

THE STATUS OF THE GENERIC NAMES
ERYTHEMIS, *LEPTHEMIS*, AND *MESOTHEMIS* (ANISOPTERA: LIBELLULIDAE)

The most recent paper I am aware of in which the merits of *Erythemis*, *Lepthemis*, and *Mesothemis* are discussed as of generic or subgeneric rank is that of C. H. KENNEDY (1923, *Misc. Publ. Mus. Zool. Univ. Mich.* 11: 19-22, pl. 1, figs 7-16). His suggested possibilities are based primarily on his study of the penis. He made no final decision for a synonymy as is evident by the following:

"The American species, by penis characters, divide into four groups which are exactly equivalent with the groups as outlined by [P. P.] CALVERT [1901-1908, *Odonata. Biol. Cent.-americana*, Porter & Dulau, London] and [F.] RIS [1911, *Collns zool. de Selys* 12: 529-700] on other characters. To these, *Rhodothemis rufa* may be added as an extra group. In the key I have placed it first as Group I because of its generalized characters. The fifth and largest group is composed of species with penes so much alike that no good characters appear on which to divide them further, though they seem to fall into two subgroups on the shape of the abdomen. The writer would be inclined to call the whole series of five or six groups *Lepthemis* and would consider the individual groups as subgenera, which could be given generic rank by those who wish to use smaller genera. *Lepthemis*, for the whole series from *Rhodothemis rufa* to *Erythemis haematogastra*, is no more comprehensive, in the writer's opinion, than *Libellula* for the series of species included in the latter by Ris and later by the writer. The comprehensive genus would have to be *Lepthemis* because of the priority in the use of that name." [By page priority only]

"It is possible that *vesiculosa* [which he placed in a separate group] belongs near

Group V [in which he included *plebeja*, *carmelita*, and *haematogastra*]. A careful check of the other characters should decide this."

"We have also problems of the generic rank of *Mesothemis* and the value of its two forms, *collocata* and *simplicicollis*. By penis characters alone, *Mesothemis* is as valid a genus as *Lepthemis*."

Perhaps because of Kennedy's tentative statement and because *Lepthemis* has page priority, some authors have assumed that a synonymy has been made. However, I have been unable to find any reference in which this has actually been done for *Erythemis* or *Rhodothemis*. Furthermore, page priority is no longer considered adamant in the choice of a name. One of the purposes of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature is to promote stability. There are now eleven species in *Erythemis* but only one in *Lepthemis*. If the species in these two genera are eventually proven to be congeneric, then retaining the name *Erythemis* would evoke less change. Without any formal record of a synonymy, it is confusing to have the species included by some authors in *Erythemis* and by others in *Lepthemis*. Until a careful study has been made and proof given for a synonymy of *Erythemis* and *Lepthemis*, or the restoration of *Mesothemis*, no change should be made. Both Calvert and Ris in their respective monumental works recognized *Erythemis* and *Lepthemis* as valid genera.

L.K. Gloyd, Division of Insects, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109, United States.