

Species Status Assessment

Class: Insecta
Family: Gomphidae
Scientific Name: *Progomphus obscurus*
Common Name: Common sanddragon

Species synopsis:

The distributional center of *Progomphus obscurus* lies along the Ohio River in southern Illinois in the Central Hardwood Forest ecoregion. The species ranges widely across the eastern US, west to Colorado, northwest to northern Wisconsin, east to the Maine/New Hampshire border and south to Florida and Texas (Donnelly 2004c). New York is near the northeastern range extent and *P. obscurus* was known historically from Suffolk County Long Island and, more recently, from the upper Hudson and Schroon Rivers. One of the historical Long Island occurrences, as well as the Hudson River population, were re-confirmed - as extant during the New York State Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey (NYDDS) while the Schroon River population was last documented in 1996, but has not been well surveyed in recent years. An additional pond in Suffolk County was added during the NYDDS (White *et al.* 2010). Both lentic and lotic habitats are occupied in different parts of New York. On Long Island, this species is found in small, shallow, sand-bottomed ponds (kettleholes) with shoreline beaches and emergent vegetation. In the upper Hudson watershed, forested medium-sized clean rivers with sandbars, moderate flow, and few boulders are characteristic of preferred habitat (White *et al.* 2010).

I. Status

a. Current Legal Protected Status

i. Federal Not Listed Candidate: No

ii. New York Special Concern; SGCN

b. Natural Heritage Program Rank

i. Global G5

ii. New York S1 Tracked by NYNHP? Yes

Status Discussion:

White *et al.* (2010) suggests that the status remain S1(5 or fewer occurrences, or few remaining acres or miles of stream, or factors demonstrably making it especially vulnerable to extinction rangewide or in New York State).

II. Abundance and Distribution Trends

a. North America

i. Abundance

declining increasing stable unknown

ii. Distribution:

declining increasing stable unknown

Time frame considered: Last assessment for US in 1995; Canada 2012

iii. Abundance

declining increasing stable unknown

iv. Distribution:

declining increasing stable unknown

Regional Unit Considered: Northeast

Time Frame Considered: Last assessment 1995

b. Adjacent States and Provinces

CONNECTICUT **Not Present** _____ **No data** _____

i. Abundance

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

ii. Distribution:

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

Time frame considered: _____

Listing Status: _____ **Special Concern** _____ **SGCN?** **Yes**

MASSACHUSETTS **Not Present** _____ **No data** **X**

i. Abundance

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

ii. Distribution:

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

Time frame considered: _____

Listing Status: _____ **Not Listed** _____ **SGCN?** **No**

NEW JERSEY **Not Present** _____ **No data** **X**

i. Abundance

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

ii. Distribution:

_____ **declining** _____ **increasing** _____ **stable** **X** **unknown**

Time frame considered: _____

Listing Status: _____ **Not Listed** _____ **SGCN?** **No**

Trends Discussion:

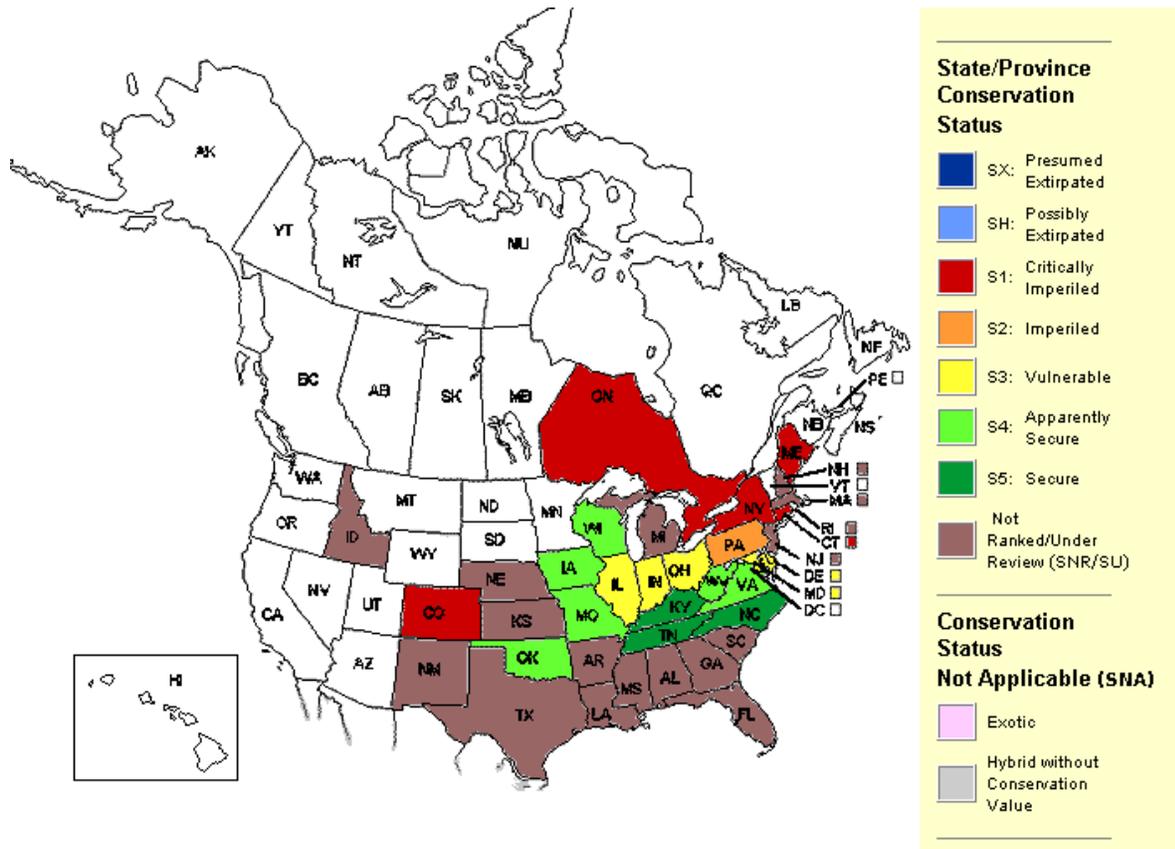


Figure 1. Conservation status of common sanddragon in North America (NatureServe 2012).

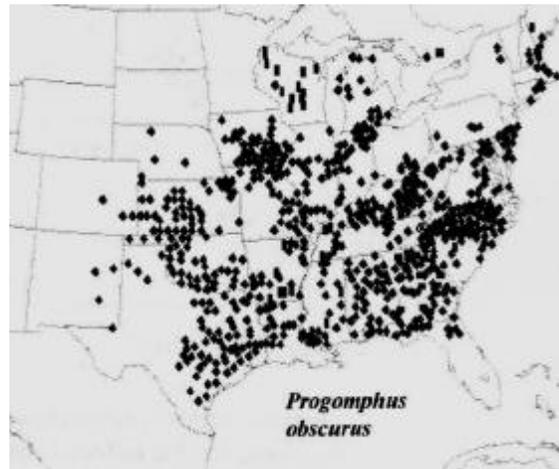


Figure 2. Distribution of common sanddragon in the United States (Donnelly 2004).



Common Sanddragon (*Progomphus obscurus*)

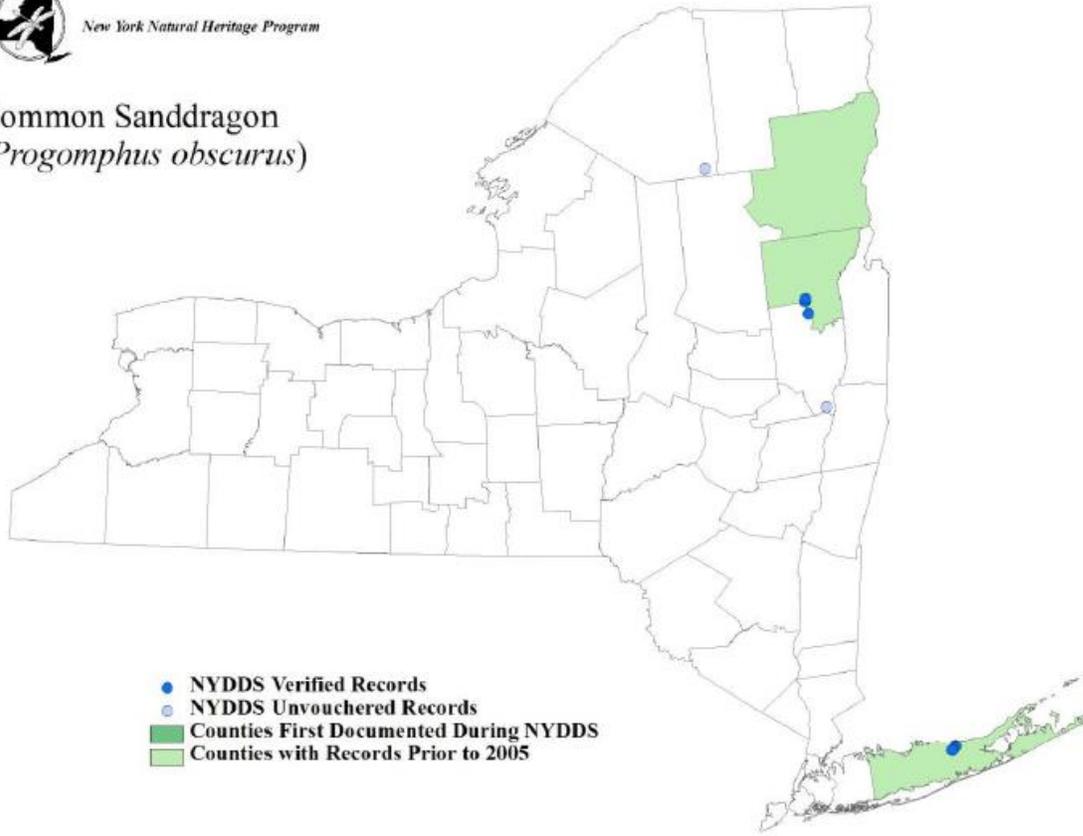


Figure 3. Occurrence records of common sanddragon in New York (White *et al.* 2010).

III. New York Rarity, if known:

Historic	<u># of Animals</u>	<u># of Locations</u>	<u>% of State</u>
prior to 1970	_____	<u>2</u>	_____
prior to 1980	_____	_____	_____
prior to 1990	_____	_____	_____

Details of historic occurrence:

Two pre- 1928 locations were documented by Needham, both in Suffolk County, including Wading River and Deep Pond (Needham 1928, Donnelly 1992).

Current	<u># of Animals</u>	<u># of Locations</u>	<u>% of State</u>
	<u> </u>	<u> 4 </u>	<u> </u>

Details of current occurrence:

Counting the Schroon River population which was last verified in 1996, *Progomphus* is known from four occurrences or populations in New York State including the upper Hudson River in the vicinity of Lake Luzerne, the Schroon River, north of Schroon Lake and Deep Pond and Tarkill Pond in Suffolk County on Long Island.

