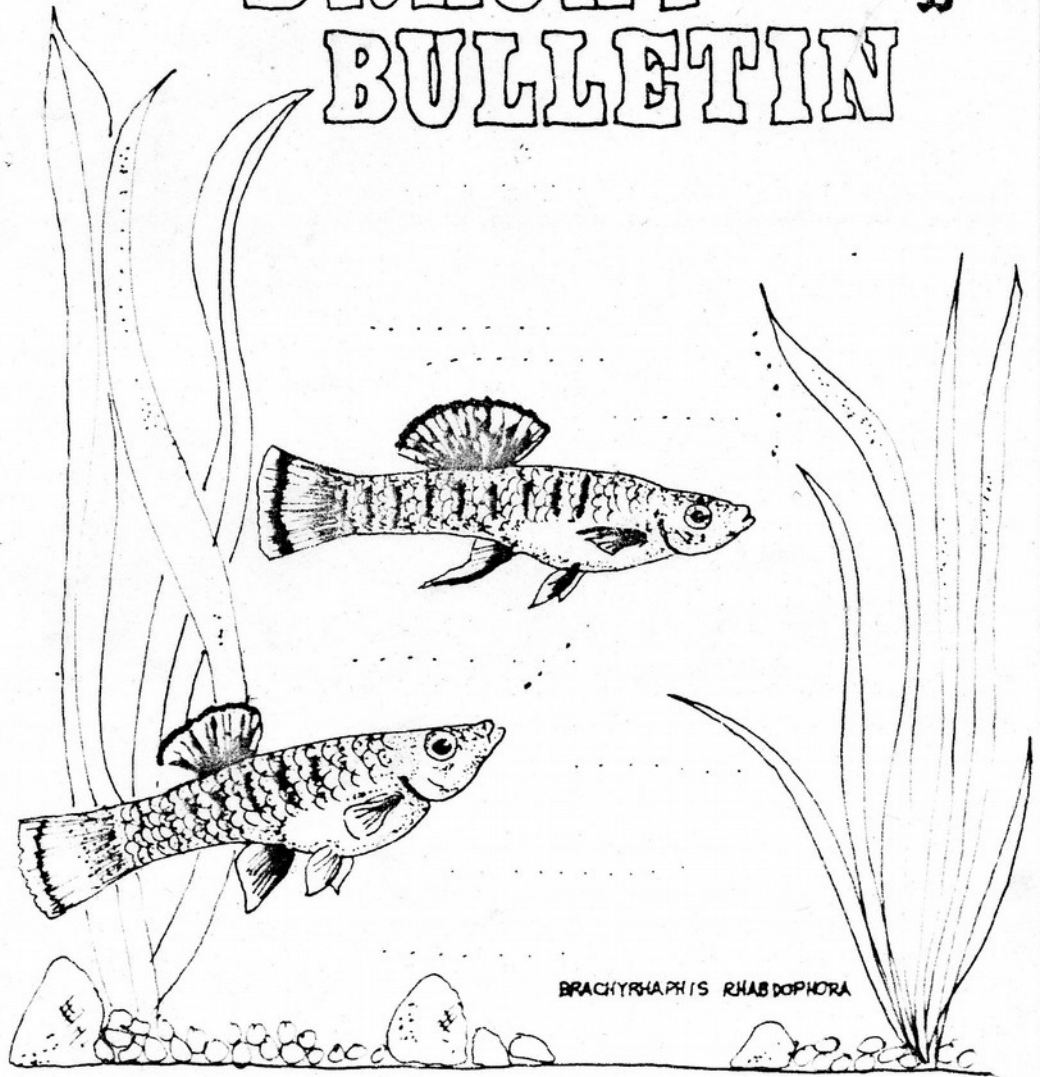


“ BRACHY BULLETIN ”



BRACHYRAPHIS RHABDOPHORA

**S.L.A.G.  
JOURNAL No. 10.**

SLAF-1971-DESIGN-F.H.SLAF57

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ESSEX. " 58

NON-COMMITTEE POSTS

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BASINGSTOKE, HANTS. » 30
- (b) P.R.o. London and Home Counties  
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please make Colin happy and send him your Subs, if not already paid. Annual amount is £5 Adults, £2.50 Juniors aged 16 or under and Senior Citizens.

MEMBERSHIP AND SPECIES LISTS WILL BE PREPARED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE 28th FEBRUARY, 1981.

IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID BY THE TIME THESE LISTS ARE PREPARED YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE INCLUDED.

SOUTHERN LIVEBEARERS AQUATIC GROUP

JOURNAL – NO. 10. April, 1981.

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**You will remember that the last "Journal" No 9 the Editor mentioned the new format.**

format. Well, it did not quite turn out as we had hoped, The single sided element of its appearance was an accident due to the editor's being unable to obtain a better duplicator. One or two wise members have told him since that they thought that this one sided nature was either due to him keeping *Jenynsia lineata* or that he had only received half the material for a "Journal" so that is what he produced! Also on Journal No. 9 the editor was disappointed only to receive one positive response to his comments on *Limmurgus innominatus*. Well done member 4!

We have a reader somewhere! It appears that the Journal is not the only publication of the Society which needs material; the editor is informed by Species Control (1) that more information is needed for information sheets. Members you are the people who know. You keep the things - or I think you do. You do not need to put much down on paper, just the size of the tank, food you feed, the temperature of the water and if pH or DH affects the fish. You may have noticed that they feed in the middle of the tank, or they are aggressive, or timid, or they mix well in a community including various other livebearing or egg-laying fishes. PLEASE TELL!

You may have the answer to many people's problems. Remember we are not all experienced with all species. In the long run you will gain as others may then be able to keep and breed the fish and thereby help you to keep a strain up to the mark.

Members have been saying for some time "What can I do? I want the new fish".

Please give a thought to the keeping of the old friends of the hobby! EVERY species or race of fish needs at least three or four members to keep them. Every new species or race of fish which comes into the country could be endangered in time.

You the specialist fish keepers may well be having a laugh at the Show sizes as put forward by the Federations.

Have a think and see if you can honestly agree with the sizes in "Livebearing Aquarium Fishes" by Kurt Jacobs. Over the years new information comes to hand and should be made use of, not kept as if it were something you would not want to tell your best friend!

As you will read elsewhere in the "Journal" a new Society has started to function and most of its members tend to be members of SLAG. The Editor hopes that there will be no conflict of interests between the two groups as they appear to have very similar aims. Some of the Committee of SLAG have basically formed this new society without the knowledge of either the other members of the committee or the members of the Society. We must not allow the changes which are afoot to disrupt a well developing society. Full consultation and trust is needed on a committee for that committee to function effectually and for the general good. Before you go much further with S.L.A.G. please think of what we are doing.

Remember it takes a lot to get a new society functioning well. The problems of the birth and teething have to be overcome as they arise.

Also remember that the editor did not take up the hobby of fish keeping to become a politician. (There is a new society he could have joined if he wanted that). The editor will have to resign if politics become the order of the day, and not the peaceful hobby of fish-keeping that it once was for him.

From the Chairman..... - .... Dave Cheswright (2)

First of all it is with much regret that the resignation of Ray Townsend (12) as Hon. Secretary has been received due to personal reasons. Thanks are due to Ray for all his work since stepping into the breach early in 1980. Naisby, Noble (120) is taking over until the A.G.M.

We appear to have lost a percentage of Members from last year although some renewals are still coming in. It is a pity that this happens but it seems to be fairly normal with Specialist Societies. Let us not just write off these past Members without giving some thought as to why some of them who seemed to be keen have left us. On the Credit side we are gaining numerous new Members from the newly-formed Scottish Area Group plus a sprinkling from around the Country.

Mervyn (1), Ivan (4) and Members 30 and 52 were at the Motherwell, Scotland, Show early in April and assisted SLAGSAG to spread the gospel.

Our P.R.O. Dennis (91) informs us that the North-west is the latest to form a Group - details later.

The small number of Members able to get to the London/Essex Area Meetings are concentrating on fishy matters and leaving the business side to the main Committees. Stan (33) with others, had a successful day at the Croydon Show, 28<sup>th</sup> March, in his P.R.O. work, and his next efforts will be at Southend, 2nd May, and Medway, Kent, 17th May. He has agreed with Tom (85) that Tom will run the P.R.O. Stand at Mid-Sussex Show, 31st May, as he is on the spot in Burgess Hill.

The Committee of the Southern Livebearers Aquatic Group is now effectively under the control of Officers plus Members or potential Members of The Society for. International Conservation of Livebearing Fishes. These, by the way, do not include me amongst their numbers.

There is a continuing lack of information arriving, or rather NOT arriving, at Species Control. I would ask all Members to look at the last but one paragraph of (8) under our Constitution which covers the "expected" sending of "full details, etc." The word "expected" does not order every member to carry this out and was purposely used in the Constitution when drafted. It was hoped, however, and still is to my mind, essential that a sufficient proportion of Members would comply with this to make any lists compiled by Species Control as full as possible. Mervyn informs me that there are only two Members apart from himself who regularly give him sufficient information.

We found our first small amount of Daphnia in our part of Essex in late-March. I realise that Daphnia can be found in very small amounts even during the Winter but it would be interesting to know how early this and other collectable live foods can be found in reasonable quantities in various parts of the U.K. Is there Irish Daphnia, Gordon (72)? How about Member 158 who is the furthest West we have in England?

Finally a plea which I know our Editor will have already made. Please write something for the Journal.

10/3

As Promised

BARRY BANKS Age 33 years

I have kept fish for the past fifteen years during which I have kept and mainly concentrated on breeding most species of Tropical fish with main interests in Corydoras, Cats, Toothcarps, Dwarf cichlids, characins, and in the past livebearers.

I still have the same strain of Merry Widows that I have been maintaining for approximately eight years. I have only really concentrated on livebearer in the last eighteen months, but have been having great success in propagating the species that I have. These at present run at forty one species.

My fish house contains approximately 125 tanks, ranging in various sizes from 12" x 8" x 8 to 10' x 2' x 2'.

