

The European Habitats Directive and dragonflies: more than the Annex species!

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The European Habitats Directive (1992) (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (1979) (Council Directive 79/409/EEC) are the cornerstones of the European nature conservation policy and aim to maintain or restore natural habitats, fauna and flora. One of the regulations of the HABITATS DIRECTIVE is that Member states have to designate special areas of conservation for the species mentioned in Annex II. Species of community interest in need of strict protection are mentioned in Annex IV. Altogether there are 16 dragonfly species mentioned in one or both Annexes. From the results of the European Red list (KALKMAN *et al.* 2010), it became clear that many threatened species in Europe are not mentioned in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive and therefore do not get the necessary attention in European conservation policy.

One of the obligations of the Habitats Directive (Article 17) is that Member States have to report once in every six years about the conservation status of the habitats and the species. It further defines that the assessment of the conservation status of a habitat is based on three parameters of which one is the list of typical species, including fauna. Typical species for Article 17 reporting should be selected to reflect favorable structure and functions of each habitat type, although it will not be possible to associate species with all aspects of structure and function. Given the variability of habitat types across their range it is very unlikely that all typical species will be present in all examples of a given habitat type. The sum of sites and occurrences of each habitat type per Member State should however support viable populations of the typical species on a long term basis to be in Favorable Conservation Status.

This paper includes a tentative list of typical dragonfly species for the different Natura 2000 habitat types present in the Atlantic biogeographical region in Europe. A differentiation is made between species exclusively present in a habitat type (type E), characteristic species (type K) having half their population reproducing in it, and species which are consistently present (type Cp), but not restricted to it. We further propose a method for the assessment of the status of typical species.

This ‘forgotten’ obligation of the Habitats Directive opens new possibilities for the protection, conservation and monitoring of dragonflies in Europe.

KALKMAN, V., BOUDOT, J.-P., BERNARD, R., CONZE, K.-J., DE KNIJF, G., DYATLOVA, E., FERREIRA, S., JOVIĆ, M., OTT, J., RISERVATO, E. & SAHLÉN, G., 2010. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 28 pp.