

Dragonfly Tourism

Lemelin, R. H. (2007). *Finding beauty in the dragon: The role of dragonflies in recreation and tourism. Journal of Ecotourism*, 6(2), 139-145.

History

Many insects are often seen as a nuisance; however, dragonflies serve many purposes. For example, they are great for pest control, they are used as bioindicators for their habitat, and they are a flagship species for tourism. Dragonflies eat pesky organisms such as mosquitoes. They can also serve as bioindicators in their native habitats, meaning dragonfly health is monitored over a period of time to observe any changes in order to make note of the overall health of the ecosystem in a given area. Dragonflies serve as a flagship species as they draw attention to attractions like conservatories, gardens, ponds, festivals, and more! Some of these attractions may seek to allocate funds toward dragonfly conservation.

Aspects of culture shock: Dragonflies are often regarded differently in places and cultures around the world. For example, in Japan, dragonflies are celebrated with festivities and honored in lore. In addition, Japan is also known as the Island of the Dragonfly, or Akitsushima. However, in places like America and Europe, dragonflies are often shooed away like pests.

Threats

Lack of research funds accounts for the lack of dragonfly conservation. With insufficient funds, we are unable to protect these insects in both their wild habitats and in captivity.

Perception is also a threat; dragonflies, and insects in general, may be viewed differently depending on people and location. Opinions about insects differ in other places like Europe and America, where they are discounted more as pests and are not celebrated the way they are in Japan and China. Dragonflies carry a stigma in some lore with certain species labeled as a 'devil's needle' or a 'black witch'.

Recovery Plan

There are a few ways that we can improve dragonfly populations. The first issue that needs to be addressed is insufficient research funding. One way to solve this problem is already being implemented; places such as conservatories charge fees and encourage donations toward their cause. That money can then help dragonflies, whether it is used to restore their natural habitats or fund new homes in conservatories.

Another way to protect dragonflies is to eliminate negative perceptions and misinformation. This would involve educating the public about the advantages of dragonflies, as well as providing reassurance that there is nothing to fear.

Tourism Location

There are many places all around the world that host dragonfly tourism. Some of the most visited places include the Dragonfly Awareness trails at National Botanical Gardens in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, the Taomi Ecological Village in Taiwan, the Dragonflies in Our Wetlands exhibit at the West Eugene Wetlands Education in Oregon, and the Valley Nature Centre's 6th Annual Dragonfly Days in Weslaco, Texas.