

EPALLAGE FATIME (CHARPENTIER, 1840) (ODONATA: EUPHAEIDAE), A NEW SPECIES FOR THE DRAGONFLY FAUNA OF SERBIA

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Abstract

Field investigations along the Lopatnica River on the Troglav Mountain near Kraljevo have led to the discovery of a new dragonfly species for Serbia: *Epallage fatime* (Charpentier, 1840), belonging to the family Euphaeidae. On the Borošnica River, the right tributary of the Tolišnica River (Lopatnica River basin), *E. fatime* was recorded in high abundance with confirmed reproduction, indicating the presence of well-established populations. Egg laying was observed in several locations along the course of the river, and a significant number of exuviae were also found. This finding increases the total number of dragonfly species known in Serbia to 71 and the number of represented families within the order Odonata to 10.

KEYWORDS: Odalisque, newly recorded, Zygoptera, Kraljevo, Troglav Mountain, Borošnica River, Tolišnica River

Introduction

The most recent checklist of dragonflies in Serbia was published just over ten years ago (Jović, 2013), reporting 67 Odonata species of Odonata. The presence of four of these species was considered questionable. *Caliaeschna microstigma* (Schneider, 1845) is one of these four species and was rediscovered in 2018 (Đukić & Bolesnikov, 2020). A few years later, successful reproduction of the species in Serbia was confirmed at the same watercourse by the discovery of a larva (Kovács *et al.*, 2022). One year later, Petrović (2023) reported four additional localities for this species in the country. These findings indicate that the species was previously overlooked and that intensified research over the last decade has yielded a markedly different picture. A similar situation may apply to the other three species.

In the meantime, given the direct influence of the Mediterranean climate in Serbia (Apfelbek, 1926), additional species have been recorded in the country, representing Mediterranean faunal elements: *Trithemis annulata* (Palisot de Beauvois, 1807) and *Selysiotthemis nigra* (Vander Linden, 1825) (Đurđević *et al.*, 2024). The occurrence of these is not unexpected, considering that they have been recorded in neighboring countries in previous years (Šalamun, 2012; Farkas, 2017; Mészáros, 2020; Stefanov & Vasilev, 2021; Vinko & Šalamun, 2021; Koren *et al.*, 2022), but they are likely expanding their range under the influence of climate change (Smallshire & Swash, 2020; Lohr, 2021; Đurđević *et al.*, 2024). It is assumed that the same factors led to the discovery of the next new species for Serbia, *Lindenia tetraphylla* (Vander Linden, 1825) (Nikolić & Samardžić, 2025), bringing the total number of recorded species at that time to 70.

Epallage fatime (Charpentier, 1840) is a species belonging to a monotypic genus within the Euphaeidae family, and it is the only representative of this family in the Mediterranean region and Europe (Boudot *et al.*, 2009; Dijkstra *et al.*, 2020). The main distribution of this species is in Southwest Asia, ranging from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Turkey, and extends into parts of southeastern Europe (De Knijf & Demolder, 2013; Kalkman *et al.*, 2015). In Europe, this species is present in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, North Macedonia, and European Turkey (De Knijf *et al.*, 2024). According to Dijkstra *et al.* (2020), this species in Europe and the Mediterranean region flies from April to August. It inhabits mainly small, sunny, running waters and is only rarely found along larger rivers (Smallshire & Swash, 2020; Dijkstra *et al.*, 2020). Most of the streams it inhabits are intermittent, often drying seasonally or losing surface water in sections (Gerken & Sternberg, 1999; Kalkman *et al.*, 2015; Boudot *et al.*, 2021).

This study presents the first records of *E. fatime* in Serbia with confirmed reproduction at the sites.

Materials and Methods

Field surveys in the Lopatnica River basin near Kraljevo were conducted to investigate the Odonata fauna of the Troglav (Fig. 1) and Čemerno mountain areas. The Troglav massif is bounded by rivers on all sides. On the eastern side, from south to north, flows the Ibar River, which is the largest watercourse in the area. On the southern side, the Dubočica River flows from the central part of the massif eastwards and discharges into the Ibar. On the western side, the Zidinski Stream flows as a headwater tributary of the Stanja River. From its source, the Stanja River flows north along the western slopes of the Troglav Mountain. At its confluence with the Boročnica River, it becomes the Tolišnica and continues along the northwestern slopes. After joining the Kaonska River, it turns eastward and changes its name to Lopatnica (Оцокољић, 1990). The Lopatnica River flows eastward along the northern side of the massif to its confluence with the Ibar. The Troglav massif Mountain is bounded by rivers except for a narrow area on the southern side, between the headwaters of the Dubočica River and Zidinski Stream. The peak of Kom (1,178 m a.s.l.) is located in the central part of the massif. Numerous streams originate on its slopes and flow in all directions, many of them forming tributaries of the Tolišnica/Lopatnica River (Оцокољић, 1990).

