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## Dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) from Pobè, Republic of Benin

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### Abstract

Between June and December 2025, seven sites in the municipality of Pobè were surveyed for Odonata. A total of 31 species were recorded, 20 of which are new to the area. *Tetrathemis camerunensis* (Sjöstedt, 1900), *Elattoneura balli* Kimmins, 1938, *Elattoneura nigra* Kimmins, 1938 and *Oxythemis phoenicosceles* Ris, 1910 are considered rare in the Republic of Benin.

**Key words:** Odonata, West Africa, Benin, Dahomey Gap, Pobè

### Introduction

The Odonata of the Republic of Benin (hereinafter referred to as Benin) remain insufficiently studied. Research dates back to Palisot de Beauvois (1807, 1817) who mentioned dragonflies from Oware in Benin, at that time referred to as the Republic of Nigeria, a term that was often used interchangeably with Benin in historical literature.

Only a few faunistic studies on dragonflies and damselflies have been conducted in Benin: Tchibozo & Dijkstra 2004; Tchibozo et al. 2008; Papazian et al. 2021; Romera, 2024; Tchibozo & Maes 2025; Tchibozo & Deliry 2022; Papazian et al. 2025. While these studies focus explicitly on the odonate fauna of Benin, a few additional publications include data on the regional fauna: Fraser (1951) documented records from Dahomey (Benin) and Togo, and Lieckweg & Niedringhaus (2006) listed several species from Benin while also considering records from Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, and Cameroon.

Tchibozo & Maes (2025) compiled a checklist of 121 odonate species for Benin. Of the 19 species previously recorded from Pobè, five have so far been documented exclusively from this locality in Benin: *Chlorocypha rubida* (Hagen in Selys, 1853), *Chlorocypha selysi* (Karsch, 1899), *Allocnemis subnodalis* (Selys, 1886), *Elattoneura balli* Kimmins, 1938, and *Africalagma subtile* (Ris, 1921).

The author considers it essential to continue monitoring and identifying dragonfly species in West Africa in order to improve our understanding of their distribution and threats. Dragonfly habitats are being destroyed at an alarming rate due to human activities, making the rapid documentation of species composition increasingly urgent.

Many localities in Benin have not yet been thoroughly surveyed, including the natural habitats of the Pobè region (6.992339, 2.677471) in southern Benin (Fig. 1 & 2).

This study intends to contribute to current knowledge of the odonate fauna of southern Benin.

## Material and Methods

Each specimen was photographed and identified. Priority was given to photographic documentation in order to avoid disturbance and killing of specimens. Regrettably, this approach was not applied to the species; consequently, identification to species level was difficult or not possible. In exceptional cases, species were captured with a sweep net, photographed and identified, and subsequently released back into their habitat. All photos taken in the field were carefully analyzed in the laboratory to confirm species identification. The illustrated catalogue of Odonata of Benin (Tchibozo & Maes 2025) was also consulted for identification.

Seven stations were established in June 2025 to collect data on the local odonate fauna.

