

Recent observations of male and female *Sarasaeschna pramoti* (Anisoptera: Aeshnidae) in north-west Thailand

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Abstract

During a recent trip to the mountains of northwest Thailand in May and June 2024, single male and female *Sarasaeschna pramoti* were photographed separately in the Doi Inthanon National Park. This species was previously only known from two male specimens (the types) collected in the same area in 1999. There have been no published sightings since the original discovery of the two males. The female was therefore unknown until our recent observation. The two sightings of *S. pramoti* are detailed and photographs of the males of *S. pramoti* and its close relative *Sarasaeschna niisatoi* are compared. The authors consider the two species may be synonyms.

Introduction

The authors, together with Michael Post and Günther Fuchs, spent an enjoyable fortnight chasing Odonata in Thailand between 25th May and 7th June 2024. Our short route took in the area around Chiang Mai and Doi Inthanon National Park. During the trip we recorded just over 110 species of Odonata, most of these being expected but nevertheless much anticipated. We did however get one surprise when we found the seldom-recorded *Sarasaeschna pramoti* (Yeh, 2000) at two sites at Doi Inthanon National Park.

Sarasaeschna pramoti was originally described as an *Oligoaeschna* Selys 1889 from two males collected at 1400-1450 masl above the Siribhum Waterfall in Doi Inthanon National Park, Thailand in 1999. Shortly after *S. pramoti* was described the species was transferred to *Sarasaeschna* when that genus was erected by Karube & Yeh (2001). The genus is a rather enigmatic one; adults appearing to have short, late spring/early summer flight periods and finding them usually requires searching less obvious dark, forest wet hollows and shaded swamps.

Observations

Chris Heavilin (CH) had an incredible time in Thailand finding both our individuals of *S. pramoti* as well as



Figure 1. Male *Sarasaeschna pramoti*, Doi Inthanon National Park. (A) Dorsal view. (B) Lateral view. Photo credits: Benoît Guillon.



Figure 2. Female *Sarasaeschna pramoti*, Doi Inthanon National Park. (A) Dorsal view. (B) Lateral view. Photo credits: Benoît Guillon.

several other mouth-watering aeshnid species. On 3 June 2024 CH found a territorial male *S. pramoti* on a grassy, shaded and shallow ditch feature (presumably man-made) beside a riverside open area behind Mr Daeng's excellent café (18°31'58.2"N 98°31'22.1"E) - (see Fig. 1).

On 5 June 2024 CH went one further finding the previously unrecorded female of *S. pramoti* whilst working the swampy, forested stream inlet feeding an excellent small reservoir at Doi Inthanon (18°30'52.9"N 98°31'47.5"E) - (see Fig 2).

Discussion

The two observations we made of *Sarasaeschna pramoti* constitute the first sightings of this species since the species was originally described in 2000. The observation of a female is the first record. Photos of live



Figure 3(A-B). Side-by-side dorsal comparison of (A) male *Sarasaeschna niisatoi* and (B) *S. pramoti*. Perhaps the most obvious difference between the two individuals are the medio-lateral spots of segments 3 to 6 on *S. pramoti*, indicated by arrows. Photo credits: Benoît Guillon.

individuals are presented here for the first time.

In his description of *S. pramoti* Yeh (2000) pointed out that the new species was extremely close to *Sarasaeschna niisatoi* (Karube, 1998). The latter species is currently only known from two sites (Dow 2011); one in northern Vietnam and the other in Hainan (China). The authors are in the enviable position of having also photographed *S. niisatoi* at its only known station in Vietnam (Pia Oac) which allows the photographic comparison presented here - (see Figs 3 & 4).

Yeh (2000) considered *S. pramoti* was diagnosed by shorter male cerci with shorter apical expansion, the spots on either side of the frontal 'T' shorter and stouter, the medio-dorsal marks on S2 larger and more elongated transversely and the medio-lateral spots of segments 3 to 6 more apparent (they are present but very subtle on *S. niisatoi*). These small differences can be seen in Figures 3 & 4. Are these differences enough to justify species status for *pramoti*? We do not know but suspect not, maybe future research will shed light on this.

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Figure 4(A-B). Comparison of the appendages of *Sarasaeschna niisatoi* (A) and *S. pramoti* (B). The cerci of *S. pramoti* do seem to be marginally shorter and stouter. Photo credits: Benoît Guillon.