



AGRION

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLDWIDE DRAGONFLY ASSOCIATION

PATRON: Professor Edward O. Wilson FRS, FRSE

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Secretary: Linda Averill. 49 James Rd, Kidderminster, Worcs. DY10 2TR. lindamaverill@aol.com

Editor: Jill Silsby. Sunrise of Banstead, Croydon Lane, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 3AG. JSilsby1@yahoo.co.uk

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EDITORIAL

It doesn't seem possible but this month sees our 10th Anniversary and I am hoping that this number of AGRION will appear on our Website on July 17th, which is our actual anniversary. Ten years since that epic Maribor (Slovenia) meeting in 1997 which was attended by just forty people and which resulted in the birth of PHOENIX – very soon to become the Worldwide Dragonfly Association. PHOENIX had no money, no records, no literature, no Board – BUT its founder members had boundless enthusiasm, linked with a determination to make their new society truly democratic, truly constitutional and perhaps above all to become once again a happy band of dragonfly lovers. On a personal note, I am proud to be a founder member and to have the WDA No. 0001

Please note that my e-mail has changed once more: JSilsby1@yahoo.co.uk

Finally, after editing AGRION for over ten years and Kimminsia for about the same period before that, I am regretfully passing the job on and have been lucky enough to find two people happy to take it over: Keith Wilson and Graham Reels and I know the WDA Newsletter will be in good hands. All that remains is for me to thank you all for your support over the years – I feel I know many, many of you SO well and, of course, it is not “Goodbye”: I'll see lots of you in Mexico I hope and after that in Japan!!!

Keith's e-mail address is: wilsonkd@netvigator.com

News of members

Norman Moore sends his thanks to all those attending the Namibia Symposium who signed the greetings and good wishes card. He says he was very touched to receive it. He was glad to hear from Philip Corbet that the Meeting had been such a success, adding “I've never been to Namibia but all I know who have say that it is a wonderful part of Africa”. Norman has had a long bout of bronchitis but is improving and is able to get out and see dragonflies emerging on the Mere which, despite two months with almost no rain, still has a reasonable amount of water.”

The fifth w.d.a. international symposium Namibia, 2007

A Report of general, social and non-scientific activities – Jill Silsby

Well over a hundred of us made our ways to Namibia, in various different ways. Personally I flew by Air Namibia to Windhoek from Gatwick Airport and it was with relief and excitement that I saw several old friends (**Philip Corbet & Sarah, Linda & Mike Averill, Dave Thompson** and **Robert Canning** to name just a few) amongst the long queue for embarkation. After a reasonable flight we were met by two of our three organisers: genial, welcoming and always unflappable **Eugene Marais** & beaming **Frank Suhling**,

who whisked us off to our various hotels for the night. Next morning early(ish!!) we set off by coaches on a long, somewhat frustrating drive to the seaside resort of Swakopmund where the Symposium was to take place. Once we arrived at the National Museum of Namibia which hosted the Congress we joined up with the third of our organisers (**Andreas Martens**) and a happy gabbling group of WDA members and their partners. Here we registered and each received a smart official bush-hat, a symposium shirt and a dragonfly-bedecked document holder for the copious literature. It was really good to see so many old friends and to meet and get to know a goodly number of new ones. It was April 15th and the long anticipated event had begun.

We all owe a big vote of thanks to Eugene, Frank and Andreas – together they did a fantastic job.

By 9am the next morning we were all assembled in the National Marine Information & Research Centre's splendid lecture auditorium to welcome the Honourable John Mutorwa, the Namibian Government's Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture (and his entourage) who performed the official opening ceremony with dignity and a pleasant sense of humour. We witnessed the launch of a set of very lovely dragonfly stamps and we sang the Namibian National Anthem and also the beautifully worded Anthem of the African Union.

Let us all unite and celebrate together
The victories won for our liberation.
Let us dedicate ourselves to rise together
To defend our liberty and unity.
O Sons and Daughters of Africa
Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky
Let us make Africa the Tree of Life.