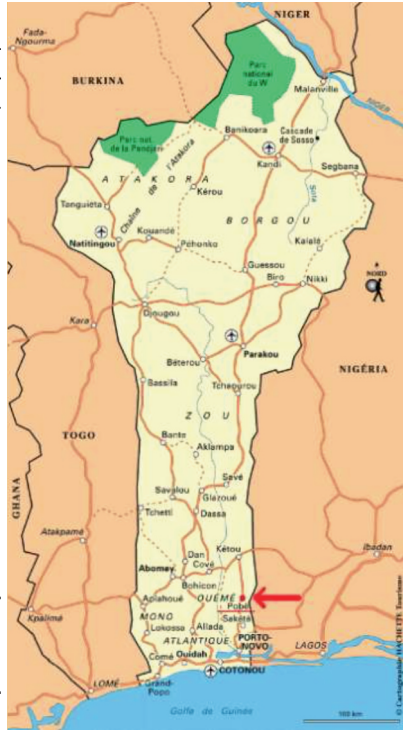
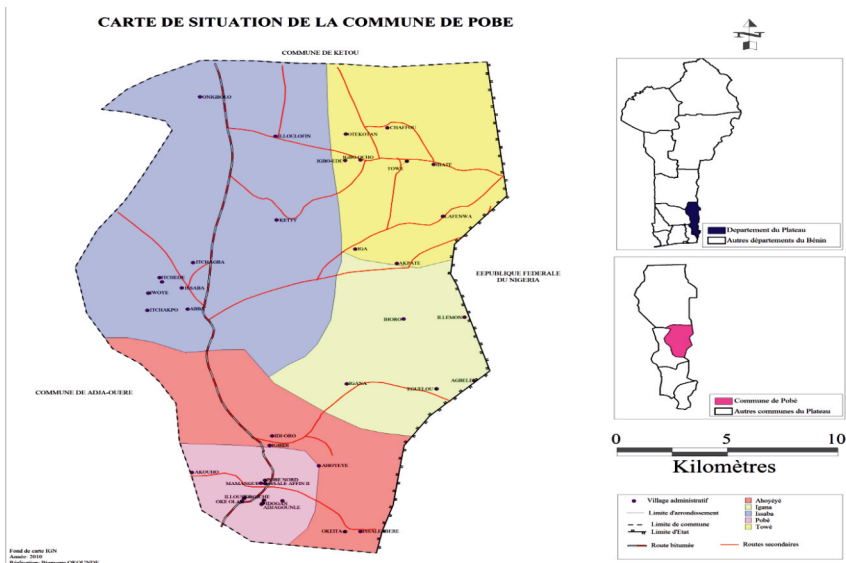


Figure 1a: Study site at Benin; [http://humanaire-benin.chez-alice.fr/pobe\\_021.htm](http://humanaire-benin.chez-alice.fr/pobe_021.htm)

Figure 1b: Studied area within the country of Benin (<https://decentralisation.gouv.bj/com-mune/67/pobe/>)



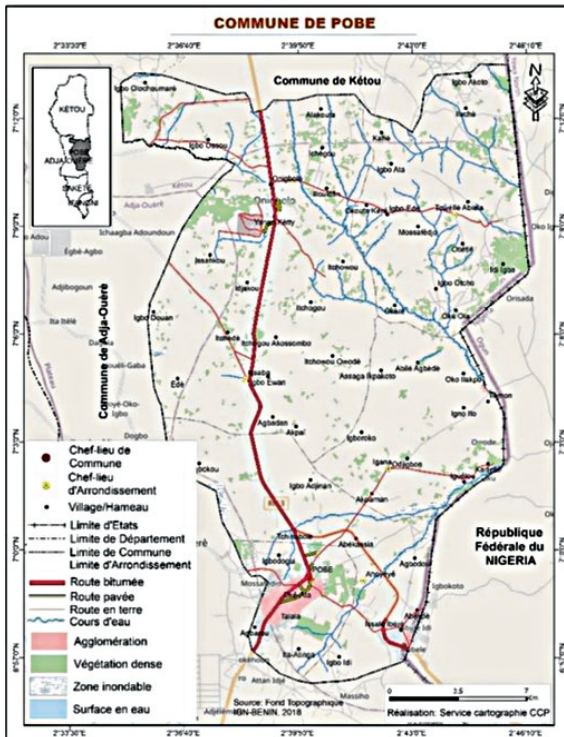


Figure. 2: Map of the studied municipality of Pobè <https://-ccp.bj/commune/pobe/>

## Localities

The seven study sites (stations) are characterized by their geographic coordinates and altitude, a personal assessment of odonatological importance, and a brief description of habitat conditions.

**ST 1** - N 06.96176, E 002.67-747. Alt. 81.4m. Odonatologically interesting. A relatively little human-modified site. Trails cross ST 1 for motorcycle access to agricultural fields and to Nigeria (Fig. 3).

**ST 2** - N 06.96214, E 002.66-616. Alt. 95.2 m. An interesting site located in the center of the forest of Pobè. It borders

several family farms cultivating oil palms, corn, soybeans, cassava, etc. (Fig. 4).

**ST 3** - N 06.96072, E 002.67493. Alt. 84.17 m. High human impact. An interesting situated within the forest. Trails cross ST 3 and are used regularly by motorcycles travelling to agricultural fields and to Nigeria, causing continuous disturbance of the substrate and larval habitats of the small river. The area is also used for ritual activities in the river, making fieldwork difficult. Continuous motorcycle traffic further complicates observation and sampling of dragonflies and damselflies (Fig. 5).

**ST 4** - N 06.9886, E 002.70284. Alt. 63.7 m. Heavy human impact, reflected by the presence of only a single recorded species. The water source is polluted by dishwashing and bathing with soap. Passage of transhumant cattle causes heavy trampling of the river banks and riparian vegetation (Fig. 6).

**ST 5** - N 06.97070, E 002.63619. Alt. 72.4 m. Located in the centre of a large oil-palm plantation. Ritual activities take place in the waterway (Fig. 7).

**ST 6** - N 06.96460, E 002.66317. Alt. 92.9 m. Very interesting site within forest gallery at the edge of natural forest. Local people use the stream for bathing, dishwashing, and ritual offerings. During such activities, adult dragonflies tend to avoid the water (Fig. 8).

**Pobè forest** - N 06.96542, E 002.67308. Alt. 117.9 m. Dense semi-deciduous forest (Fig. 9), currently not very well preserved and subject to severe degradation due to regular tree



Figure 3: Locality ST 1: N 06.96176, E 002.67747. The habitat is dominated by plant species such as *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq., *Triplochiton scleroxylon* K. Schum., *Ceiba pentandra* (L.) Gaertn., *Terminalia superba* Engl. & Diels, *Cola gigantea* A. Chev. and *Antiaris toxicaria* Lesch. *Elatoneura nigra* Kimmins, 1938 is currently known in the study area only from this station, ST 1.



Figure 4: Locality ST 2: N 06.96214, E 002.66616. The habitat is dominated by plant species such as *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq., *Terminalia superba* Engl. & Diels, *Triplochiton scleroxylon* K. Schum, *Spathodea campanulata* P. Beauv., *Raphia* sp., *Alchornea cordifolia* (Schumach. & Thonn.) Müll.Arg., *Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott, and *Cyclosorus interruptus* (Willd.) H. Itô. *Tetrathemis camerunensis* (Sjöstedt, 1900), *Agriocnemis exilis* (Selys, 1872), *Ceriagrion glabrum* (Burmeister, 1839), and *Oxythemis phoenicosceles* Ris, 1910 were recorded exclusively at ST 2.



Figure 5: Locality ST 3: N 06.96072, E 002.67493. The vegetation is composed of *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq., *Bambusa vulgaris* Schrad. ex J.C. Wendl., *Dialium guineense* Willd., *Sterculia tragacantha* Lindl., *Triplochiton scleroxylon* K. Schum, *Celtis mildbraedii* Engl., and *Alchornea cordifolia* (Schum. & Thonn.) Müll. Arg.. *Chlorocypha selysi* (Karsch, 1899) was recorded exclusively from this habitat. The stream connects this locality with ST 6. *Elattonaura balli* Kimmins, 1938 and *Tamea basilaris* (Palisot de Beauvois, 1805) were also recorded only at ST 3.



Figure 6: Locality ST 4: N 06.9886, E 002.70284. The vegetation is composed of *Bambusa vulgaris* Schrad. ex J.C. Wendl., *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq., *Mitragyna inermis* (Willd.) K. Schum., *Ipomoea aquatica* Forssk. and *Pistia stratiotes* L. *Pseudagrion nubicum* Selys, 1876 and *Pseudagrion hamoni* Fraser, 1955 were recorded exclusively at this station.



Figure 7: Locality ST 5: N 06.97070, E 002.63619. The vegetation is dominated by *Ipomoea aquatica* Forssk., *Pistia stratiotes* L., and *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq. Only *Pseudagrion camerunense* (Karsch, 1899) was recorded at this location.



