

DRAGON- AND DAMSELFLIES OF SOCOTRA

ODONATA

Dragonflies ODONATA are an Order of flying insects that have an aquatic larval stage. Worldwide there are more than 5.000 species known.

The three main characteristics of ODONATA are:

- they are good flyers;
- they have big eyes, which they use to find prey;
- they have long legs, which they use to catch prey.

Dragonflies and Damselflies

ODONATA can be divided into two main groups:

- *Damselflies* are slender and their eyes do not touch each other. The fore- and hind wings have the same shape;
- *Dragonflies* are usually more bold, in most species the eyes touch each other on top of the head or are very close to each other. The fore- and hind wings are different in shape: the base of the hind wing is broadened.

Habitats

For the survival of dragonflies the presence of both an aquatic and a land habitat is crucial. The land habitat is usually less important than the aquatic habitat. Dragonflies can be found in and near all different kinds of streams and water bodies from waterfalls to brackish waters near the sea. All dragonflies are carnivorous and play a very important part in ecosystems. They can control pest insects such as mosquito's and are an important food supply for birds.

Species on Socotra

On Socotra 19 species ODONATA can be found, 15 Dragonfly and 4 Damselfly species. Only one is endemic: *Azuragrion granti*. Within the ODONATA the degree of endemism on Socotra is surprisingly low, compared to other groups like Grasshoppers & Crickets and Reptiles.



Two examples of Damselflies: on the left *Ischnura senegalensis*, on the right *Ceriagrion glabrum*.



Two examples of Dragonflies: on the left the common *Crocothemis erythraea*, on the right *Paragomphus genei*.



Orthetrum julia (left) and *Zygonyx torridus* (right) are highly specialized species that only occur in the mountains.



Two of the most abundant and widespread species: *Trithemis arteriosa* and *Diplacodes lefebvrei*

Water habitats

Different water types have different ODONATA-species. At fast flowing wadies and near waterfalls the most specialised and rare species like *Azuragrion granti* and *Zygonyx torridus* can be found. In brackish waters *Macrodiplax cora* and *Ischnura senegalensis* are usually the only reproducing species. At slow flowing wadies and pools the most common species like *Pantala flavescens* and *Trithemis arteriosa* can be found in large numbers.

The rarest species on Socotra is probably *Orthetrum julia*. It only occurs near very small, vegetated streams high in the Haggier mountains.



The extraction of water (left) from the wadies can be a problem for the dragonflies such as the endemic *Azuragrion granti* (right) which only occurs in relatively fast flowing waters.