I was in search of a rare and unknown fish - the "original" Poecilia reticulata.

Many aquarium books make some brief references to collecting methods. A seine net is most often preferred to, so I felt reasonably well equipped with a length of cheesecloth to use as a seine, a large aquarium net to retrieve the fish, a portable aerator, a plastic bucket, and for later return to New York, some plastic bags.

After getting settled in Barbados, the first problem was to find where their guppies were. I looked in the Sidgecum directory, and found a pet shop and tropical fish store, run by a Mr. David Gittens. The only livebearers in Mr. Gittens's small stock were some fancy guppies imported from Florida. However, Mr. Gittens was quite helpful about suggesting places to collect guppies. He mentioned two sources - Graham Hole Swamp, which was in walking distance from where I was staying, and Odrington College, which is on a more distant part of the island. Mr. Gittens also mentioned that mollies (Incilia latipinna) were common on the island. This proved to be quite true, and I have never seen Barbados mentioned in descriptions of their distribution.

The following day I set out for Graham Hole Swamp. It is an attractive setting with a long, densely planted channel, leading to a medium sized lake. At first glance, the edge of the channel appeared to be densely populated with endless schools of baby guppies. All one had to do was reach in with an aquarium net, and scoop them out by the hundreds. However on closer examination, I realized that not only were they not guppies, but they were not livebearer young of any kind. I would not have known what they were but Mr. Gittens informed me that these were the young of an African mouthbrooder, a Tilapia species, that had been introduced onto the island as a food fish. As they are obviously extremely prolific, and grow relatively fast, large palatable fish, they are well suited to this role. However, they have done so well in this environment that they have become predators of the guppies, which used to be extremely numerous, but are now much less abundant due to the predation of the Tilapia. Some local (Tilapia) fishermen suggested that some of the small offshore pools might be a good place to find guppies. It was possible to collect what fish were around by throwing cracker crumbs onto the surface to see which fish would appear. No livebearers surfaced from the main lake, but they were abundant in the overflow pools.

The pool I chose to collect at was roughly circular, about 8 - 10 feet in diameter, and no deeper than a foot at the deepest point. The water was a murky orange colour, although it appeared clear around the shallow parts at the edges. The interior of the pool was thickly grown with aquatic plants and freshwater shrimp were common. Large water beetles lived in burrows around the edge of the pool and mosquitoes were all too prevalent.

To be continued.....

In the last few sentences of part 3 of this series, I wrote quite a bit about what I expected to get out of the breeding with a male from an established strain of Pintails and a female from a black strain run by Ron Jones; all Broadtail. The article was written in March 1976 and it is now November. All through the long, hot summer days (all 3 months of it) the young from the cross were looked after, right from an early stage. In their lives they showed the full  $\frac{1}{2}$  black that was carried by the parent female.

The caudal shape soon developed into a type of ball shape, or because that word ball caused some confusion, let's say disc shaped. The black of the body had extended into the caudal completely except for a circle of lime green colour, but NO PINT.

These males were kept to themselves and the female sisters were also kept to themselves and allowed to grow.

It was on the 21st October that I noticed one of the males was starting to shoot out an extension bang in the middle of the caudal. I felt then that the whole experiment had been a success.

Immediately the male was put with 12 of his sisters. On November 3rd, another male showed an extension and he is now with his brother and sisters. The conclusions so far are: definite improvement in the body size, two of the males have body size that is comparable to a Broadtail male. I haven't the words to describe the colour, but it may help you if I say from the pectorals to the caudal it is a shiny blue-black with this colour extending through the caudal with a lime green circle. The females are made up of half with a definite  $\frac{1}{2}$  black colour strain in the body and fins and the other half showing only traces of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  black.

I've put the males in with all the females so that I can take the best 4 out when they are gravid to carry the experiment a bit further.

You see one thing I haven't mentioned so far is the dorsal fin, this fin shape to me is more important than the caudal fin and the two males have dorsal fins that are shockers, they are too long and too thick at the end.

At this stage I would ask Bill Myers what he would do to put back the length and get a nice point.

