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### COMMUNICATION

### A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON DRAGONFLY DIVERSITY ON A PLATEAU AND AN AGRO-ECOSYSTEM IN GOA, INDIA

Andrea R.M. D'Souza & Irvathur Krishnananda Pai

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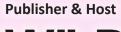
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### A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON DRAGONFLY DIVERSITY ON A PLATEAU AND AN AGRO-ECOSYSTEM IN GOA, INDIA

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Abstract: The present study was carried out to fill the lacuna in the understanding of the diversity of odonates of Goa in general and dragonflies in particular on plateau and paddy fields in coastal villages—agricultural area at Velsao and Taleigao Plateau. Diversity in plateau ecosystem was higher possibly due to a greater plant and insect diversity on the plateau, in comparison with the monoculture paddy agro-ecosystem. Highest number of species recorded belonged to the family Libellulidae. Monthly diversity showed correlation with monthly average rainfall and humidity.

Keywords: Odonates, Taleigao Plateau, Velsao.

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Author contribution: ARMD was involved in field work, sample collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. IKP was responsible for designing the study, analyzing the data, directing and supervising and preparation of the manuscript.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Initial work on odonates in the state of Goa was carried out by Prasad (1995), followed by Rangnekar et al. (2010, 2014), and Subramanian et al. (2013), indicating the diversity to be 87 species. Considerable amount of research has been carried out in the Western Ghats and the neighboring state of Maharashtra (Subramanian et al. 2011; Kulkarni & Subramanian 2013; Muthukumaravel et al. 2015; Tiple & Koparde 2015). Despite this, there are several lacunae in understanding the diversity of odonates in general and dragonflies in particular. Hence, this attempt is to study diversity, distribution patterns, specific species abundance and status of dragonflies in plateau and paddy field areas at Taleigao Plateau and paddy fields in a coastal village of Goa, in Velsao. In the present work we have analyzed the odonates from Goa in general and plateau and agroecosystem in particular, which has not been attempted previously.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Study sites

The areas chosen for the study include Velsao (15.354°N & 73.891°E, 11m) (Image 1), which is a coastal village and the Taleigao Plateau (15.457°N & 73.834°E, 50m) (Image 2) which is a lateritic region.

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Velsao comprises of several paddy field ponds and streams; four sites were chosen (Image 3a–d) in the village. On the other hand, Taleigao Plateau is a lateritic region comprising several temporary monsoon water pools. Four sites (Image 4a–d) were chosen on Taleigao Plateau, representing the lateritic water pools.

At the plateau study site, the soil is mostly lateritic with vegetation belonging to Asclepiadaceae, Acanthaceae, Leguminosae Mimosaceae, Rubiaceae, Rutaceae families. Paddy fields are composed of loamy-clay mostly with water logging with vegetation comprising of *Tridax* sp., *Gliricidia* spp., *Justicia* spp., and *Centella* spp. seen around the paddy field bunds.

#### Weather parameters

Table 1 provides meteorological data of the sites under study. The monthly average temperature ranged between 26.86°C to 27.64°C; wind speed from 2.13–6.84 km/h; sunshine was between 97.3–290.1 hr/ month; relative humidity was between 78.2–93.7 % and rainfall was from 1–449.5 mm/ month (Fig. 1).

#### **METHODS**

The study was conducted from August 2016 to February 2017. The sampling is done by monthly direct counts, by following all out opportunistic surveys, at the selected sites from 08.30 to 12.00 hr, which coincides



Image 1. Study sites at Velsao. (Courtesy: Google Maps)

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Image 2. Study sites at Taleigao Plateau. (Courtesy: Google Maps)



Image 3. Study sites at Velsao (Agro-ecosystem). © Authors.



Image 4. Study sites at Taleigao plateau (plateau ecosystem). © Authors.

Month	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Temperature (C°)	27.64	27.3	27.21	27.4	27.11	26.86	27.6
Wind speed (km/hr)	6.84	4.4	3.29	3.2	3.13	3.35	3.96
Sunshine hours	97.3	136	204.2	268.9	273.4	290.1	271.7
Relative humidity	91.5	93.7	92.52	78.2	78.48	79.74	86.14
Rainfall (mm)	449.5	242.9	157.3	1	-	-	-

#### Table 1. Weather profile of Goa during the study period (August 2016 to February 2017).

(Source: Anonymous, Goa Meteorological Department, Panaji, Goa)

with the insect's active period. Species observed were recorded and photographed, using Nikon Coolpix L840 and Nikon Coolpix S6300 cameras. A monthly record of species at the sites was maintained. Species which could not be identified in the field were collected using insect collecting net and maintained by dry preservation (Kapoor 2008) and identified using standard literature such as Fraser (1939), Subramanian (2009) and Nair (2011).

