

***CALIAESCHNA MICROSTIGMA* (SCHNEIDER 1845) (RE)DISCOVERED
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Abstract – The distribution of *Caliaeschna microstigma* (Schneider 1845) in Europe is restricted mostly to the Balkans. As its populations have been declining over the past years, the species is classified as Near Threatened (NT) in the European and Mediterranean Red Lists. In Serbia, this species was reported earlier, but the data is incomplete. Precise location and the description of the record is missing. During the field trip in July 2018 in Pčinja River Valley (Southern Serbia) two individuals of *C. microstigma* were recorded. Based on this study, further faunistic research should be carried out in southern parts of the country to map the present distribution of this rheophile species and to take the most effective management measures for its conservation.

KEY WORDS: Conservation, *Caliaeschna microstigma*, dragonflies, Pčinja River Valley, Serbia

Izvleček – PONOVRNO ODKRITJE BLEDEGA VETRNJAKA *CALIAESCHNA MICROSTIGMA* (SCHNEIDER 1845) V SRBIJI (ODONATA: AESHNIDAE)

Bledi vetrnjak *Caliaeschna microstigma* (Schneider 1845) je v Evropi razširjen skoraj izključno na Balkanskem polotoku. Ker populacije te vrste upadajo, je vrsta uvrščena na evropski in sredozemski rdeči seznam, na oba s statusom potencialne ogroženosti ('Near Threatened', NT). Za Srbijo obstaja starejši podatek o prisotnosti bledega vetrnjaka, a je pomanjkljiv, kajti ni bilo sporočene natančne lokacije najdbe. Na terenski odpravi julija 2018 v dolino reke Pčinje (južna Srbija) smo zabeležili dva osebka bledega vetrnjaka. Za natančno poznavanje razširjenosti te reofilne vrste in pripravo načrta njenega ohranjanja so potrebne nadaljnje favnistične raziskave, predvsem v južnih predelih Srbije.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: varstvo, *Caliaeschna microstigma*, kačji pastirji, dolina reke Pčinje, Srbija

Introduction

In the last decade, great progress has been made in studying dragonflies in Serbia (e.g. Jović et al. 2010, Kulić et al. 2013, Rajkov et al. 2015, Vinko et al. 2016), but this group of insects is still insufficiently explored in the country. Although a certain number of papers on Serbian dragonfly fauna was published, the majority includes a smaller part of the country territory as well as a smaller part of the field season. For many species data is scarce and the records are sporadic (e.g. Jović et al. 2009). Therefore, the distribution of a large number of species in Serbia is poorly known and it can be assumed to be much wider than we know today.

In Serbia no national Red list exists (Boudot & Kalkman 2015), although seven dragonfly species are protected (Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije 5/2010). Jović (2013) listed 67 dragonfly species in the Serbian fauna, four of which require further research that will confirm the accuracy of the previous literature sources and were therefore not included in the Atlas of the European dragonflies and damselflies (Boudot & Kalkman 2015). One of these species is *Caliaeschna microstigma* (Schneider 1845). It develops in cold and fast flowing, well oxygenated running waters, which are at least partly shaded, with stony, pebble or gravel substrate. These are usually brooks, streams or small rivers (with width mostly 0.5–2 m), majority lacking aquatic vascular plants, where pools of calm water provide refuges for the larvae (Kovács & Murányi 2013, Kalkman & Jović 2015). Elevation of the habitats is from sea level up to 1,500 m a.s.l. (Shkëmbi et al. 2018). The larvae live among submerged moss, leaf litter, roots or under stones when other substrates are absent (Dijkstra & Lewington 2006). Larval development of this semivoltine species usually takes three years (Kovács & Murányi 2013). In Serbian language, the species is called ‘*primorski plemić*’ (Jović 2013).

Without any political suggestion, in this paper we exclude Kosovo as a part of Serbia.

Landscape of outstanding features “Pčinja River Valley” is an area comprising 2,606 ha, located in the south of Serbia, on the border with the Republic of North Macedonia. It is a landscape with exceptional biogeographical characteristics (Avramović et al. 2005). Pčinja River Valley is located in the transitional area in the climatic and vegetational terms, which makes it prone to degradation and susceptible to anthropogenic influences (Mišić 1981). The climate of this area is a mixture of continental and Mediterranean and as such has influenced the development of specific heterogeneous vegetation. These two factors defined the unusual fauna structure in this area.

Caliaeschna microstigma was previously reported from Serbia (Karaman 1979), but without a precise description of the record. In this article we present the first detailed record of *C. microstigma* for the country.