I know when his Double-Sword dorsals began to reduce in length he would introduce a Bottom Sword.

If I introduce the old Pin strain, I'm sure to lose this colour and I don't want that. The females all have short dorsals, non standard I know, but I will be concentrating on this with the females.

It is now nearly 12 months since I started this experiment and I do know this: I have had more fun out of this experiment than any other breeding programme, I've tried before and once again it has been shown to me that GUPPIES CAN BE FUN.

Who knows, Part 5 may be an article on my success on the show bench with Pintails.

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DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUNG FRY

by George Fensholt, D.S.L.C.

XENOTACA EISENI.

- Size -  $\frac{1}{8}$ " to  $\frac{1}{4}$ " depending on size and age of female.
- Body - Unusual shape looking like malformed guppy - narrow dorsal fin - great body depth for size. Small head for size of body. Spine visible. Fins clear. Sexual organs in the male apparent at early age.
- General - Can be deformed if female is very young. Broods numbers vary depending on size and age of female. During first few days the fry pick off plants and bottom of tank. Growth steady.

AMEGA SPLENDENS

by Charles Grimes, U.S.A.

Articles by Dr. Robert Rush Miller of Michigan University in the "Copie" and the "Livebearers" indicated that *Amea splendens* was first collected by him in Mexico in March of 1955. This fish was found in a tributary of the Ameca River, Mexico. The Ameca river, also close to a town named Ameca, is a major river in western Mexico and empties into the Pacific Ocean. The town of Ameca is about 50 miles southwest of Guadalajara. The tributary where the fish was first found was the Rio Touchitlan which has its source nearly 4200 feet elevation and comes into contact with the Ameca river after about nine miles. The water temperature at that time was from 76 - 86 F. This would indicate that warmer temperatures would be beneficial rather than the cool temperatures we normally feel compliment livebearers. This is a fish that can attain a size of 4 inches total length, which, with the striking coloration, makes it a knockout.

Both the males and females have a basic greenish body colour with blue-green spangles on the side. In the females, these spangles form about 15 to 20 irregular lines the length of the fish while in the male, they seem to form a lateral line appearance. My personal experience with these fish has been that the males and females are about the same size and general body size, but that the male, especially with age, develops much larger finnage. The dorsal fin, which is approximately four times the size of the female's, seems to flow. The earliest sexual dimorphism comes in the anal fin of the males which develops a notch. This notch serves as a modified reproductive organ in these viviparous fish. (viviparous meaning livebearing) The brood intervals are about two months and the brood size is very small, usually about seven. Since it takes twice as long between "blessed events" and the brood size is so small, building up a bunch of surplus fish is a problem. The one consolation is that the newborn are quite large and the parents seem to ignore them. Dr. Miller's laboratory examination reveals that, in nature, the feeding habits of these fish seem to be towards the herbivorous side as evidenced by both intestinal content and the long length of the digestive system.

My aquarium experience has proved that these fish will eat anything but I am careful to include some plant material in the diet.

Dr. Miller stated in the article in "Livebearers" that in aquarium raised stock, the male becomes less colourful. Well, let me tell you that since this is a really good-looking fish in my tank, the wild ones must really be something. I would like to put some of mine into an outside pool next summer because the outside conditions would probably really improve the colour. I did get a summer outside on some long fin Rosy Berbs and the improvement is indescribable.

This is a fantastic fish. The shape is about that of a Xenotoca aisoni. The male has a brilliant yellow band on the end of the tail fin and they have all the good qualities that Xenotoca aisoni look. They don't eat their babies and don't fight with other fish\* A person who doesn't like livebearer fishes would like this one, so you can imagine how neat those of us who like livebearer fishes think *Amea splendens* are.

Being the first person in the U.S.A. to get the fish, I have been successful in breeding them and have distributed over 75 young, sexable fish, which I have raised and this is quite an accomplishment.

\* .....

\* Editors Note.

My Xenotoca aisoni don't eat their babies or fight with other fish, but I have heard one or two reports from members that they can be rather nasty towards other fish. As quite a number of these fish have been distributed among members, perhaps you would care to send in comments about the behavioral patterns of X. aisoni towards other species of fish, giving size of tank, other inhabitants in tank, diet, etc.