The Boročnica River (Fig. 2) originates near the Kom peak, the highest point of Troglav Mountain, flows along its western slopes, and joins the Tolišnica River as its right tributary at 502 m a.s.l. (Fig. 1). This survey covers the last third of the river.

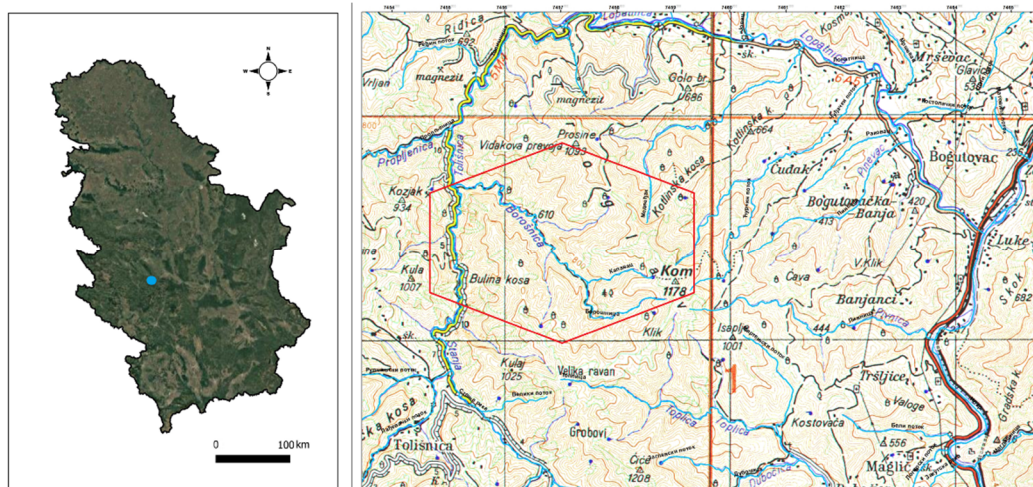


Figure 1: Position of Troglav Mountain on the map of Serbia (left), and Borošnica River on western slopes on same mountain (right).



Figure 2: Borošnica River on Troglav Mountain, habitat of *E. fatime* in Serbia. (Photo: A. Đurđević).

During the dragonfly surveys in the broader Troglav and Čemerno Mountains area, selected localities were sampled along transects of approximately 500 m, and species lists were compiled accordingly. For the Borošnica River, the transect began approximately 200 m from the mouth of the river, as the channel is dry in its lowermost section. With the reappearance of surface water on the surface, *Epallage fatime* was recorded, prompting extension of the transect length along this watercourse. Individuals were observed, photographed, and captured with an entomological net. Species were identified using the European Odonata field guide (Smallshire & Swash, 2020), while collected exuviae were identified using the appropriate key (Gerken & Sternberg, 1999).

Results

On 13.07.2025, the Borošnica River was surveyed, and the presence of *Epallage fatime* was recorded (43.655993 N; 20.439833 E), with individuals observed, captured, and photographed for the first time (Figs. 3-4). Two specimens of *E. fatime* (male and female) were deposited in the private collection of the first author. Proceeding upstream along the transect, the species was recorded throughout its entire length, with the final observation at 43.655590 N; 20.448920 E. On the same day, exuviae were found on stones in the river (Figs. 5-6), confirming successful reproduction at the locality. Oviposition was also observed along the surveyed section of the watercourse, occurring in tandem at the river margins in shallow water with a sandy or gravelly substrate. A large number of adult individuals and exuviae of *E. fatime* were recorded along the transect, estimated at 100-130 individuals and 20-30 exuviae.



Figure 3: Male *E. fatime* perched on twigs, photographed on 13.07.2025, at Borošnica River on Troglav Mountain. (Photo: A. Đurđević).