#### Statistical analysis

From the data obtained of dragonflies species at the sites diversity indices such as shannon diversity index,

evenness index, species richness index and species abundance, were calculated using PAST software and MS-Excel. Correlation between the diversity indices and weather parameters was calculated using correlation coefficient (Fig. 2).

#### RESULTS

The list of dragonflies encountered at the study sites is given in Table 2. During the study period, a combined total of 28 species of dragonflies belonging to 18 genera and three families were encountered.

Table 2. Dragon	fly species o	bserved at t	he stud	y sites.
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Family	Genera	Common name	Scientific name	Plateau	Paddy field
Gomphidae	Ictinogomphus	Common Clubtail	Ictinogomphus rapax Rambur, 1842	+	+
Aeshnidae	Anax	Blue-tailed Green Darter	Anax guttatus Burmeister, 1839	+	-
	Gynacantha	Parakeet Darter	Gynacantha bayadera Selys, 1854	-	+
	Gynacantha	Brown Darter	Gynacantha dravida Lieftinck, 1960	+	-
Libellulidae	Acisoma	Trumpet Tail	Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842	-	+
	Brachythemis	Ditch Jewel	Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793	+	-
	Bradinopyga	Granite Ghost	Bradinopyga geminata Rambur, 1842	+	+
	Cratilla	Emerald Banded Skimmer	Cratilla lineata Foerster,1903	+	-
	Crocothemis	Ruddy Marsh Skimmer	Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770	+	+
	Diplacodes	Ground Skimmer	Diplacodes trivialis Rambur,1842	+	+
	Indothemis	Blue Ground Skimmer	Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798	+	-
	Lathrecista	Asiatic Blood Tail	Lathrecista asiatica Fabricius, 1798	+	+
	Neurothemis	Fulvous Forest Skimmer	Neurothemis fulvia Drury, 1773	-	+
	Neurothemis	Pied Paddy skimmer	Neurothemis tullia Drury, 1773	+	+
	Orthetrum	Brown-backed Red Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum chrysis Selys, 1891	+	+
	Orthetrum	Tricoloured Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum luzonicum Brauer, 1868	+	-
	Orthetrum	Crimson-tailed Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum pruinosum Rambur, 1842	+	+
	Orthetrum	Green Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum sabina Drury, 1770	+	+
	Orthetrum	Small Skimmer	Orthetrum taeniolatum Schneider, 1845	+	-
	Pantala	Wandering glider	Pantala flavescens Fabricius, 1798	+	+
	Rhodothemis	Rufous Marsh Glider	Rhodothemis rufa Rambur, 1842	+	+
	Rhodothemis	Common Picturewing	Rhyothemis variegate Linnaeus, 1763	+	+
	Tholymis	Coral-tailed Cloud Wing	Tholymis tillarga Fabricius, 1798	-	+
	Tramea	Red Marsh Trotter	Tramea basilaris Kirby, 1889	+	-
	Tramea	Black Marsh Trotter	Tramea limbate Rambur, 1842	+	-
	Trithemis	Crimson Marsh Glider	Trithemis aurora Burmeister, 1839	+	-
	Trithemis	Black Stream Glider	Trithemis festiva Rambur, 1842	+	-
	Trithemis	Long-legged Marsh Glider	Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889	+	-

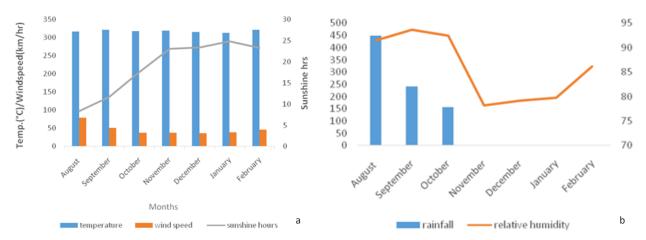


Figure 1. Monthly profile of weather conditions prevalent in Goa during the study period. a - Temperature, wind speed and sunshine hours | b - Rainfall and humidity.

