

WORLDWIDE DRAGONFLY ASSOCIATION



Code of practice for collecting specimens

Preamble

A policy is needed to reconcile the need to collect and preserve specimens of dragonflies with the need for the conservation of species and habitats. There is an apparent conflict between, on the one hand, the requirement that species recorders, educators and scientists be able to examine and re-examine preserved specimens from certain taxa and certain localities in the light of future knowledge and, on the other hand, the general distaste among conservationists and others for killing any organism, either on ethical grounds or because of a perception that to do so might endanger the viability of a local population.

At their meeting on 22 July 2001, the Trustees of WDA decided to produce a code of practice for members of WDA who need to collect dragonflies. The following text is the result. David Fitch has been generous with advice during its preparation.

The Code

The provisions in this code arise logically from the application of four principles, as outlined below. By formulating the code, WDA confirms its commitment to these principles. In the code the word 'dragonfly' means a member of the order Odonata. The code is recommended as best practice by the Board of the Worldwide Dragonfly Association and will be subject to review at least once every five years.

Principle 1. To respect life, in the form of species, communities and habitats.

1.1 Unless needed for education or scientific research, no larval or adult dragonfly should be killed, either as a sequel to capture or through habitat destruction. Of these two types of intervention, the second is by far the more serious as a threat to the continuity of dragonfly populations.

1.2 Live dragonflies should only be held captive for good scientific reasons, under conditions that do not expose them to avoidable stress, and for no longer than necessary.

1.3 Specimens of dragonflies that have been collected should not be offered for sale.

1.4 Recognising that sometimes, scientific study will require a series of specimens to be secured, no more specimens should be collected than are needed. The collector should always exercise discrimination and restraint and proceed in a spirit consistent with the principles espoused in the code.

1.5 The habitat in which specimens are being collected should be damaged as little as possible.

1.6 Specimens of one species should not be collected in large numbers from the same locality in the same season.

Principle 2. To comply with existing regulations.

2.1 Before any dragonfly is collected, or collected material exported from its country of origin, all existing, relevant regulations, including the common law of the country, should have been complied with. Such regulations may include permission: to enter land, to collect certain species, to collect biological material of any kind, and to export or retain it.

2.2 When the collecting site is a nature reserve or a site of known interest to conservationists, a list of species collected should be supplied in due course to the owner or managing authority, whether or not to do so is a requirement when permission is granted.

Principle 3. To respect the need for scientific rigour.

3.1 Sometimes larval or adult dragonflies have to be collected and preserved as voucher specimens in order to further odonatology through education and scientific research, including the validation of specific identity. Sound taxonomy is central to odonatology and sound taxonomy almost invariably depends on the existence of properly annotated material. All voucher specimens should be adequately preserved and labeled, and thereafter properly curated. Where feasible, and in due course, they should be deposited in a suitable museum or institution or, if retained in a private working collection, their whereabouts should be made known to odonatologists generally.

Principle 4. To show, and expect to receive, tolerance of differing attitudes towards collecting biological material.

4.1 If a WDA member who is collecting in compliance with this code encounters overt disapproval from anyone at the collecting site, that member should respond to that disapproval by explaining the need for voucher material and by citing the authority that legitimizes the action of trying to obtain it.

4.2 It is recommended that WDA members conduct their activities in a manner consistent with this Code, and, at their discretion, report to the WDA Board any activity inconsistent with the Code. WDA unequivocally endorses the need to collect voucher specimens of dragonflies for the furtherance of odonatology through scientific research. WDA unequivocally deplores the behaviour of anyone who tries to obstruct, intimidate or slander anyone trying to collect dragonflies while complying with this WDA Code of Practice.

This Code was ratified by the WDA Board of Trustees on 26th February 2002.