This finding increases the total number of species recorded in the country from 70 (Nikolić & Samardžić, 2025) to 71 Odonata species. It also raised the number of Odonata families known from Serbia from nine (Đurđević *et al.*, 2020) to ten.

Discussion

Among Serbia's neighboring countries, *Epallage fatime* has been recorded only in Bulgaria and North Macedonia. In Bulgaria, populations are largely confined to the southeastern region along the Black Sea coast, with occasional and rare records from the eastern parts of the Rhodope and Balkan mountains (Marinov, 2000;

Beschovski & Marinov, 2007). In North Macedonia, the species is present in the southeast of the country (Bilek, 1966; Karaman, 1979; Karaman, 1981; Bedjanić & Vinko, 2012), with relatively recent records from the central part of the country (Bedjanić & Vinko, 2012). A record from North Macedonia, from the Luda Mara stream (Bedjanić & Vinko, 2012), represents the nearest known population to the newly discovered Serbia site, at a straight line distance of approximately 285 km. The population on the Borošnica River in Serbia thus constitutes the northwestern limit of the range of *E. fatime*.



Figure 4: *E. fatime* perches on stones or plants on Borošnička River, 13.07.2025. (Photo: A. Đurđević).

From a faunistic perspective, the influx of Mediterranean and tropical insect species into Serbia occurs via the Vardar River (North Macedonia) and South Morava River valleys, extending northwards as far as Niš (Apfelbek, 1926; Djurić *et al.*, 2025). This is supported by recent records of new or rare dragonfly species for the fauna of Serbia from the areas of Preševo, Niš, and Leskovac (Đurđević *et al.*, 2023; Đurđević *et al.*, 2024; Nikolić & Samardžić, 2025) in the South Morava Valley, representing the Mediterranean and Afrotropical faunal elements. De Knijf *et al.* (2024) include Serbia and Albania among countries with potential occurrence of *E. fatime*; however, their maps indicate southeastern Serbia (along the border with North Macedonia, i.e., the upper South Morava Valley), while Troglav Mountain is located in western Serbia. As the Borošnica River lies outside the corridor connecting the Mediterranean region with Serbia (the South Morava Valley), it is possible that *E. fatime* is not a recent range-expanding species, but has persisted in this area as a refugial habitat since earlier times. It is also possible that undiscovered populations connect this site to the corridor, or occur within the corridor itself in Serbia. Additionally, populations may exist further west than the currently known locality.

This is the largest species of the suborder Zygoptera in Europe, with a total body length of up to 50 mm (Smallshire & Swash, 2020). It also exhibits several characteristics typical of Anisoptera: it is the only zygopteran in the region that holds its wings almost horizontally at rest, and its flight behavior can lead to confusion with species of the genus *Orthetrum* (Smallshire & Swash, 2020). It is most often observed resting on stones protruding from the water or on vegetation and twigs along the riverbanks (Kalyoncu & Salur, 2018), as was also the case on the Borošnica River (Fig. 4).



Figure 5: Position of exuvia of *E. fatime* on stones at Borošnica River. (Photo: A. Đurđević).

Larvae live under stones or rarely in gravel (Kalkman *et al.*, 2015), and there are indications that their development is perennial, which increases the vulnerability of the species (Kovács *et al.*, 2022). The structure of the larvae, i.e., the exuviae, of *E. fatime* is highly distinctive compared to other European Zygoptera. Most notably, lateral gills are present on abdominal segments 2-8, a feature absent in all other zygopteran species in the Old World (Gerken & Sternberg, 1999). Compared to other European species, they have a distinctive overall body form, including the characteristic shape of the caudal gills (Fig. 6). Exuvia of *E. fatime* found on the Borošnica River were consistently found on rocks protruding from the water, at heights of no more than 10 cm above the water surface (Fig. 5), similar with observations from other Balkan habitats (Kemp & Kemp, 1985). Based on general body morphology, coloration, leg position, and their typical placement in the river, they may easily be confused with the exuviae of insects belonging to the order Plecoptera.