Material and methods

During the study we visited the Landscape of outstanding features “Pčinja River Valley” (Loc. 1) as well as the surrounding localities (Loc. 2–4) in order to clarify

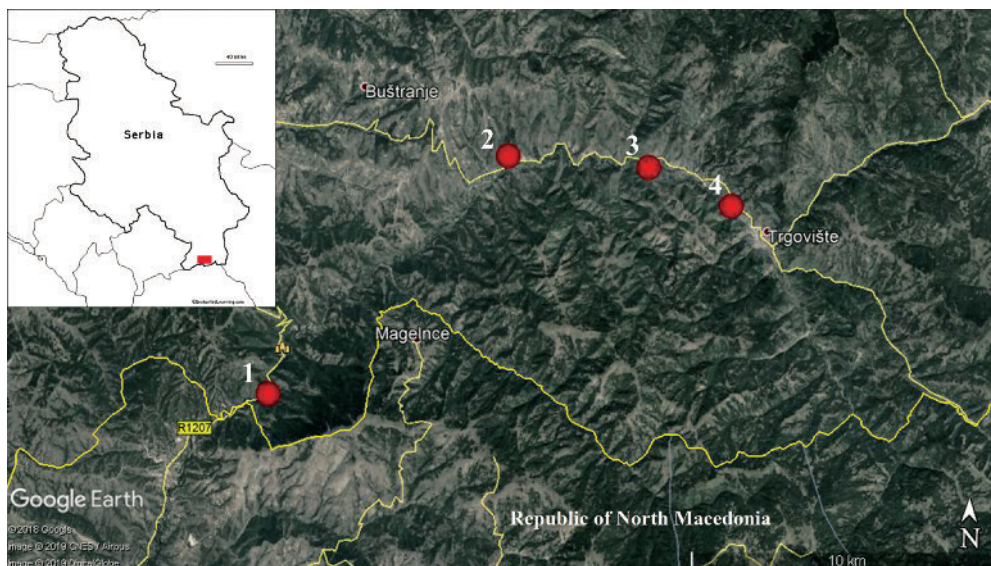


Fig. 1: Map of studied sites in the Pčinja region, south Serbia.

the status of *C. microstigma* in Serbia (Fig. 1). In the period from 20 to 22 July 2018 four sites were visited (Tab. 1) with only adult dragonflies identified. Three localities (Loc. 1, 3, 4) are different sites of Pčinja River, while one (Loc. 2) is a stream that is a tributary of the Pčinja River.

One male specimen of *C. microstigma* is stored in the entomological collection of the Natural History Museum in Belgrade.

Table 1: List of investigated sites from Fig. 1.

no. Loc.	Locality	Coordinates(l at./lon.)	alt. (m)	date	no. of dragonfly taxa
1	Prohor Pčinjski monastery (Pčinja River)	42°18'59.0"N 21°53'29.3"E	629	20.07.2018, 21.07.2018	1
2	Šaprance (stream)	42°23'11.67"N 21°58'55.71"E	561	21.07.2018, 22.07.2018	7
3	Šajince (Pčinja River)	42°23'02.9"N 22°02'02.8"E	572	21.07.2018	1
4	Trgovište (Pčinja River)	42°22'31.1"N 22°03'53.9"E	606	21.07.2018	3

Results

Altogether eight dragonfly taxa were identified (Tab. 2).

During the visit to Šapranca (Loc. 2), two adult males of *C. microstigma* were recorded (Fig. 2).

Table 2: List of recorded dragonfly species per locality from Tab. 1.

Species	Loc. 1	Loc. 2	Loc. 3	Loc. 4
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	-	+	-	+
<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i> (Pallas 1771)	-	+	+	+
<i>Caliaeschna microstigma</i> (Schneider 1845)	-	+	-	-
<i>Cordulegaster bidentata</i> Selys 1843	-	+	-	-
<i>Cordulegaster</i> sp.	+	-	-	-
<i>Somatochlora meridionalis</i> Nielsen 1935	-	+	-	-
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	-	+	-	-
<i>Orthetrum brunneum</i> (Fonscolombe 1837)	-	+	-	+