Let us all unite and sing together
To uphold the bonds that frame our destiny.
Let us dedicate ourselves to fight together
For lasting peace and justice on earth.
O Sons and Daughters of Africa
Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky
Let us make Africa the Tree of Life.

Let us all unite and toil together
To give the best we have to Africa,
The cradle of mankind and fount of culture,
Our pride and hope at break of dawn.
O Sons and Daughters of Africa
Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky
Let us make Africa the Tree of Life

The evening of that first day was notable for a Public Lecture by **Georg and Dagmar Ruppell**. It was, as all of us who had previously witnessed their wonderful photography expected, a magical, breath-taking hour. When that was over we transferred to a hotel where we enjoyed a Cocktail Party, attended by the British High Commissioner.

Wednesday, April 18th was the day of our **Mid Symposium Field Trip** – it was a day to be remembered, a day spent in the renowned Namib Desert. Although most of us had believed that this was the oldest desert on Earth, we were informed by Eugene that the claim is unfounded: 17,000 years ago there was no sand and thus no dunes – an inland sea covered it all. However the vast area is now covered by various types of sand: and very lovely it is. We had many stops throughout the day to examine this and that and perhaps the most intriguing was a dry, sandy expanse in which grew a scattering of the most ancient plants known on earth: *Welwitschias*. Look them up on Google – you will be

fascinated. The lovely day ended by all participants being photographed at the base of a small sand dune – the customary Group Photograph!



Welwitschia, showing the cones which prove its conifer ancestry (Jill Silsby)

The night of the **Symposium Banquet** was one that not one of us will forget. It was held deep in the desert under a spectacular starlit sky. (It always seems so strange to those of us living in the Northern Hemisphere to see Orion and his belt the wrong way round and Cassiopeia upside down!!) We sat at tables under a vast awning and enjoyed our excellent dinner almost as much as we enjoyed each other's company. We were, of course, celebrating the 10th anniversary of our Association and toasts were freely drunk to a multitude of people, all of whom richly deserved being singled out.

The Post-Symposium Tour was exceptionally well-subscribed and, In order to cope with the large number of participants, we were divided into three groups, each going independently in three different directions, although on one or two occasions we did all gather in one spot: an evening watching some brilliant African tribal dancers was one such occasion. We spent a couple of days in the vast Etosha National Park and two more at Kavanga on the Okavanga River – sunsets over the river each night were unspeakably lovely. **Linda Averill** has contributed the following report describing the doings of one of the groups (aka "Wild Dog").

"Wild Dog Group. After an extremely successful symposium held in Swakopmond, Namibia, 27 delegates headed off into the wilds of Africa on a camping safari. We were split between two safari buses each with a driver/guide and a camp assistant, respectively Raymond and Caleb on our bus. There were 13 of us in the bus that Mike and I travelled in, we all got on well as a group; useful when you are together for long hours in a coach. We shared stories; sweets and biscuits but, most importantly I think, information about

the different items of interest we saw en route. We were lucky to have some keen bird-watchers on board and a knowledgeable guide in Raymond. Early on the first day he screeched to a halt to rescue a chameleon he had spotted in the middle of the road. Despite getting a nasty suck he brought the creature onto the bus for us all to have a close look. We stopped at a large Spar supermarket that morning for the guides to stock up with provisions to feed us. It was at this stop that I saw one of the things that left a lasting impression of Africa on me. Right in the middle of this bustling supermarket car park were 2 young Himba women in their tribal dress with fully ochre'd bodies and hair. They were absolutely beautiful and I so wish that I had had the nerve to go and ask them if I could take a photograph. As it was I had to make do with a postcard but it was a sight I shall never forget. Our tour moved on and we took a detour for lunch to a site where we met up with Eugene Marais and he told us about the research that the National Museum are involved with there looking into the structure of termite mounds. It was a lovely spot to stop and our guides and assistants made our first meal seemingly out of the air. Lunches consisted of salads, crusty rolls, cheese, cold meats and fruits (the water melon being Mike's favourite). Everything came out of the back of the buses – chairs, tables even the washing up kit! Our long lunch stop made us late getting to our first overnight stop at Okaukuejo Camp in Etosha and because of the short days (sunset at 17.30hours) we arrived after dark. This became a regular occurrence – pitching tents after dark: it was always a surprise next morning to see where we were camping. The two campsites we stopped at in Etosha both had floodlit waterholes where you could sit and watch the animals that came to drink. While we were there most animals must have remained thirsty because our total was just one jackal, one hyena, one wildebeest and six zebra.

