

Green Swordtail

Xiphophorus helleri

By John Moyles

The green swordtail is a species of fish in the family Poeciliidae of order Cyprinodontiforms. It is a livebearer, like its close relative the platy (*X. maculatus*) and it can cross breed with it. It is native to North and South America with a range from Southern Mexico to Honduras.



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Description

Males are slender and have a long sword shaped caudal fin extension formed by the lowermost eight fin rays. Females are stockier in build. In both sexes, the upper-side is olive-green the sides are yellow-green highlighted with brown edges. A dark stripe runs from the nose, through the eye, down the length of the body and in males along the top and bottom of the 'sword'. Also on the sides near this stripe is an area of iridescent light green bordered in red.

Feeding

They are omnivorous in the wild and feed on insects, detritus, algae and plants. Flakes and pellets should make up the bulk of their diet and should be supplemented with live, frozen and freeze dried foods.

Breeding

Swordtails are a livebearing toothcarp that belong to the family Poeciliidae. It shares this family with its close cousins; mollies, guppies and swordtails. Males can be identified by their tubular "gonopodium" which is a modified anterior portion of the anal fin. Females have a triangular shaped anal fin. Place two or three females with a male and breeding should take place almost immediately. Females give live birth 24 to 30 days later and should be separated into a "breeder box" when she is close to her due date. Babies are born fully formed and need no additional care other than very small foods such as powdered flake foods. Females can store sperm for several months.

Habits

Platies are a very peaceful fish and make great tankmates for similar sized "community" fish. Keep more females than males to reduce pestering.