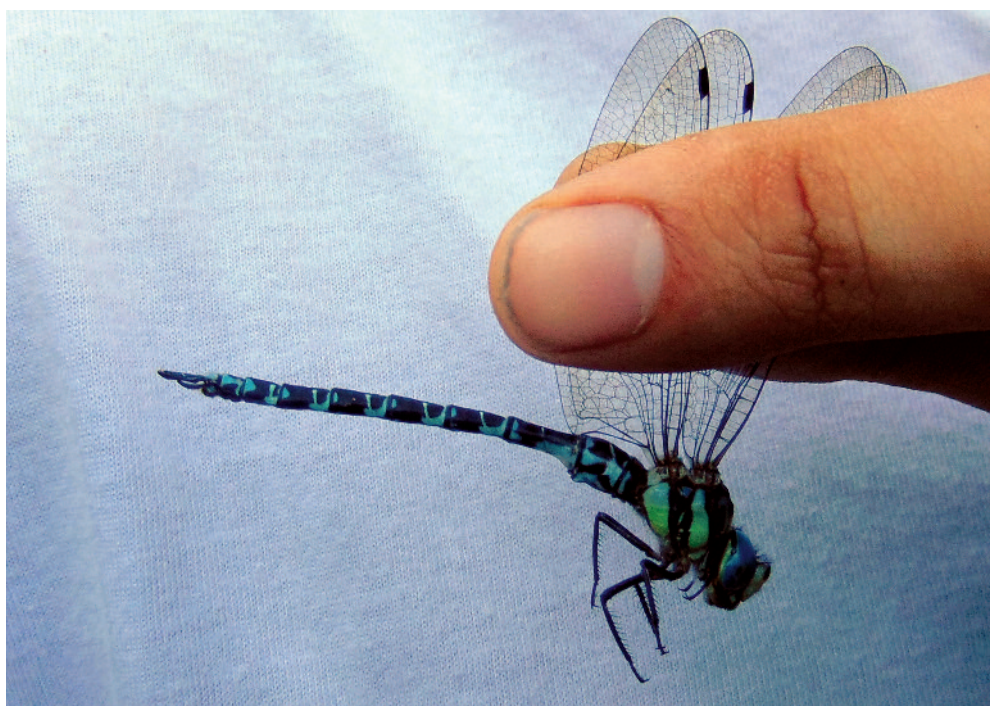


Fig. 2: *Caliaeschna microstigma* (Schneider 1845), adult male from Loc. 2, deposited in the entomological collection of the Natural History Museum in Belgrade (photo: Milan Đurić, 21-VII-2018).

Discussion

Two adult males of *Caliaeschna microstigma* were observed on 21 July 2018 in the late afternoon (18:00 PM), patrolling low above the water, matching the description of this crepuscular animal (Dijkstra & Lewington 2006). Recorded territorial behaviour as well as the appropriate habitat in form of a smaller slow flowing stream, in shade with dense surrounding vegetation indicates that reproduction is possible on the site. Further studies should be carried out in order to determine the reproduction status of this species. The site was also visited in the morning hours (10:00 AM) on 22 July 2018, when no individual of this species was recorded.

The species recorded in sympatry with *C. microstigma* were expected based on quotations (Kovács & Murányi 2013). *Caliaeschna microstigma* was often observed with *Cordulegaster* spp. and *Calopteryx* spp. (Kulijer et al. 2012, De Knijf et al. 2013), in our case with locally abundant *C. bidentata* and *C. virgo*.

The distribution of *C. microstigma* in Europe is restricted to the Balkans, Cyprus and the Aegean Islands (Kalkman & Jović 2015). This rheophile species is not uncommon in large parts of the eastern Mediterranean, but often occurs in low densities (Kalkman & Jović 2015). Individuals of *C. microstigma* are recorded in almost every country of the Balkan Peninsula (Adamović 1948, Bedjanić et al. 2008, Beschovski & Marinov 2007, Buczyński et al. 2013, Daraž 2009, De Knijf et al. 2013, Hostnik 2018, Kalkman 2000, Kovács & Murányi 2013, Kulijer et al. 2012, 2013, Lopau 2010, Puschnig 1926, Murányi 2007, Murányi & Kovács 2013, Shkëmbi et al. 2018, Vinko 2012, 2018, Vinko et al. 2017, 2018), while localities in Croatia (Belančić et al. 2008, Vilenica et al. 2014, Kotarac et al. 2016) represent north-westernmost border of the species areal (Kalkman & Jović 2015). This being considered, the presence of *C. microstigma* in the south of Serbia was expected.

Caliaeschna microstigma is classified as Near Threatened (NT) in the Mediterranean and the European Red Lists (Riservato et al. 2009, Kalkman et al. 2010). Kalkman et al. (2018) proposed *C. microstigma* to be included in the EU Habitat Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) as its populations are declining and the species is likely to qualify as threatened in the European Red List in the future. Furthermore, decrease in quality of running waters throughout its area of distribution is present. As the range of *C. microstigma* is confined to cold streams and small rivers, the climate change will have a major impact on the species due to habitat degradation (Boudot et al. 2009). Therefore, the conservation of Pčinja River Valley is extremely important in order to protect the population of *C. microstigma* in Serbia. Further faunistic studies, focused also on dragonfly larvae and exuviae, should be carried out, especially in the southern parts of the country, to map the present distribution of this species and to take the most effective management measures for its conservation.

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