

# SELYSIA

A NEWS LETTER OF ODONATOLOGY

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## COMMON (FOLK) NAMES FOR ODONATA

For many years I have had a great interest in the names applied to the Odonata although I must note that my efforts in collecting such names, their origins and usage have been quite desultory. During a visit with Mr. Bostjan Klauta in Utrecht, in September, we discovered our mutual interest in this topic and decided to collect all such names that we can find and to determine the significance of as many of these as possible. My survey of such names in English is far from exhaustive but may serve to show what is desired.

A majority of the names have a reptilian overtone, although I am unable to find a firm reason for this association. The oldest reference I have located is to Adder bolt in Caxton, 1483, "The eygth our lord sente to them locusts which is a maner grete flye callyd in some place an adder bolte." The Oxford Dictionary explains the origin of this term as "adder  $\neq$  bolt, the arrow of a crossbow; from the shape of the body," but offers no explanation of the application of "adder." Many of the other names would appear to be mere variations, or derivations from this term. These include adder fly and flying adder, which latter is said by the Oxford Dictionary to be "a widely diffused popular name of the Dragon-fly, used from Scotland to the Isle of Wight; also called adder-fly, and adder-bolt." Even now ether's mon (adder's man) and ether's nild (adder's needle), are British colloquial names for dragonfly. In Wales gyas-y-neidr (adder's servant) and gwaell neidr (adder's knitting-needle) are common names for the Odonata. In the novel, Precious Bane, laid in north Shopshire, Mary Webb wrote, "where the adder lay hid in the grass there above hovered the ether's mon as a warning."

The Oxford Dictionary notes under snake, "In the specific or popular names

of animals, birds, fishes, etc. A large number of combinations of this type are given in recent American dictionaries as snake-bunny, snake-doctor, snake-feeder, snake-hay," etc. Does this indicate a change in America from the English "adder," a name not widely used in this country, to snake- in the names for dragonflies? If so, whence the terms -feeder and -doctor in place of -bolt, etc.? The Dictionary of American Usage notes that, "The dragon-fly is known as 'snake doctor' from his supposed professional services to snakes."

A series of names with needle in the combination, probably related to the application of bolt (arrow), to these insects may have developed in America, as the Oxford Dictionary notes that "Devil's needle," and "Devil's darning needle" are used in the United States as names for dragonfly. Additional names of this ilk are darning needle, bad man's needle, (obviously a pious rendition of devil's needle), spindle and spindler.

The term "mosquito-hawk" apparently comes from the coastal areas of south-eastern United States. The earliest reference I have found is Brickell, 1737, (North Carolina), "The muskeetoe hawks are insects, so called from their continually hunting after Muskeetoes, and killing and eating them".

The term, damsel fly, was used by Moore, 1815, in Lolla Rookh (Paradise and the Peri),

"The beautiful blue damselfies  
That fluttered round the jasmine stems  
Like winged flowers or flying gems"  
and again by Robert Browning in The Ring and the Book:

"Before him, aye aloof,  
Fluttered in the cool some  
azure damsel-fly  
Born of the simmering quiet,  
there to die."

(continued, page 3)

## SELYSIA

A Newsletter of Odonatology

Compiled at  
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Lafayette, Indiana  
B. Elwood Montgomery

Issued at intervals  
as available news and information warrant

This newsletter is designed to disseminate facts and news about the activities of Odonatologists and Odonatology. It is not intended as a journal, nor an organ for the publication of articles or technical papers. The name is based upon that of the "Father of Odonatology," Baron Edmond-de Selys Longchamps.

## SEASON'S GREETINGS

As this issue is being compiled and posted at the beginning of December I am very happy to extend greetings of the Holiday Season. A very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY, JOYOUS NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE!!

One of my most pleasant experiences during the year was the opportunity to visit several Odonatologists in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. I took advantage of a trip to Bucharest (to participate in the XX International Congress of Apiculture) to visit other European cities en route to and from Roumania. Unfortunately, the trip was made in August and early September, during the annual holiday or vacation season. Some institutions were closed, and a few workers were away from the addresses at which I tried to find them. The time I had available for these visits was very limited so that I could spend only one to three days in most of the cities visited. The weather was very unfavorable - quite cool with almost constant rain - during the second week in September, when I had scheduled several

days in the Netherlands for field work. I had hoped to see several species of *Symphetrum* in flight and to obtain eggs for use in Mrs. Tai's biosystematic study of this group. Neither hope was realized!

