

Dragonflies from northern Syria

(Insecta: Odonata)

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Abstract. Nineteen stations distributed across the northern part of Syria were inventoried for dragonflies between 2006 and 2010. About 37 species were recorded, and four species are added to the list of known Syrian species. Because of a generalized decrease in the water quality of Syrian rivers, and an increasing number of rivers falling dry, lotic species such as the calopterygids have suffered and the remaining populations have become reduced to disjunct islands. *Calopteryx splendens hyalina*, once extending from Lake Hula to the Wadi Afrin, now appears to have become extinct in the Orontes valley, and only survives in few short Syrian coastal rivers.

Introduction

The earliest information on the Odonata of Syria dates back to the 19th century (SELYS LONGCHAMPS 1887, BOLIVAR 1893). Knowledge accumulated during the 20th century (MARTIN 1909, SCHMIDT 1938, ST QUENTIN 1965, SCHNEIDER 1981, 1982, 1985, 1987), culminating with the Ph. D. thesis of SCHNEIDER (1986). Meanwhile, considerable progress (often more so than in Syria) was made in some adjacent countries. For Turkey, DUMONT (1977) laid the foundation of modern biogeographic and faunistic research, which was followed by a faunal study with identification keys (DEMIRSOY 1982), while for Israel and adjacent Levantine countries DUMONT (1991) published a faunal monograph. Recent keys to the fauna of Turkey were produced by KALKMAN (2006), while comprehensive distribution maps were given by KALKMAN & VAN PELT (2006) and an evaluation of the status of endangered species was given by KALKMAN et al. (2004). A recent update of our knowledge of the fauna of Iran (HEIDARI & DUMONT, 2002) should also be mentioned, as well as a paper on the Lebanon (SCHNEIDER & MOUBAYED 1985), but perhaps the most significant recent publication is that of an atlas of the Odonata of the Mediterranean and North Africa by an impressive group of authors (BOUDOT et al. 2009). In this last work, Syria – although it is included – stands out because of the relative paucity of data. Indeed, since the mid 1980s, no further substantial progress with Odonate studies in Syria has been recorded. Therefore, we here provide some recent data on the northern half of Syria, collected between 2006 and 2010. Our aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the fauna of Syria and its distribution, but also to compare the current situation in north-western Syria with that at the time of SCHNEIDER's studies (1981, 1986).

Material and methods

Regular field trips and collections were made at monthly to bimonthly intervals from ten stations (locations 10-19), mainly rivers but also springs and man-made reservoirs and lakes in northern Syria, situated in the catchments of the Rivers Afrin and Euphrates (Fig. 1). In May 2010, an