



Restoration
of dry-acidic
Continental
grasslands
and
heathlands
in Natura2000
sites in
Piemonte and
Lombardia.

Sympecma paedisca

Habitat 4030

THE HEATH-DWELLING WINTER DAMSELFLY

NAME: *Sympecma paedisca* (BRAUER 1877)

Common name: Siberian winter damselfly

Habitat: H4030 - European drylands.

Distribution: In Italy this damselfly is only found in a few areas in the western Po Valley: the Baragge area (in Biella and Vercelli provinces), and the river valleys of the Sesia (Vercelli province) and the Ticino (Novara, Varese, and Milan provinces).

Identification: It is a small damselfly (35-39 mm long), greyish-light brown in colour, with dark green metallic markings on its abdomen and thorax. It closely resembles the congeneric *Sympecma fusca* species, from which it can be distinguished by a difference in the dark marking on its thorax and by the different shape of its abdominal appendages. Its colouring is darker in spring following the long winter hibernation, than it is during the rest of the year.

Facts

- > *Sympecma paedisca* is a rare and fast declining species throughout Europe.
- > It is important to protect for this reason.
- > it is sought-after by wildlife photographers and dragonfly watchers because of its rarity and its peculiar colouration.
- > Obviously, because it is an odonate, it is important to maintain the conditions of both the overwintering habitats of adults and the aquatic habitats where the larvae develop.

Mutual species It is connected to *Calluna vulgaris* and to *Molinia caerulea/Molinia arundinacea*, whose shrubs provide optimal overwintering conditions for the adults.

Did you know?

- > It is protected under the Habitats Directive (Directive 43/92/EEC), Annex IV.
- > Damselflies of the genus *Sympecma* (in Italy *S. paedisca* but also *S. fusca*, similar in appearance but much more widespread) are the only European odonates to overwinter on land in the adult stage rather than only in water in the larval stage; all others species overwinter only in water during the larval stage.

Conservation status

- > In Italy (Continental biogeographical region): overall bad (III Report ex-Art. 17) and getting worse.
- > High risk of extinction/decline mainly due to habitat loss, with larval habitats also subject to the effects of climate change.
- > *S. paedisca* is classified as "critically endangered" on the Italian Red List and as of "least concern" at the European level.

Intervention sites: ZSC IT 1120004 Baraggia di Rovasenda (Lenta, VC)

- > > Type of intervention: the Life Drylands project includes interventions aimed at improving the status of Habitat 4030. Although these interventions are not directly aimed at the conservation of *S.paedisca*, they will certainly benefit it, since heathland is the overwintering habitat favoured by the adults.

>>> LIFE DRYLANDS: IT'S TIME FOR DRY HABITATS!

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