Note on “nigrescens-like” specimens of *Sympetrum striolatum* (Odonata, Libellulidae) in the Åland Islands

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*Sympetrum striolatum* (Charp.) specimens from the Åland Islands are reported to have intermediate characters between *S. striolatum* and *S. nigrescens* sensu Gardner. The status of *S. nigrescens* Lucas is discussed. Record on the discovery of a larva of *S. nigrescens* in Tvärminne is corrected — the larva is *S. vulgatum* (L.).

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In 1979 Dr. D.C.F. Cotton had found specimens in Ireland with intermediate characters in the hamuli. Since then similar specimens have also been found in Scotland. Because these findings have shown that the features of the hamuli considered diagnostic by Gardner (1955) are actually subject to variation, the validity of the specific status of *S. nigrescens* was doubted by Merritt & Vick (1983). They suspect that *S. nigrescens* might be only a melanic race of *S. striolatum* associated with a cool maritime climate. Geijskes & van Tol (1983: 255) consider that characteristics of *S. nigrescens* lie within the margins of variability of *S. striolatum striolatum*.

Meanwhile, however, the possible occurrence of *S. nigrescens* in Finland had aroused my interest, and in 1981 and 1982 a large material of *Sympetrum* was collected from several localities on the south coast. In August 1982 half a dozen localities were searched in the Åland Islands, and a study of the *S. striolatum* material collected there revealed interesting results. In most specimens the coloration of legs and frons resembled Gardner’s (1955) description of *S. nigrescens* more than that of *S. striolatum*. Furthermore, the sides of the thorax in the Åland specimens were slightly more heavily marked with black than in central European *S. striolatum*, though less heavily marked than in *S. nigrescens*. However, differences in coloration were not considered of much diagnostic value by Gardner (1955), who states that in northern and western areas of its range, *S. striolatum* attains colour characters near to those of *S. nigrescens*. Differences in the structure of the genitalia, especially of the male hamuli, were described by Gardner as the most striking distinguishing character of the two species. Although the hamuli in most of the Åland *S. nigrescens* appear more like those in Gardner’s description of *S. nigrescens*, there are some intermediate characters, slightly variable in different specimens, which make the identification uncertain.

References