\* .....

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GUPPIES GALORE.

I'm hoping that you, the members will help me fill this page every newsletter.

I keep and breed guppies, and I intend to devote most of this page to this type of fish.

I'm hoping to get plenty of contributions from you, the members, but to start you off, I'll write briefly about the way I breed my guppies, I'm not saying it's the only way, or indeed the right way, but it suits me, so here we go.

Males and females are always kept in separate tanks until I wish to breed from them, they are then placed together in a small tank, I must point out here that my first consideration when breeding is the shape of the young, next the colour, and last of all the size. Don't think I'm not interested in size, I am, but the other things come first.

As I've already said, the male of my choice and the female are placed into a small tank, after three weeks the male is returned to his own tank, the female is placed into a breeding tank, she's fed mainly on live food at this time, and plenty of it. After a week or so she usually drops her young, after which she is removed from the tank, note that the fry are left in the tank where they were born, they seem to grow better by doing this. Fry are given at least five feeds a day, feeding is heavy, two gallons of water are syphoned from the breeding tank every day, so I'm not worried about amount of food on the bottom. Any deformed fry are removed when seen, and at the end of a month remaining fry are sexed. After sorting out all the females I can, the remainder are put back into the original breeding tanks.

Now comes the most important part, CULLING, I sort out the largest six sexed females, as long as they have no deformity, these are placed into a growing on tank, of course these are checked every day to make sure I've not slipped up on the sexing, the remainder of the sexed females are culled. If one had thirty tanks per strain, you could possibly keep them all until maturity and then sort them out, this is the American way, but it's not mine. Right, this now leaves me with six females in one tank, and all males and unsexed females in another, all a month old, for the next three or four weeks I concentrate on the male tank, any females that I can sex are culled. When males start showing colour I start sorting them out, I believe that the males which show colour first always have the best colour as adults. At two months of age I make my final selection, I would like to have them longer before making my choice, but lack of space is always the problem with guppy breeders.

At this time I may have eight or nine males left, more or less identical in shape and colour, out of these only the best four or five are kept.

GUPPIES GALORE. (continued).

The six females are now closely checked, if they were a swordtail strain then the clear fin ones would be kept, if colors, then the ones with plenty of colour in fins would be kept. In other words, I know which females I require for the various strains, if any do not conform to what I require they are culled.

If I start with fifty fry, and I finish with four of each sex, I consider I've done really well.

One more point before I finish,

NO PAIR OF GUPPIES BREEDS 100 per cent GOOD FRY.

So if you get a pair from a top breeder, do not expect to get all good youngsters, do the same as the breeder himself, cull all the poor ones then go through them again, pick the best three or four of each sex and then cull the rest.

Although you have four males, pick the best to breed from, remember this does not mean the biggest, but the best shaped one combined with good colours, if it happens to be the largest all well and good.

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In the next newsletter I hope to write about feeding and water temperatures, these two items are the main things which decide how large your guppies will be and how long they will live.

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WHO'S BOBBY NOW?

I HAD A GUPPY WITH A BODY SO GREEN,  
THE BEST DOUBLE SWORD EVER SEEN.  
I PUT HIM ON THE SHOW BENCH ONE DAY,  
BUT BEFORE HE WAS JUDGED SOMEONE TOOK HIM AWAY.  
IT HAD TAKEN THREE YEARS TO PERFECT THE STRAIN,  
AND EVERY MALE LOOKS THE SAME.  
I'M NOT BITTER OR FULL OF DESPAIR,  
BUT I STILL THINK ITS NOT QUITE FAIR.  
PEOPLE LIKE THIS ARE A DISGRACE TO THE HOBBY,  
AND TO THINK THAT I'M A WORSE BOBBY.