E. fatime primarily inhabits small running waters, i.e., streams, and is only rarely recorded from rivers (Smallshire & Swash, 2020; Dijkstra *et al.*, 2020). Many of the streams it occupies are intermittent, periodically drying out or lacking surface flow in sections (Gerken & Sternberg, 1999; Kalkman *et al.*, 2015; Boudot *et al.*, 2021). Regardless of whether the stream is permanent or intermittent, the water must be clean (Skvortsov, 2010; Kalkman *et al.*, 2015). Preferred habitats are sun-exposed watercourses with gravel and stony substrates; in shaded habitats, if present, the species typically occurs in low numbers (Kalkman *et al.*, 2015). The Borošnica River flows over an impermeable serpentine bed (Brajković *et al.*, 1968; Brajković *et al.*, 1976), partially sinking and continuing through the contact zone between the bedrock and its deposits, resulting in

sections without surface flow. The substrate is gravelly and stony, with sparse stands of black (Austrian) pine (*Pinus nigra* J. F. Arnold) along the banks (Fig. 1). The river itself is largely exposed to direct sunlight and, in all its characteristics, corresponds to a typical habitat of this species. In the broader river basin on Troglav Mountain, as well as on the surrounding mountains in western Serbia (Tara, Povlen, Maljen, Zlatibor, Čemerno, and Crni Vrh), Mediterranean pine forests occur at lower elevations (Novaković-Vuković, 2015), indicating a Mediterranean climatic influence in the region. This is further supported by the recent record of the Mediterranean butterfly species *Papilio alexanor* Esper, 1800, as a new species for Serbia, from the same area, specifically on the Zlatibor Mountain (Vukajlović *et al.*, 2025).



Figure 6: Exuvia of *E. fatime* on rock at Borošnica River, photographed on 13.07.2025. (Photo: A. Đurđević).

According to the IUCN, both globally and at the European level, *E. fatime* is not considered endangered and is classified as Least Concern (LC) with a stable population trend (Boudot, 2014; De Knijf *et al.*, 2024). In an earlier assessment, the species was categorized as Near Threatened (NT) (Kalkman, 2010); however, although it has a relatively restricted and patchy distribution, it often occurs in high numbers where present (De Knijf *et al.*, 2024). According to the latest European Red List of Dragonflies & Damselflies (De Knijf *et al.*, 2024), as well as *The Status and Distribution of Dragonflies of the Mediterranean Basin* (Riservato *et al.*, 2009), the species is also categorized as LC.

As a newly recorded species for Serbia, detailed surveys of the surrounding area and suitable habitats are required to determine its distribution. Given its specific habitat requirements, the Borošnica River may represent its only locality in the country. The species has very high water quality requirements, and the watercourses where it is present are typically free from pollution sources (Boudot, 2014). Kalkman *et al.* (2018) recommend that *E. fatime* be included among the species listed in the Habitats Directive, citing, among other factors, the "Declining, decrease in quality of running waters throughout its area of distribution". Accordingly, the Borošnica River basin should be designated as a high-category protected asset. In addition, as an indicator of a well-

preserved aquatic ecosystem, *E. fatime* should be granted appropriate legal protection at the national level, specifically as a strictly protected wild species.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Andrej Zaharjašević for creating the topographical map showing Troglav Mountain and the Borošnica River. This research was conducted with the permission of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, No: 001697194 2025 14850 004 002 501 086.

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EPALLAGE FATIME (CHARPENTIER, 1840) (ODONATA: EURHAEIDAE) НОВА ВРСТА ВИЛИНСКОГ КОЊИЦА ЗА ФАУНУ СРБИЈЕ

АЦА ЂУРЂЕВИЋ, МАРКО ДИВАЦ И МИЛОШ РАДАКОВИЋ

Извод

Теренска истраживања слива реке Лопатнице на планини Троглав код Краљева довела су до открића нове врсте вилинског коњица за фауну Србије: *Epallage fatime* (Charpentier, 1840) која припада породици Eurphaeidae. На реци Борошници, која је десна притока реке Толишнице (слив реке Лопатнице), *E. fatime* је забележена у великој бројности и са потврђеном репродукцијом, што указује на добро успостављену популацију. На неколико локација дуж тока реке посматрано је полагање јаја, а и нађен је значајан број егзувија. Овај налаз подиже укупан број вилинских коњица познатих за фауну Србије на 71, као и број присутних породица из реда Odonata на 10.

Received: January 12th, 2026

Accepted: March 20th, 2026