

COUNCIL OF EUROPE, COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R(87) 14

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON THE PROTECTION OF DRAGONFLIES (ODONATA) AND THEIR BIOTOPES

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 June 1987 at the 409th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats of 19 September 1979;

Having regard to its Resolution (76) 17 on the European network of biogenetic reserves, as well as to its Recommendation No. R (86) 10 concerning the Charter on Invertebrates;

Referring to the study commissioned by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and published in the Nature and Environment Series on the protection of dragonflies (Odonata) and their biotopes;

Considering that the diversity of wildlife is essential to the maintenance of the biological balance of ecosystems and that here invertebrates play a determinant part which is often underestimated and requires thorough study;

Recognising that dragonflies are a fundamental part of the European natural heritage for their scientific, educational, cultural, recreational, aesthetic and intrinsic value;

Noting that in Europe there are already more than sixty dragonfly taxa which may be considered threatened (in danger, vulnerable or rare) and that others risk becoming so if their decline continues;

Noting that the alarming situation of dragonflies is attributable primarily to the loss or deterioration of their habitat, in particular as a result of drainage work, changes to watercourses and reafforestation, and of human activity leading to chemical pollution, acidification or eutrophication of watercourses, culminating in the immense biological impoverishment of a large number of European aquatic ecosystems;

Considering that dragonflies are bioindicators of the most interesting and most characteristic European aquatic ecosystems;

Considering that it is the diversity of dragonfly species, rather than the abundance of certain species, which reflects a healthy environment and is the sine qua non of guaranteed production of drinking water;

Recommends the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe to implement the following measures:

- (1) endeavour to ensure the conservation and protection of representative aquatic ecosystems essential to dragonflies, taking into account their ecological requirements when selecting sites and determining the area of the zones to be protected. Priority should be given to total protection of peatbogs and mesotrophic moorlands which have remained intact or little changed and to a selection of watercourses, pools and lakes which are still unpolluted and comprise a wide variety of biotopes;*
- (2) endeavour to ensure the conservation of "modified" elements in cultivated landscapes, such as peatbogs in the process of regeneration and gravel pits; the construction of artificial pools and ponds with a maximum diversity of biotopes should be encouraged;*
- (3) where appropriate, take adequate legal measures to ensure the protection of dragonflies and their biotopes, and use them as biological indicators in all impact studies prior to engineering work affecting watercourses, lakes or ponds;*
- (4) provide for the need to adequate replacement in case of unavoidable damage caused to aquatic ecosystems essential to dragonflies;*
- (5) encourage the reduction of pollution to ensure that the chemical quality of European aquatic zones reaches a satisfactory level, as indicated by the presence of dragonflies which serve as bioindicators;*
- (6) ascertain that, when zones are being designated for inclusion in the European network of biogenetic reserves, account is taken of the importance of their contribution to the protection of dragonflies and, in addition, that these zones are sufficiently large and close enough to one another to allow interbreeding between populations and eventually recolonisation;*
- (7) undertake and continue systematic research into aquatic ecosystems and their fauna and, if possible, promote the development of an international system of databanks providing up-to-date information on the distribution of dragonflies and the evolution of their situation in Europe;*
- (8) encourage and promote information to the public and provide appropriate instruction in primary and secondary education on the role of aquatic wildlife and particularly dragonflies in the natural environment, the need to protect it and the measures to be taken to preserve the diversity of species and their biotopes.*