

Elegans Newsletter

Notes from the „*elegans* study-group“ of the DKG

No. 6, December 2002

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Dear Elegans friends,

just in time I was able to prepare the new ENL. As usual, the english translation was made in a hurry and I would like your apologies for the rough and dirty stuff I am presenting here. however, I hope you understand what I mean and that is important.

First of all, I am very happy to tell that nearly all of you have send their fish list. This is a very important step towards getting an overview on the status of the species and populations presently available in the hobby. Such an overview is an essential prerequisite for further steps in the direction of species maintenance. As you all probably know, species maintenance is one of my special interests in the killi hobby and especially in the elegans-group of species. Further activities in this regard are becoming more and more shape and this is only possible due to your repeated and continuous help, especially your fish listings for the ENL. This listing is becoming the stable base on which we can found further decisions and develop actions. And this what should come next: action.

1. News

Unfortunately, I have to tell that some members quit:

Dennis and Lynn Haggerty (DKG 703) (they remain on the recipients list)

Alexey Rak (DKG 449)

Steffen Riese (DKG 688)

Thøger Harder (SKS)

The following members lost their elegans-species and therefore will not be listed as members any more:

Daniel Gezy
Harald Hoelzer (remains on the recipients list)
Joe Weber

Repeatedly no response came from:

Anthony Conrad (KCF)
Bill Drake (BKA)
Allen McNeally (AKA)
Toni Pinto (DKG 758)

They will be removed from the members list.

Really hard for us is the dropping out of the Haggertys. Dennis and Lynn have been active and enthusiastic elegans-breeders for years. They have always been helpful to others in giving away every requested fish they could afford. We will for sure realize their leaving but I hope that we will be able to fill the gap they left - sooner or later. However, I want to give all my thanks to both of them for the long time they joined us in breeding elegans-group fish. Without their help, I am sure we had lost many of the populations currently in the hobby years ago.

Horst Tomczyk is now online: Tomczykmartha@freenet.de

The species maintenance list will be prepared just twice a year in the future by Juergen Heidler. The dates will be March, 1st and Sept. 1st. Accordingly, the ENL will be published March, 15th and Sept. 15th each year. The main reason for this change is that by doing so we all should have a actual list of available populations at hand in spring and fall, just when most of the stock exchanges will be made. If there occur major changes in someones stocks between these dates, please feel free to contact Juergen Heidler to inform him or use the online database table at

<http://de.groups.yahoo.com/group/elegans/database?method=reportRows&tbl=1>

After the introduction of the „Boende 2002“-Population of *A. elegans* by Armand van Deun earlier this year (see announcement in ENL 5, 2002). Uli Schliewen was able to import two additional populations from the DRC in fall

this year. However, we still have problems in identifying these strains (see chapter 3 this issue). Both of them deserve our greatest thanks for bringing these fish to Europe and to the DKG. While the fishes Armand brought are already somewhat established in the DKG, this is currently not the case for the fishes Uli brought. I hope this will change soon and I'll do my very best.

2. Looking for *A. elegans* in the Congo

Report of Armand van Deun

Preface A. Schwekendiek:

Armand Van Deun was lucky to visit the region around Boende, DRC, in June this year and even luckier could bring some fish from there and distribute them in the DKG and elsewhere. Here, I will show you an excerpt of a personal email he sent me and for which he gave me the permission to publish it in the ENL and the DKG-Journal. The following text is an original part of this email without further editing. A more shaped version of this report will be published soon in the DKG-Journal by Heinz Ott.

“These elegans are probably the same as those brought from Boende in the sixties by Lambert, and which I remember from W. Wachters tanks some 25-30 years ago. I looked also (but without taking enough time, too much pressed) on the road from Mbandaka to Bikoro (terra typica), and Bikoro to Itipo (Ingende endpoint). They must have been there, but I didn't try the right places and didn't see any Aphyosemion (but there were Epiplatys, a kind of Aplocheilichthys with orange borders of the caudal and many brownish red spots on the body which may be new, never saw its picture, and also some Plataplochilus like fishes). It was end of the rainy season, waterholes everywhere, difficult to pick the right ones. They seemed not to be in the small rivers (bridges), probably the adults will descend there only in the dry season. The people said it was not the time for fishing, should have been plenty of fish in July or so.