New York's Contribution to Species North American Range:

Distribution (percent of NY where species occurs)

Abundance (within NY distribution)

<u> X </u> 0-5%	<u> </u> abundant
<u> </u> 6-10%	<u> </u> common
<u> </u> 11-25%	<u> </u> fairly common
<u> </u> 26-50%	<u> </u> uncommon
<u> </u> >50%	<u> X </u> rare

NY's Contribution to North American range

 X 0-5%

 6-10%

 11-25%

 26-50%

 >50%

Classification of New York Range

 Core

 X Peripheral

 Disjunct

Distance to nearest population:

 ~700 mi

Rarity Discussion:

This is one of the rarest dragonflies in the state. Currently, there are only four known extant populations—two nearby ponds on the north shore of Long Island, and along the upper Hudson and Schroon Rivers in the southern Adirondacks. Despite an intensive statewide odonate survey in 2005–2009 (White *et al.* 2010), no new locations were found. Abundance levels at the Suffolk County ponds are fairly robust. The Hudson River population occurs over at least several river miles, though numbers of exuviae typically collected are fairly low (possibly owing to their emergence very close to the water resulting in some being washed away during post emergence rains). The Schroon River population was not re-confirmed during NYDDS, but more survey effort is needed on the Schroon, both upstream and downstream of Schroon Lake.

It is unclear whether the Schroon River population remains extant. It was not re-located during NYDDS (2005-2009) despite targeted searches for it. Likewise, only a few larvae have ever been seen at the upper Hudson River locale since the mid-1990s, despite much searching. However, it should be noted that exuviae have been regularly found, and are the more reliable survey technique, though survey timing is critical for this species as emergence is typically very close to the water edge and exuviae can be readily washed away by post emergence rains. On the other hand, abundance levels and reproductive activity at the two inhabited Suffolk County ponds appear to suggest viable populations at the Coastal Plain sites (White *et al.* 2010).

Sanddragons have been known from Long Island since the 1920s and were first documented from the Hudson and Schroon Rivers only since the mid-1990s. Populations in both of these widely disjunct areas remain extant, although possibly somewhat reduced, suggesting a fairly stable trend statewide (White *et al.* 2010).

IV. Primary Habitat or Community Type:

- 1. Coastal Plain Pond
- 2. Small River, Low-Moderate Gradient, Sandy substrate
- 3. Medium River, Low-Moderate Gradient, Sandy substrate

Habitat or Community Type Trend in New York:

Declining Stable Increasing Unknown

Time frame of decline/increase: long-term and possibly short-term

Habitat Specialist? Yes No

Flagship/Indicator Species? Yes No

Habitat Discussion:

True to their name, sanddragon larvae are burrowers (< 2 cm deep) found primarily in shifting sandbars in small streams and the sandy shallows of wide lakes. The nymphs show a preference for sand particle sizes from 0.625-1.0 mm (Huggins and DuBois 1982) and they emerge on sandy beaches (Phillips 2001). At breeding sites, males perch on sandy ground or in vegetation and hover very low over the water (Nikula *et al.* 2003). Both lentic and lotic habitats are occupied in different parts of New York. On Long Island, this species is found in small, shallow, sand-bottomed ponds (kettleholes) with shoreline beaches and emergent vegetation. In the upper Hudson watershed, forested medium-sized clean rivers with sandbars, moderate flow, and few boulders are the preferred habitat (White *et al.* 2010).

V. New York Species Demographics and Life History

- Breeder in New York**
 - Summer Resident**
 - Winter Resident**
 - Anadromous**
- Non-breeder in New York**
 - Summer Resident**
 - Winter Resident**
 - Catadromous**
 - Migratory only**
 - Unknown**

Species Demographics and Life History Discussion:

Larvae that have been collected on the upper Hudson on 22 May, emerged around 9 or 12 June, which may be earlier than can be expected in the wild. Adults on Long Island are mostly observed during July, with one record pre-NYDDS observed on 29 July. Thus, the entire flight season in New York is about two months long from June to the end of July, possibly ending significantly sooner than in other northern states (The Ohio Odonata Society 2000; Brunelle and deMaynadier 2005; Wisconsin Odonata Survey 2009) where the species can often be observed throughout August.