## Table 3. Family-wise percentage composition of dragonflies in ecosystems under study.

Families		Number of species			
	Families	Agro-ecosystem	Plateau ecosystem		
1	Gomphidae	1	1		
2	Aeshnidae	1	2		
3	Libellulidae	14	21		

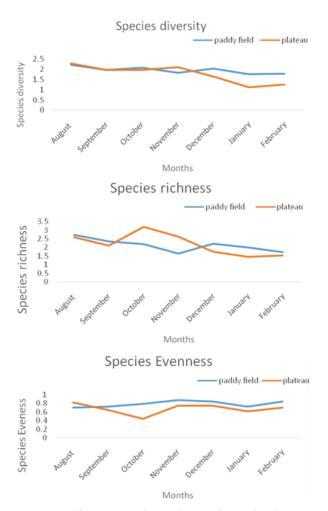


Figure 2. Monthly variation in the population indices such as diversity, evenness and richness.

Of the above, 24 species belonging to 16 genera and three families were sighted in the plateau ecosystem; while 16 species belonging to 12 genera and three families were sighted in the agro-ecosystem. There were 12 species of dragonflies belonging to 12 genera that were common to both the ecosystems (Fig. 3).

#### a. Agro-ecosystem

A total of 16 species belonging to 12 genera and three families were sighted in the agro-ecosystem. Most number of species noted during post monsoon Table 4. General composition of dragonfly community and species indices in paddy field and plateau ecosystem.

	Agro-ecosystem	Plateau ecosystem			
Affiliations					
Total no. of individuals recorded	308	402			
Total no. of species	16	24			
Total no. of genera	12	16			
Total no. of families	3	3			
Species indices					
Species diversity (H')	1.944 ± 0.158	1.762 ± 0.405			
Species evenness (J')	0.782 ± 0.066	0.674 ± 0.111			
Species richness (SR)	2.113 ± 0.347	2.172 ± 0.603			

(October–December) were 13, monsoon (August, September) were 12, and winter (January and February) were nine. Species diversity (H') was found to be 1.944  $\pm$  0.158, species evenness (J') was 0.782  $\pm$  0.066, and species richness (SR) recorded was 2.11  $\pm$  0.347 (Table 3).

#### b. Plateau ecosystem

A total of 24 species belonging to 16 genera and three families were sighted in the plateau ecosystem. Most species were noted in post monsoon (17), followed by monsoon (14) and winter (7).

Species diversity (H') was  $1.762 \pm 0.405$ , species evenness (J')  $0.674 \pm 0.111$ , and species richness (SR)  $2.172 \pm 0.603$  (Table 3).

#### Weather parameters vs. dragonflies

The monthly diversity of dragonfly species recorded was correlated with the different weather parameters like monthly average rainfall, relative humidity, wind speed, sunshine hours and temperature (Table 1). Monthly diversity of dragonflies showed a significant positive correlation with the monthly average rainfall in the agro-ecosystem (cr cf = 0.765, p <0.05) and relative humidity in both the ecosystems (agro-ecosystem- cr cf = 0.759, p <0.05 and plateau ecosystem- cr cf = 0.796, p <0.05) and a low correlation with temperature and wind speed. Further, it was also found to be strongly negatively correlated with the monthly sunshine hours (agro-ecosystem- cr cf = -0.758, p <0.05 and plateau ecosystem- cr cf = -0.751, p = 0.06).

# Table 5. Seasonal variations in species indices of dragonflies in (a) agro-ecosystem and (b) plateau.a) Agro-ecosystem

Species indices	Monsoon	Post- monsoon	Winter
Species diversity (H')	2.145	2.138	1.801
Species evenness (J')	0.711	0.652	0.673
Species richness (SR)	2.373	2.435	1.903

