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N.G.L.S.



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AND LIVEBEARER SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.

After the Chairman's letter in the last issue, I expected to hear quite a reaction from people regarding my comments on crossbreeding, however, I was quite pleasantly surprised to find that, up to now, everyone who has written or contacted me has been in complete agreement with my comments. Identification is quite difficult enough without crossbreeding, and to prove my point, I have included a letter from Mr. Chambers of the British Museum. The letter was in connection with a query over the identification of a fish that we, in the North East, have been calling Glr. metallicus for the last 5 or 6 years. One of our members, Mr. R. Kirkup, bought this fish at a recent Open Show as Glr. eubensis, and as all information available at present suggests that Glr. metallicus and Glr. eubensis are almost identical apart from size, it was decided to send a specimen to the British Museum for identification.

The results were as follows:-

"I have your livebearer in good condition and having knocked him out for a little while, I have examined his gonopodium. I find that its form agrees most closely with that of Girardinus eubensis although it also resembles somewhat that of Glr. denticulatus. Are these fishes alike in other respects? However, that aside, I would call your fish G. eubensis but certainly not, from my reading of the gonopodium, G. metallicus."

This information has brought to light an interesting thought. The source of stock in the North East was originally dealers, who, at different times, have imported this fish as G. metallicus, however, people in the South of England have always been able to grow these fish, especially the females, far larger than people in the North East, and the question must be asked - have they got G. metallicus or G. eubensis?, so with this in mind, I have asked a member of Dasingstoke club if he, or one of his members can take one of their fish for identification, and I am now waiting for the results, for if all these fish are the same, then the size normally accepted for G. eubensis will have to be drastically revised.

This year June and I, along with a few of our local members visited the Yorkshire Festival at Doncaster for the first time, and I must admit that the sight of what must have been thousands of people filling the hall on the Sunday was not for the faint hearted. The Yorkshire Festival is without doubt the biggest show anywhere in the country. The quality and sheer size of some of the tableaux has to be seen to be believed, although I have to admit to being a little disappointed with the general standard of livebearers.

June and myself always try to travel as far as possible throughout the year to various shows and events in an attempt to meet as many members as possible, and of course, one way of recognizing our members is by our lapel badge, (which we always keep an eye out for) so if you haven't purchased one, don't delay, then all our members can recognise each other.

Recently we received a letter from a member asking for more articles about the more common livebearers (i.e. Mollies, Platias and Swordtails) as at the moment everyone seems to be concentrating on the A.O.S. species, and I must admit he has a valid point, so let's have some articles from our readers to even out the balance.

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When the cross to Singapore albino was made, the dark blond body colour appeared on some of the topwords in the F2 and this produced a good line when crossed back to a blond female from the 1972 - 3 grey line, (which also carried blond, so these dropped up at intervals). One male from this cross was first put on the show bench at the 1974 International, won Best Livebearer at B.A.F. in 1974, and to crown his career was Best Male at the 1975 International. He was still alive when I started writing this story in early 1976 and finally pegged out at the ripe age of 2½ years.

Later generations of this line were not as good and since I had handed some of it over to the Purdies in South Wales and knew it was doing well for them, I did not keep it on myself. I had other irons in the fire then, another attempt at albino topwords, so space was a bit of a problem. The blends, at the time I had abandoned them, were doing a trick which I think has bothered other people who have had this topword stock. Males would develop in a promising manner at first, and they got quite large, but they never developed proper swords and sometimes the colour pattern remained very pale.

The next attempt at the albino topword really started in 1974 but to get it into perspective it is necessary to go back to 1970, when Midge Hill sent over from California to the International some nice, red-tailed albino broadtails. These were genetically different type of albino (Midge Hill's Type B) from the Singapore stock (Midge Hill's Type C.) I acquired this albino character in 1973 when, as a result of some dark and dirty breeding, someone who had some of this broadtail stock bred two albinos together and got 100% grey fry. They were surprised, to say the least, and gave me some of the grey fry to see if I could make any sense out of the situation. I managed to re-extract the Type B albino and for a while did some broadtail breeding with it. It behaved much better than the Type C had done, so in the end the topwords were crossed into it. Luckily I had already introduced the shape-neutral X chromosome of the topwords into the broadtail albino crosses, so my crossing programme was very simple, and in the F2 I got albino topwords and albino clear-finned females as well as the grey versions (and the odd blond for good measure). The albinos are now at the F4, both by breeding albino X albino and albino X grey albino carrier. In contrast to the type C albinos, these Type B's have produced few fertility or viability problems, though by the time I had got to the F4 albino X albino there was some trouble with kinked spines and I think that this line, which has produced better topwords, needs to be crossed through greys again.

