

First record of *Brachytron pratense* and *Isoaeschna isoceles* on the island of Evia, Greece (Odonata: Aeshnidae)

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Abstract

In the first decade of April 2024, several males of *Brachytron pratense* and one to two males of *Isoaeschna isoceles* (formerly known as *Aeshna isosceles*) were recorded on the island of Evia at Limni Distos and in the immediate vicinity. The records of both species made during little prospected periods are an addition to the checklist of the island. The adult record on 8 April 2024 of *I. isoceles* being the earliest for Greece and the abundance of mature *B. pratense* illustrates an emergence as early as the second or third decade of March.

Zusammenfassung

Erste Nachweise von *Brachytron pratense* und *Isoaeschna isoceles* auf der Insel Evia, Griechenland (Odonata: Aeshnidae) – In der ersten Aprildekade 2024 wurden mehrere Männchen von *Brachytron pratense* und ein bis zwei Männchen von *Isoaeschna isoceles* (älterer Name *Aeshna isosceles*) auf der Insel Evia bei Limni Distos und in unmittelbarer Umgebung nachgewiesen. Die Beobachtungen beider Arten, die während bisher wenig untersuchter Zeiträume gemacht wurden, sind eine Ergänzung der Checkliste der Insel. Der Nachweis eines adulten Exemplars von *I. isoceles* am 8. April 2024 ist der früheste für Griechenland, und die Häufigkeit von bereits ausgefärbten *B. pratense* deutet auf einen Schlupf bereits in der zweiten oder dritten Märzdekade hin.

Introduction

The only summary of the odonatological fauna on the island of Evia mentioned 31 species (LOPAU 1999b). New surveys have led to the discovery of four new species, bringing the total number of species to 35 (LOPAU 1999c, 2010a, 2010b). On a broader scale, the dragonfly fauna of Greece has been the subject of cartographic summaries and a checklist (BOUDOT et al. 2009; LOPAU 2010a; BOUDOT & KALKMAN 2015). With 35 species, Evia is the fourth most species-rich Greek island after Lesbos (44), Corfu (40), and Rhodos (37) (LOPAU 2010a). With a surface area of 3,654 km², the island of Evia is the second largest in Greece. Several

species reported on the mainland in eastern central Greece or Thessaly, regions adjacent to Evia, are potential for the island. In the first decade of April we visited Límni Distos and report on our observations.

Records

Brachytron pratense (Müller)

5 April 2024 (12:45–14:30 G.M.T.). At least two adult males were observed north-west of Límni Distos (38.364446° N, 24.124381° E, 40 m a.s.l.) hunting out of the wind in structured habitats in the phryganae.

8 April 2024 (13:45–16:20 G.M.T.). At least four adult males were observed in the same areas as on 5 April but also to the west near the Límni Distos close to the road. They flew around and hunted in habitats close to the lake.

9 April 2024 (13:15–15:30 G.M.T.). Near Límni Distos (Fig. 1), two to three males showed territorial behaviour near an open meadow surrounded by reeds but not at the water's edge. One of them landed very close to the ground (Fig. 2) to take shelter from the wind, and the other was flying close to the ground. Other individuals were observed close to the lake in terrestrial habitats made up of mosaics.



Figure 1. View of the southern tip of Límni Distos with several bodies of water, extensive reed beds and a variety of terrestrial habitats in which *Brachytron pratense* and *Isoaeschna isoceles* have been observed, 9-iv-2024. **Abbildung 1:** Blick auf die Südspitze von Límni Distos mit mehreren Gewässern, ausgedehnten Schilfgebieten und einer Vielfalt von terrestrischen Lebensräumen, in denen *Brachytron pratense* und *Isoaeschna isoceles* beobachtet wurden, 09.04.2024. Photo: CM

***Isoaeschna isoceles* (Müller)**

8 April 2024 (16:10 G.M.T.). An immature imago hunted near Límni Distos (38.342443° N, 24.127631° E, 30 m).

9 April 2024 (15:45 G.M.T.). Two immature imagines hunted in the shelter of a grove of oaks (38.334231° N, 24.139762° E) (Fig. 1). One specimen, a male, was caught and presented type stripes on thorax in lateral view typical for the *antehumeralis* form (Fig. 3). Additional Odonata species observed on this locality were mature imagines of *Ischnura elegans*, *Anax imperator*, and *A. parthenope*.



Figure 2. A male adult of *Brachytron pratense* resting a few centimeter off the ground in a strong north-easterly wind at Límni Distos, 09-iv-2024. **Abbildung 2:** *Brachytron pratense*, ein geschlechtsreifes Männchen, das am Límni Distos bei starkem Nordostwind nur wenige Zentimeter über dem Boden ruht, 09.04.2024. Photo: CM

Discussion

The records of *Brachytron pratense* and *Isoaeschna isoceles* are the first ones for the island of Evia, where 37 species of dragonfly have been recorded to date.

The nearest known localities of *B. pratense* are on the mainland, 150 km to the south-west in the Peloponnese and 200 km north of Evia on the coast (LOPAU 2010a). Its island presence eastern of mainland has been documented only for Lesbos (JOANNIS 1916; HOCHBNER et al. 2000). The flight period of *B. pratense* extends in Greece from the third decade of March to 11 June (LOPAU 2010a). During the first part of the flight period, observation intensity remains low in



Figure 3. An immature male of *Isoaeschna isoceles* captured and photographed in hand. It was flying in a maturation and foraging habitat 300 m from Límni Distos, 09-iv-2024. **Abbildung 3:** Ein immatures Männchen von *Isoaeschna isoceles*, gefangen und in der Hand fotografiert. Es flog in einem Reifung- und Jagdgebiet, 300 m vom Límni Distos entfernt, am 09.04.2024. Photo: CM

Greece (LOPAU 2010a). There is little doubt that *B. pratense* is indigenous to the site, based on the abundance of freshly matured individuals and repeated sightings, but above all on the favourable habitat. Límni Distos is largely covered with *Phragmites australis* with a few areas of open water in the center and on the banks depending on the water level. At the time of our visit in early April 2024, it still contained areas of open water on its western and south-western margins. Its water level must drop significantly in summer, and if they persist, the permanent water surfaces of the lake are likely to be limited.

Isoaeschna isoceles is more widely distributed in Greece on the mainland, in the Peloponnese and on several Aegean islands, namely Samos (LOPAU 1995; MARTENS 2009; KALFAYAN & KRIEG-JAQUIER 2018; KALFAYAN & TAYLOR 2020), Thassos (LOPAU 1999a), Ikaria (LOPAU 1999c), Lesbos (LOPAU 2010b) and Crete (MARTENS 2023). The reported sightings are the earliest for Greece according to LOPAU (2010a). *Isoaeschna isoceles* is also probably native to the site that suits its requirements.

Límni Distos had already been visited in the past on 27 April 1998 (locality 40 in LOPAU 1999a) and again on 23 May 2003 and 14 June 2004 (LOPAU 2010b). It is likely that the site has not been colonised recently, but depending on the level of flooding, the adults are probably active more in the center of the body of water and more difficult to detect.

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