DENNIS BARRETT. P R O U.K. (81)

I have been keeping fish now for over 20 years. I started with an 18" x 10" x 10" and on from there. I now have a fish house with 52 tanks. 99 per cent of the fish I keep are livebearers. Over the years I think I have tried and bred most Barbs, Cats, Killies, Fighters. Our local Club in Yorkshire is B.B.C. of which I am Treasurer.

I took the post of PRO. U.K. at the 1 9 8 0 A.G.M. and enjoy it very much. It also gets me around the country quite a bit.

I drive a Tanker for a living, so I know most Tropical Fish shops in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

In other words I should say I'M A DEDICATED IDIOT LIKE MOST OF US !!

10/4  
AREA GROUPS AND MEETINGS

Several members of SAG were present at the Motherwell Show. The group is increasing in numbers.

NEW GROUP FORMING IN THE NORTH WEST

There is no name for this group as yet, but we hear they are thinking about that.

Y.A.G.

Next Meeting YORKSHIRE AREA GROUP. 3 p.m. Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1981, Thorne Town Hall (Temperance Institute). From. M.18 100 yards on right before trafficlights. Guest Speaker – National Chairman Dave CHEWRIGHT. Usual Auction, excellent refreshments, Table Show. Singles and Pairs (1) Xiphophorus (Wild and Cultivated Swords) (2) Goodea.

LONDON AND ESSEX AREA MEETING – 20th March 1981.

This was held at Paul Mill's address (34). Present were Paul, Stan Furssedonn, Barry IMyers, Dave Cheswright, Howard Preston, Terry Blackmore and Karen Turner. Apologies from Terry Waller and Bernard Meech.

Discussions took place on Stan's P.R.O. work plans. A new stand has been built and there will be displays at Southend, 2nd May, and Ilford, 26th September Shows, following that at Croydon on 26<sup>th</sup> March. Other members offered to assist and to supply fishes for sale to cover expenses and to provide some funds for the Area. Other Shows it is hoped to have the stand at in 1981 are:- Dumaow, Essex, Medway and Tonbridge, Kent, Walthamstow, London, and Basingstoke, Hants.

The need for information for further SLAG info sheets/slides was mentioned.

Water tests were made as under, the others not having brought any samples with them.

	Wickford, Essex,	Chingford,	London, 521
	Cheswright.	London E.4.	Furssedonn.
		Mills	
Tap Water	120ppm.,	440Ppm.	400ppm
Old Water Tank	330ppm.	600ppm.	460pp&

The "old Tank Water" was taken by each from tanks which had not had very regular water changes for several months. It is interesting to note that the smallest increase in hardness was shown by a 48inch tank in which Stan has about 200 *Poecilia vittata* (free breeding). He does, however, have a fast filter on this tank. The water was tested using British Drug Houses total hardness tablets.

Next Meetings:- Dave Cheswright's (2) – 23rd April, 1981.

Both at 8 p.m. Stan Furssedonn's (33) – 25th June, 1981.

**THE SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION OF LIVEBEARING FISHES**

The Committee of S.L.A.G. have discussed at some length the above new society. It is the Committee's opinion that the aims of this society complement those of S.L.A.G.

The officers of the Society for the International Conservation of Livebearing Fishes are as follows

- |                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| JOHN DAWES (S.L.A.G. 53)  | - CHAIRMAN  |
| DON KENWOOD (s.L.A.G. 14) | - SECRETARY |
| COLIN HOWE (s.L.A.G. 5)   | - TREASURER |

THE SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION OF LIVEBEARING FISHES

It became increasingly apparent over the past couple of years that many of the species of livebearing fishes in which we are interested were either becoming endangered or have become extinct due to the pressures placed upon them, mainly by human intervention, in their natural environment and that whereas there were organisations taking an interest in conservation of various mammals and birds, there is no evidence of anyone looking after the interests of fishes, let alone livebearing fishes.

It was felt therefore, that there was an urgent need for setting up a society to deal with this problem. To be of maximum effect such a society would need to be made up of scientists who would work with these fish as well as some aquarists whose prime concern would be to maintain stocks of the species and races in an absolutely pure state. In order for a society like this to work it would have to be small in size of membership since an organisation such as SLAG would be far too big to manage efficiently. Above all, the aims of the society would have to be very carefully defined with the principles involved taking greater importance than any individual. Hence the reason why the society has been set up with a number of officers to carry out the Society's requirements but no committee, all members therefore being equal in status.

It was recognised that whereas existing organisations such as SLAG, NGLS, BASS etc. are doing a magnificent job in their field in coordinating the distribution of stock, - information and in specific studies, such organisations by virtue of their size and membership were not able to fulfil the particular need relating to conservation. .... .

After some outline discussions on the subject, a small group of interested people met and set up this new society in a way designed not to compete with the existing organisations but rather to complement them and to work closely in liaison with them.