“On the following two days we did a couple of game drives into Etosha and saw some interesting wildlife although, disappointingly for me, no big cats or elephants. Doubly disappointing, as our friends on the other bus saw lion and a leopard. However we did see an interesting group of mongoose that they missed!

“On day 3 we had a long drive north to the Kavango River stopping for lunch at the Hobo Meteorite site. Once again we arrived at our campsite after dark. By this time many of us were feeling exhausted by the long days of travelling combined with early mornings (rising at 05.30am to make the most of the day) so when we were given the option of a rest day and staying for 2 nights at the N'Kwazi Lodge we

jumped at the chance. We had an interesting evening watching traditional dancing and having a beer before we turned in with the promise of a lie in until 7am for those of us not going out to Poppa Falls or on a bird watching boat trip.

“The morning was a real surprise the Lodge and its surroundings were absolutely delightful right on the Kavango River in a beautiful setting surrounded by trees and lush greenery. A group of us spent a lovely morning walking along the river looking for dragonflies. We were led by Frank Suhling so of course saw lots of different species. I spent the rest of the day relaxing, swimming and chatting, an ideal rest day finished off with a boat trip along the Kavango River to watch the sunset.

“Day 5 was a long driving day not helped by the fact that the other bus picked up a flat tyre which meant an unscheduled stop while the guys replaced it, so we were late arriving at our last camp – the Waterburg Plateau.

“The following morning 16 of us took a dawn game drive onto the plateau. It was a fascinating area covered in thick bush and we were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a black rhinoceros. It was amazing how so large an animal could disappear into the bush only a matter of yards from where we were watching. At one of the water holes we stopped at we had an excellent view of a warthog with attitude. He was doing all the things you would expect a warthog to do: scratching himself on trees; rooting in the ground with his snout and, when we snorted at him, he pawed the ground before stalking off in the opposite direction. We left Waterburg for Windhoek at about 10am and arrived at the hotel just as it was going dark, so nothing new there! Despite my disappointment in not seeing some of the “Big Five” I enjoyed the experience of my first safari very much. I also feel that, after my camping experience, I could complete a thesis on Intercontinental Snoring!”

Linda Averil



(a) A group of Himba women in their desert home. (Jill Silsby)



(b) A group of Desert Elephants. (Jill Silsby)

A non-scientific day out

Ten eager participants set off to meet the native Namibian's during the Swakopmund conference. We all piled into 2 cars, one with a faulty back opening. Some very agile women were seen climbing over the seats to exit the vehicle at each stop. The first stop was the ATM machine, which eventually "ran dry" before the last participant could extract any cash. All was not lost, as "Secretary, Linda" came to the rescue with a loan.

We visited the home of the "Herero" tribal chief. She was a woman aged 81 years, who spoke Afrikaans and a little German. She told us about life in her youth as well as today, and her role within the local tribe.

We then visited a local artist at his hand painted house. It was very colourful both inside and out. Many gifts were purchased including hand-painted T-Shirts for all ages.

Next on the agenda was a visit to the local school. School hours are flexible, depending on the weather. On the day of our visit, school finished at 12 noon, but the students were happy to wait for our arrival. We were entertained with songs and we were asked to examine the students work.

Lunch was our next experience. It was a cultural lunch. That is local indigenous food!! The menu consisted of Mopane worms, millet, chicken and nuts. Eight of the ten participants tried the Mopane delicacy, however most participants were seen washing down this treat with the local "Taffel" beer.

