

A Selection of Freshwater Fish Biotopes in Mexico, by Kai Qvist and Rune Evjeberg – Volumes one and two.

These volumes have become this year's surprise. Both are inspirational page-turners and once I pick one up it takes great willpower to lay it down again, writes **Nathan Hill**.

If you like livebearers you need this book. If you like biotopes, you need this book. If just interested in reading accessible literature on fish, you need this book!

I promise that by the end of your read you'll have a hankering for all things Mexican and, like me, you'll be scouring the lands for the species mentioned.

The pictures alone are enough to create unreserved excitement. From page to page I find myself openly saying 'That one! No! That one!' as I glimpse yet another slice of nature I want to replicate at home. Cichlids here, swordtails there, a molly there, a tetra there, over leaf litter, or cobbles, or algae, or sand, or plants.

For the aquarist craving inspiration for a set-up, every other page is a revelation.

The words, despite the Danish heritage of the authors, are written in an easy to follow, flowing and continually interesting style.

The content is ripe with information, leaving you thinking 'well, I never knew that!' as you learn something new.

The books could have easily become a dull chore like a



travelogue, but the way it's been handled, with anecdote and contextual information slipped in as a refresher and precursor for yet more fish information, makes for a bore-free read.

They're comprehensive, too, with book one covering almost 25

different and distant locations. The hardcore fish enthusiast will be more keen on volume one, with its references to water parameters, species identities and interactions, though the natural history lover will want volumes one and two together.

Towards the end of book one the paludarium fan will rejoice at sections on indigenous Mexican fauna and flora.

The reader who has come to relish learning of Mexican biotopes in their entirety will be pleasantly surprised to gain some contextual knowledge of the birds, mammals and reptiles found along the waterlines. It's all very comprehensive.

As well as getting plenty of regional information, you also get lots of nuts-and-bolts facts for the aquarist, including temperature, water hardness, pH values, CO₂ levels, oxygen levels, phosphate, nitrate, conductivity and so on. You even get GPS data, should you feel you need to check these locations for yourself!

Verdict

Book one has blown me away and there will be many projects forming on the back of this experience. Book two, though fascinating I feel has less for the fishkeeper, but given the deal on buying both together it represents an interesting additional read and well worth the price.