VI. Threats:

Little published information is available citing specific cases of negative impacts to the various species of river dwelling odonates, but any activities which degrade the sensitive hydrology of these habitats would threaten populations of these species. The most important likely negative impacts would come from changes in the natural hydrology such as the building of dams, increases in the sediment load of the river (such as might result should logging occur down to the river edge), changes in dissolved oxygen content, direct effects of pesticides, and chemical contamination by runoff of agricultural or other discharge (Novak 2006).

Generally, Coastal Plain Ponds on Long Island are threatened by the introduction of grass carp, alterations to hydrology and water quality, as well as herbicides used to clear aquatic weeds from ponds. The most significant threat to their hydrology comes from commercial and residential development causing increases in the demand for fresh water. This causes drawdowns of the water table, altered hydroperiods and a general diminishment of the pond extent (NYNHP 2011). The expansion of *Phragmites* and decline of water quality due to increased recreation during the dragonfly flight season are possible threats at the two inhabited Coastal Plain Ponds. It is unclear what threats may be a concern at the Hudson/Schroon River locales. In general, lotic habitats for this sand-dependent species could be altered by dams which change the sedimentation dynamics of flowing waters (NYNHP 2011).

The common sanddragon was classified as “not vulnerable/increase likely” (IL) to predicted climate change in an assessment of vulnerability conducted by the New York Natural Heritage Program. Available evidence does not suggest that abundance and/or range extent within the geographical area assessed with change (increase/decrease) substantially by 2050. Actual range boundaries may change (Schlesinger et al. 2011).

Are there regulatory mechanisms that protect the species or its habitat in New York?

No Unknown
 Yes

The Tidal Wetlands Act provides protection for all tidal wetlands under Article 25 of the NYS Conservation Law.

Article 15 of Environmental Conservation Law provides some protection of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds through the Protection of Waters permit program. However, this protection may not be adequate to protect the habitat/species.

Describe knowledge of management/conservation actions that are needed for recovery/conservation, or to eliminate, minimize, or compensate for the identified threats:

The most important management concern for Coastal Plain Ponds is the maintenance of a natural hydrologic regime and good water quality. Water supplies for new development and ditching, draining or impoundment activities should be weighed carefully. Storm water run-off, herbicide and pesticide use should also be minimized or eliminated in the vicinity of ponds. Where practical, wide (> 100') vegetated buffers should be managed to reduce storm-water, pollution, sediment and nutrient run-off. Habitat alteration within the wetland and surrounding landscape should be minimized (NYNHP 2011).

Conservation actions following IUCN taxonomy are categorized in the table.

Conservation Actions	
Action Category	Action
Law and Policy	Policies and Regulations

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (NYSDEC 2005) includes recommendations for the following actions for odonates of rivers and streams, and for common sanddragon in particular.

Habitat monitoring:

— Support and encourage habitat monitoring efforts that would complete the baseline assessment of habitat quality and threats.

Habitat research:

— Support and encourage research projects that will help define preferred habitat in order to guide future monitoring, restoration and habitat protection efforts.

New regulation:

— Recommendations for official state endangered, threatened, and special concern listing are an anticipated result of the statewide inventory. It is expected that at least a few species will be recommended for listing and officially adding these species to the list would constitute a concrete action. Four of the species are currently listed as Special Concern, but it is possible a change in their listing status may be warranted following additional surveys.

Population monitoring:

— Conduct surveys to obtain repeatable, relative abundance estimates for these species at known sites and newly discovered sites where access permission to conduct surveys is obtained (as indicated in the State Wildlife Grant Odonate Inventory Project).

Statewide baseline survey:

— Most of these species are known from fewer than 10 locations in the state, but new populations undoubtedly remain to be discovered. A currently approved, but not yet begun State Wildlife Grant Statewide Odonate Inventory Project will utilize volunteers, Natural Heritage Program and other staff to conduct surveys for these species at potential sites throughout the state.

VII. References

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Date last revised: _____ February 19, 2014 _____