#### (a1) Abundance and species richness at the agro-ecosystem

Family	Common name	Scientific name	Monsoon	Post-monsoon	Winter
Gomphidae	Common Clubtail	Ictinogomphus rapax Rambur, 1842	4	1	1
Aeshnidae	Blue-tailed Green Darter	Anax guttatus Burmeister, 1839	-	-	-
	Parakeet Darter	Gynacantha bayadera Selys, 1854	-	-	-
	Brown Darter	Gynacantha dravida Lieftinck,1960	-	1	-
Libellulidae	Trumpet Tail	Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842	4	7	-
	Ditch Jewel	Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793	-	-	-
	Granite Ghost	Bradinopyga geminata Rambur, 1842	2	4	-
	Emerald Banded Skimmer	Cratilla lineata Foerster, 1903	-	-	-
	Ruddy Marsh Skimmer	Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770	-	-	-
	Ground Skimmer	Diplacodes trivialis Rambur, 1842	11	27	17
	Blue Ground Skimmer	Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798	-	-	-
	Asiatic Blood Tail	siatic Blood Tail Lathrecista asiatica Fabricius, 1798		1	1
	Fulvous Forest Skimmer	Neurothemis fulvia Drury, 1773	-	-	1
	Pied Paddy Skimmer	Neurothemis tullia Drury, 1773	30	28	20
	Brown-backed Red Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum chrysis Selys, 1891	-	4	-
	Blue Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum glaucum Brauer, 1865	-	-	-
	Tricoloured Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum luzonicum Brauer, 1868	-	-	-
	Crimson-tailed Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum pruinosum Rambur, 1842	5	9	4
	Green Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum sabina Drury, 1770	9	17	6
	Small Skimmer	Orthetrum taeniolatum Schneider, 1845	-	-	-
	Wandering Glider	Pantala flavescens Fabricius, 1798	11	22	10
	Rufous Marsh Glider	Rhodothemis rufa Rambur, 1842	14	15	7
	Common Picturewing	Rhyothemis variegata Linnaeus, 1763	2	2	-
	Coral-tailed Cloud Wing	Tholymis tillarga Fabricius, 1798	10	-	-
	Red Marsh Trotter	Tramea basilaris Kirby,1889	-	-	-
	Black Marsh Trotter	Tramea limbata Rambur, 1842	-	-	-
	Black Stream Glider	Trithemis festiva Rambur, 1842	-	-	-
	Long-legged Marsh Glider	Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889	-	-	-

Table continued on next page

#### (b) Plateau ecosystem

Species indices	Monsoon	Post-monsoon	Winter
Species diversity (H')	2.203	2.077	1.289
Species evenness (J')	0.646	0.469	0.578
Species richness (SR)	2.49	3.056	1.764

#### (b1) Abundance and species richness at the Plateau ecosystem

Family	Common name	Scientific name	Monsoon	Post-monsoon	Winter
Gomphidae	Common Clubtail	Ictinogomphus rapax Rambur, 1842	-	3	-
Aeshnidae	Blue-tailed Green Darter	Anax guttatus Burmeister, 1839	-	1	-
	Parakeet Darter	Gynacantha bayadera Selys,1854	-	-	-
	Brown Darter	Gynacantha dravida Lieftinck,1960	-	-	-
Libellulidae	Trumpet Tail	Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842	-	-	-
	Ditch Jewel	Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793	-	1	-
	Granite Ghost	Bradinopyga geminata Rambur, 1842	9	10	3
	Emerald Banded Skimmer	Cratilla lineata Foerster, 1903	-	-	1
	Ruddy Marsh Skimmer	Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770	10	6	1
	Ground Skimmer	Diplacodes trivialis Rambur, 1842	19	39	18
	Blue Ground Skimmer	Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798	17	10	-
	Asiatic Blood Tail	Lathrecista asiatica Fabricius, 1798	-	1	-
	Fulvous Forest Skimmer	Neurothemis fulvia Drury, 1773	-	-	-
	Pied Paddy skimmer	Neurothemis tullia Drury, 1773	3	1	-
	Brown-backed Red Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum chrysis Selys, 1891	-	-	-
	Blue Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum glaucum Brauer, 1865	-	1	-
	Tricoloured Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum luzonicum Brauer, 1868	-	-	-
	Crimson-tailed Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum pruinosum Rambur, 1842	2	-	-
	Green Marsh Hawk	Orthetrum sabina Drury, 1770	18	17	
	Small Skimmer	Orthetrum taeniolatum Schneider, 1845			1
	Wandering Glider	Pantala flavescens Fabricius, 1798	59	67	5
	Rufous Marsh Glider	Rhodothemis rufa Rambur, 1842	3	6	
	Common Picturewing	Rhyothemis variegata Linnaeus, 1763	14	2	1
	Coral-tailed Cloud Wing	Tholymis tillarga Fabricius, 1798	-	-	-
	Red Marsh Trotter	Tramea basilaris Kirby, 1889	7	4	-
	Black Marsh Trotter	Tramea limbata Rambur, 1842	18	12	-
	Black Stream Glider	Trithemis festiva Rambur, 1842	5	7	-
	Long-legged Marsh Glider	Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889	1	-	-

#### DISCUSSION

A combined total of 28 species of dragonflies recorded at both sites makes about 59.5% of the total dragonflies recorded in the state so far (Rangnekar 2014).

