

PROFILE OF A GUPPY BREEDER #2

Paul Hotz

A LADIES MAN

Frank Schulterbrandt 11/17/2015



I would first of all like to introduce you to Mr. Paul Hotz a member of the South Jersey Guppy Group. I have conducted this profile in an interview style manor. The last two IFGA shows that Paul has entered, he has not only won in each of the female classes that he has entered but has also won 1st thru 4th Best Of Show in both shows. To me that is very, very impressive. I would be hard pressed to see if any breeder has done that. I was in total disbelief when I first saw the size of his females. I have not seen females that large since the days of the late Robert Thornton. So to you Paul I tip my hat. So lets get right to It with this interview.

- 1:** When/how did first get involved with tropical fish ? and
- 2:** When did you get involved with guppies and how long have you been raising guppies ?

A friend of my mother's - the bad fairy? - presented me with a jar of wild-type guppies and a sprig of hornwort when I was six or seven. The guppies multiplied, the jar became a bowl and, on my birthday, a 10 gallon tank. I soon realized that fish could thrive & multiply in any large container - I grew up in Durban, South Africa - and the backyard was soon cluttered with refrigerator linings, old washing tubs and the like in which mollies, swords, gouramis, platys and, yes, guppies bred enthusiastically. I also collected feral guppies, tilapia, barbs and the tadpoles of the clawed frog in a nearby swamp. Occasionally I would find a male guppy with a longer caudal flecked with dots of color. I tried to breed them systematically, but didn't get very far. Half an hour with a guppy club member would've helped me immeasurably but there were no fish clubs in town. Then I went off to college & gave up fish.

Fast forward 25 years. My oldest son, Alex, asked for help with a middle school science fair project. I suggested testing the effect of temperature on guppy reproduction. We bought 20 feeder guppies at Pet Shanty, four small tanks and four heaters. The experiment was a success; Alex won his division at the science fair, and went on to more exciting things. I was left holding the guppies and I found myself back in the hobby again.

- 3:** Did you belong to any club before joining the SJGG ?

Initially I joined NJAS and kept and bred African gouramis (ctenopoma) but I soon found the variations in the guppies I bred to feed them more interesting than the gouramis themselves. When I went to the NJAS 50th anniversary show in 2003 I strayed into the East Coast Guppy Association show that was being held at the same time. I was awed by the color and sheer diversity of the guppies on display, and decided this was the fish I wanted to work with. I looked for a small breeding project - between four kids and work I didn't have much time - and the males all looked so finished I didn't think I could contribute anything useful. The females on the other hand were relatively dowdy. I saw a female with a bright red tail in with a male roundtail in the AOS (all other shapes - remember that?) class that look interesting, and wondered whether it was possible to breed an all-red female. I bought the female at the auction - there were no other bidders - and I've been working on the problem ever since.

By the way, I met Frank at the show - I wonder whether he remembers? I remember telling him about my interest in female color, & I could see that he wrote me off as slightly nuts. He told me about the South Jersey club, but I didn't join as I worked Sundays. When my schedule changed a year or two later, I became a member.

- 4:** How many tanks do you have and what size tanks are they ? and
- 5:** What are you favorite color / type of guppies ?

These days I have four strains - reds, whites, yellows and grass - and 28 lines. The reds are in part descendants of the reds I bought in 2003. I'm still working on that all-red female; I'm about three-quarters of the way there. I'm also trying to breed all-white males with elongated black pectorals and all-white females, an IFGA -type yellow male and an all-yellow female, and female grass with red and black caudals. Other projects include fixing a line of male guppies with a white body and black fins, fixing a line of pinkish females with some pearlescent body coloring, and a line of guppies with very short fins and jewel-like body coloring. My fish are crammed into 28 tanks - mostly 20s but with six 10s and five of 30 or above - which requires doubling up, tripling and even on occasion quadrupling. It's not the most efficient system - Rube Goldberg would be very proud of me - but I hope to upgrade soon.

- 6:** How many times a day do you feed your guppies and what do you feed them ? and
- 7:** What is your water maintenance routine and your lighting system (how long the lights are on / off) ?

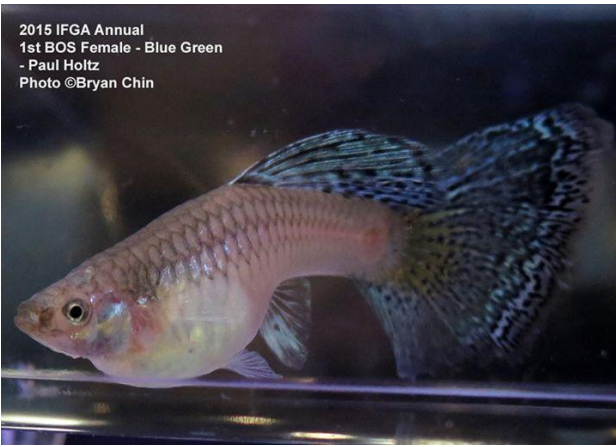
I feed two or, preferably, three times a day. I feed Ken's flakes in the morning along with decap brine shrimp eggs, more Ken's flakes in the afternoon if I'm around, & baby brine in the evening. I try to do 90% water changes once a week, but more often than not I'm only able to make the changes every second week. I keep the lights on 13 to 14 hours a day.

- 8:** What do you do to get your females so large ?

It's a mystery to me as to why my females seem large than usual. (The very big ones are only around three inches long.) I did not set out to breed large guppies - I use size only as a tiebreaker when picking breeders. There's nothing out of the ordinary about my guppy-raising practices. I think it probably boils down to this: I keep more elderly guppy females than most other breeders. I have two tanks of "reference" fish, one of males and one of females, all retired breeders that I refer to, along with my notes on selection criteria, when picking new breeders. There are usually 20 to 30 fish in the female tank at any one time, and it is from these that I pick show fish.

It's worth noting that the show fish are usually more than a year old: female guppy fertility seems to peak at about six months, and to decline sharply thereafter. It's rare for a fish more than eight or nine months old to produce fry. At their fertility tapers off, the fish usually go through a growth spurt - the energy that once went into reproduction goes into body size. There are sometimes other hormonal changes too - in some strains, there's a marked increase in fin length. Color can intensify too, though in some red strains it fades as the fish gets larger.

It's also worth noting that few if any of these females appear to die of old age. Most eventually suffer from what appears to be a form of osteoporosis and have to be euthanized. If we were to become experts in guppy geriatrics and were able to treat such conditions and keep the fish alive longer - we've all heard that guppies never really stop growing - we might be able to breed a four-inch female guppy. After all, the largest domestic guppy males must be at least three or four times longer than their wild counterparts, while domestic females are only twice as long. There's definitely room to grow!



And taking nothing away from Paul, he also raises nice male guppies too.



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