

Canberra Nature Map helps to shed light on ACT's dragonflies

Andrew Brown

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While much is known about the different wildlife that have habitats in Canberra, there was one species that remained a mystery.

Despite the Canberra Nature Map - an online tool recording sightings of plant and animal species - having more than 1.1 million recorded sightings, there was little known about the humble dragonfly.

Enter public servant and wildlife watcher Harvey Perkins, who since November has helped to record sightings of 52 of the estimated 60 dragonfly species that live in the ACT.

Dr Perkins has been taking photos of the insect for the past three years on weekends or in lunch breaks at work and has been using them to record sightings for the nature map.

He said while he has always been interested in wildlife and insects, his greatest fascination has been with dragonflies.

"My interest was triggered by photos I took in Cape York several years back, which triggered me to looking into what ones are in Canberra and there's a lot more than you would think," he said.

"They're dazzling because of their flying abilities and their bright colours."

While dragonflies in Canberra can be found in bushland, the creature is mostly found around rivers, lakes or dams.

"Their larval stages are aquatic, so the adults tends to hang around the edges of water when they mature," Dr Perkins.

While Canberra is too small to have dragonfly species endemic to the area, species found in the ACT can also be found along the Great Dividing Range.

So far, the dragonfly enthusiast has taken submitted more than 150 photos to the Canberra Nature Map, with plans to upload more in the future.

He said it's become easier over the years to take photos of the creature, often requiring fast reflexes.

"I still use a traditional SLR camera, so it's a pretty heavy contraption to be lugging around the wetlands," he said.

"It all depends on the species. Some tend to sit there happily for you to approach them while others are very sensitive to sudden movements."

Dr Perkins is one of more than 800 contributors to the Canberra Nature Map, which has helped to identify habitats for more than 3700 plant and animal species across the ACT.

While he has helped to submit more than 100 entries to the site, some users have reported more than 3000 sightings to the online database.

He said he plans to upload many more sightings in the weeks to come.

"Hopefully it will open people's eyes to what is out there," he said.

"It's nice for people to be able to look at the pictures and get a better idea of all the species that are out there."

This story was found at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberra-nature-map-helps-to-shed-light-on-acts-dragonflies-20161231-gthc0e.html>