I have been very pleased with the Type B albino topwords. They don't get as big as the black-eyed fish but the shape has generally been good, and the colour is a nice iridescent light green by reflected light. No mating has refused to produce fry (a common pain in the neck with the Type C) and sometimes fry have been produced within 4 weeks. The worst problem has been cannibalism when breeding albino male to grey (carrier) female, sometimes no albino fry are left. This stock has been passed out to a few people and I am very curious to see how they get on with it over a period of time.

When I decided to write this article it was originally going to be just historical, but as I went along other things came to mind. For instance, these have been very good fish for teaching one patience since the males normally take 7 months or so to get to showing point. Another thing is the importance of outcrossing in this stock. It has always paid off to have an outcross programme going even when the basic strain seemed all right; there has always been reserve material when the basic strain set up. And the outcrosses have added new variety of colour in addition to slowly improving the basic shape and colour pattern of the strain.

I have probably done as much with the topwords as my patience can stand in the 6½ years I've been playing with them. They have had red tails or green tails, lilac or green bodies, clear dorsals and coloured dorsals; they have been grey-bodied, 2 versions of blond and 2 versions of albino. Over all the time the snakeskin and topword characters have been inseparable and they have been staunchly Y-linked. Occasional males turn up with no snakeskin and with natural tails - these could be the result of crossing over or could be XX males. On one occasion I found a female which showed some snakeskin patterning in the caudal and which must have acquired X-linked snakeskin + topword by crossing-over.

What else can be done with snakeskin topwords? I can think of 2 variations in colour pattern and others in basic body colour without turning a hair. Back in 1970 a different Y chromosome gave topwords similar to the basic green strain but with the addition of red markings on the hinder part of the body; and about 1972, Alan Swain had fish in which the hinder part of the body and caudal were standard green snakeskin while the front half of the body had red markings and the dorsal was entirely red. Neither of these forms were stabilized but the possibility is there, indeed I saw fish similar to the first one at the 1975 International. It would be a slow process deliberately breeding for these variants from the basic strain since one would have to obtain partial breakdown of the snakeskin factor. However it would be a comparatively simple matter to produce topwords in the only basic body colours left - bronze (ie: gold face), blue or white - if there was any stock available in those colours

reprinted from the Bulletin of the American Livebearer Association.

My interest is in the Fighting Fish, Betta splendens. Its full popular name is the "Siamese Fighting Fish", as though the species were a unique type as far as fighting is concerned. I recently visited Thailand (once better known as Siam), Malaysia and other southeast Asian countries and while in Bangkok I went to see a fish fight. There I found that animal fighting was not limited to fish, and fish fighting is not limited to Bettas! I also had the opportunity to see public fighting of the Livebearer I assume was Dermogenys pusillus, commonly known as the "Halfbeak".

The arena I visited was about twenty miles from the heart of Bangkok. The locality was something like the far outskirts of a large city might be in this country . . . with a bit more of the rural atmosphere one finds blending with oriental cities. It was not noticeably obvious from the outside just what it was yet there seemed to be no special effort to conceal the fact the something was going on there. I had previously encountered officials who seemed to be trying to convey the impression that animal fighting of all kinds is not a widespread interest among the Thai people. I was somewhat surprised to enter this establishment then and to see the numbers and kinds of people there and the interest they displayed.

I actually observed three kinds of fights there though there may have been more at other times. The principal interest seemed to be cock fighting, followed by fights with Bettas. But there were also fights involving Halfbeaks.

There seems to be a general pattern of preparation and behavior common to most all forms of animal fighting. It consists of the capture or domestic propagation of the animals which are reared and conditioned to be in prime shape, then are trained or baited in ways which tend to maximize what seems to be an already excessive aggressive tendency in the species used. Fortunately, for these purposes, there are plenty of species with suitable aggressive tendencies! (It is perhaps no surprise that Thai boxing is such an exciting and widely followed sport!) When the time for a fight comes, the individuals to be antagonists are placed within sight (or other sensitive proximity) of each other for a time so they may get "ready". When they reach a peak of anger they are allowed together whereupon they usually fight fiercely until one or the other is either hurt or given up the battle. Death is seldom the goal, or, probably the result of these fights. Losers are not valued however, and they may be killed or otherwise disposed of. The winners are those who carry on the fight the longest and with the most vigor and persistence.

Bettas are carried to the fights in half pint whiskey bottles which are often covered with tape or paper which allows only an interrupted view. The owners examine each others fish and let the fish view one another. If a match develops, the two fish are dumped into a suitable container and allowed to fight until the conclusion. Of course bets are made and I understand more may be made as the fight goes on. In the case of the Bettas, this may be an extended period . . . possibly several hours. During lulls in one battle, spectators wander about the arena looking at other fights, visiting or eating and drinking, all apparently normal things to do in this carnival-like atmosphere.

