



## The inclusion of a species in the ‘Catalogue’ automatically carries with it a ban on import, export, sale and (even) possession

Even a mere cursory glance at the list will reveal some fundamental flaws and beg some questions. For example, *Gambusia holbrooki* is listed. If so, why not *G. affinis*, which is so similar as to be only distinguished from it by experts? Then, what’s *Pterois volitans* doing on the list? Was it included because of its invasiveness along American coasts? If so, why not include the extremely similar *P. miles* as well?

I would not wish to be misinterpreted. I, along with my colleagues in the industry, support the control of invasive alien (exotic) species (IAS). However, we would argue that IAS lists should be based on good science and be as reasonable and workable as possible.

It is this that is now raising further concerns within the industry, following the announcement that Spain plans to extend its ‘Catalogue’ of fish species by adding a further 18 entries, which, in effect, could total over 260 species, since some of the genera proposed for listing are large (see below). Again, the concern is not specifically about the intention to expand the list, if the proposed species warrant inclusion, but, rather, about some of the actual species that are being considered.

If the above list is flawed and controversial, and open to debate, the new proposed list of additions is much worse. The full proposed listing of fish species is as follows (but there are also a couple of corals, several shrimps and one reptile pencilled in for inclusion):

<i>Arapaima gigas</i>	Arapaima or pirarucu
<i>Carassius spp</i>	Goldfish and its relatives – 6 species
<i>Cichla spp</i>	Peacock cichlid and its close relatives – 15 species
<i>Colossoma macropomum</i>	Pacu
<i>Pterygoplichthys spp</i>	Genus of ‘pleco’ suckermouth catfish with 16 species
<i>Oryzias latipes</i>	Medaka or rice fish
<i>Osphronemus goramy</i>	Giant gourami
<i>Pygocentrus nattereri</i>	Red-bellied piranha
<i>Siganus spp</i>	Rabbitfishes – genus with 29 species
<i>Hypophthalmichthys spp</i>	Silver carps – 3 species
<i>Poecilia spp</i>	Genus embracing guppies, mollies and their relatives – 40 species
<i>Potamotrygon falkneri</i>	Largespot river stingray
<i>Potamotrygon motoro</i>	Motoro or South American freshwater stingray
<i>Ctenopharyngodon idella</i>	Grass carp
<i>Hypostomus spp</i>	Genus of ‘pleco’ suckermouth catfish with 148 species
<i>Tanichthys albonubes</i>	White Cloud Mountain minnow
<i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>	Southern or moon platy
<i>Xiphophorus hellerii</i>	Swordtail

Of course, one would assume that the Spanish authorities are in possession of appropriate, credible evidence for listing all of these species without exception. We would also, quite naturally, expect them to be able to present these data for review and discussion with all stakeholders. We therefore await such documentation with great interest, to put it mildly!

The new list raises countless questions. Why, for example, list the goldfish when it’s already been present in Spanish waters for around 400 years (introduced during the period 1600 – 1699) and has long been naturalised within the country? Why list whole genera, irrespective of the characteristics of the individual species concerned? Why on earth list the giant gourami if – with a temperature range of 20-30°C (Fishbase.com) - it appears that it can’t survive Spanish winters? And so on...

Obviously, space doesn’t allow me to discuss each individual entry, so I’ll concentrate, albeit briefly, on just two genera which are of fundamental importance to the ornamental aquatic industry: *Poecilia* and *Xiphophorus*, i.e. guppies, mollies and their relatives, along with swordtails, platies and their relatives.

Such listing would, obviously, hit the Spanish sector very hard, but such action could also have much wider pan-European implications if other EU Member States were to follow suit. And... in any case... can a coherent case be advanced for including all 40 *Poecilia spp...* or even one? At the moment, the two *Xiphophorus* species being mentioned are *X. maculatus* – the southern or moon platy, and *X. hellerii* – the swordtail.

Bearing in mind that the temperature range for *X. maculatus* is given as 18-25°C and that for *X. hellerii* as 22-28°C (Fishbase.com) how can such inclusions be justified when both species will not be able to survive Spanish winter temperatures, not even in southern Spain? I live in Spain’s southernmost and warmest region (Andalucía) and the temperature of the water in my pond drops to 8°C, or even lower, during January and February every year, meaning that neither the moon platy nor the swordtail would stand an earthly chance of surviving from one season to the next.

As far as *Poecilia* species are concerned, Fishbase.com gives the temperature range for the guppy (*P. reticulata*) as 18-28°C. If we take into consideration the fact that the guppy is one of the hardiest, if not *the* hardiest, species in the genus, and that it can’t survive Spanish winter temperatures, this must, surely, cast considerable doubt on the wisdom of the proposed listings.

Obviously, AEDPAC – the Spanish pet trade association - with support from Ornamental Fish International (OFI), are holding talks with the Spanish authorities to try and avoid what could turn out to be a major, disastrous and unwarranted setback for the Spanish sector and, probably, the whole of the European ornamental aquatic trade. ■

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