In arriving at the stated aims we have taken the definitions of the endangered species etc from the Red Data Book published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

(Contd. over)



The aims of the Society will be:-

a) The maintenance of species and races of livebearing fish considered to be within the following categories as

designated by the Survival Service Commission and published in the Red Data Book by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

- i. Endangered – Taxa in danger of extinction and whose survival is unlikely if the causal factors continue operating. Included are taxa whose numbers have been reduced to a critical or whose habitats have been so drastically reduced that they are deemed to be in immediate danger of extinction. Also included are taxa that are possibly already extinct.
- ii. Vulnerable – Taxa believed likely to move into the endangered category in the near future if the causal factors continue operating.

Included are taxa of which most or all the populations are decreasing because of over-exploitation, extensive destruction of habitat or other environmental disturbance; taxa with populations that have been seriously depleted and whose ultimate security is not yet assured; and taxa with populations that are still abundant but are under threat from serious adverse factors throughout their range.

- iii. Rare – Taxa with small world populations that are not at present endangered or vulnerable, but are at risk.

These taxa are usually localised within restricted geographical areas or habitats or are thinly scattered over a more extensive range.

- iv. Out of Danger – Taxa formerly included in one of the above categories, but which are now considered relatively secure because effective conservation measures have been taken or the previous threat to their survival has been removed.

- v. Indeterminate – Taxa that are suspected of belonging to one of the first three categories but for which insufficient information is currently available.

N.B. – In practice, endangered and vulnerable categories may include, temporarily, taxa whose populations are beginning to recover as a result of remedial action, but whose recovery is insufficient to justify their transfer to another category.

- b) The maintenance of all other collected species and races of livebearing fishes so that the pressure on natural stocks of these for scientific or other purposes is reduced.

(Conti .over)

c) to encourage where possible the reintroduction of stocks of any species or race to its former habitat as and when necessary.

d) To liaise with all other preservation, conservation and piscicultural bodies to further these aims.

John A. Dawes  
Chairman.

Don Kenwood  
Secretary.

**THE BRITISH AQUARISTS STUDY SOCIETY**

The executive committee of the British Aquarists Study Society (BASS) have asked S.L.A.G. to make it clear to all S.L.A.G. Members that B.A.S.S. Is in no way connected with the above new Society.

NAILSEA & DISTRICT AQUARIST SOCIETY SHOW 20th June 1981 - Severn Side  
Rules apply.

Princes Hall, Clevedon Community Association, Clevedon, Avon.

Benching 08.30 - 11.0. The classes as for 1980 Show.

Dr. A. Radda will speak during the afternoon.

Further details Member (4) - Ivan.

Dr. Radda works at the Institute Virology Vienna.

**THE BEST "FOOD FOR LIVEBEARERS AND IT COSTS NOWT.!**

That statement may not be quite correct. But there are not many insects that have fishes named after them even if it's only the common name and the popular brands of flake fish foods now cost upwards of £10,000 a ton. Admittedly you can feed quite a few fish with a ton.

I'm referring to mosquito larvae. Many aquarists, even experienced ones, express surprise at how easy it is to culture.

This is the method I have evolved over the last few years. First one wants a shallow container, with a large surface area, an old 3' tank is ideal except that it is easily broken, or if you leave water in it over the winter frost may freeze the water and crack the glass. It is best sited in a shady spot away from the house. Do this about the time the lawn needs cutting for the first time. Fill the tank with tap water. Mine is about 7.5 PH and 10DH but I do not think this is important.

Get your first grass cuttings and put them in a sealed plastic bag. This biologically breaks the grass down and gives the culture a good start.

When the weather starts to get warmer get a pair of your wife's stockings or Tights and put grass into the foot from the bag. Baking a sausage about 1 foot long and about 3 inches in diameter put this into the tank. The sausage of grass will need renewing about every three weeks throughout the summer; also the water will need topping up, from time to time.

After 2 or 3 weeks the culture will become ripe. Other members of the family may have another word for it! The odour from the culture attracts the female mosquito and she lays her eggs on the surface of the water. These egg rafts are hard to describe. They are about long and about wide and have the texture of the under side of a mushroom. They are usually on the edge of the container, almost proud of the surface. They are light grey when laid and turn dark brown as they mature.

At this stage one has two choices:- 1) Collect the egg rafts and put them in a jar of water in your fish-house or any warm place until they hatch. Newly hatched mosquito larvae makes an ideal substitute for brine shrimp, for the larger fry of *Jenynsia* and *Goodei* species and cost nothing.

Or 2) Leave the eggs to hatch in the tank in the garden where they will grow to full size. One can feed them to adult fishes. But first they have got to be caught. Mosquito larvae are sensitive to any vibrations, so take a net and creep up the garden to the container. (You will be confirming what your neighbours suspected long ago), and net out the larvae.

These cultures are never very prolific but the larvae are ideal for getting the more difficult species into breeding conditions. An unexpected way of breeding livebearers commercially in Florida was to place a Heavy gravid female in a goldfish bowl with some *Anacharis* and as much larvae as she can eat. This idea may even work with *Bimaculata* and *Gambusia* species which are very cannibalistic toward their off spring.