Halfbeaks apparently are aggressive enough that preliminary baiting is an unnecessary preamble to the fight. I don't know if the methods I saw are the only ones used for halfbeaks, but they seemed to be the only one used there. The fish were brought in coconut shells with only a small opening in the end, there was no way the fish could see each other. The Halfbeak fights were not held in glass containers like the Betta fights but in fairly large earthenware basins. These were about 6" deep and perhaps 24" across. The fish were released into the container which held only clear water, (no plants, gravel etc.) They immediately attacked one another. To me it was a bit ludicrous to observe this 'fight' which consisted primarily of one fish grabbing the beak of the other, then proceeding to hang on for dear life . . . bulldog-like . . . shaking the other occasionally. It seemed that the hold would be broken then the other might get the hold. Though I wouldn't challenge the bravery and the tenacity of the fish, it seemed to me they provided a somewhat less interesting fight overall than Bettas do. I also thought that it might be very difficult to tell just which fish was winning. I mean this in the sense that I was unable to distinguish the two easily. I'm not sure that, were I to look away for a moment, I would be able to determine which fish was mine! I suspect the same could be said for the fighting Bettas since the wild type fighting fish have a sameness about them. It happened that there were no Halfbeak fights in progress when I was there, so I was given a demonstration which only lasted for a short while. It is possible that, were the fight to be continued, a clearcut pattern of dominance would have emerged and the difference between the two may have been clearly observed.

The comments of our Chairman relating to indiscriminate crossings of various species has motivated some of our members to put pen to paper and add their comments to the debate.

I was, like the Chairman, really disgusted when I saw the "Poec. ornata". There is no doubt in my mind that the fish that I have seen have all been Poec. vittata crosses, and evidence so far available through observation indicates the other parentage to be Poec. sphenops or one of its hybrids. Most fish show the typical Poec. vittata spotting or blotching mainly in black, but one "female", which was absolutely plain, sexed out after a couple of months as a male. (X)

I have little information on Poec. ornata, but from the photographs seen both here and in Germany and the descriptions in literature available so far, there is no possibility of identifying these fish as Poec. ornata. (X)

I was also presented with some Xiph. xiphidium recently and some turned out to be definitely Xiph. xiphidium X Xiph. variatus. I know where they come from and have ensured that all the stock has been destroyed. In fact they were passed on to this person by a well respected judge who has always been a keen breeder of Xiph. variatus. If he was responsible, then he should have known better.

I have now become very fussy as to who I pass my fish on to, and I think with good reason. The fact is that with something near to 40 species now avail ble, many people haven't the room to keep them separately and the fanatics, as well as the newcomers, are throwing caution to the winds. I was disturbed to find Poec. reticulata (Guppies) running with Poec. vittata in a well known livebearer fanatic's tank recently - and he ought to know better as well - OK, who has heard of a cross between those two species, but there is a first time for everything, and who would have thought of a Poec. vittata X Poec. sphenops. Surely the facts relating to inter-specific hybridisation within a genus are well known to all - if not we should have it well public through the Journal.

Just see the examples we have so far :-

X. montezumae X Xiph. holbrooki.
X. variatus X Xiph. milleri.
X. xiphidium X Xiph. maculatus.
X. xiphidium X Xiph. variatus.
P. melanogaster X P. vittata.
and now - P. sphenops X P. vittata

Don Kenwood, Portlough.

I also deplore the practice of crossing species, even the species the 'breeders' have managed to mess up, mainly Swords, Mollies and Platies.

I am in the process of trying to raise four Green Sword females to a size where they will be certain 1st on the show bench. That size is 4 1/2" according to which ever size sheets you just happen to have. I will tell you it is not easy getting good stock; now if you happen to purchase your fish from a chap who, in the past, has been crossing etc. Need I say more !!

Tony Onslow, Hugglesboote.

SHOW NEWS.

The German Guppy Federation are holding their International Show on November 26th, in Berlin. Entries are for THREE MATCHED MALES. Females can be included, but they will not be judged.

Entries must be in Berlin on or before November 17th.

Shipping address : JUGENDFREIZEITHEIM HALEMMEG,
Herr. HEINZ - GÜNTER VOIGTLÄNDER,
HALEMMEG 18,
1000 BERLIN 13.

Call on arrival : 030/380 52 67 or 030/534 69 13.

Send by Airmail or Airfreight - mark the outside of the parcel: AUSSTELLUNGSTIERE OHNE HANDELSWERT.

Further information can be obtained from:- FRAU SILKE SANDER,
Mariondorfer Dame 116,
8000 Berlin 42.