The highest diversity recorded belonged to family Libellulidae (23) followed by Aeshnidae (3) (in plateau ecosystem) and Gomphidae (1). All over the world, species belonging to family Libellulidae dominate unshaded habitats with stagnant water, include species with great migratory ability and distributions covering more than one continent including isolated islands (Kalkman et al 2008).

Diversity in plateau ecosystem was more with 24 species while paddy field ecosystem displayed 16 species. This could possibly be due to a greater plant and insect diversity on the plateau, as opposed to the

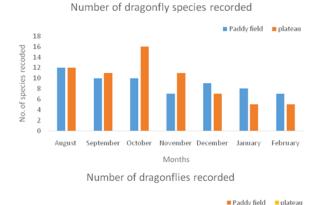




Figure 3. Monthly variation in the number of dragonfly species and number of dragonflies recorded.

monoculture paddy agro-ecosystem, which supports a lesser number of plant species and thus fewer insect species that are the prey base for dragonflies. Aquatic bodies in paddy fields were mostly covered by invasive weed like *Salvinia*, which hampers the growth of other native aquatic plant and animal diversity (Balzan 2012).

In the present study, seasonal variation in dragonfly species was also observed. Highest number of species and individuals were recorded during post monsoon, followed by monsoon and least in winter in both the ecosystems. Species diversity (H') was highest in monsoon followed by post monsoon and winter. Similar studies were carried out by Muthukumaravel et al. (2015). This may be attributed to drying up of the habitats which results in reduction in food resources post monsoon.

Monthly diversity of dragonflies showed a significant positive correlation with the monthly average rainfall in the agroecosystem and relative humidity in both the ecosystems. Similar observations were reported by Kalita et al. (2015) and Muthukumaravel et al. (2015). Weather plays an important role in the survival and activity patterns of adult odonates (Aguilar 2008). These environmental factors, along with vegetation directly affect diversity and distribution of food resources (Morais et al. 1999). The influence of rainfall is seen on density and distribution of vegetation, which leads to increase in abundance of herbivorous insects (prey for dragonflies).

It was observed that the species diversity (Fig. 2) in both ecosystems continue to be fairly similar in months August to October, however declined in January and February in the plateau ecosystem, along with a decline in the species richness, which can be attributed to the drying up of temporary water bodies following the monsoon season in the plateau ecosystem. Highest number of species was recorded in the month of October on the plateau ecosystem. Many of the species have their flight period during this period and a higher diversity of odonates could be attributed to this (Kulkarni & Subramanian 2013).

Neurothemis tullia shows the highest species abundance, followed by Diplacodes trivialis and Rhodothemis rufa in the paddy field ecosystem and Pantala flavescens in the plateau ecosystem followed by Diplacodes trivialis. Similar studies at agricultural areas were also reported by Kulkarni & Subramanian (2013).

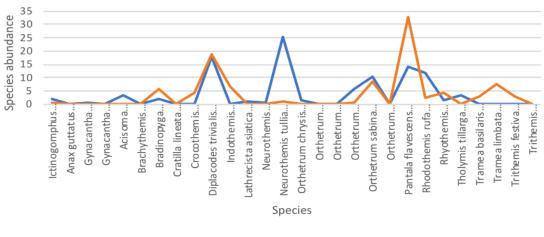
Dragonflies are important bio-indicator species (Stewart 1998; Nair 2011). Presence of species like *Brachythemis contaminata*, which is known as a dragonfly of polluted waters (Subramanian 2009), was recorded at some of the sites in the plateau ecosystem, may indicate deterioration of the aquatic body. The presence of *Neurothemis fulvia*, *Neurothemis tullia*, *Bradinopyga geminata and Trithemis festiva* at the sites can indicate superior quality water and species *Brachythemis contaminata*, *Orthetrum chrysis*, and *Orthetrum sabina* which are common species at the sites could possible indicate lower water quality.

