

MONOPODDING IN *LESTINOGOMPHUS ANGUSTUS* MARTIN (ANISOPTERA: GOMPHIDAE)

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The long abdominal segment 10 in *L. angustus* is used as a monopod to support itself while it perches on horizontal stems and twigs in the shade of bushes or trees.

INTRODUCTION

Gomphidae species exhibit a wide range of wing and abdomen morphologies. These morphologies are linked to flight behaviour (MARTENS, 2001), which in turn, is often related to size of the insect. Some African spp., such as *Phyllogomphus brunneus* Pinhey, 1976, are large, powerful fliers with large, pointed wings and well-developed abdominal foliations. At the other extreme are *Lestinogomphus* spp., which are small-sized and narrow-winged. In the case of *L. angustus* Martin, 1911, there are no prominent foliations, and the insect spends most of its time perching. Additionally, abdominal segment 10 of *L. angustus* is elongated and, in preserved specimens, often bent downwards.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

On 11-15 March 2002, *Lestinogomphus angustus* was observed in its natural riverine forest habitat in the Kruger National Park, South Africa. It perches motionless, often for many tens of minutes, in a horizontal position along a grass stem or twig in the shade of a bush or tree canopy. Its flight is short and wasp-like, soon settling again after being disturbed. Interestingly, it uses its abdominal segment 10 as a monopod, bent downwards at 90° to the abdominal axis (Fig. 1a). Presumably this is a strategy to steady itself along a narrow grass stem or twig, where it is highly camouflaged. It moves from this position principally to visualised targets (e.g. prey, mate), returning to its resting position. Sometimes however, it returns to the perch and rests tangentially, with its ab-



Fig. 1. Male *Lestinogomphus angustus* perching along a grass stem in riverine forest, Sabie River, Kruger National Park: (a) using abdominal segment 10 as a monopod support; – (b) abdomen resting across a horizontal stem and segment 10 hanging down.

domen resting across the stem and segment 10 hanging down (Fig. 1b). It is still remarkably camouflaged in this position.

This sp. appears to have forsaken the more usual gomphid aerodynamics to have a body form more suited to snatch-and-return, short-distance foraging, rather than the bolder foraging of the larger, open-terrain spp.

REFERENCE

- MARTENS, A., 2001. Perching site choice of *Onychogomphus f. forcipatus* (L.): an experimental approach (Anisoptera: Gomphidae). *Odonatologica* 30(4): 445-449.