

Background

The BDS receives enquiries from time to time about Odonata emerging in aquaria, typically involving exotic species unlikely to have reached Britain under natural conditions. Such Odonata and other non-native species, both plants and animals, may affect native dragonflies or their habitats, should they become established in the wild. This policy is required so that competition and damage to our native fauna and flora is avoided and appropriate advice is given to those who request it.

Non-native dragonflies emerging in aquaria

Non-native larvae can be introduced into aquaria accidentally in imported water plants.

- It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended to release into the wild any animal which is not ordinarily resident in, or a regular visitor to, Great Britain in the wild state. Therefore non-native dragonfly species should never be released from aquaria or other captive situations into the wild.
- Although larvae can be kept successfully on a temporary basis, adult dragonflies or damselflies emerging from aquaria will die from starvation if kept in captivity. The BDS therefore recommends the following options, either for humane killing of the adult insect or disposal by the BDS:
 - Put the dragonfly or damselfly into an opaque container and leave it in a freezer overnight.
 - Post the larva or adult to the BDS in a suitable container (e.g. specimen tube or clean margarine tub). The Migrant Recorder will accept non-native specimens either dead or alive (see <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/contact-us> for contact details).
- Occasionally, non-native dragonflies emerge from imported aquatic plants in garden ponds. When these cases are discovered, the advice should be the same as for aquaria. Where individual specimens have already flown, this should be reported to the BDS who will notify local recorders.

UK dragonflies emerging in aquaria at inappropriate locations

- Every effort should be made to ensure captive larvae or the subsequent adults are returned to their place of origin. Where this is not possible, release should only take place within the known geographical range for that species. Releasing UK species out of their current known range is similar in many respects to releasing non-native species from outside Great Britain and the same advice should be followed.

Invasive non-native plant and animal species

Invasive non-native plant species or the measures needed to control them can be a threat to dragonfly habitats. Some non-native animal species also pose a threat to dragonflies. For example, the so-called 'Killer Shrimp' *Dikerogammarus villosus* is a potential predator of small larvae, especially damselflies. Information on dealing with non-native species is available from the GB Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>

- BDS shall encourage the use of native plants, from local sources, throughout its work.
- It is an offence by law for all non-native animals and certain non-native plants to be released into the wild. BDS advice should reflect this.
- The impact that invasive non-native species can have on water-bodies should be highlighted.
- BDS shall encourage use of the 'Check, Clean, Dry' initiative for equipment, footwear and clothing during all aquatic surveying and recording work.
- BDS shall encourage its membership to report non-native species found in the wild to the appropriate agencies. Some counties run their own non-native species initiatives.

Further advice on non-native species is available from organisations including Freshwater Habitats Trust, Plantlife, the Environment Agency and various water companies.