Most of the species recorded belong to the Least Concern category of the IUCN Red List, while one species *Indothemis carnatica* is Near Threatened.

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Scientific name	Agro-ecosystem	Scientific name	Plateau ecosystem
Neurothemis tullia Drury, 1773	25.324	Pantala flavescens Fabricius, 1798	32.506
Diplacodes trivialis Rambur, 1842	17.857	Diplacodes trivialis Rambur,1842	18.858
Pantala flavescens Fabricius, 1798	13.961	Orthetrum sabina Drury, 1770	8.684
Rhodothemis rufa Rambur, 1842	11.688	Tramea limbata Rambur,1842	7.444
Orthetrum sabina Drury, 1770	10.389	Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798	6.699
Orthetrum pruinosum Rambur, 1842	5.8441	Bradinopyga geminata Rambur, 1842	5.459
Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842	3.5714	Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770	4.218
Tholymis tillarga Fabricius, 1798	3.246	Rhyothemis variegata Linnaeus, 1763	4.218
Ictinogomphus rapax Rambur, 1842	1.948	Trithemis festiva Rambur, 1842	2.977
Bradinopyga geminata Rambur, 1842	1.948	Tramea basilaris Kirby,1889	2.729
Orthetrum chrysis Selys, 1891	1.298	Rhodothemis rufa Rambur, 1842	2.233
Rhyothemis variegata Linnaeus, 1763	1.298	Neurothemis tullia Drury, 1773	0.992
Lathrecista asiatica Fabricius, 1798	0.974	Ictinogomphus rapax Rambur, 1842	0.744
Gynacantha bayadera Selys, 1854	0.324	Orthetrum pruinosum Rambur, 1842	0.496
Neurothemis fulvia Drury, 1773	0.324	Anax guttatus Burmeister, 1839	0.248
Anax guttatus Burmeister, 1839	0	Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793	0.248
Gynacantha dravida Lieftinck, 1960	0	Cratilla lineata Foerster,1903	0.248
Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793	0	Lathrecista asiatica Fabricius, 1798	0.248
Cratilla lineata Foerster, 1903	0	Orthetrum glaucum Brauer, 1865	0.248
Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770	0	Orthetrum taeniolatum Schneider, 1845	0.248
Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798	0	Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889	0.248
Orthetrum glaucum Brauer, 1865	0	Gynacantha bayadera Selys,1854	0
Orthetrum luzonicum Brauer, 1868	0	Gynacantha dravida Lieftinck,1960	0
Orthetrum taeniolatum Schneider, 1845	0	Acisoma panorpoides Rambur, 1842	0
Tramea basilaris Kirby, 1889	0	Neurothemis fulvia Drury, 1773	0
Tramea limbata Rambur, 1842	0	Orthetrum chrysis Selys, 1891	0
Trithemis festiva Rambur, 1842	0	Orthetrum luzonicum Brauer, 1868	0
Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889	0	Tholymis tillarga Fabricius, 1798	0



Paddy field — Plateau

Figure 4. Species abundance of the dragonfly species recorded.

#### D'Souza & Pai



Image 5. Common Clubtail *Ictinogomphus rapax* Rambur, 1842.



Image 6. Ditch Jewel Brachythemis contaminata Fabricius, 1793.



Image 7. Granite Ghost *Bradinopyga geminata* Rambur, 1842.



Image 8. Ruddy Marsh Skimmer Crocothemis servilia Drury, 1770.



Image 10. Blue Ground Skimmer Indothemis carnatica Fabricius, 1798.





Image 9. Ground Skimmer *Diplacodes trivialis* Rambur, 1842 (male and female).





Image 11. Pied Paddy skimmer *Neurothemis tullia* Drury, 1773 (male and female).





Image 12. Rufous Marsh Glider *Rhodothemis rufa* Rambur, 1842 (male and female).



Image 13. Common Picturewing *Rhyothemis* variegata Linnaeus, 1763.



Image 15. Long-legged Marsh Glider Trithemis pallidinervis Kirby, 1889.



Image 14. Coral-tailed Cloud Wing *Tholymis tillarga* Fabricius, 1798.

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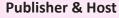
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