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Long-tailed Duskhawker Dragonfly Rediscovered in Arunachal After 110 Years

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ENVIRONMENT

GS3

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Long-tailed Duskhawker Dragonfly Rediscovered in Arunachal After 110 Years

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1 tag

WHY IN NEWS:

The **Long-tailed Duskhawker dragonfly (*Gynacantha khasiaca*)** — last recorded in Arunachal Pradesh during the **1914 Abor Expedition** — has been **rediscovered after 110 years** inside **Namdapha Tiger Reserve**. The find, photographed during an **October 2024 biodiversity survey** along the **Miao–Vijaynagar road**, was published in the **Journal of Threatened Taxa** in **May 2026** — the first confirmed Arunachal record in over a century.

THE SPECIES

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Scientific name	<i>Gynacantha khasiaca</i>
Common name	Long-tailed Duskhawker
Order / Family	Odonata / Aeshnidae (Hawker dragonflies)
Described by	Robert McLachlan, 1896 (from Khasi Hills, Meghalaya — hence <i>khasiaca</i>)
IUCN Red List status	Data Deficient
Indian distribution (prior)	Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand
International distribution	Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh
Last Arunachal record	1914 — Abor Expedition
Rediscovery date	October 2024
Publication	<i>Journal of Threatened Taxa</i> , May 2026
Site	Miao–Vijaynagar road, Namdapha Tiger Reserve

WHAT IS A DUSKHAWKER?

Duskhawkers (genus *Gynacantha*) are **crepuscular dragonflies** — active at **dusk and dawn** rather than midday. This makes them under-surveyed: most odonate fieldwork is daytime-focused. Key features:

- Large, robust hawkler-type build (wingspan typically 90–110 mm).
- Long abdomen and prominent caudal appendages — hence “long-tailed”.
- Strong, low-light flyers; often associated with shaded forest streams and tree holes.
- Larvae develop in stagnant or slow-flowing forest pools and tree-hole phytotelmata.

NAMDAPHA TIGER RESERVE — THE SITE

PARAMETER	DETAIL
State	Arunachal Pradesh (Changlang district)
Area	1,985.23 km² (core), with buffer; total ~ 2,053 km²
Declared National Park	1983
Declared Tiger Reserve	1983 (Project Tiger)
Elevation range	200 m to 4,571 m — one of the largest altitudinal ranges of any Indian protected area
Biogeographic zone	Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot
Iconic species	Tiger, clouded leopard, snow leopard, common leopard (four big cats in one PA — unique in India); Mishmi takin, red panda, hoolock gibbon, Namdapha flying squirrel
River	Noa-Dihing
Tribal communities	Lisu, Chakma, Tangsa

WHY THE REDISCOVERY MATTERS

- **Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot** — Arunachal is part of one of the world’s 36 biodiversity hotspots; insect diversity is hugely under-documented.
- **Climate baseline** — odonates are sensitive bio-indicators of freshwater ecosystem health; mapping them gives a baseline for climate-impact monitoring.

- **Citizen science + targeted surveys** — the rediscovery underlines that India’s faunal inventory has major gaps, especially for invertebrates and crepuscular species.
- **Eastern Himalaya conservation case** — repeated rediscoveries in recent years (Manipur-clay dragonfly *Anaciaeschna jaspidea* records, Mizoram skink *Calamaria mizoramensis* 2026, *Vaccinium piliferum* 2026) reinforce the case for protected area expansion.

INDIA’S ODONATE DIVERSITY — QUICK NUMBERS

INDICATOR	VALUE
Indian odonate species	~500 (dragonflies + damselflies)
Global odonate species	~6,300
Endemic to India	~70
Western Ghats endemics	Several (e.g., <i>Idionyx travancorensis</i>)
North-East dragonfly diversity	Particularly high — Arunachal alone hosts ~150+ species

CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

LAYER	DETAIL
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Schedule listings — most invertebrates not listed; protection is largely habitat-based
IUCN Red List	Many <i>Gynacantha</i> species are Data Deficient — survey-led upgrades needed
CITES	Not applicable to most odonates
National Mission on Himalayan Studies	MoEFCC platform — funds Himalayan biodiversity surveys
State Biodiversity Boards	Maintain People’s Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)

WAY FORWARD

- **Targeted crepuscular surveys** in NE India and Western Ghats — current odonate fieldwork is daylight-biased.
- **Re-assess IUCN status** of *Gynacantha khasiaca* — Data Deficient status may now be revisable.

- **Citizen science platforms** — iNaturalist, India Biodiversity Portal, Odonata of India — to crowdsource records.
- **Strengthen Namdapha** — staffing and patrolling have historically been weak relative to its enormous size.
- **Local community involvement** — Lisu, Chakma, Tangsa communities as biodiversity stewards.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 — Environment & Ecology:

- Biodiversity, conservation, protected area system in India.
- Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot.
- Species in news — IUCN status changes.

Analytical hooks for Mains:

- Invertebrate conservation in a vertebrate-dominated policy landscape.
- Citizen science as a complement to formal surveys.
- Bio-indicator species and climate monitoring.

FACTS CORNER

Species: *Gynacantha khasiaca* (Long-tailed Duskhawker).

Family: Aeshnidae; Order: Odonata.

Described: McLachlan, 1896 (Khasi Hills).

IUCN status: Data Deficient.

Rediscovery site: Miao–Vijaynagar road, Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh.

Rediscovery year: October 2024 (published *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, May 2026).

Previous Arunachal record: 1914 Abor Expedition.

Namdapha NP/TR: Notified 1983; ~1,985 km² core.

Namdapha big cats: Tiger, common leopard, clouded leopard, snow leopard — only Indian PA with all four.

Indian odonate species: ~500; global ~6,300.

India biodiversity hotspots: Western Ghats, Eastern Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Sundaland (Nicobar) — 4 of the world's 36.

Sources: *Journal of Threatened Taxa, The Hindu, Mongabay-India*

Source: Long-tailed Duskhawker Dragonfly Rediscovered in Arunachal After 110 Years — Ujyari.com | Free
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