FIGHTING FISH OF SIM LIVEBEARERS contd

Halfbeaks have always been interesting novelties in the aquarium but are probably something less than good for the hobbyists. They tend to hang near the surface of the tank, often hiding in any floating plants that are available so they may be observed with difficulty. They also seem to never lose their belligerence, thus fighting is a constant danger. They also are poor reproducers generally. New specimens may have a litter or two when first introduced into aquaria, but seldom more. Litters are small and may get smaller. Young often have lower viability. Thus there seems to be a generally deteriorating viability.

Many species seem to be marine or at least brackish water types. Even the ones we know as "fresh-water" types (principally Dermogenys pusillus) may require some salt or other ionic adjustment. I suspect when better studies are made of their physiological and behavioral requirements it may be possible to do a lot more with them. Like many species, they tend to be thrust into some rather generalized aquarium conditions. Like many, they may just not be able to withstand such casual treatment. The potential they have may warrant this further investigation on the part of the more serious aquarist.

Obviously, we have not exploited the Halfbeaks even as much as our fish friends. One last observation of the fish fights may be of interest to you generally. That is that the fish fights seemed to be primarily events staged for males. There were males of all ages at the arena, even quite young boys. The only females present seemed to be workers. Women's Lib at fish fights?

XIPHOPHORUS MILLERI.

by Mike Mansbridge, N.G.L.S.

I have kept these fish for about 3 years, they seem to be true milleri, and not milleri crosses.

Description.

Female:- Drove to brownish with about 5 - 6 zig-zag stripe running from the head to the beginning of the caudal.

Belly whitish with 5 curved, silvery stripes running from the middle of the body through the belly. There is a black line running from the anal to caudal on the outline of the fish. Pelvic, ventral and dorsal fins clear. Caudal fin has two rows of bands like the Poec, melanogaster dorsal. Also black streaks in the anal fin. There is a rosylah tinge in reflected light. There is a small black pregnancy mark in both sexes and the coloration overall is similar in both sexes.

Water conditions

They appear to be very adaptable to varying conditions.

Temperature. 68 - 75 F.

Feeding Live and dried food plus extra vegetable matter.

Feeding the fry Food as normal livebearer fry - micro worm, other small live and dried foods.

Special Remarks

I have kept these fish in an 18" x 14" x 12" tank. I did split these fish up and put some into a larger tank. (31), but they wasted away. They are a fairly nervous fish and tend to lose their shape, so a well planted tank seems to be needed. They have between 20 - 30 fry at regular intervals.

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Our thanks to Mr. Mansbridge for sending in this information, which will probably be also be used in the preparation of information booklet No. 2. If any of our members have information on any of the A.O.S. species, especially, Poecilia reticulata, Prispetil: intermedia, Xiphophorus xiphidium and Xiphophorus pygmaeus, please send it to the Chairman.

EXCHANGE COLUMN

Mr. D. J. Francis,
67, Bligh St.,
Wavertree,
Liverpool 15,
Tel. no. 051 - 7330004.

NEW MEMBER - Interested in obtaining any A.O.V.
species to help him get started.

Mrs. J. Renton,
'Halfbeak House',
146, Chillingham Rd.,
HEATON,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5BU.

offers - *Xiph. maculatus* (Victory Platies)
wants - Female *Nonnaphus celebensis*,
Briachyraphis rhabdophora for outcross.

Mr. R. V. Ison,
11, Chesham Walk,
CORBY,
Northants. NN17 2LD.

offers - *P. amates amates*, *X. eisani*, *P. mexicana* (speckled)
P. mexicana (liberty), *Xiph. variatus*, 5 spot
Portulius.
wants - *Xiph. montezuma*, *Hel. bimaculata*, *B. rhabdophora*.

Mr. D. Cheswright,
2, Cedar Avenue,
WICKFORD,
Essex.

offers - *Poec. melanogaster*, *Poec. vittata*, *X. eisani*,
A. splendens, *Limnugus inominatus*, *Godd.*
atlepinis, *Poec. varicolor*, *Gir. metallicus*,
Xiph. maculatus (Blue), *Phall. amates amates*.
wants - Outcross stock for any of the following:-
X. montezuma, *xiphidius* & *pygmaeus*, *Gam. affinis* *hol*
holbrookii, *Phisipella intermedia*, *Hot. formosa*,
Belandus, *P. nigrofasciata*, *B. rhabdophora*,
Hot. bimaculata MALES.

Now that the weather is slowly getting colder, don't forget to make sure that the fish
are well insulated when sending them, especially if you are sending fish to the German
Cuppy International in November.

A word from the Editor.

As you may have noticed, this issue is one page short - this is due
to the lack of articles from members, so if you have any comments, ideas or information that you
would like to pass on to other members, PLEASE send it to the Editor :- Mrs. J. Renton,
'Halfbeak House', 146, Chillingham Rd, HEATON, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5BU.

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