Figure 8: Locality ST 6: N 06.96460, E 002.66317. The vegetation is composed of *Milicia excelsa* (Welw.) C.C. Berg, *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq., *Alchornea cordifolia* (Schum. & Thonn.) Müll. Arg., *Cola millenii* K. Schum., *Albizia* sp., *Antiaris toxicaria* Lesch., *Carica papaya* L., and *Musa* spp. *Trithemis arteriosa* (Burmeister, 1839) was recorded at this site, representing the only locality for this species in Pobè.

felling by local populations (Fig. 11). According to Sokpon (1995), the Pobè forest covers 744 hectares and surrounds the commune. It is crossed by a small depression containing a stream. In 1922, an oil palm research station was established, resulting in partial forest



**Figure 9: Locality Pobè forest: N 06.96542, E 002.67308.**

clearance for infrastructure. By 1995, only 115 hectares of natural forest remained, now protected by the research station (current the Centre de Recherches Agricoles Plantes Pérennes, CRA-PP). The forest structure includes a tree canopy reaching up to 30 m in height composed mainly of *Triplochiton scleroxylon* K. Schum, *Antiaris toxicaria* Lesch., *Celtis adolfi-friderici* Engl., *Piptadeniastrum africanum* (Hook.f.) Brenan, *Albizia* spp., *Terminalia superba* Engl. and Diels, and *Holoptelea grandis* (Hutch.) Mildbr. A second tree layer (10–30 m) is formed by *Strombosia glaucescens* Engl., *Sterculia tragacantha* Lindl., *Dialium guineense* Willd., *Celtis mildbraedii* Engl., and *Milletia thonningii* (Schumach. & Thonn.) Baker. The shrub layer (3–10 m) includes *Cola millenii* K. Schum., *Rothmannia urcelliformis* (Hiern) Bullock ex Robyn, *Olax subscorpioidea* Oliv., *Dictyandra arborescens* Welw. ex Hook. f., *Trichilia prieuriana* A. Juss. and *Baphia nitida* Lodd. The sub-shrub and herb layer (0–3 m) is composed of *Angylocalyx oligophyllus* (Baker) Baker f., *Microdesmis puberula* Hook.f. ex Planch., *Sphenocentrum jollyanum* Pierre and *Chassalia kolly* (Schumach.) Hepper.

## Results

In 2025, a total of 31 species were recorded. Of these, 20 represent new records for the study area (Tab. 1).

Tchiboza & Dijkstra (2004) documented 19 odonate species from the Pobè forest and its surrounding habitats: *Phaon iridipennis* (Burmeister, 1839), *Chlorocypha curta* (Hagen in Selys, 1853), *Chlorocypha rubida* (Hagen in Selys, 1853), *Chlorocypha selysi* (Karsch, 1899), *Allo-cnemis subnodalis* (Selys, 1886), *Elatoneura balli* Kimmins, 1938, *Africallagma subtile* (Ris, 1921), *Agriocnemis maclachlani* (Selys, 1877), *Pseudagrion kersteni* (Gerstäcker, 1869), *Pseudagrion melanicterum* (Selys, 1876), *Chalcostephia flavifrons* Kirby, 1889, *Gomphidia gamblesi* Gauthier, 1987, *Neodythemis* sp., *Orthetrum hintzi* (Schmidt, 1951), *Orthetrum julia* (Kirby, 1900), *Orthetrum stemmale* (Burmeister, 1839), *Orthetrum* sp., *Tetrathemis camerunensis* (Sjöstedt, 1900), and *Tramea basilaris* (Palisot de Beauvois, 1805).