A great day was had by all. The company was great fun, the tour of the town and school was excellent and the food was interesting!! See you all in Mexico **Robyn Sharman**

During the Mid- and Post-Symposium tour drives many of our members who had never before been to Africa were able to observe for the first time such beautiful creatures as giraffe, zebra and antelope (including the tiny Damara Dik-dik) - in the wild and in their natural habitat as opposed to seeing them in zoos. The excitement was infectious!! And we were lucky as (on our group) we had good sightings of many other species of African wildlife: lion, elephant, buffalo, wildebeeste (gnu), gemsbok (oryx) and, in the distance, we saw rhinos, both black and white. Birds were fairly numerous too: probably the most beautiful being the Lilac-breasted Roller and the two most impressive a Kori Bustard and a Bateleur Eagle. In one or two watery habitats we even found odonates!!! Not many but I'm told 18 species were found, photographed or netted.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is a milestone issue of *AGRION*. We are now into Volume 11, marking our second decade, which is cause enough to celebrate. But more importantly here, I want to try to acknowledge the contributions of Jill Silsby, not only to *AGRION* but to the WDA in general. All issues of *AGRION* have so far been edited and produced by Jill, who has now decided that it is time to retire and pass the reins on to others. It should not be at all difficult to describe Jill's contributions to the WDA, although it is not easy for me to find the most appropriate words. Jill was a prime mover in the establishment of WDA. She chaired the meeting held on 17 July 1997 in Maribor that founded the new international dragonfly society temporarily called *PHOENIX* (it later became the WDA), and, carrying Membership Number 1, she has earned the title of "Mother of the Association". She served as Secretary/Treasurer on the first two Boards and through her dedication to *AGRION* she has kept the Association's essential business on track and provided us with news of members and articles on dragonflies, all presented in a most attractive format. Except for Beechworth, where she was sorely missed, she has attended all of our International Symposia, including the last one in Namibia in spite of coming off a very difficult year on the health front. She has always inspired us with her charm and enthusiasm for all things odonatological. All of us in the WDA owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Jill and on behalf of us all I want to wish Jill a happy 'retirement'. Of course, she is only retiring from the editorship of *AGRION*. She is not retiring from all of her many other projects, one of which is a major book on the wildlife of the whole of Africa. Good Luck Jill, from all of us who look upon the WDA as an important and stabilizing focus in our lives. As Duke Ellington used to say: We love you madly!



Jill at Down House 2005



Jill at the Swakop River 2007

Of course the big event of the year was the meeting in Namibia. Valerie and I were privileged to take in the whole thing from the start of the pre-congress tour to the end of the post-congress camping tour and we have so many memories (and more than 2000 photographs) that it is difficult to contain the whole event. However, Jill has asked me to say something about one part of the experience - the pre-

congress tour - and this I am pleased to do, not only because Jill is a real incarnation of Rumpole's "She who must be obeyed", but because it was a wonderful start to our encounter with Namibia.

The tour was organized by Frank Suhling, ably assisted by Kamilla Koch. Frank put together a superb trip and proved to be an outstanding guide while Kamilla made sure that we were never short of food and drink. When I first wrote this, Frank was in hospital, but I am now pleased to report that he is out of hospital and feeling fine.

The trip started in Windhoek with a bus-load of 21 persons, including Teddy our amiable and careful driver, and wended its way to the south-west, to the Naukluft Mountains and the dunes at Sossusvlei, and then north-west to Swakopmund. There were several opportunities to observe and collect dragonflies, starting almost immediately at a reservoir just outside of Windhoek. However, an equally important aspect of the trip, apart of course from the most agreeable camaraderie that was enjoyed by the participants, was the changing landscapes and geological features, ably captured in pixels by John Hawking and Ulf Norling whose fleet-footed movements through the bus, cameras in hand, were the envy of us all. Among the landscape highlights of the first day were the flowering *Aloe hereroensis* set in what probably passed for prime grazing land, but looked pretty inhospitable to me even for goats.