(Contd)

10/9

Before I change the subject, if anybody in the neighbourhood goes down with Malaria

I would get rid of the culture - QUICK!      **Now from fish to filters but still saving money.**

**Don't buy filter wool from the local fish shop. It costs a bomb. Buy it by the yard from a good**

**haberdashery shop where** it's sold for filling Continental quilts, or from Sunday type

markets where they sell off-cuts for stuffing soft toys.      One **more** thing on the subject

of filters. Does anybody know of a cheaper source of activated Bone Carbon than the local

Fish Shop. !

=====

D.G.L.Z.

Member 4 (Ivan) reports that he attended the **A.G.M.** of the D.G.L.Z. (German Livebearer Society). There were very few changes except the position of Overseas Secretary. Herr G. Entlinger was not present at the meeting, and had not indicated that he would be willing to be re-elected. Due thanks were tendered for his work and Herr. H.D. Georg was elected.

The next Meeting 23rd Kay Sandleford Hospital, Uewbury.

The Meeting will be slide-quiz by Colin Howe (s)

Copy for next Journal to The Editor

338 Coggeshall Road, Braintree, Essex  
**by 30<sup>th</sup> June 1981.**

=====

VISIT TO GERMANY

This will be advertised in the "National Fish" Press, as there were not enough takers from SLAG alone.

Further information, Member 4, Ivan Dibble, 120 Naizby Noble, or 33 Stan Furssedon.

### Phalloptychus januarius – Breeding Experiment Dave Cheswright

Several years ago I separated females of *Heterandria formosa* (.Mosquitoes) and showed that far more fry are obtained in this way over a period than are obtained if they are left together and bred as a shoal.

Therefore it would seem that they do eat their own fry. Whether or not the males and females eat them or both, I do not know. I did not keep records of that experiment, but have recently started one with the above species.

REPORT TO DATE 19<sup>th</sup> January 1981 (F = female)

tanks on	F1 8/10/80	F2 9/11/80	F3 All separated into 7x5x5" plastic show 1/12/80
1) Total fry to date	29	12	16 F2 much smaller than 2
2) Largest number 1 day 2		2	7 (this 7 were on 19 <sup>th</sup> December F3 also dropped 3 on a later date.
3) Longest interval between drops	11 days	16 days	8 days
Shortest interval	1 day	1 day	4 days
4) Fry since 9/11/80 to even up	19	12	16
5) Fry since 1/12/80 to even up	13	7	16
6) I have 2 virgin Females, F4 and F5 which I put with males on 1st December 1980. I will now separate these two as well. With all F's it is impossible for us to tell date when F. will first drop fry. Therefore left with M's for a period to hope for truer comparison. Experiment continuing until F's stop dropping fry.			

Notes. 1). No male present

- 2) Need to put Males and Females and both with fry in order to see if any eaten, if possible, which eats them, and how many eaten.
- 3). From the details to date and previous experience I would say that far more fry have been recovered than if left in shoal.
- 4). Do fry in shoal set-up die from lack of food?? Doubtful, I would think.
- 5). Perhaps fry not eaten when born but after a period when they become "just fish" and, therefore, food.

Very little information is available in publications on this Genus. The only useful information in publications available easily to Aquarists is on page 365 of "Livebearing Aquarium Fishes", by Kurt Jacobs, and this in respect of *Priapella intermedia* only, with a colour photograph, plate 25 of the book. *Priapella Compressa* is mentioned as "unknown in the aquarium world" and *P. bonita* as "largely unknown in the aquarium world".

*P. bonia* was first described in 1904, *P. Compressa* in 1948 and *P. intermedia* as recently, in scientific terms, as 1952. For the purposes of this article I will ignore *P. Bonita* as I know of no one who has even seen live specimens.

In 1975 H.Preston (21), with a fellow Aquarist, was on a collecting trip in Mexico and he purchased what was obviously a *Priapella* specie from a shop in Mexico City. He had not before and has not since brought any other specimens to the U.K. From the limited information to hand we took these to be *P. intermedia* and they were known as this until early 1960. Our SLAG contacts with the D.G.L.Z. resulted in our supplying quantities to them of the Preston specie (M1). In 1979 we received from Germany specimens of what they had identified as *P.intermedia*. (I had seen these in Frankfurt in November, 1978). The fry I received from Germany came via Ivan Dibble (4) direct from the Channel Ferry, and it was obvious, even as fry, that they were different in shape from Preston's. As they grew it was clear that those from D.G.L.Z. were considerably slimmer than Preston's. They also showed clearly the white-tipped finnage. In fact, they very closely resemble the colour photograph in Jacobs referred to above. The fry were much smaller than those from Preston's. I understand that they drop more fry than Preston's which usually produce only 10 / 15 in each brood. The body colour of both species is very similar, being a beautiful golden-yellow, with a slight blue on the fins showing only occasionally, together with the outstanding feature of the blue/green eye. I have noticed that the specimens from D.G.L.Z. tend to a greenish/yellow body colour which is not as outstanding as the Preston colour. Early in 1960 specimens of both were given to Jim Chambers, British Museum (Natural History). Jim's opinion agreed with that of our German friends and their specie is now accepted as *P. intermedia*. Preston's being *P. compressa*.

