

## A NOTE ON DRAGONFLIES CAUGHT IN SPIDERS' WEBS

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Predation of *Lestes praemorsa praemorsa* (Sel.), *Bayadera indica* (Sel.), *Brachythemis contaminata* (Fabr.) and *Aethriamanta b. brevipennis* (Ramb.) have been recorded in spiders' webs at Dehra Dun Valley, India.

### INTRODUCTION

Mortality due to predation in Odonata is quite common in the tropics in the egg (KUMAR, 1973), larval and adult stages (CORBET, 1957, 1959). CORBET (1962) has recorded that in *Anax imperator* approximately 5% of the total emerging population is lost due to predation by birds. There are records of other animals like water spiders (WRIGHT, 1943) catching Odonata larvae as they leave the water for emergence. CORBET (1957) observed predation by land spiders on emerging *Crenigomphus renei* in East Africa. CALVERT (1903) recorded incidents of dragonfly predation of the teneral adults of *Dromogomphus spinosus*, *Neurocordulia obsoleta* and *Epicordulata princeps* in spiders' webs. BYERS (1937) again recorded the predation of the adults of *Neurocordulia obsoleta* in spiders' webs. These authors have deduced from their observations that the spiders have preyed on these species at the site of emergence.

### OBSERVATIONS

Recently, in the field, the authors have come across some cases of dragonfly predation in spiders' webs. Teneral adults of *Bayadera indica* (Selys) (*Epallagidae*) have recently been recorded by us caught in garden spiders' webs formed on the plants of *Bidens biternata* (Lour) (*Compositae*) near a hill stream at Sulphur

Springs, Dehra Dun, India. From the behaviour of the spiders it was likely that they were about to feed on their prey. During the post-monsoon period we have come across many cases in Dehra Dun Valley, where the teneral and freshly emerged adults of *Lestes praemorsa praemorsa* (Selys) (*Lestidae*) were found caught in spiders' webs. This species breeds in temporary monsoon ponds and the teneral adults fall easy prey to the spiders' webs which are frequently present in the surrounding vegetation. Another interesting incident of this kind was observed in the post-monsoon period when the teneral adults of *Brachythemis contaminata* (Fabricius) (*Libellulidae*) were found caught in spiders' webs in paddy fields in the Dehra Dun Valley. Recently a partially damaged adult (male) of *Aethriamanta brevipennis brevipennis* (Rambur) (*Libellulidae*) was caught at night inside a room at Gorakhpur, U.P., in a web of the House spider. This dragonfly is perhaps nocturnal in habits and the adult may have been attracted to the electric light inside the room.

These records are interesting from the point of view of the behavioural studies on Odonata and it may be worthwhile to study the extent to which spiders can be considered as serious predators of Odonata.

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