***Aloe hereroensis* on the pre-congress tour**

There were many surprises on the trip, and one of the biggest was our first night's accommodation. Right in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by barren Namibian landscape, was an estate winery! Under the name **NEURAS**, the winery, run by Allen Walken-Davis, produces some 3000 bottles of very fine wine a year, with everything from picking the grapes to pressing, fermentation, and bottling done by hand on the premises. The small vineyard is irrigated by natural palm-fringed springs to which the resident *Tilapia* population adds fertilizer and so no chemicals (fertilizer or pesticides) have to be added. After a fine meal under the stars at a neighbouring farm several kilometres away and a good night's sleep at **NEURAS**, Allen gave us a tour of the winery, followed by a tasting of his superb red wines. Then it was into the bus for a day's touring through the area.

After a stop at Bullsport to check out potential dragonfly sites it was on to Solitaire for petrol and apple pie. If you look up one of the websites for Solitaire it will tell you that "the petrol station and garage as well as the farm store and café in Solitaire have acquired cult status. Until just a few years ago they were literally hidden away in the great nowhere. With tourism on the rise traffic through Solitaire has

clearly increased as well, but with a little luck it is still possible to get hold of a helping of the apple crumble for which Solitaire is world-famous". Another tells you: "As the name suggests, this is a lonely place in the middle of absolutely nowhere. The only reason it exists at all is to service visitors who are heading for Sesriem Canyon and the sand dunes at Sossusvlei. It used to have one solitary tree, one petrol pump, a take away kiosk and a captive puff adder. But big things have been happening here and there are now a couple of petrol pumps, a full-blown cafeteria and small shop and some basic accommodation. The dead tree is still standing stark against the flat dry landscape, but the puff adder has gone". Also they have a football team whose next fixture was to be against a neighboring community on Saturday afternoon (predicted temperature - 35°) at the Solitaire Stadium no less. And we did get the famous apple pie.

The day's sites included several typical Namibian rivers (bone dry or underground) and we passed a large tufa deposit indicating wetter times in the past, but no dragonflies today. Our accommodation for the next two nights was at Weltevrede Rest Camp, a handy jumping off point for Sossusvlei and one of Frank and Andreas' favorite dragonfly sites. Our rooms at Weltevrede looked onto a small artificial water hole which attracted a number of birds and mammals including flocks of Sand Grouse that visited in the early morning.

Frank was informed that rhinos had been introduced to the area where the site that we planned on visiting next morning was located, and sure enough we spotted one on the way. However, it was judged to be far enough away that it posed little threat and so we proceeded. And we were glad that we did because the spring-brook site was glorious. No more than 100 metres from the springs to the point where it disappeared and only a few centimetres deep, the brook supported several species of odonates including *Anax imperator* and *Anax speratus* and allowed great opportunities for photography and collecting.



The spring-brook with Frank leading the attack

After lunch we headed for what many of us had most wanted to see in Namibia – the picture-postcard dunes at Sossusvlei. Although we were a little rushed to get in and out before sunset, I have 80 photographs to show that we were not disappointed. My only concern was to wonder whether the oryx standing atop the crest of dune 47 in photographs used to advertise Namibia was really there or had been Photo-shopped in.

And so we were a very contented group as we crossed the tropic of Capricorn on the next day on our way to Swakopmund. The trip was a wonderful introduction to Namibia and its dragonflies and we

shall remember it for a long time. The only outstanding question is: Just how many glasses of wine did Mike Parr consume? Thank you, Frank, for a super trip and please take care of yourself.



The pre-congress trip group.

On the WDA Business front I have little to report. The Board is slowly catching up on issues that were raised in Swakopmund as well as ongoing matters. As a cost-saving measure, starting in 2008 we shall no longer be sending hard-copy versions of *AGRION* to members who have e-mail addresses and who are expected to be able to down-load the pdf version and print their own copy, complete with photographs. We have had some problems with the mailing of the *IJO* over the last year or so, but we think that we have them resolved now. Reinhard, our hard-working Editor, has agreed to add posting to his already heavy work-load. Thank you, Reinhard. And finally, those of you who were in Swakopmund, and probably most other members as well, will have heard about the proposal to merge the two odonatological journals – *IJO* and *ODONATOLOGICA*. Not much has happened on this front, although we continue to hold discussions with FSIO. WDA members can be assured that we shall work towards a solution that is acceptable to the WDA and will benefit the whole global odonatological community. Have a wonderful summer.