The fry I had in 1979 of *P. intermedia* were not moved at all, but, when males developed 3 out of the 5 had straight-down fixed gonopodia, the other 2 being deformed slightly in this respect also. These were useless for breeding and I also ignored the 2 females in case there was something genetically wrong with them as well. I acquired more *P. intermedia* on our visit in 1980 to Germany and these have developed correctly, although they very often show closed fins, which a slight water change usually corrects. Other members- have far more experience of success with *P. intermedia* than I, so the remainder of this article relates to *P. compressa* only.

Apart from myself, others such as Ken Usher of London and Tony Naronha of Kent, had bred *P. compressa* in largish quantities and it should have been widely.....

distributed in' the U K . However, it was –apparent in 1977 that very few remained. I therefore undertook the task, from 4 females, of increasing numbers. You must bear in mind that broods average about 12 fry and occur at about 6 week intervals. I have, though, had several broods numbering 17 / 20 and one of 32, the fry in that case being very small and the female dying of "old age" shortly after that birth. During 1978 and 1979 I distributed about 300 specimens in the U.X. and Germany, usually in shoals of 6/8 fry.

There have been a handful of Aquarists who have taken advice freely given, as to breeding this specie but the majority come back for more, – saying that they cannot breed them. Not all Livebearers breed "like Guppies". I have not come across any that have been "impossible" to breed but some need special attention and, more important, patience, in order to collect fry.

The way I maintain them and their habits I summarise below.

- 1) They must have clean water with fairly heavy aeration. They stay in mid to surface water near the water flow and facing against the flow. I do not use filters to any extent — indeed at present, I have 3 tanks only with sponge filters in. Any other type of filter would never be cleaned out – my tanks have heavy plant growth but with this specie a large open swimming area is best — so, plants are of the short varieties in their tanks.
- 2) They are a shoaling specie. Therefore, a pair alone are never very "happy" neither is a single fish, eg. a pregnant female. They are attracted to any fast movement in the water, whether aeration, your hand or a net, into which they quite often swim.
- 3) They are very nervous fish, easily frightened, they jump well and need good cover glasses.
- 4) A 10 / 20 % water change every 3/4 weeks is quite enough, as is the case with most species of fishes. If you have the time you could do this more often but the advantages are little.
- 5) If one or more look off colour they usually hide in the corner of the tank nearest to the air stream. If they do this, or show any signs of mouth damage or "fungus" change some water immediately. They knock themselves about in panic if frightened and mouth damage nearly always results. It usually clears completely in a day or so.
- 6) Temperature. My fish-house ranges during the year from 20 to 30 °C, in winter a maximum of around 24 °C. The temperature varies considerably during each 24 hours, particularly in the summer. Space heating only is used. Over the years I have dabbled in many egglayers and livebearers and have never experienced any troubles from this range. My feelings are that many Aquarists keep their fishes at too high temperatures and more important, too even temperatures. It is very difficult not to do this unless you have space heating.
- 7) Feeding. They feed mainly from the surface or in mid-water. They do not look for food on the bottom so have some other species with there which do. They eat both dry and live foods in variety and, being fast moving fishes, little and.....

(Contd..)

-often. However mine are fed once or twice per day only: when available of course daphnia etc can be in the tank at all times.

py<sub>a</sub>-i iy> nf

8) Community tanks. They are all right here, providing their shoaling instinct and nervousness are taken into account - basically with other peaceful species of their own size or smaller. Females grow to about 50 mm, males smaller.

9) Breeding. Males do not mature until about 8 months old. There seems to be about a 2/1 ratio of males to females. Males are prone to be a bit pugnacious towards each other unless they are in a large tank and I find it best to have 1 male to every 3/4 females. Gestation period is 5/6 weeks. They live for a little over 2 years only due to their fast way of life presumably. Females seem to be breedable from about 8 months to 2 years old, when young they produce only about 6 fry, later about 12 as stated above. The total fry from any one female may not, therefore, be much over 100, a very small number compared to most other livebearers. Females do not become "fat" when pregnant: they merely look well fed and the knack is to get used to knowing when a female is ready to drop fry. A slight brownish "pregnancy" mark becomes noticeable in front of the vent. Having obtained a brood from a particular female it is then a matter of observation 4/5 weeks later to see when the next brood is due. Females, as I said, can become distressed when alone and to give them a sense of security I place each one in a large bucket or tank of about 30 mm x 15mm almost filled with plant, Elodea or the like.. - and with aeration. The cover must be secure or she will jump out in fright. When the timing is right the fry will arrive within a day or so. The female is then removed. Some fry may be obtained from the main adult tank but will be few, as they and the adults all head for the air stone area where water movement is greatest.

It is essential that *P. compressa* is not confused with or kept with *P. intermedia*. The differences are not obvious to any new-comer, especially if he has only 1 of the 2 species. Cross-breeding is, we must assume, possible. Several members have told me they will keep only 1 of the 2 in case a cross-breeding accident happens.

Males and females will "spar up" and circle each other with gills open somewhat like *Betta splendens* but without the resulting fight and damage. At this time, in particular, very small black dots appear above the middle of the lateral line in a random pattern, up to 10 in number. These dots seem also to show when they are in very good condition: they, therefore, seem to be a sign of excitement from pleasure or annoyance. When they are frightened or conditions are not right there is no sign of these dots and the beautiful gold colour fades very quickly.



