



Picture wing *Rhyothemis variegata*



Chalky Percher *Diplacodes trivialis*

Dragonflies of the British Indian Ocean Territory

Similarly to other groups of terrestrial organisms, the Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) of the Chagos are few in species compared to continental land masses or other older island groups. Up to 2008, only nine species have been identified in the region. Six of the species present appear to be of Oriental origin¹, including the most widespread in the archipelago, the chalky percher *Diplacodes trivialis*². The African bluetail *Ischnura senegalensis*, as the vernacular name suggests, is found in Africa as well as the Middle East and southern and eastern Asia. The globe skimmer *Pantala flavescens* is found worldwide in the tropics and the warmer temperate zones and is a common sight patrolling the coast of Diego Garcia.

In the Chagos several habitats are used by dragonflies. Some of the species present such as the midget whisp damselfly *Agriocnemis pygmaea*, are described as salt-tolerant¹; others are capable of inhabiting dark, overgrown stagnant ponds, as does the longtailed duskdarter *Zyxomma petiolatum* on Diego Garcia. Permanent freshwater pools are obvious attractions for breeding purposes and the sewage works pools on Diego Garcia are a dragonfly haven.

New species continue to turn up in the Chagos, and in November 2007 the beautiful female picturewing *Rhyothemis variegata* pictured above was recorded on Diego Garcia. This specimen's identity was confirmed by the Natural History Museum London². Twelve months later, the picturewing is now one of the commonest dragonflies on Diego Garcia and is found throughout the atoll near freshwater. Other strongly migratory or swarming Odonata are likely to be recorded and potentially colonise the Chagos in the future.

¹ Barnett, L.K. & Emms, C. (1997). Odonata observations on the Chagos Archipelago, British Indian Ocean Territory: A review and update. *Notulae Odonatologicae* Vol. 4: 10 pp 153-155.

² Carr, P. 2008. Expedition Report – Diego Survey III. *Sea Swallow* 56 pp.

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If you would like more information on the publications or membership, please contact the Secretary (simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk) or visit www.chagos-trust.org.