



SAMWAYS M.J. 2024: CONSERVATION OF DRAGONFLIES – SENTINELS FOR FRESHWATER CONSERVATION. CAB International, Wallingford, 560 pp. ISBN 978-1789248371. Price GBP 175.00 (hardback), GBP 55.00 (paperback), GBP 88.00 (eBook).

Michael J. Samways is a Distinguished Professor of Conservation Ecology and Entomology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and one of the leading figures in global insect conservation biology. His work has fundamentally shaped both theoretical and applied approaches to insect conservation, with a particular emphasis on freshwater ecosystems and Odonata.

*Conservation of Dragonflies – Sentinels for Freshwater Conservation* is a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary knowledge on dragonfly ecology and conservation, firmly grounded in decades of original research by the author and his collaborators. Although the community of odonatologists is relatively small, dragonflies and damselflies are widely recognised as a model group for studying ecological processes across multiple spatial and temporal scales. Their amphibic life cycle and strong dependence on both aquatic and terrestrial environments make them particularly sensitive to environmental change. As such, Odonata are rightly regarded as sentinels of freshwater ecosystems.

For generations of odonatologists and freshwater ecologists, research on dragonflies has drawn heavily on the unparalleled intellectual legacy of Philip S. Corbet, whose monumental synthesis of dragonfly biology and ecology remains unsurpassed in its depth and clarity. Yet, as comprehensive as Corbet's work is, it inevitably reflects the priorities of its time. What has long been missing is a similarly authoritative, integrative book devoted explicitly to dragonfly conservation. This gap is filled masterfully by Michael J. Samways, arguably the most qualified scholar to undertake such a task.

The book opens with two foundational chapters — *Dragonfly Functional Morphology* and *Dragonfly Diversity and Distribution*. These chapters provide a concise yet rigorous framework, grounding the reader in the biological and biogeographical foundations necessary for understanding conservation processes.

They are followed by a series of outstanding chapters that form the intellectual core of the book: *A Trait Perspective on Dragonfly Conservation*, *Stressors on Freshwater Ecosystems and Dragonflies*, *Dragonfly Conservation Action*, *Freshwater Assessment and Monitoring Using Dragonflies* and *Future-proofing Freshwaters and Their Dragonfly Sentinels*. Together, these chapters demonstrate how functional traits mediate dragonfly responses to environmental change and how these responses can be translated into robust conservation and monitoring strategies.

One of the great strengths of this volume is its conceptual breadth. Samways seamlessly integrates perspectives from trait-based ecology, macroecology, conservation genetics, and quantitative analysis, without ever losing sight of real-world conservation challenges. Despite addressing highly complex topics, the book is written with remarkable clarity. Samways possesses a rare ability to explain sophisticated ecological concepts in a way that is accessible to students of ecology, while remaining intellectually rigorous and deeply informative for specialists. This pedagogical clarity greatly enhances the book's impact and longevity.

The intellectual narrative is further strengthened by the schematic figures and illustrations prepared by Robyn Symons and Megan Louise Potgieter. These visual elements do not merely decorate the text; they actively contribute to understanding, clarifying complex processes and reinforcing key conceptual links between traits, environments, and conservation outcomes.

In sum, *Conservation of Dragonflies – Sentinels for Freshwater Conservation* is far more than a book about dragonflies. It is a comprehensive, conceptually rich, and forward-looking manifesto for freshwater and insect conservation. By using Odonata as a lens, Samways provides insights that resonate across taxa and ecosystems. This book unquestionably belongs in the library of anyone engaged in insect ecology, conservation biology, or freshwater science. It stands as a testament to the author's extraordinary career and as a benchmark for future work in the field.

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