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**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "OLD" BLUE EYES**  
(*Girardinus metallicus*)

Is this another case of a has been, a cast-off old friend, spurned as a result of more and more new species being available?

How many Members still keep *Girardinus metallicus*?

Certainly they do not stand up to be counted, even infrequently, indicating a loss of favour. An even stronger indication no doubt is the distinct lack of these fish at the auctions and at every Open Show I attended last year.

Why? I wonder. Are our "old" blue-eyes newly introduced cousins really more worthy of attention, or is it that they are no longer fashionable?

I have a very strong affection for this little beauty due to a long association, one of the first species I was able to add to my collection when I decided to exoand, and believe it or not, probably the species which started our P.R.O. Ivan Dibble on his long quest to expand the number of species available to us.

Maybe it's pedigree cannot be fully established, but I feel that we should still support our old friend.

Perhaps the decline in interest in *Girardinus Metallicus* is also related to the problem- most people have in getting the best out of its potential. As a show fish early on it was great, good quality fish we found, were not difficult to produce with many pushing on towards the mythical size requirement of organisations like FBA3., for a number of years whilst there- were fewer subjects for our attention. Things went well but sooner or later we, like others, allowed our stock to decline by reducing our attention to detail.

No longer did we give the young fry such immediate attention, leaving them to fend for themselves amongst the hoards. We later realised that to keep the best stock, the provision of space, clean hard water, regularly changed, and great quantities of best quality food like daphnia, brine shrimp, ox heart and peas right from birth were essential to obtain the full bodied, good SIZED fish we expect. Size was still a bit of a problem until we remembered that heat was the answer. In their heyday, we grew the fry at lower 80's Fahrenheit, at a very fast rate and produced breeding teams which & often disbelieved! How well they responded to the extra heat always surprised me.

More recently I found that reading material from scientific papers gave us a hint that this phenomenon had not gone unnoticed prior" to 1940 as it manifests itself in the wild state in Cuba. In his paper published in 1939 entitled "The origin, evolution, dispersal and geographical distribution of the Cuban poecilid fishes of the Tribe Girardini", R. Nivas quoted "Certain populations of *Girardinus falcatus*, *Dachylophallua denticulatus* and *Cr.aetallicus*

(Contd.)

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living in thermal springs grow faster and have proportionately larger heads and head parts.

From the North of England I heard of specimens of their so called Cr. metallicus being called Cr. cubensis, an identification based mainly on size!

To conclude, I hope more members will take this species into their collections and give it the attention it deserves. I have not by the way attempted to describe the fish for members as I feel -that this is adequately catered for in publications including "Jacobs" as is any data required.

Don Kenwood

## SLAG BADGES

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LIMURGUS INNOMINATUS

As far as I can recall, my first experience with these fish was after the Basingstoke Livebearer Show in 1978. I was warned at the time that they were proving difficult for most people to keep and breed. I was very short of tank space at that time, so I accommodated them in a 14" x 8" x 8" tank which I placed on top of a 4' tank, as this was the only way I could keep them on their own. I set it up with a poly filter and plenty of willow moss and hornwort for plant. To my great pleasure they settled down, and a couple of months later, after feeding them well with a daily diet of daphnia and mosquito larvae, the female produced her first brood of 8 fry in this tank with both parents present, who didn't seem to bother them. As this was their first brood though, I decided to take no chances, so I removed the fry to another new tank in my fish room, which I had started building up again by this time. For a week or so, all went well until one by one all but 3 of the fry died for no apparent reason. They would just stop feeding and waste away. I varied the diet with micro worm, sifted daphnia, small grindle worms and fine dry food "I even tried Liquifry", but despite this and regular careful water changes, nothing seemed to make any difference. Unfortunately also, the 3 remaining fry all turned out to be males, so I was back where I started. Some time later the female produced another batch of fry and then died. This time there were 14 fry but they were very much smaller and very quickly went the same way as the first brood.

Now, I don't know if you are like me, but it seemed that this species was throwing down the gauntlet to me and as those of you who know me will know, I love a challenge, so over the next year to 18 months I acquired 2 or 3 more pairs, all of which went the same way.

I listened to all the arguments about "their requiring high hardness levels and this and that pH" but was not convinced they were valid. So I set about doing a little detective work on their origin to see if there was anything in the articles which had appeared in the past which might give me a clue to the problem, as well as asking questions of Howard, and any members like David who I knew had kept them successfully, but nowhere could I find anything conclusive until I took a closer look at the area where they were caught. It seems they were found in only one place by Howard and only on one occasion. On the other occasions he had returned to this spot, there was no trace of these fish. I also discovered that Howard had not returned to the same spot at the same time of year in search of these fish, so I wondered if it could be that the Limurgus moved into this area only at one time of year in search of the abundant live food in the dirty water, and reasoned that this being possible, it was also possible that they normally spent their time deeper in the lake where it was both darker and cooler, coming into the shallower parts only when conditions which promoted a good supply of daphnia and mosquito larva to exist. I also gave some thought to the number of fry produced and this, it seemed, varied with water temperature, and once again it seemed reasonable to assume, after discussing the matter with several people, that the lower water temperature could be a contributory factor to their being a lower number of eggs released in the females cavity to be fertilised, therefore producing fewer but more robust fry, as there would be less fry to draw food from the females blood stream. This would also put less strain on the females, so we should end up with healthier specimens in the long run, and for me this seemed to be the case that the cooler conditions I would have thought could have been brought about at the bottom of the lake seemingly giving weight to my thoughts. It was with these thoughts in mind that I decided to put it to the test, so I set up 2 aquariums of a similar capacity and.....