In Boende I first tried with a local man since I had to work the whole day in the hospital. Gave him the

nets and bags, explained what I wanted. Apparently he didn't get it, since he came back with 12-15 cm long *Hemichromis*, catfish and lots of *Ctenopoma* (ansorgei and another one), probably from the main river. He was going to try again the next day, so I left him my gear. That day we went on a visit to Yaa health center, 40 km from Boende on motorcycle. On an afterthought I took the remaining net (very small and shallow, took it to catch black mosquitolarvae in Kinshasa!) and the two plastic bags that were left. Going there we crossed several small rivers in the forest, and the people at Yaa said there were these fishes around but it would take a few days to catch them (they had to send the women in the morning!). There was very little time, but on the way back we stopped at the first of these bridges. In fact it was a low area, several small rivers and bridges at a few hundred meters apart with lots of waterholes in between under the trees. Probably secondary forest already, but still lots of shade. The well-known very clear coffee-water in river as well as these holes. Now we went first for the waterholes, but the first ones had no fish except for one small catfish. Then the river, almost no fish again except Congo-type characins in the strongest current. I had already decided to go on for the next river, when I saw a few waterholes on the other side of the road very near to the river. Full of fallen leaves, nothing else. The first one was maybe 30-40 cm deep, and from far I saw what was unmistakably a big *Aphyo* female hanging at the surface, long shape, tail and end of body hanging down, so could be *elegans*. She disappeared immediately of course, and I couldn't see others. The water was too big and deep for our small net, so I looked in the hole besides. This was only 2 m long and one meter wide, 5-10 cm of water (but maybe 20 cm of leaves on the bottom). I was not sure but thought I saw some small fish going into hiding. My driver had already proven to be the best fishcatcher and went in it. Within a few minutes he had a two cm long fish, in the bag clearly an *Aphyo* young female. Then it went on, next was already a young male of what had

to be *elegans*. The hole which had looked unpromising at first proved to be full with them, he went on and on and sometimes brought out 4-5 at once from under the leaves. Bit of a problem with the small net, quite a few especially bigger ones jumped out right away. Finally I had to make him stop, since I had only two small bags and still 35 km ahead on motorcycle plus ? time before they could be put up properly. All in all he got 29, and as it turned out none died and I had 14 pairs plus probably one female, perfect!

There were no other fish at all with these youngsters, but it is clear that they had sought this shallow hole when there was more water and probably connected with the other one where the big one was seen. Also there no other fish visible. They may come in contact with them only in dry season when the survivors reach the river itself. (I caught some young almost adult *christyi* in June 1994 near Kisangani, small river where they were hiding in shallow areas on the sides under leaves.) Another waterhole on the same spot contained the *Epiplatys* which H. Ott took (my driver, now very enthusiastic since he had already realised he had got me happy and willing to give a good reward, had wandered off there when I was already closing the bags and had taken them for more *Aphyosemion*; when I saw they were not, I made him stop). There may very well have been more species of fish in that river, but we didn't try even too look for them.

The fellow we had sent again to fish had been discouraged, hadn't even gone. Good I did a last try after all!

The place was some 35 km from Boende road to Yaa (south from Boende?). This is the Tshuapa river system. It was 1PM at noon on 22/5/02 when we caught them. They were all young fish (not a single adult was caught in that hole), around 2-3 cm long.

Next day we returned to Mbandaka over the main river in a speedboat, 12 hours, fish in bags about 7-9 each bag. Two nights in Mbandaka, rather hot hotel room, I was afraid. But I had taken 5 plastic shallow 1-liter boxes with lid from home. So everywhere I spent one or more nights, I put the fish in these boxes, at the same time mixing fresh water. Lids went on loosely (but taking care not to leave any real gap) to make exchange of gases and evaporation possible, I could even feed a bit (ants from my room in Mbandaka, the small scorpion I encountered there as well was still too big!; black mosquito-larvae and daphnia from the ditch in front of the house in Kinshasa, plenty of them). I think this was a very good system, except that I had to cover them with a big black bag to stop the jumping. They didn't like the white bare boxes, and then they saw the light coming in under the lid as their target. I could hear them jump almost continuously, and several times one was clinging to the lid for minutes.”

