

Notes on dragonflies in Egypt, spring 1990

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Introduction

Relatively little is known about the dragonflies (Odonata) occurring in Egypt. As a side activity to the ornithological studies in Egyptian wetlands in spring 1990, some attention was paid to field observations and the collecting of specimens of dragonflies.

Methods

Of all species observed in the field attempts were made to collect at least one specimen. Not from all (visits to) localities specimen material is available. Notes were made of field observations.

Specimens collected have been deposited in the collection of the Instituut voor Taxonomische Zoölogie (ITZ, Amsterdam, The Netherlands). Localities where specimens have been collected are indicated with ' * '.

In addition to the information collected during the field work in spring 1990, some information on Egyptian dragonfly specimens in the collection of the ITZ has been included. The latter specimens have been collected at Dakhla Oasis by T. & M. Simon Thomas in the period 20 December 1977 - 12 January 1988. These remained hitherto unidentified and the information has not been published previously.

Distributional data collected in 1990 have been compared to data in the literature (d'Aguiar et al. 1986, Aguesse 1968, Andres 1928, 1929, Askew 1988, Dumont 1975, 1980, Dumont & Fossati 1990, Kimmins 1950, Morton 1929, Pinhey 1962, Rambur 1842) and with the collections of the Entomological Society of Egypt and the Cairo University, Giza, Egypt.

Sequence and nomenclature generally follow Davies & Tobin (1984, 1985). The description of the abundance of a species in the following systematic list is based on the author's opinion and refers only to a restricted period of the year. 'Throughout the country' refers to the areas visited in March - July 1990.

Systematic list

Agriocnemis sania Nielsen, 1959

Only found at Wadi Gharandal*, one copulum was captured (only the female was collected) on 12 May, above a small stream.

Pseudagrion torridum Selys, 1876

Only found south of Kom Ombo, where it was common along the Nile at Kom Ombo* and Aswan*, and along Lake Nasser at Abu Simbil*. They all showed characters of the subspecies *P. t. torridum* (Dumont 1973/74, Dumont 1978).

Ischnura senegalensis (Rambur, 1842)

This was found to be the most abundant dragonfly in Egypt, which was common in fields and along lakes throughout the country. Found in the Western Desert (all lakes in Wadi el Natrun*), in the Nile Delta (Fariskur*, Abu Gridi), in the Nile Valley (Kom Ombo*, Aswan*, Abu Simbil), in the Faiyum (Lake

Abu Taleb*, Shakshuk*), and in the Eastern Desert (Bir Beida). Not found in Sinai.

Ischnura fountainei Morton, 1905

Exclusively found at Am Musa* (Sinai) on 5 May, where it was abundant.

Ischnura evansi Morton, 1919

Exclusively found in Sinai: common at Am Musa* on 5 May and at Wadi Gharandal* on 12 May (four collected).

Anax imperator Leach, 1815

Common in the Faiyum*, where many individuals were captured in mist-nets. Also found at Bahr el Baqr (Lake Manzala El) and at Bir Beida (Eastern Desert).

Anax parthenope Selys, 1839

Common in the Faiyum*, where many individuals flew into the mist-nets at Shakshuk*, and in fields and along Lake Qarun. Also found at Am Musa, Sinai, on 5 May.

Hemianax ephippiger (Burmeister, 1839)

A male was captured in a mist-net near Shakshuk, Faiyum* on 15 April.

Orthetrum chrysostigma (Burmeister, 1839)

Common in northern Egypt, locally very abundant (e.g. at Shakshuk*, Faiyum). Found everywhere in the Faiyum. Also found at Wadi el Natrun* and at Dakhla Oasis*.

Orthetrum ransonneti (Brauer, 1865)

Only found at Am el Furtaga*, Sinai, where up to ten males and two females were found along a stream on 16 June (two males collected).

Orthetrum sabina (Drury, 1770)

Common throughout the country. Found in the Nile Delta (Fariskur), Wadi el Natrun* (all lakes), in the Faiyum (Shakshuk* and Lake Abu Taleb), in the Nile Valley (Kom Ombo) and in Dakhla Oasis*.

Orthetrum trinacria (Selys, 1841)

Common throughout the country in fields, at lake shores and along irrigation canals. Found in the Nile Delta (Fariskur*, Abu Gridi, Lake Manzala El, at Wadi el Natrun*, at Lake Abu Taleb and Shakshuk* in the Faiyum, at Kom Ombo* in the Nile Valley, and along the Cairo-Suez desert road 5 km W of Suez (female specimen collected).

Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842

Two males were present among the dragonfly specimens from Dakhia Oasis in the ITZ.

Diplacodes lefebvrii (Rambur, 1842)

Abundant; in Wadi el Natrun* and at Ain Musa* (Sinai). Also found at Fariskur* (Nile Delta), Lake Abu Taleb* (Faiyum) and Dakhla Oasis*.

