Lyriothemis keralensis

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Species*

Why in News?

Recently, a new dragonfly species, Lyriothemis keralensis, has been formally identified from Kerala after being misidentified for over a decade.

- **Common name –** Slender Bombardier.
- **Genus –** Lyriothemis.
- **Discovery –** ***First spotted in 2013 in Varappetty*** near Kothamangalam, Ernakulam district, Kerala.
- Previously ***misidentified as Lyriothemis acigastra or Little Bloodtail*** odonate family, widely found in northeastern India.

Dragonflies and damselflies constitute the insect order Odonata, and are collectively known as odonates. These predatory, amphibious insects are known for their aquatic larvae and terrestrial, winged adult stages.

- **Habitat –** It inhabits *vegetated pools and irrigation canals* within well-shaded pineapple and rubber plantations.
- **Distribution –** It is found in the *low-lying coastal plains of Kerala.*
- **Characteristics – Dimorphism –** Males and females look different in colour and body shape.
- **Size –** About 3 cm long.
- **Male –** Males are bright blood-red with black markings.
- **Female –** Females are yellow with black markings.
- **Body Shape –** Females are bulkier, males have a slimmer body.
- **Abdomen –** Males have a slender abdomen.
- **Behaviour –**
  - Seasonally *visible only during the Southwest monsoon* (late May to the end of August).
  - Believed to persist in the aquatic larval stage during the remaining months.
- **Diet –** Feed on insects like mosquitoes, flies, midges, moths, and butterflies, often catching them mid-air.
- **Threats –** Occur mainly *outside protected areas and depend on fragile microhabitats.*
- Vulnerable to land-use changes in plantation-dominated landscapes.
- **Ecological Significance –** *Odonate* species are known as ***ecological bioindicators***

of healthy, clean wetlands.
- Demonstrates Kerala’s high insect biodiversity.
- Underlines the need for sustainable land-use practices for species conservation.

References

1. TH | Lyriothemis keralensis
2. The Tribune | Slender Bombardier

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering