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A NOTE ON MOCK-MATING BEHAVIOUR IN DAMSELFLIES (ODONATA: INSECTA)

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During our ecological studies in Madayipara, a laterite hillock situated about 21km north of Kannur Town in Kerala, we observed an unusual mating behaviour exhibited by two species of damselflies near a pond. The aquatic as well as marginal vegetation in and around the pond provided good foraging and perching sites for many odonates.

On 6 September 2001, we observed a swarm of *Copera marginipes* (Rambur) and *Ceriagrion cerinorubellum* (Brauer) around the pond. At about 0815hr, a male *C. marginipes* was found flying in tandem with a female *C. cerinorubellum*. After perching on the tip of a grass blade, the male *C. marginipes* extended its abdomen towards the neck region of the female *C. cerinorubellum*. While clasping, the female attempted to form the wheel position by bending its abdomen towards the genital organ of the male situated on the second segment of its abdomen. Even after great efforts, the female damselfly could not place her genital part perfectly in position to effect mating, though they remained in the wheel position for about 40 minutes before freeing themselves. On their separation, we collected the pair and identified them as the male of *Copera marginipes* (Rambur) (Family: Platycnemididae) and the female of *Ceriagrion cerinorubellum* (Brauer) (Family: Coenagrionidae).

Corbet (1983) states that male odonates occasionally grasp females of species other than their own, but in such cases the female do not co-operate by bending the abdomen forward in to the copulatory position and that they attempt to free themselves. On the contrary, in our observation the female did co-operate by bending the abdomen forward and remained in the wheel position for a considerable period of time though never succeeded in mating. Our observation is in conformity with that of Neville (1959) in which inter-generic mating attempts by female co-operation do occur occasionally in mixed pairs of odonates.

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