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NOTE

DO PREDATORY ADULT ODONATES ESTIMATE THEIR ADULT PREY ODONATES' BODY SIZE AND DISPERSAL ABILITY TO PROCEED WITH A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK?

Tharaka Sudesh Priyadarshana

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Do predatory adult odonates estimate their adult prey odonates' body size and dispersal ability to proceed with a successful attack?

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The average body size and dispersal ability of a species significantly depends on its taxonomic order (Siemann et al. 1999). Indeed, there are significant body size and dispersal ability differences between predatory odonates and their typical prey items such as gnats, mayflies, flies, mosquitoes, and other small-sized flying insects. During one of my field visits in Sri Lanka in 2015, I observed an adult dragonfly (Orthetrum sabina) eating another species of dragonfly (O. luzonicum) (Image 1), and their average body sizes and dispersal abilities were similar. Similar observations were being circulated on Odonate-specialists' Facebook (FB) groups, suggesting that adult odonates feed on other species of odonates or even the same species (see Image 2). When predators prey upon members of the same taxonomic group, it is difficult to predict whether the predators still estimate the size and dispersal ability of their potential prey items to proceed with a successful attack (Woodward & Hildrew 2002). This, however, can be measured by using a robust statistical analysis and a precise dataset.

Even though adult odonates feed upon adult odonates, such records are uncommon. To build the dataset, I surveyed two private FB specialists' groups for such potential records. I manually checked every single post of the "DragonflySouthAsia" (https://

www.facebook.com/groups/dragonflyindia) FB group between 2020 to 2016 and posts of the "Dragonfly Interest Group of Sri Lanka" (https://www.facebook. com/groups/256874097746055) FB group between 2020 to 2012. I also searched the "Odonata of India" (https://www.indianodonata.org/) website for more potential records. For most of those records, predator and prey species had been identified by experts within those groups. Prey odonates that could not be identified to species level due to predation were excluded from the final dataset. The records of mature predators preying upon juveniles were also excluded because that might result in some biases in the dataset as those individuals are immature. The final dataset included 67 records of adult predatory and prey odonate encounters from Sri Lanka (24) and India (43) — nine species of predators and 27 species of prey (see Table 1).

Morphometric trait measurement data related to body size and dispersal ability for each predator and prey odonate was extracted from the "Odonate Phenotypic Database" (OPD) at http://www.odonatephenotypicdatabase.org/ (Waller et al. 2019). When the data was not available in the OPD (only for eight species), the data was extracted from other published literature (see the Supplementary data for

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Table 1. Records of adult predator and prey odonate encounters from Sri Lanka (24) and India (43) from 2012 to 2020. Please see the supplementary data for additional information and references.

Record number	Country	Predator odonate species	Prey odonate species		
Records of Anisoptera (dragonflies) preying upon Anisoptera (n= 40)					
1	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Neurothemis tullia		
2	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Neurothemis tullia		
3	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
4	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum pruinosum		
5	Sri Lanka	Ictinogomphus rapax	Brachythemis contaminata		
6	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Brachythemis contaminata		
7	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum luzonicum		
8	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Neurothemis tullia		
9	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum luzonicum		
10	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Brachythemis contaminata		
11	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum luzonicum		
12	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum pruinosum		
13	India	Orthetrum sabina	Neurothemis fulvia		
14	India	Orthetrum sabina	Tetrathemis platyptera		
15	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
16	India	Orthetrum sabina	Potamarcha congener		
17	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
18	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum sabina		
19	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
20	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
21	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum sabina		
22	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum pruinosum		
23	India	Rhodothemis rufa	Neurothemis tullia		
24	India	Orthetrum sabina	Rhyothemis variegata		
25	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum pruinosum		
26	India	Orthetrum sabina	Potamarcha congener		
27	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
28	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum sabina		
29	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum sabina		
30	India	Orthetrum sabina	Crocothemis servilia		
31	India	Orthetrum sabina	Trithemis aurora		
32	India	Orthetrum sabina	Pantala flavescenes		
33	India	Orthetrum sabina	Potamarcha congener		
34	India	Orthetrum sabina	Diplacodes trivialis		
35	India	Orthetrum sabina	Pantala flavescenes		
36	India	Orthetrum sabina	Trithemis aurora		
37	India	Orthetrum sabina	Tholymis tillarga		
38	India	Acisoma panorpoides	Acisoma panorpoides		

Record number	Country	Predator odonate species	Prey odonate species		
39	India	Orthetrum sabina	Orthetrum sabina		
40	India	Orthetrum sabina	Paragomphus lineatus		
Records of Anisoptera (dragonflies) preying upon Zygoptera (damselflies) (n= 16)					
41	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Pseudagrion microcephalum		
42	Sri Lanka	Acisoma panorpoides	Ceriagrion coromandelianum		
43	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Pseudagrion rubriceps		
44	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Pseudagrion microcephalum		
45	Sri Lanka	Orthetrum sabina	Ceriagrion coromandelianum		
46	Sri Lanka	Brachythemis contaminata	Pseudagrion rubriceps		
47	India	Orthetrum sabina	Onychargia atrocyana		
48	India	Orthetrum sabina	Lestes viridulus		
49	India	Orthetrum sabina	Ischnura rubilio		
50	India	Orthetrum sabina	Ischnura rubilio		
51	India	Acisoma panorpoides	Ceriagrion coromandelianum		
52	India	Acisoma panorpoides	Agriocnemis splendidissima		
53	India	Brachythemis contaminata	Ischnura senegalensis		
54	India	Brachythemis contaminata	Ischnura senegalensis		
55	India	Orthetrum sabina	Ischnura senegalensis		
56	India	Orthetrum sabina	Agriocnemis pygmaea		
Records of 2	Zygoptera (dar	mselflies) preying upon Zyยู	goptera (n= 11)		
57	Sri Lanka	Ceriagrion cerinorubellum	Ceriagrion coromandelianum		
58	Sri Lanka	Ceriagrion coromandelianum	Agriocnemis pygmaea		
59	Sri Lanka	Ceriagrion coromandelianum	Onychargia atrocyana		
60	Sri Lanka	Ischnura senegalensis	Agriocnemis pygmaea		
61	Sri Lanka	Ceriagrion coromandelianum	Pseudagrion microcephalum		
62	Sri Lanka	Ischnura senegalensis	Agriocnemis pygmaea		
63	India	Ceriagrion coromandelianum	Ceriagrion cerinorubellum		
64	India	Ceriagrion coromandelianum	Ceriagrion cerinorubellum		
65	India	Ischnura senegalensis	Agriocnemis pygmaea		
66	India	Ceriagrion coromandelanium	Ischnura senegalensis		
		Ceriagrion	Agriocnemis		