**Table 1: List of species recorded from June to December 2025 at Pobè in chronological order. Appendix 1 documents some of the identified taxa.**

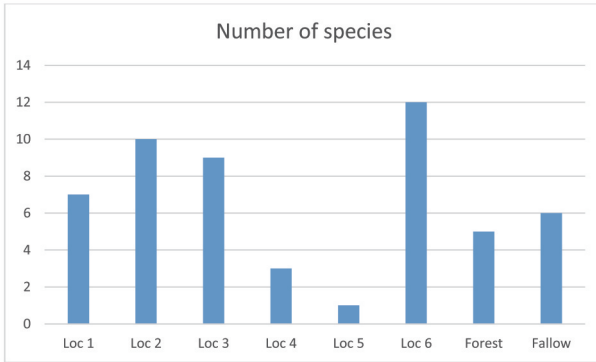
N°	Family	Species	Date of first observation / Locations (stations)	Previously re- corded in Pobè
1	Coenagrionidae	<i>Agriocnemis exilis</i> (Selys, 1872)	26.06.2025 / ST 2	No
2	Coenagrionidae	<i>Agriocnemis maclachlani</i> (Selys, 1877)	26.06.2025 / ST 2 / ST 6	Yes
3	Coenagrionidae	<i>Agriocnemis</i> sp.	24.07.2025 / ST 2 / ST 1	No
4	Coenagrionidae	<i>Ceriagrion glabrum</i> (Burmeister, 1839)	23.07.2025 / ST 2	No
5	Coenagrionidae	<i>Ceriagrion rubelloccerinum</i> Fraser, 1947	24.07.2025 / ST 2 / ST 1/ Forest	No
6	Libellulidae	<i>Chalcostephia flavifrons</i> Kirby, 1889	24.07.2025 / ST 2 / ST 1 / ST 3	Yes
7	Chlorocyphidae	<i>Chlorocypha selysi</i> (Karsch, 1899)	24.07.2025 / ST 6 / ST 3	Yes
8	Libellulidae	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i> (Brullé, 1832)	23.07.2025 / Fallow close to the Pobè forest.	No
9	Platycnemididae	<i>Copera sikassoensis</i> (Martin, 1912)	26.06.2025 / ST 2 / ST 3	No
10	Protoneuridae	<i>Elatoneura balli</i> Kimmins, 1938	30.09.2025 / ST 3	Yes
11	Protoneuridae	<i>Elatoneura nigra</i> Kimmins, 1938	24.07.2025 / ST 1	No
12	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum abboti</i> (Calvert, 1892)	23.07.2025 / Fallow close to the Pobè forest / ST 6	No
13	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum julia</i> (Kirby, 1900)	25.06.2025 / ST 6 / Fal- low close to the Pobè forest / ST 1 / Forest	Yes
14	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum hintzi</i> Schmidt, 1951	23.07.2025 / ST 6 / Fallow close to the Pobè forest / Forest	Yes
15	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum stemmale</i> (Burmeister, 1839)	26.VI.2025 / Fallow	Yes
16	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum</i> sp. 1	25.06.2025 / ST 6	?
17	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum</i> sp. 2	25.06.2025 / ST 6	?
18	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum</i> sp. 3	23.07.2025 / ST 6	?
19	Libellulidae	<i>Orthetrum</i> sp. 4	23.07.2025 / ST 6	?
20	Libellulidae	<i>Oxythemis phoenicosceles</i> Ris, 1910	30.09.2025 / ST 2	No
21	Libellulidae	<i>Palpopleura lucia</i> (Drury, 1773)	24.07.2025 / Fallow close to the Pobè forest / ST 1	No
22	Libellulidae	<i>Palpopleura portia</i> (Drury, 1773)	25.06.2025 / Fallow close to the Pobè forest	No
23	Coenagrionidae	<i>Pseudagrion camerunense</i> (Karsch, 1899)	24.07.2025 / ST 4 / ST 3 / ST 5	No
24	Coenagrionidae	<i>Pseudagrion hamoni</i> Fraser, 1955	24.06.2025 / ST 4	No
25	Coenagrionidae	<i>Pseudagrion kersteni</i> (Gerstäcker, 1869)	24.07.2025 / ST 2 / ST 6 / ST 1 / ST 3 / Forest	Yes
26	Coenagrionidae	<i>Pseudagrion melanicterum</i> Selys, 1876	24.07.2025 / ST 6 / ST 3	No
27	Coenagrionidae	<i>Pseudagrion nubicum</i> Selys, 1876.	24.06.2025 / ST 4	No
28	Libellulidae	<i>Neodythemis</i> sp.	25.07.2025 / ST 3 / Forest	Yes
29	Libellulidae	<i>Tetrathemis camerunensis</i> (Sjöstedt, 1900)	26.06.2025 / ST 2	Yes
30	Libellulidae	<i>Tramea basilaris</i> (Palisot de Beauvois, 1805)	25.07.2025 / ST 3	Yes
31	Libellulidae	<i>Trithemis arteriosa</i> (Burmeister, 1839)	23.07.2025 / ST 6	No