So far Armands report. His fishes survived the trip to Europe and could be distributed among breeders in the DKG, BKV and KFN. In the DKG, we have recently distributed the fish to five breeders. Some of the breeders already have some fry and others have sexed out fishes of the F1-generation. I received a couple of eggs from Hans-Juergen Blum in early September and they sexed out in November. The two pairs that raised from the eggs produced eggs themselves recently – just three months after hatching! We are all of good hope being able to establish this strain in the hobby. Maybe, we can distribute the strain further in spring next year. I am of good hope we will.

The photos below were taken by Heinz Ott, who photographed the wild imports. Thanks Heinz for the wonderful photos.



Aphyosemion elegans „Boende 2002“
(Heinz Ott, DKG 360)

Wild male of *A. elegans* „Boende 02“ (photo: Heinz Ott)



Aphyosemion elegans „Boende 2002“
(Heinz Ott, DKG 360)

Wild male of *A. elegans* „Boende 02“ (photo: Heinz Ott)

Please feel free to redistribute the photographs as long as the author and the population name are included.

3. Introduction of two additional *elegans* populations from the Congo by Dr. Ulrich Schliewen

Uli Schliewen from the Zoologische Staatssammlung München was lucky to make a trip to the DRC in late summer. Besides other fishes, he could also bring two populations of fishes that might belong to the *elegans*-group. He took the following photographs:



Blue form of location „Lompolé, Prov. Bandundu, DRC ». This form was not imported.



Red form of location „Lui Kotale, Prov. Bandundu, DRC”. The picture is not very sharp. However, this form looks nearly identical to the „Boende 2002“ form.



Yellow form of laocaton "km14 near Inongo, Prov. Bandundu, DRC“

Both forms are now in my possession. However, I just received 5 individuals of each of the populations (2/3 and 1/4 , respectively), which I got from Dirk Ude who kept them for a while after the import. Both gave eggs in the meantime, but just a few so far. If, based on the above photographs, somebody could make any suggestions on the identity and correct taxonomical grouping of these populations, I would be extremely glad to receive your notes. The red form might indeed be *A. elegans*, but how about the blue and yellow form? Any suggestions?

4. Species List

Hans-Juergen Blum made the suggestion to include a column for the number of available fishes. I included this column and would be happy if all of you could add the required information next time.

Ident-No.	Species – Population	Number (m/f)	Breeder
427	<i>A. chauchei</i> „Masèpe“	safe 1/1(+) (+) 12/16(+)	Blum Okada Pietz Tuerk Wagner
4249	<i>A. chauchei</i> „Obeya“, RPC 91/6		Haggerty Ott
430	<i>A. chauchei</i> „Oltombo“, RPC Z 96/5	critical not for distribution 5/6(+)	Blum Haggerty Kraska Lehmann Ott Wagner
432	<i>A. christyi</i> “alter DDR Stamm”	5/5(+)	Heidler Wagner
437	<i>A. christyi</i> „HZ 85/8“	safe 1/3 not for distribution 1/1 (old) endangered(+) 1/1	Blum Haggerty Kaempf Kraska Kurachi Lehmann Ott Tomezyk Tuerk Ude
3993	<i>A. christyi</i> “HZ 85/20”	degenerate(+) 1/3	Tuerk Wagner