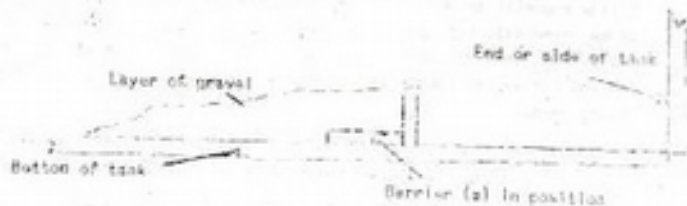
### TOP AND BOTTOM

Some breeders like the bottom of their tanks to be completely bare, some prefer the normal covering of gravel, while others prefer a combination of both the above. For example, three-quarters of the tank bottom covered with gravel with the remaining quarter left bare, this bare end being the feeding end, any food not eaten being easily siphoned from the bare glass.

To set up this method efficiently two 'barriers' are required, (A) to hold back the gravel at the desired position and (B) a barrier at water surface level to prevent any floating food from dropping onto the gravel area. This top barrier requires to be set a little less than a quarter of the distance from the end of the tank.

To make these barriers, clean and unobtrusive, use either glass or clear plastic. A simple method of construction is as follows:

### BOTTOM BARRIER

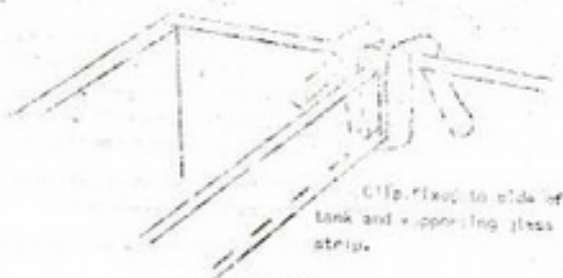


### TOP BARRIER

This is a strip of glass or plastic the length being about a quarter of an inch less than the tank width, the depth of this strip being optional but two or three inches is adequate. This strip of glass spans the tank, the ends being held against the side walls with some two-way wire clips. See sketch below.



Wire clip covered with plastic strip



Use easily bendable wire, but before bending fit some cover this wire with plastic wire-line so that no bare metal enters the inside of the tank. The top of the barrier needs to be about a quarter of an inch above the water surface. It should be possible to lift out this piece of glass/plastic quite easily, so do not make it too tight a fit vertically.

Mr. G.J. Johnston,  
Barton on Trent.

.....

Every livebearer enthusiast has heard this comment from 'ordinary' aquarists at some time: "Livebearers! I keep a pair of *Mollies/Swordfishes* with my fish to give them an extra feed of live food." Well, now's the time to turn the tables on them. Have you ever thought about spawning *guppies* and feeding the fry to your young, spawning *livebearers*? This is what *Red & Blue Pouter* of Alabama do. They find that spawning *3 Spot Guppies* (which can produce up to 1,000 eggs) and rearing the fry to their best youngsters and *nature show* fish it gives them that 'extra' bit of conditioning needed. After all, nature seems to point out that one of the best food for fish is other fish, so why argue with Mother Nature?

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TROUBLE

by G. MARTIN, N.G.L.S.

The first sign of trouble in one of my four foot tanks were the *Poecilia vittata*, (approx 50 of them) all with the shimmies. Also in that tank were six platies, which were swimming quite happily.

After checking the temperature of the water and finding it normal (80 F) I then inspected some of the vittata and found no signs or marks of any disease on them. One main point was that they were still feeding as normal.

The following day there were six dead. After three days I had lost about forty of them. A fellow aquarist brought his Tetra Test Kit over as he thought I had nitrate trouble. This proved to be incorrect, but on testing the pH, it was found to be 4-6. As our local water ranges from 6-8 to 7-0, this was quite a shock. In the following twenty four hours I brought the pH up to 7-0 and I have not lost any more fish in this tank. All this time the platies were quite unconcerned.

As all my tanks are given the same water change (10%) every week and from the same source, I just cannot explain why one tanks pH should alter so drastically.

None of my tanks have gravel in them. The only difference in the affected tank was that it has a very thick covering of Indian Fern, (all very healthy) On checking with the local Water Company they said that the water had been going out at pH 7-0.

