

Worcestershire gets a UK first for an exotic dragonfly - the Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina*

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01. Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina*, emerged from an aquarium in Bromsgrove, a UK first. Andy Warr.

Not a wild and free dragonfly this time but one found emerging from an aquarium in Bromsgrove. Nevertheless it is the first UK record of Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina*, adding to seven other dragonflies that have arrived in imported waterweed over the years.

Dean Amess from Bromsgrove noticed the freshly emerged dragonfly (01 & 02) on the 11th October 2024, and called Jared Tibbetts who was able to identify it. The dragonfly was alive and well but unfortunately wouldn't last long if let out in our climate and it would strictly speaking be illegal to do that anyway. It was taken to Oxford University Museum of Natural History to be preserved.



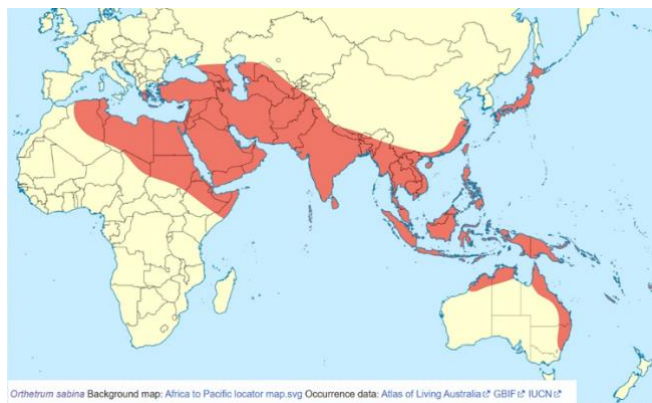
02. Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina* Bromsgrove, October 2024. Andy Warr.

The species, which is a medium-sized dragonfly with a wingspan of 60-85mm, is quite common in the tropical to sub-tropical zone from North Africa to South East Asia, where it lives in drains, ponds and marshes. A relative of our Black-tailed Skimmer, the larvae would resemble that species if found in an aquarium.

Interesting as this finding is, it should be noted that the species will not be added to the official list of dragonflies recorded wild and free in the UK, but will join the list of exotic species that arrived here by some other method.

Imported goods like waterweed are checked by border authorities, but of course this is very much a sampling technique as everything cannot be minutely checked, so many creatures must enter the country unseen.

Checks on imported goods are carried out by several agencies in the UK; The UK Border Agency enforces controls under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Waterweed would be covered by The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), formerly known as the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), which is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of the United Kingdom.



03. Distribution of Slender Skimmer.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dean Amess for notifying Jared Tibbetts, ensuring that this UK first was recorded in Worcestershire.

References

Dijkstra, K., Schröter, A. (2020). *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe: 2nd Edition*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.
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<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/107974-Orthetrum-sabina> [Accessed 07.12.24].

Images

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