I was able to renew my acquaintance with Dr. St. Quentin in Vienna and to meet Drs. Karl Buchholz and Erich Schmidt in Bonn, Dr. Geijskes in Leiden, and Messrs. Bostjan Kiauta and H. Moller-Pillot (who came from Tilburg to see me) in Utrecht.

I visited the Colegio del Salvador in Zaragoza and the Zoological Museum in Barcelona to study types in the Navas Collection. None of the types of species of the Polythoridae described by Navas and presumed to be in his collections was found.

A Study of the species of Ladona

Attention is called to a modest, but quite good paper entitled, "A Taxonomic Study of the Subgenus Ladona (Odonata: Libellulidae)" in Univ. Kans. Sci. Bull., 45(4): 361-396 (June 7, 1965) by Billy L. Bennefield. The study includes statistical analyses of 11 different measurements in addition to the use of coloration in the descriptions of species, with comparisons of the variations among six populations of L. julia. This study was used by Mr. Bennefield for a master's thesis at the Univ. of Kansas. He had intended to continue the study of the Odonata but he died even before the publication of this paper. The paper is listed here to inform workers that copies may be obtained upon request from Prof. George W. Byers, Department of Entomology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045.

## The Reprint Problem

In a letter of recent date, Mr. Bryan L. Sage of "Caldey," 11, Deepdene, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, England, calls attention to the problem of keeping up with the literature and offers a suggestion for my comments. However, the problem is of such importance that I am repeating his suggestion here for further discussion and suggestions for following out his proposal or another for the same

(cont., page 6)

Common Names for Odonata  
(continued from page 1)

In certain editions of Moore's poem there is a quotation from Sonnini as a footnote to the word, "damsel-flies": "You behold there a considerable number of remarkable species of beautiful insects, the elegance of whose appearance and their attire procured for them the name of Damsels." The name damselfly is noted in the Oxford Dictionary as, "the slender dragon-fly *Agrion Virgo* and kindred species, called in French demoiselle and in German Wasserjungfer and Wassernympfe."

Tillyard noted that horse-stinger is widely used as a name for dragonflies in Australia.

I have been unable to trace the origin of the name dragonfly; the oldest reference I have is from Bacon in *Sylvia*, 1626, "The delicate coloured Dragon Flies may have likewise some corrosive quality." It would be easy to think that the naiad has some resemblance to the mythical dragon, and that folk knowledge of the naiad emerging from the water to become the flying adult gave rise to the name. However, it may be that etymology can furnish a more reliable explanation of the name than entomology.

While a few names as dog-tail, white face, skimmer, amber-wings and similar terms are sometimes used for species, genera, or families, these appear to be manufactured rather than folk names.

Tillyard wrote that "in Victoria, the larvae of *Hemicordulus* are called 'Mud-eyes' (an excellent description!) and the late E. B. Williamson once found some people in eastern Indiana calling *Libellula (Neotetrum) pulchella*, the raffle snake feeder. In Florida, *Coryphaeschna ingens* (possibly other large aeshnids also?) is known as bee-butcher from its habit of preying on honey bees.

We would like to have as much additional information as possible. Can you furnish other names, correct or expand what I have given on common names for the

Odonata in English? Can you furnish folk names in other languages? The inside of the cover of this issue is made up as a blank for this purpose. Space is provided for names, language or dialect, areas where used, group to which applied, translation, meaning or equivalent in English (or in French, German or Russian), remarks and references (if the name has been published or the information is quoted from another author). Dr. Kiauta has furnished an example from Slovene to show what is desired.

Also we would like to know of any published compilation of folk names for any language. Dr. Kiauta has given me two such references:

LAZZARINI, A., 1906, *Catalogo di Ortoteri del Friuli*. Pastorizia del Veneto, Nos. 20-23 (Reprint, 1907, 30 pp.) This paper lists the folk names in the language of Friuli.

GARBINI, A., 1925, *Antroponimie ed omonimie nel campo della Zoologia popolare*. Verona, 2 v., 1598 pp. This includes a listing of more than 300 folk names for dragonflies in various dialects of Italy.