Gordon Pritchard

Life before GPS - an Australian story

During a dragonfly-collecting expedition on December 9th 1999 a friend and I, together with our wives, stopped at about lunchtime at Boshey's (also called Bushy's) Waterhole, a swampy bog near Brooms Head in north-eastern New South Wales.

A short walk to the most promising section, followed by a brief look for dragonflies, was not encouraging. Heading back to the car, however, I suddenly spotted, suspended in mid-air and ca 2.5 m from the ground, the profile of a very large, long-bodied dragonfly. Closer investigation disclosed that a Golden Orb Weaver (spider of the genus *Nephila*) which occasionally catches small birds had spun a large web between two trees and that a male *Petalura* had been caught in it. The insect was still alive and in good condition and looked like *Petalura litorea*, a species I had described only a few months earlier from coastal southern Queensland. Both superior anal appendages of the dragonfly, however, had a very distinct caudal dent. A search for more individuals was not successful, and the place was left.

About four weeks later, on January 7th 2000 my friend and I arrived again at the waterhole at about lunchtime. After I spotted a male *Petalura* with its superior appendages appearing hatchet-like when seen in profile we decided that one of us would try to cover what could be considered the upstream section and the other the downstream section of this very inhospitable habitat. I chose the upstream section and it was not long, hardly 150 metres from the car, before I saw first one, then two and finally four *Petalura* males soaring around me but keeping a safe distance. The spectacle displayed by the dragonflies and my continuous struggle to come close to any of them completely confused my sense of direction. A cloud came up, the dragonflies disappeared and I was lost – where was our car?

After trying several directions without success I finally plunged into dense bush hoping to make for the coast as remembered from a map and using the sun. My memory turned out to be faulty and using the sun during this time of the day was unfortunately not very useful. After a while (and the loss of much skin from my legs) I found traces of a track that had possibly been made by a bike a few days earlier. I decided to follow it and after a considerable time I came to a closed gate and then to a road which I felt just had to lead to Brooms Head, from where I would hopefully become reunited with my car. It was only when I was picked up by a passing vehicle that I realized I had spent more than 3 hours and covered more than 10 kilometres going round in circles in my futile attempts to find the car.

I was finally dropped in Brooms Head, far from where I'd hoped to be, where numerous fishermen and pleasure seekers camped between road and shore. By offering money I found a couple of blokes courageous enough to try to take me back to the car. After they had picked up a six-pack (compact package of 6 beers) each for the expedition they noticed a police car patrolling the area. Their condition was apparently such that they panicked and told me that keeping their drivers licences would outweigh any of my needs. I was stranded again.

It was then that the idea was born to me that “a policeman is your friend” and might possibly help. I stopped the impressive new 4WD vehicle and, after stating my problem, persuaded the two young officers to try to take me to the locality I was able to describe but had not approached from Brooms Head before. Concerted orienteering and excellent bush driving finally succeeded and a much less clean and good-looking police vehicle pulled up at our car.

It was then that I spotted my friend who had just arrived from an adventure of his own but, despite my collecting permit, he had no desire to approach a police car in the wild and swiftly disappeared into the bush. Only my call from the vehicle induced him to reappear - the police officers and the two of us had a good laugh when it was revealed that he too was simply looking for dragonflies and that he also had lost his direction! Sadly we were not as prepared for a celebration of our re-union as the campers from Brooms Head would have been. We could do no more than express our gratitude and offer a drink of water to the brave police officers. As we never followed up their careers in the police force a copy of this report will now go to their commander.