I enquired from a water chemist whether an abundant growth of plant could have caused the lowering of the pH. He said "No". If the plants had not been healthy it could have had an adverse effect on the pH and heightened it.

To date I have found no explanation. Can any of our members help?

N.B. Needless to say, I now check the pH, reading every week.

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FISH TREATS FROM THE TABLE re-printed from "Fin Formation", Preston-Galt Aq. Soc. Canada.

There are many kinds of prepared fish foods on the market, but once in a while a lot of hobbyists like to give their fish a treat. Unfortunately in a lot of cases these hobbyists lack the time, space and equipment to prepare for livefood. Even if you do have the above, some people object to having worms and bugs in their fridge. Why not give them some food right from your table. Here are some things you can feed your fish and they will enjoy it.

- Scrambled Eggs. - Highly nutritious but the aquarist must wash it thoroughly to make sure they remove the cooking oil and grease. Use hot water when you wash them.
- Beef. - Hamburger or scraped beef may be fed by scraping it with a sharp knife into the aquarium.
- Liver. - Beef or chicken liver is easily taken by the fish. It is rich in vitamins. Liver can be fed raw or cooked.
- Canned Fish. - Small pieces of Tuna, Salmon and Shellfish. You simply wash the pieces in very hot water first.
- Raw Fish. - You can feed them small pieces, which should be washed thoroughly first.
- Spinach. - This is a must for the vegetarian. It should be boiled and drained before feeding. (Care should be taken with this as heavy feeding of spinach can cause curvature of the spine and calcium oxalate stones in fish)

All these foods except the spinach and beef may be fed in one of two ways. One way is to mince the food and drop bits into the tank. The second way is to tie the food to a string and suspend it into the aquarium. The former method is best for small fishes and the latter is better suited to large fish and community aquariums.

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INTERNATIONAL SHOWS

We have received invitations from the German Guppy Federation and the German Livebearer Association to enter exhibits in their Shows this year, and I hope that some of our members will accept the invitations.

The German Guppy Show will be held from September 29th - October 2nd. This show is for THREE MATCHED MALES ONLY. Females from the strain can be sent, with the males, but they will not be judged.

Fish are to be in Berlin by Wednesday, September 28th and the shipping address is: BERLIN - TEGEL AIRPORT.

HERR. HEINZ GUNTHER VOIGTLANDER,  
HALEMWEG 18,  
1000 BERLIN 13,  
WEST GERMANY.

CALL ON ARRIVAL : 300 52 67 or 334 69 13.

It is possible that entries will be all sent together from Newcastle - for further details contact the Editor.

The German Livebearer Show will be held from October 26th - 30th and is for BREEDING PAIRS ONLY (NO GUPPIES)

ENTRY FORMS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM Herr. G. Entlinger,  
2000 HAMBURG 53,  
Flurstraße 60,  
Germany.

Shipping address -  
4 INTERNATIONALE LEISTUNGSSCHAU,  
HEINRICH KROGER,  
GLUCKSTADTERWEG 75,  
SCHULE AM BARKS,  
2000 HAMBURG 53,  
GERMANY.

EXCHANGE COLUMN

Mr. J. Waterson,  
62, Holly Avenue,  
Winton Mill,  
BLAYDON,  
Tynes & Wear NE21 6GL

Offers - *Poecilia vittata* & *Heterandria formosa*  
Wants - *Gambusia* sp., *Girardinus metallicus*,  
*Poecilia melanogaster* & *nigrofasciata*.

Mr. C. Hewn,  
11, Chandos Road,  
NEWBURY,  
Berks. RG14 7EP

Offers - *Gambusia striplensis*, *Gambusia penzance*,  
*Poecilia nigrofasciata* & *Poecilia intermedia*.  
Wants - *Brochyrhynchus rhabdophorus* & *Phall. sandimnatus*  
*mellicolatus*.

PUZZLE CORNER

1. What is *Nuphar sagittifolium*?
2. What is *Ichthyophthirius*?
3. Where are *Poecilia vittata* found?
4. Which group of fish belong to the same family as Livebearers?
5. Which fish have dextral males and sinistral females?

Answers in next edition.