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introduced into each, 2 pairs of *Limnurgus*, one was in daylight, backed up by a 30 watt fluorescent tube and the other tucked away on a bottom shelf in the coolest part of the fish room, where it's temperature was between 19°C and 21°C this tank had no plants

as it got very little daylight, and there was no artificial light either over it or nearer than 2ft away, and the light from these were shaded off by the structure of the shelving. Whereas in the other tank the temperature ranged from 25° c to 27° c and it had quite a good growth of willow moss. In this latter tank, in the higher temperatures, I found

that the fish over a period of many months hardly grew, and hardly any of the fry they produced were of much use with most being either deformed or having what appeared to be swim bladder trouble. Whereas the pairs in the cooler sheltered tank thrived and grew to almost twice the size of the others in the same period. The fry these produced were also much

healthier robust fish with rarely a deformity among them. After 6 months or so, I decided as I now had a good stock of the fish from this latter tank, to try and change the original parents over to the opposite tanks. This I accomplished with very careful acclimatisation. The pair which had been in the higher temperature and well lit tank very gradually became

much healthier fish in the cooler tank, but did not produce any fry for

8 weeks, when the first female produced a small brood of 6 very good fry and since then both females have produced more healthy young. I cannot say much about the formerly very healthy specimens though which I had placed in the higher temperature and light, as both females grew quite large in pregnancy. One dropped about twice her normal amount of fry (24) these were very small, but most survived. The female, however, did not, she died a few days later, as did the other female without dropping her young. The males in this tank began to deteriorate, so

I returned them to their original tank.

As I said in the beginning, this is just my experiences with *Limnurgus* and did not claim to have found the answer to all the problems we have experienced with the *Limnurgus*, I am sure there will be some who will say that they have not experienced any problems with this species, but for every one of these, there must be 10 who have had problems. Yet with the exception of very few members, the remainder seem very reluctant to put pen to paper and tell us of their experiences, not, just with these species, but with any subject related to our hobby. I know that many people have complained that I do not report in the journal enough on my activities. Well may I remind these people that we are all paying members of our Society so what about some more contributions for the journal from you. Even criticism as long as it's constructive, would be most welcome. Remember our journal, or even S.L.A.G. for that matter is only as good as it's members, because you are S.L.A.G. and if Bernard received even just one letter or article for publication from each of our members each year, then we would have a much better journal. I've done mine, now where are yours?

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## PROPOSED VISIT TO THE D.G.L.Z. SHOW 1981

With our last journal you had two alternatives for a visit to Germany to the D.G.L.Z. Show – one was for 9 days incorporating a sightseeing tour of the area, the other was just for the show itself.

Due to unforeseen circumstances both the place and date of the show have been altered. It is now being held in Frankfurt on the weekend of the 10th/11th October.

Learning from the mistakes of last year (excessively long travelling time etc.) an alternative schedule has been arranged which incorporates some of the 9 day tour and breaks the journey into a more leisurely and enjoyable one.

The revised timetable is as follows

Depart Clevedon Thursday 8th October at 15.00 hours, picking up at points as previously mentioned in the original schedule.

Instead of heading for Dover, we will leave England at 21.30 hours from Sheerness, this will give us a long boat trip when you can have a drink or two (or more) and still get a good night's sleep as the boat has many reasonably priced cabins and does not arrive in Holland until 0700 hrs on the Friday morning.

We will depart from the harbour at 07.30 hrs and make our way to Koblenz arriving there between 1100hrs and 1200 hours. There we will leave the coach and join a river ferry for the journey along the fairylane of the Rhine arriving at Rudesheim at 1500hrs where our coach will be waiting to pick us up. From there it is a short journey to Frankfurt when we will arrive at our Hotel at approximately 17.30hrs in time for an evening meal.

Saturday and Sunday will be free as in the original schedule and on Monday the morning will be free for a trip to a fish wholesaler, or shopping whichever you want to do.

We will leave Frankfurt Monday afternoon to arrive at Vlissingen for a 2200hours departure for Sheerness, with another long restful boat journey to arrive back in England at 0700hrs on Tuesday.

From there the journey home will be as originally stated.

If anyone is interested in this visit, please get in touch with any member of the sub-committee, or send the reply slip to me.

The price for this trip is £ to be advised which includes boat fare, and bed breakfast and evening meal for three nights (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). If you want a cabin on the overnight ferry, this will be extra.

I.H. DIBBLE