Image 1. A mature adult of *Orthetrum sabina* preying upon a mature adult of *O. luzonicum* at Sinharaja rain forest in Sri Lanka, 2015.



Image 2. A mature adult of *Orthetrum sabina* preying upon a mature adult of *O. sabina* at Tirupur, Tamil Nadu in India, 2018.

Table 2. Differences in body size (average body length in mm) and dispersal ability (hind-wing length in mm) between predator and prey odonates when both groups belong to Anisoptera (dragonflies) suborder (n= 40). SD indicates standard deviations, and L-95% and U-95% indicate 95% credible interval (lower and upper, respectively).

	Mean	SD	L-95%	U-95%
Body size of predator odonates	46.500	0.001	46.498	46.502
Body size of prey odonates	39.992	2.415	35.208	44.530
Body size differences between predator and prey odonates	6.507	2.415	6.492	6.522
Dispersal ability of predator odonates	30.500	0.0006	30.498	30.501
Dispersal ability of prey odonates	28.251	1.482	25.287	31.027
Dispersal ability differences between predator and prey odonates	2.248	1.482	2.239	2.257

Table 3. Differences in body size (average body length in mm) and dispersal ability (hind-wing length in mm) between predator and prey odonates when predators belong to Anisoptera (dragonflies) and prey belong to Zygoptera (damselflies) suborder (n= 16). SD indicates standard deviations, and L-95% and U-95% indicate 95% credible interval (lower and upper, respectively).

	Mean	SD	L-95%	U-95%
Body size of predator odonates	45.749	2.037	40.313	46.533
Body size of prey odonates	32.808	1.235	30.371	35.155
Body size differences between predator and prey odonates	12.941	2.252	12.926	12.955
Dispersal ability of predator odonates	30.499	0.003	30.494	30.505
Dispersal ability of prey odonates	18.624	0.871	16.797	20.221
Dispersal ability differences between predator and prey odonates	11.875	0.871	11.869	11.881

Table 4. Differences in body size (average body length in mm) and dispersal ability (hind-wing length in mm) between predator and prey odonates when both groups belong to Zygoptera (damselflies) suborder (n= 11). SD indicates standard deviations, and L-95% and U-95% indicate 95% credible interval (lower and upper, respectively).

	Mean	SD	L-95%	U-95%
Body size of predator odonates	32.984	0.938	31.117	34.820
Body size of prey odonates	28.387	2.477	23.564	33.450
Body size differences between predator and prey odonates	4.597	2.658	4.581	4.614
Dispersal ability of predator odonates	18.600	1.010	16.606	20.324
Dispersal ability of prey odonates	14.359	1.718	10.919	17.829
Dispersal ability differences between predator and prey odonates	4.241	2.009	4.228	4.253



references). The average body length of each predator and prey species considered as the body size and potential dispersal ability was measured with the hindwing length (only males in mm) for each species (Moretti et al. 2017). To measure whether there is a significant difference in body size and dispersal ability between predatory and prey odonates, I performed a Bayesian t-test using the "BEST" package with flat priors (Kruschke & Meredith 2020). Due to available replicates and data distribution, the Bayesian t-test approach provides a more robust way of estimating posterior probabilities of group differences (Kruschke 2013; Kruschke & Meredith 2020). All the statistical analyses were performed in R version 4.0.3 (www.r-project.org/).

The final dataset showed three types of predation behaviors between the two suborders of Odonata, i.e., (i) Anisoptera (dragonflies) prey upon Anisoptera (60 %, n= 40), (ii) Anisoptera prey upon Zygoptera (damselflies) (24 % of n= 16), and (iii) Zygoptera prey upon Zygoptera (16 %, n= 11), but there was no record of Zygoptera preying upon Anisoptera. Therefore, three separate analyses were performed for each type of predation to estimate the body size and dispersal ability differences between adult predatory and prey odonates. Since each suborder was separately analyzed, the hind-wing length measurements were not scaled relative to body length.

The results of the analysis showed strong evidence that the predatory odonates performing the attack had larger body size and greater hind-wing length than their prey odonates across all three predation types (see Table 2–4). This indicates that predatory adult odonates may estimate the body size and dispersal ability of the adult prey odonates to execute a successful attack even

when both groups belong to the same taxonomic group. *Orthetrum sabina* had the highest percentage with 70 % (n= 47) of attacks on both Anisoptera and Zygoptera species, including *O. sabina-O. sabina* attacks (Image 2). It is also important to note that the attacks of the predatory odonates were mostly on the head or thorax of their prey odonates.

Data accessibility: Supplementary data for this study is available at, https://github.com/Tharaka18/Predatory-adult-odonates-and-their-adult-prey-odonates

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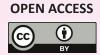
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