436	A. christyi “HZ 85/22”	2/2 not for distribution	Kaempff Kraska
	A. christyi “Kinshasa”		Okada
499	A. cognatum “Z 82/2”	2/12(+)	Haggerty Heidler Wagner
500	A. cognatum “Gilima”, Z 91/3		Haggerty Ott
484	A. cognatum „Kenge“, CI Z 93		Haggerty Ott
489	A. cognatum “Kinshasa”		
1381	A. cognatum „Madimba“	3 juveniles 3/3(+) 10/25(+) (+)	Okada Pelletier Pietz Schwekendiek Tuerk
1441	A. spec. aff. cognatum “Lake Fwa”	safe 3/2 2/2 20/20(+) (+)	Blum Haggerty Kaempff Kurachi Lehmann Okada Ott Puetz Roßkopf Schwekendiek Tuerk
	A. cognatum “Kinsuka”, WF 2001	safe	Blum
490	A. cognatum “Kinsuka”	2/6 2/2(+)	Puetz Ude Wagner
	A. cognatum „Kwambila“		Blum
4251	A. cognatum “CI 2001”	(+)	Tuerk
	A. cognatum TAAG 2000/1		Addis
505	A. congicum „Z 82/17“	good numbers 6/6(+) 6/8 good numbers 1/0 7/7	Blum Haggerty Heidler Kaempff Kraska Lehmann Pietz Puetz Rak Tomczyk
516	A. decorsei „Bangui“, KCF 5	good numbers 3/4	Blum Kraska Tomczyk Ude
442	A. spec. aff decorsei “Lobaye”	good numbers 12/2 good numbers	Blum Kämpf Kraska

		15/5	Lehmann Okada Schwekendiek
518	A. decorsei “Kapou I”, RCA 91/1	good numbers not for distribution 2/2 + fry 1/1	Blum Addis Haggerty Kraska Lehmann Nanninga
517	A. decorsei “RCA 82/3”	not for distribution	Haggerty Kraska Rak
	A. elegans “Boende 02”	good numbers 2/2(+)	Blum Ott Schwekendiek Wachters
	A. lamberti “BBA/GAB/90/1”	2/2	Addis Brown
	A. lamberti “BBA/GAB 90/27”		Brown
848	A. lamberti „BSWG 97/9“	1/1 1/1 + fry (+)	Kurachi Lehmann Pelletier Roßkopf Tuerk
854	A. lamberti „G 88/7“	5/4	Haggerty Kaempff Lehmann
855	A. lamberti „G 92/4“	critical not for distribution	Blum Kraska Nanninga Tomczyk
860	A. lamberti “GEB 94/7”	4/4 (+)	Kaempff Tuerk
4250	A. lamberti „GHH 97/11“	very good numbers	Addis Blum Puetz
873	A. lamberti “PEG 96/4”	1/6	Kaempff
878	A. lamberti “TDK 97/17”	2/2 + fry	Lehmann
881	A. lefiniense “CI 96”	- not for distribution	Blum Haggerty Kraska Tomczyk Ude
986	A. margaretae “HZ 85/14”	good numbers 1/4 not for distribution	Blum Haggerty Kaempff Kraska Ott
1392	A. spec. “oyo” ,RPC 91/8	0/1 good numbers	Addis Blum Haggerty

		12/1 good numbers 1/1(+) 1/1 2/2(+) 5/4(+) 1/3 3/3	Kaempff Kraska <u>Lehmann</u> <u>Okada</u> Ott Pelletier Pietz Rak <u>Schwekendiek</u> Tomczyk Ude Wagner
1195	A. polli “N’jili”, CI Z 93 (Type loc.)		Kraska
	A. polli “N’jili”, WF 2001	safe	Blum Ott
	A. polli “N’jili” (T.t)		Kraska
4253	A. polli “CI 99”		Haggerty Lehmann
	A polli „CI01“		Okada Schwekendiek
1272	A. rectogoense „BBA/GAB 90/27“	2/2 0/6 2/2	Brown Kämpf Lehmann
	A. rectogoense	7/7(+)	Pietz
	A. rectogoense “G 76/11”	critical	Blum Rosch
1270	A. rectogoense “G 92/5”	0/4	Kaempff
1267	A. recotgoense „G 92/11“	not for distribution 5/6	Kraska <u>Wagner</u>
1275	A. rectogoense „GHP 80/30“	2/1 2/2	Addis Haggerty Harder <u>Lehmann</u> Ott Puetz
1276	A. rectogoense “PEG 95/16”	4/5 2/2 (+)	Kaempff Lehmann Ott Roßkopf Tuerk
1321	A. schioetzi „C 85/1“	critical 1/2	Blum Haggerty Pelletier Ude
1336	A. schioetzi “Z 91/1”	good numbers 2/2 0/2	Blum Haggerty Ott Pietz Ude
1389	A. spec. “Epoma” “RPC 91/1”	gesichert	Blum Haggerty