Re-united we stayed overnight in the area without getting lost again, and the next day we established the occurrence of *Petalura litorea* well into north-eastern New South Wales with a north-south overlap of at least 90 kilometres and decided that the strangely shaped anal appendages of the spider web *Petalura* were apparently just a symmetrical defect.

Gunther Theischinger



Petalura litorea: defect male from the spider web. (Gunther Theischinger)

Welcome to new members

China

Zhang Hongjie

Shaanxi Bioresource Key Lab., Shaanxi Univ. of Technology, Hanzhong 723000, Shaanxi

Finland

Merja Honkanen

Biol. & Environmental Sciences, PO Box 35, F1-400014 Univ. of Jyväskylä

Katja Tyukkynen

Biol. & Environmental Sciences, PO Box 36, F1-400014 Univ. of Jyväskylä

Germany

A. Klaus-Juergen Conze Daimler Str 6, D-59609 Anroechte

Italy

Alessandro Tabarroni

Via Domenico Zampieri 24, 1-40129 Bologna

Japan

Misa Tanimoto-Piper

4, Ohashidori 3-chome, Nakamura, Shimanto-shi 787-0033

Ikeda Kazutaka

106 Sanko-zaka Homes, 2-1-41 Shirokane, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-0072

Tomonori Kojyo

3-5-1-9-108 Sakurada, Wshimiya-cho, Kitkatsushika-gun, 354-0013

Yohei Kurauchi

Room B-102, 3-9-2 Kasuga, Tsukuba-city, Ibaraki Pref., 305-0013

Korea

Kwang-soo Jung

112-601 Dalvit-maul, Hwanjung-dong, dukyang-ku, Koyang City Gyunggi-do

Spain

Dr Christopher Beatty

Grupo de Ecol. Vol., Dept de Ecologia y Biol. Animal, Univ. of Vigo, 36005 Pontevedra

U.K.

Sarah Jewell

3 Lelant Meadows, Church Road, Lelant, St Ives, Cornwall. 26 3JS

U.S.A

Marion Dobbs

9 Bridlewood Lane, Rome, GA 30165

Debbi Frick

37 Walnut Road, West Seneca, NY 14224

Changes of Address

Germany

Andreas Kaemper

Heinrichstr 4, D 720774, Tübingen

Japan

Dr Katsuyoshi Ishida	2130-3 Kohazama, Haruki, Togo-cho, Aichi-gun, Aichi-ken, 470-0162
Toshiyuki Miyazaki	3-23-10 Habikigaoka, Habikino-shio, Osaka 583-0864
Akihiko Sasamoto	190-4 Yakuoji Tawaramoto-cho, Shiki-gun, Nara prf 636-0341,
Dr Kouji Sawada	Rm 203, 1-11-11 Hakozaiki, Higashi-Ku, Fukuoka City, 812-0053
Prof Yoshitaka Tsubaki	Hirano 2-509-3 Kohazama, Haruki, Togo-cho, Aichi-gun, Aichi-ken, 470-0162
Sadayuki Ugai	2-4-7 Mizutani Higashi, Fujima-city, Saitama Pref., 354-0013

U.S.A.

John Abbott	2907 Lake Austin Blvd., University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78703
Philip Crowley	Univ. of Kentucky, 101 Morgan Building, Lexington, KY 40502-0225

Book Reviews

1. Juwelenschwingen. Geheimnisvolle Libellen, Gossamer Wings, Mysterious Dragonflies – Dagmar Hilfert-Rüppell and Georg Rüppell. 2007. Splendens-Verlag, Cremlingen. ISBN 978-3-00-020389-3 (hardback). 168 pp. Price Euro 38.60 (including postage costs) if ordered directly from publisher (www.splendens-verlag.de or Splendens-Verlag, An der Wasserfurche 32, 38162 Cremlingen, Germany) or Euro 43.55 in European bookshops. 22.5 x 28.5 cm.

Dagmar Hilfert-Rüppell's and Georg Rüppell's book represents the harvest of days, months and years of patient observation, under water as well as above, to capture on film odonates living out their brief lives. The authors have dedicated many years of research to this, their specialist subject, and everything about this beautifully presented book bears testimony to their skills.

