

Note on "nigrescens-like" specimens of *Sympetrum striolatum* (Odonata, Libellulidae) in the Åland Islands

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Sympetrum striolatum (Charp.) specimens from the Åland Islands are reported to have intermediate characters between *S. striolatum* and *S. nigrescens* sensu Gardner. The status of *S. nigrescens* Lucas is discussed. Record on the discovery of a larva of *S. nigrescens* in Tvärminne is corrected — the larva is *S. vulgatum* (L.).

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VERHOEVEN (1980) listed *Sympetrum nigrescens* Lucas as new to the Finnish fauna on the basis of a single larva collected in N: Tvärminne, Byviken, while he was studying the macroflora and macrofauna of *Ruppia* communities. *S. nigrescens* is a problematic taxon related to *S. striolatum* (Charp.); it was raised to specific status by GARDNER (1955). It is known to occur in Scotland, Ireland and SW Norway.

VERHOEVEN'S (1980) record was doubted by Finnish dragonfly workers, especially since the find locality is known to have a very large population of *S. vulgatum* (L.). A single *Sympetrum* larva collected there could hardly be any another species than *S. vulgatum*. On request, the larva deposited in Leiden Museum was re-identified by Drs. J. van Tol and D.C. Geijskes, and was found to be *S. vulgatum* (J. van Tol, letter dated 8.11.1983).

Meanwhile, however, the possible occurrence of *S. nigrescens* in Finland had aroused my interest, and in 1981 and 1982 a large material of *Sympetrum* was collected from several localities on the south coast. In August 1982 half a dozen localities were searched in the Åland Islands, and a study of the *S. striolatum* material collected there revealed interesting results. In most specimens the coloration of legs and frons resembled GARDNER'S (1955) description of *S. nigrescens* more than that of *S. striolatum*. Furthermore, the sides of the thorax in the Åland specimens were slightly more heavily marked with black than in central European *S. striolatum*, though less heavily marked than in *S. nigrescens*. However, differences in coloration were not considered of much diagnostic value by GARDNER (1955), who states that in northern and western areas of its range, *S. striolatum* attains colour characters near to those of *S. nigrescens*. Differences in the structure of the genitalia, especially of the male hamuli, were described by GARDNER as the most striking distinguishing character of the two species. Although the hamuli in most of the Åland ♂♂ appear more like those in GARDNER'S description of *S. nigrescens*, there are some intermediate characters, slightly variable in different specimens, which make the identification uncertain.

In 1979 Dr. D.C.F. Cotton had found specimens in Ireland with intermediate characters in the hamuli. Since then similar specimens have also been found in Scotland. Because these findings have shown that the features of the hamuli considered diagnostic by GARDNER (1955) are actually subject to variation, the validity of the specific status of *S. nigrescens* was doubted by MERRIT & VICK (1983). They suspect that *S. nigrescens* might be only a melanic race of *S. striolatum* associated with a cool maritime climate. GEIJSKES & van TOL (1983: 255) consider that characteristics of *S. nigrescens* lie within the margins of variability of *S. striolatum striolatum*.

Although the study of the Åland populations of *S. striolatum* is still at a preliminary stage, it seems evident that adults share clear intermediate characters of *S. striolatum* and *S. nigrescens* sensu Gardner. This supports the view that *S. nigrescens* has no major taxonomic status.

In Finland *S. striolatum* is distributed only in the southwestern archipelago, and has never been found on the mainland. In Åland the species is widespread and quite abundant, and has also been found in *Ab: Houtskär*.

References

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