		4/2(-) good numbers 3/4 5/3	Heidler Kraska Ott <u>Tomczyk</u> Ude Wagner
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Key:

Core Species for the Maintenance Program

~~Breeders who dropped out~~

New Breeders

(Fry)

5. Killifisch Erhaltungszucht-Programm (KEP)

Erhaltungszucht is the German word for Maintenance Breeding.

In the first instance, I wanted to give way to my bad feelings here. But when I looked at an again impressive list of contributions from all of you, I was somewhat frustrated about the very few changes that had taken place since the last ENL of June – especially regarding the core species. However, due to two reasons I skipped this idea. The first reason is the engagement of Hans-Juergen Blum, who is becoming one of our most important and active breeders. He is almost the only one who still has sufficient numbers of HZ-individuals and he also did much in regard to saving the core species (*A. recotogense* G 76/11 was so far only bred with Rosch and Hans-Juergen also undertook much efforts in distributing the newly imported *A. elegans* “Boende 2002”).

On the other hand, I may have expected too much. Half a year is not a long period of time for establishing something like a core species maintenance program. We probably need more than just one short summer for establishing good breeding and exchange practices. I really hope that we can move on with fish exchanges next spring. This is particularly important for all the remaining HZ-populations and some of the core species as well. If we cannot combine our efforts more effectively next year, we will probably lose these populations – and this would not happen totally unexpected! Based on the data delivered by all of you, I grouped the populations into three categories:

red: absolutely critical and endangered populations. These are bred by to just two or less breeders currently and are judged critical by them.

orange: populations that could easily switch over to the red category during the next half year if numbers drop further.

We are on the right track if at the same time we are able to keep the populations from the green list where they currently are. To reach these goals we need to coordinate our efforts more effectively. This is especially important for single pairs that are left from former breeding stock or for breeders that do not reproduce in good numbers any more. Many people have left such isolated pairs and we should arrange for exchanging and for concentrating those pairs with less breeders. The breeding efforts for these pairs should be enhanced to get more vital stocks which actually can produce any offspring. We all should talk about the things that are necessary now and I think with the 6th ENL we can now look at a history which allows us to draw our conclusions. We now need to concentrate our efforts and perform action. Everybody should think about what seems to be most important in his opinion. Then we should discuss our suggestions and come to an action plan that everybody is willing to support. Spring will arrive soon and we should be prepared. So use the winter for thinking, discussing and arranging stock exchanges (worldwide, if appropriate). The best thing to do this would be telephone conferences with all of us together. However, I (and you probably to) are not in a position to supply such equipment, are you? But there are other options. I opened a mailing list at yahoo-groups which is closed to the public and only available to invited elegans-group members (all members have received such an invitation by email recently). We should use this medium to discuss our options, plan actions and discuss problems. Members who are not available by electronic mail will be informed by phone. These are Juergen Heidler, Klaus Pietz, Hans Kaempf, Thorsten Nanninga and Willfried Puetz. After receiving general consent on the actions planned by discussions in the whole group, further steps should be planned bilaterally by the partners involved. This could be done over the list or by phone besides the list. Your opinion on any of these suggestions would be extremely welcome.

I would be more than happy if thus we could come to a closer collaboration. There is much left to do – lets start. This would require that everybody is willing to distribute the last pair of a certain strain in favour of the goals of our group: the maintenance, breeding and distribution of elegans-group strains. Therefore we don't need those people who sit on their strains and are not willing to share either fish or experience. We need to give away our last of pair of a good looking strain to somebody else in order to establish the strain again in the hobby, to make it strong and healthy. It does not help if 6 people keep a pair of *A. chirstiyi* HZ 85/8 and nobody gets more and two eggs per year, fungus after three days. Of course, you cannot be sure that the fish will perform better in the hands of others. “ I cannot say if its getting better if it

changes, but for getting better it has to change”. This is not my quote, but it reflects my opinion.