Can you offer any reason why dragonflies should receive names of such malevolent implications as horse stingers, Pferdestechern, Devil's darning needles, Teufelsnadeln, or Augenschliessen? Why the reptilian associations implied by Drachenfliegen, dragonflies, adder bolts, snake doctors? Are names of such import common in languages with little or no association with English or German?

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ARGIA STUDY GRANT

Mrs. Leonora K. Gloyd of the Illinois Natural History Survey has received a National Science Foundation grant to finish a monographic study of the genus *Argia*. Mrs. Gloyd has been studying this genus for many years and we rejoice with her in this opportunity to bring a project of great magnitude and many years duration to completion.

Mrs. Gloyd has received a leave of absence for one year from the Natural History Survey to go to the Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor to carry on her study.

DIRECTORY OF WORKERS

## Revised United States List

This is a list of those in the United States known to have some special interest in the Odonata. It includes all for whom I have an address.

I shall certainly appreciate any corrections as it is very difficult to maintain an accurate list. An immediate acknowledgment of the receipt of this issue with corrections and/or additions to this list will be of great help. Furthermore, future issues of SELYSIA must carry ZIP CODE for all United States residents. Send your ZIP CODE now if it is not included in your address here.

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- ✓ ALBRIGHT, Mr. Philip N. - 943 East Mistletoe Ave., San Antonio 12, Texas
- ✓ ALRUTZ, Prof. Robert W. - Denison University, Granville, Ohio
- ALWARD, Mrs. Emily - Roy O. West Library, DePauw University, Greencastle, Ind.
- ✓ BEATTY, Mr. George H. - P. O. Box 281, State College, Penn.
- ✓ BEATTY, Mrs. Alice Ferguson - P. O. Box 281, State College, Penn.
- ✓ BELLAMY, Dr. R. Edward - Encephalitis Laboratory, P. O. Box 1564, Bakersfield, Calif.
- BERLY, Prof. J. A. - Division of Entomology, Clemson College, Clemson, South Carolina
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- GLOYD, Mrs. Leonora K. - Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- GOWER, Miss Jennett - MacDuffie School, Springfield, Mass.
- ✓ GRABEAU, Mr. Miles C. - R. 3, Big Rapids, Mich.
- GROSS, Mr. Robert E. - 64 Maple Street, Crystal Lake, Illinois
- HARBISON, Mr. Charles F. - Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, Calif.
- HARWOOD, Dr. Paul D. - Hess and Clark, Ashland, Ohio
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- ✓ HORNUFF, Mr. Lothar - Biology Dept., North Central State College, Edmond, Okla.
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- LEASE, Mr. William, Office of State Entomologist, Room 613, State Office Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.
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- ✓ LUTZ, Dr. Paul E. - The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina
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- MUSSER, Mrs. R. Jean - Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- ✓ PAULSON, Prof. Dennis R. - Department of Zoology, University of Miami, Coral Gables 46, Fla.
- ✓ PRICE, Mr. Homer F. - Payne, Ohio
- ✓ PRUESS, Dr. Neva - Department of Entomology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebr.
- RIES, Mrs. Mary Davis - 131 East View Drive, Normal, Ill., 61761
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- TINKHAM, Dr. Ernest R. - District Entomologist, Coachella Valley Mosquito Abatement District, R. 1, Box 22E, 83-733 Avenue 55, Thermal, Calif.
- ✓ TROGDON, Dr. R. P. - Judson College, Marion, Ala.
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- WEBER, Dr. Cornelius - Water Quality Section, Division of Water Supply and Pollution Control, 1014 Broadway, Cincinnati, Ohio
- WESTFALL, Prof. Minter J., Jr. - Department of Biology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.
- ✓ WHITE, Mr. Harold B., III - Box 322, Leont, Penn.
- ✓ WILLEY, Dr. Ruth L. - Department of Biology, Ripon College, Ripon, Wisc.
- WILLSON, Mrs. Mary F. - Department of Zoology, Vivarium Bldg., University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., 61822

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Specimens of Polythoridae Wanted for Study

A synopsis of the Polythoridae has been completed; the manuscript is ready for publication which, it is hoped, will be accomplished within six months. This is based almost entirely upon types and except for one species which exists in the literature as a nomen nudum includes no new forms.