Six of these species were not observed in 2025 (see Discussion below).

All species mentioned above are listed as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List, both nationally and internationally.

Figure 10 illustrates the locality-wise diversity of the local odonate fauna. ST 1, ST 2, ST 3, and ST 6 exhibited higher species richness and abundance of dragonflies and damselflies compared to ST 4, ST 5 and the Pobè forest (Fig. 10). Several species were recorded exclusively in fallows adjacent to the study sites.

Essential odonate habitats located in the humid wooded areas surrounding the natural forest of Pobè are currently being degraded due to timber harvesting for fuelwood and construction, as well as the expansion of small-scale family farmland. By December



**Figure 10: Species diversity differed among localities ST 1-6 and the Pobè forest. A few species were recorded in fallows adjacent to the localities.**

2025, most large trees (Fig. 11) in ST 2 – identified as one of the most odonatologically important sites due to its high population density and species diversity – had been felled. This rapid habitat alteration is likely to have a severe impact on the local odonate assemblages.



**Figure 11: A part of station ST 2 (N 06.96214, E 002.66616) has been destroyed.**

## Discussion

A total of 37 species were identified during the 2001, 2004 (Tchiboza & Dijkstra 2004), and 2025 (this study) surveys. Six species documented in 2001 and 2004 were not observed in 2025: *Phaon iridipennis*, *Chlorocypha curta*, *Chlorocypha rubida*, *Allocnemis subnodalis*, *Africallagma subtile*, and *Gomphidia gamblesi*. These species may be detected again during future surveys. Despite several days of observation in the Pobè forest, the absence of the characteristic forest species *Phaon iridipennis* was unexpected. This flagship forest species is typically associated with rivers and streams bordered by gallery forest but also occurs in coastal dune and swamp forests, as well as along forested edges of pans and marshes (<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/109237-Phaon-iridipennis>). Its absence may be related either to ongoing deforestation or to seasonal phenology. Interestingly, Ekpah et al. (2021) similarly observed only a single specimen of *Phaon iridipennis* in Igele Sunmoge village and none in the Omo Forest Reserve, located 257 km from Pobè. As a designated Biosphere Reserve (<https://www.unesco.org/mab/50anniversary/en/omo>), Omo Forest benefits from stronger protection and monitoring than the Pobè Forest. The scarcity of *Phaon iridipennis* in both areas suggests that the species may be negatively affected by continuing deforestation, as is the case in the Pobè forest.

Based on the 2025 survey, 25.61% of the 121 odonate species known from Benin (Tchiboza & Maes 2025) are represented in Pobè. When records from 2001 and 2004 are included, this proportion rises to 30.57%. Within Benin, *Chlorocypha rubida*, *Chlorocypha selysi*, *Allocnemis subnodalis*, *Elattonaura balli*, and *Africallagma subtile* are currently known only from the Pobè region (Tchiboza & Maes, 2025).

Since 2002, *Tetrathemis camerunensis* has been recorded from only two locations in Benin: the Lama forest (central-southern Benin) and the Pobè forest.

*Oxythemis phoenicosceles* is a very rare species and a bioindicator of fragmented tropical rainforests undergoing natural regeneration. According to iNaturalist ([https://www.inaturalist.org/guide\\_taxa/783350](https://www.inaturalist.org/guide_taxa/783350)), its natural habitats include subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests, shrub-dominated wetlands, and freshwater marshes. In Benin, the species is known from only four habitats: Lokoli forest, Sètoko forest, Gbada, and Pobè forest. ST 2 is considered an ideal location in Benin where the species is undisturbed and easily observed. During field observations, we counted eight males and one female. Despite its rarity in Benin, the species has a broad distribution across tropical Africa, including Angola, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda (<https://www.gbif.org/fr/species/1429413>).