Please think about giving away even your last pair of strain XY, if you are currently not in a position to care sufficiently about these fishes. There may be several reasons for having no time or space to care about a certain strain. But if so, please go on and pass it over to someone else. This is the only way we can go in order to keep our strains and making them strong and healthy. And this is also the only way to make useful and important work inside our study group. Everything else is just words. There is no other way leading to our goals. And this is the reason why we organized: having common goals and acting to reach them. Isn't it so?

6. Bonus System for Species Maintenance

Regarding species maintenance, I would like to introduce a new bonus system which will give credit to those members who have been engaged most to reach our goals. Therefore, I discussed the following system with Juergen Heidler which is open for further discussion:

Every member that takes over certain responsibilities leading to better performance in species maintenance will receive bonus points according to the following system:

No.	Activity	Points
1	Breeding a core species	10
2	Breeding a core species for more than 2 years	10
3	Redistribution eggs of fishes of a cores species to another member of the group	20

Remarks:

1. Breeding a core species:

Data will be deduced from the semi-annual species maintenance list published via the ENL. Bonus points will be received, if the population is actively breed. This means, fry must be present on march 1st of the year. 10 points will be given for every core species population.

2. Breeding a core species for more than 2 years:

For every year above the initial 2 year, additional 10 points will be given for each year. This means additional 20 points for the third year, additional 30 points for the 4th year, and so on. This would mean you receive 10 initial points for breeding a core species for the necessary two years. Breeding the population three years in a row gives you 30 points (10 for the first two year + 20 for the third year). After the fourth year, you receive 60 points (10+20+30), and after breeding a core species for 5 years you receive 100 points. Points will be calculated on March 1st every year.

3. Redistribution of a core species

This will focus on any of the 5 core species only. Points will be given, if a population is distributed to a new member of the group who so far did not breed them. I need confirmation of the exchange from one of the involved breeders and on the number of exchanged fish or eggs. Juergen Heidler will collect these data by phone. Otherwise you can inform me directly and I will inform Juergen Heidler. Heidler and me have plans to offer a small award each year to the person with the highest number of points. We are thinking on a trophy, medal or something like that. Since we made the decision about the core species in May this year, we will start with the price in May 2004. This gives everybody the same starting value of zero points in May 2002.

What do you think about this bonus system. Anything I missed, Comments or suggestions?

6. Offers/Wanted

Axel Schwekendiek

Since I received three additional populations this summer, I have to drop *A. cognatum* sp. „Madimba“. I have around 30 healthy individuals with approximately 75% females. The group is 9 month old and breeding.

7. Final Comment

At the end, I would like to thank everybody who helped during the past half year. Such has been done by various ways, either in distributing to ideas, exchanging fish or eggs or simply in sending in the species list. Especially important have been the contributions of Juergen Heidler, Hans-Juergen Blum and Heinz Ott whose many suggestions have significantly improved our work.

All of them showed much initiatives by themselves and they have always been a reliable source of information. They are the constant pool of driving forces in our group which we cannot miss. I would really like to see others to step into their footsteps to see our goals forming shape faster.

I would like to thank everybody else not only for sending me their species list but even more for their efforts in breeding elegans-group fishes (even if its just one of them) and for redistributing the species to others in the group. This is most appropriate action members can perform.

It would be nice if more members would share their opinion with us. How about submitting a small note or a small report of a few lines. Some news or experiences should be available everywhere. Just let us know about your stuff and I'll bring in the next ENL.

Unfortunately, I cannot attend next year's annual meeting. Hans-Juergen Blum will arrange the group-meeting during next year's convention. Please bring your slides and photographs. And please use the meeting to discuss the points presented in this ENL (as well as further issues), especially in regard to species maintenance and the bonus system. What should be done next and how?

Finally, I cannot do more than wishing you a merry Christmas and a good start into 2004.

Best wishes to all of you,
Axel

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Bondorf, December 09, 2002