(cont. page 6)

## REPRINT PROBLEM (cont., from page 2)

purpose. Comments may be sent directly to Mr. Sage, or to the Editor. In the latter case I shall be glad to compile the ideas and further suggestions in a future issue.

"Personally I find it very difficult to keep abreast of the literature outside the British Isles, and I am sure other Odonatologists must feel the same way. I would like to see instituted a scheme whereby those who are interested could regularly receive copies of other workers' papers on Odonata, and in a moment I will suggest one way in which this could be managed. In the beginning it would of course be necessary to circularise all Odonatologists and ascertain how many would be prepared to participate by providing separates of their own papers, and receive in return other workers' separates. If we assume for the sake of discussion that 50 people agreed to take part, the procedure would be as follows:-

(a) each participant would have to supply to the organiser 50 separates of each of his papers as they are published. At agreed intervals the organiser would distribute sets of separates to each participant.

(b) a small subscription may have to be charged in order to cover postal expenses,

"The scheme means that authors would have to bear the cost of providing 50 separates of their papers, but this seems reasonable as they would be getting separates of 49 other workers' papers. A possible alternative scheme would be to publish an "Odonata Abstracts" each year based on separates of papers supplied to the editor for the purpose. This would of course have to be on a subscription basis. The first scheme is the best if it could be worked."

## POLYTHORIDAE (cont., from page 5)

A more comprehensive study is now underway; as the group is so little known and species appear to be rather variable a study of populations is needed. Although several hundred specimens are now on hand, more material is desirable. Any material sent on loan now for such study can be examined promptly and, except for new forms of non-typical representatives of known species need not be retained long. The loan of such specimens will be appreciated.

## The Second Colloquium on the Odonata

Responses to the proposal for a second Colloquium on the Odonata (SELYSIA, 3, #1) have been extensive and very encouraging. Although some individuals expressed a personal desire for another time, the period between the summer sessions at colleges and the beginning of the academic year in September appears to be most suitable for the greatest number. The date of August 21-24 has been tentatively selected; although this must yet be resolved with the Purdue calendar and one other possible event in which I am involved, plans are going forward for this date.

The following suggestions have been offered and will be used in preparing for the meeting:

1. The colloquium will not be published. Each speaker will be encouraged to publish his presentation as he wishes.

2. Discussions, for the most part, will be based upon previous thought and preparation. Topics and ideas will be assigned to leaders who are willing to assemble and/or develop outlines or questions which will be distributed in advance to all who indicate plans to attend. Please comment on the following list - suggest additions, deletions, leaders and panel members for each topic.

a. Population studies - methods and equipment for both adults and naiads.

b. Geographical distribution. Seasonal life history, including climatic factors affecting development.

c. Seasonal life history, including climatic factors affecting growth rate.

d. Classification - major groups.

e. Photography - equipment and methods. Presentation of films and slides.

f. Work in progress. There are so many possible areas of research and the problems are such that a discussion of work each one is doing will eliminate duplication and provide ideas helpful to everyone.

I realize that I may have omitted whole areas in which many people are interested and included some which no one wants to hear about. Write me about both.

If you think there is any possibility of attending the meeting I shall be glad to send information about motels, rooms, parking facilities (its not free!!) etc.

FOLK NAME (In Latin characters, or in the orthography of the original language)	LANGUAGE or DIALECT	AREA OF USE	SPECIES OR GROUP to which applied Note also stage: Imago, naiad (or larva).	EQUIVALENT OR TRANSLATION OF TERMS IN ENGLISH FRENCH, GERMAN or RUSSIAN	REMARKS OR DISCUSSION	REFERENCES
<u>E X A M P L E</u> kačji pastir	Slovene	1. Republic of Slovenia, Yugoslavia 2. Southern Carinthia, Austria 3. area around Trieste and Gorizia, Italy	All Odonata adults	snakes' herdsman	Also used in the literary language; origin unknown	folk name by PUSCHNIG, 1930, Sonderh. Carinthia, II: 130, for S. Carinthia; with German translation

December 1, 1965

SELYSIA, v. 3, #2

supplement

Please use additional sheets as needed and/or furnish such information as indicated above and as much more as possible in discussion form: return as soon as convenient.