This handsome volume, bearing the cleverly chosen, evocative title "Gossamer Wings," comprises numerous photographs, mainly of *Calopteryx* species, each accompanied by explanatory text, describing the fascinating and complex life-cycle of dragonflies and damselflies. The text is in German, with an excellent English translation. It is clear, informative and concise, and perfectly matches the breathtakingly exquisite pictures, skilfully managing to fill, through scientific artistry, the many gaps in the average reader's understanding of the wondrous world of Gossamer Wings. The book handles well; it is printed on high-quality paper and the colours are true. There are no daunting diagrams or tables; indeed, they are not necessary. Chapter sub-headings include: Appearance, From Water to Air, Flight, Prey Capture, Threatening and Fighting, Courtship, Mating Tactics, Danger, Mating, Oviposition, Larvae, and Roosting. There are brief biographies of the two authors and a valuable introduction to photographic techniques. The German and English vernacular names of the species illustrated are listed, together with their scientific equivalents, which is especially helpful.

I enthusiastically commend this glorious celebration of the authors' work. The book should be treasured by all odonatologists – amateurs and experts alike.

Sarah Jewell

2. Gehan's Photo Booklet: Dragonflies of Sri Lanka and Southern India by M. Bedjanič, K. Conniff & G. de Silva Wijeyeratne. 24 pp. Published by Jetwing Eco Holidays, Colombo, 2006.

This simple illustrative booklet provides photographs of 78 dragonfly species from Sri Lanka, with brief information on their local status. A map of the island, showing major roads and locations of National Parks, is also provided. The very limited text is presented in English, Sinhala and Tamil. The dragonfly photographs are somewhat variable in quality (a number are slightly out of focus; most are good; many are excellent) and mainly depict common to uncommon species, dominated by libellulids (36 species). The authors have, however, been able to depict some 25 species which they rate as being scarce or highly scarce in Sri Lanka, including fine photographs of several platystictids, and useful shots of various seldom-photographed gomphids and libellulids. The booklet is not comprehensive (some 117 described species are recorded from the island), and provides no information on distribution, habitat affiliation or diagnostic features of species, but it makes an attractive and very useful companion to T. de Fonseka's ***The Dragonflies of Sri Lanka***. It is available as a paperback book or as a free download from the website

of Jetwing Eco Holidays (www.jetwingeco.com), although the quality of reproduction is rather poor in the latter.

G.T.Reels

3. *Taiwan 120 Species of Dragonflies* by Cao, M.H. 128 pp. Published by Wild Bird Society of Taipei, Taipei, 2005. [In Chinese].

Those familiar with Liang-Jong Wang's beautiful ***Dragonflies of Taiwan***, published in 2000, will be aware that this mountainous island in the South China Sea boasts an attractive and richly varied dragonfly fauna. Wang's book, however, although filled with gorgeous photographs, is altogether too cumbersome to use as a field guide. For the latter purpose, Cao's *Taiwan 120 Species of Dragonflies* is highly recommended. As its name suggests, this pocket-sized, inexpensive guide covers 120 (out of a total of 144) species,

each of which is illustrated with three photographs, including one of the female, invariably of a very high standard (indeed, many of the photographs are superb). For each species account, basic biometric information is provided, and a pair of simple line scales indicate the flight period and altitudinal range (Taiwan has some two hundred peaks exceeding 3,000m in altitude, its highest peak is 4,000m, and it has several montane species). This is followed by brief paragraphs on diagnostic features, habits and habitats and similar species. Unfortunately (for most readers of AGRION, at least!), the text is entirely in Chinese. One can only hope that an English translation is on the way. Those interested in purchasing a copy of the current version might try contacting the Wild Bird Society of Taipei at wbst@wbst.org.tw.

G.T. Reels

WDA is in its eleventh year. It has its roots in Slovenia but its branches spread all over the world.

Our membership is now 279 and we have members in 42 countries.