With 37 recorded species, the odonate diversity of the Pobè region is identical with that reported from the Omo Forest Reserve and the village of Igele Sunmoge in Nigeria, where also 37 species were documented (Ekpah et al., 2021).

More than 20 years ago, the Pobè forest and its surroundings were better preserved and represented the only location in Benin where one of the world's largest beetles, *Goliathus goliatus* Linnaeus, 1771 (Le Gall, 2010). This species is listed as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN national red list of Benin (Goergen et al., 2011). Rapid human population growth and associated land-use changes are increasingly degrading natural ecosystems. The natural forest of Pobè could therefore be evaluated for designation as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) within the Republic of Benin.

Ritual offerings in waterways and other wetland ecosystems appear to be increasing and progressively degrade or destroy odonate habitats. Materials such as candles, plastics, and animal remains such as skins of rodents used for offerings (Figures 12 and 13) can contribute to pollution, disrupt water runoff, and affect dragonfly and damselfly populations.



**Figure 12: Ritual offering (skin of a rodent with plastic bracelets) in ST 3.**



**Figure 13: Candles used for ritual offering at ST 6.**

## Conclusion

This study increases the number of odonate species known from Pobè compared with previous surveys conducted in 2001 and 2004.

Despite ongoing habitat fragmentation and significant human impact, continued inventories and monitoring of dragonflies and damselflies in Benin remain essential for improving our understanding of their distribution within the country and across West Africa. Raising awareness among local communities about the sustainable conservation of wetlands and associated odonate fauna is equally important in order to prevent further declines.

## Acknowledgments

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## Appendix 1



*Agriocnemis* sp. ♀ , ST 2 , 24.VI.2025



*Agriocnemis exilis* ♂ , ST 2 , 23.VII.2025



*Copera sikassoensis* ♀ , ST 3 , 23.VII.2025



*Pseudagrion nubicum* ♂ , ST 4 , 24.VI.2025



*Pseudagrion hamoni* ♂ , ST 4 , 24.VI.2025



*Pseudagrion camerunense* ♂ , ST 5 ,  
24.VI.2025



*Pseudagrion melanicterum* ♂, ST 6,  
25.VI.2025

*Pseudagrion melanicterum* ♂ and ♀, ST 6,  
25.VI.2025



*Orthetrum julia* ♂, ST 6, 25.VI.2025



*Orthetrum* sp. 1, ♂, ST 6, 25.VI.2025



*Orthetrum* sp. 2, ♂, ST 6, 25.VI.2025



*Orthetrum julia* ♀, Fallow, 26.VI.2025



*Ceriagrion rubelloцерinum* ♂ , ST 2,  
23.VII.2025



*Elatoneura nigra* ♀ , ST 1  
*Elatoneura nigra* ♂ , ST 1



*Neodythemis* sp. ♀ , ST 2 , 23.VII.2025



*Ceriagrion glabrum* ♂ , ST 2 , 23.VII.2025



*Orthetrum hintzi* ♂ and ♀ , ST 6 , 23.VII.2025



*Orthetrum abbotti* ♂ Not adult, ST 6, 23.VII.2025



*Orthetrum* sp. 3. ♂, ST 6, 23.VII.2025



*Orthetrum* sp. 4. ♂, ST 6, 23.VII.2025



*Pseudagrion kersteni* ♀, ST 1, 24.VII.2025



*Trithemis arteriosa* ♂, ST 6, 30.IX.2025



*Chlorocypha selysi* ♀, ST 6, 30. IX.2025



*Orthetrum stemmale* ♂  
immature, Fallow, ST 6,  
30.IX.2025



*Elatoneura balli* ♂, ST 3,  
30.IX.2025



*Oxythemis phoenicosceles* ♂, ST 2, 30.IX.2025

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