Crocothemis erythraea (Brullé, 1832)

Common and widely spread throughout the country, usually near small lakes and ponds. Found in the Faiyum at Shakshuk* and at Lake Abu Taleb*. Very abundant in Wadi el Natrun* in May. Also found at Dakhla Oasis*, Abu Gridi (Nile Delta), Aswan* (Nile Valley), Bir Beida* (Eastern Desert), Am Musa* and El Arish (Sinai).

Identification of all specimens collected (12 females and 17 males) was based on characters mentioned by Lohmann (1981).

Brachythemis leucosticta (Burmeister, 1839)

Common throughout the country, usually along shores and over open water. Locally very abundant, and showing high activity in the evening: on 28 June thousands were flying at sunset near Abu Gridi (Nile Delta) and on 10 July tens of thousands at Abu Simbil* (Lake Nasser). Also found at Fan'skur* (Nile Delta), Lake Abu Taleb* (Faiyum), Kom Ombo*, Aswan* (Nile Valley) and at Am Musa (Sinai).

Sympetrum fonscolombi (Selys, 1840)

The only individual found in 1990 was a (young) male collected in a garden at Suez on 27 March.

Trithemis annulata (Palisot de Beauvois, 1807)

Common throughout the country. Mainly found along lakes and streams. Usually absent at agricultural fields. Found in the Faiyum (Shakahuk*, along Lake Qarun and along Lake Abu Taleb*), in the Nile Valley (Kom Ombo*, Aswan*, Abu Simbil*), and in Sinai (El Arish early June, Am Musa 5 May, Am el Furtaga* 16-June).

Trithemis kirbyi (Sélys, 1849)

A single male was collected at Lake Abu Taleb (Faiyum) on 16 April. This species had not previously been recorded from Egypt (according to the literature and after inspection of the collections in Cairo). The species was mentioned by Dumont (1980) as 'to be expected'. It is widely distributed in Africa (Aguesse 1968, d'Aguilar et al. 1986, Askew 1988, Pinhey 1962).

Discussion

Although Dumont (1980) stated that 'at least 52 species are expected to occur in Egypt', the dragonfly fauna found in Egypt in 1990 appears to be extremely poor in most parts of the country. This can probably be mainly attributed to the fact that virtually all waters are severely influenced by man: regulation of water level, pollution, mechanical disturbance etc. Most 'green' parts of Egypt are composed of irrigated fields and polluted irrigation canals. Species found in the fields and along irrigation canals are (in order of decreasing abundance): *Orthetrum trinacria*, *Ischnura senegalensis*, *Trithemis annulata* and *Orthetrum sabina*. The few small lakes are generally inhabited by the same (few) dragonfly species. Most of the species found in these areas are abundant (in order of decreasing abundance): *Ischnura senegalensis*, *Brachythemis leucosticta*, *Crocothemis erythraea*, *Orthetrum trinacria*, *Trithemis annulata*, and *Orthetrum sabina*. All more exceptional species for Egypt (*Agriocnemis sania*, *Ischnura fountainei*, *I. evansi* and *Orthetrum ransonneti*) were found in the Sinai, all in places not or hardly influenced by man. The only specimen of *Trithemis kirbyi*, a new species for the country, was found in the relatively natural Lake Abu Taleb. It should be noted that a survey in autumn and winter would certainly reveal the presence of additional species. For example *Pantala flavescens* is known to be common from August on, which was obvious from the specimens present in the collections visited in Cairo.

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Checklist

		1990	Sinai	Faiyum	Remark
<i>Agriocnemis</i>	<i>sania</i>	x	-		
<i>Pseudagrion</i>	<i>torridum</i>	x	-		
<i>Ischnura</i>	<i>senegalensis</i>	x	-	x	
<i>Ischnura</i>	<i>fountainei</i>	x	x		
<i>Ischnura</i>	<i>evansi</i>	x	x		
<i>Anax</i>	<i>imperator</i>	x		common	
<i>Anax</i>	<i>parthenope</i>	x	x	common	
<i>Hemianax</i>	<i>ephippiger</i>	x		1	
<i>Orthetrum</i>	<i>chrysostigma</i>	x		v.common	
<i>Orthetrum</i>	<i>ransonneti</i>	x	x		
<i>Orthetrum</i>	<i>sabina</i>	x		common	
<i>Orthetrum</i>	<i>trinacria</i>	x		common	
<i>Acisoma</i>	<i>panorpoides</i>				Dakhia Oasis ITZ
<i>Diplacodes</i>	<i>lefebvrii</i>	x	abundant	x	
<i>Crocothemis</i>	<i>erythraea</i>	x	x	common	
<i>Brachythemis</i>	<i>leucosticta</i>	x	x	x	
<i>Sympetrum</i>	<i>fonscolombii</i>	x	x		
<i>Trithemis</i>	<i>annulata</i>	x	x	x	
<i>Trithemis</i>	<i>kirbyi</i>	x		x	new for Egypt
<i>Pantala</i>	<i>flavescens</i>				collections Cairo