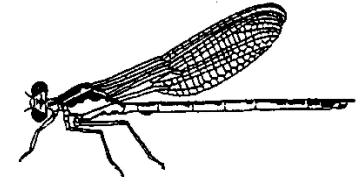


# Ode News



An Occasional Newsletter about Dragonflies and Damselflies in Southern New England

Volume XIII, Number 2

ISSN 1084-9750

November 2006

**G**reetings! At the risk of sounding like a broken record, we note that yet again an issue of *Ode News* is appallingly late appearing — perhaps record late this time!

A year ago we were complaining about the slow 2005 field season. Although it seems inconceivable, the 2006 field season was even worse — certainly the worst since this newsletter began chronicling the local odonate fauna 14 years ago! The 2006 season established a new baseline for inactivity, one we hope never again to experience. Not only was ode activity distressingly low, but ode watchers, discouraged perhaps by near-monsoon conditions from mid-May through most of June, seemed largely to have spent their time pursuing other interests. Consequently, we received very few odonate reports from the 2006 season and that is reflected in the abbreviated nature of this issue — 8 pages instead of the usual 12. We hope activity will return to a more typical level in 2007, and that there will be much more to report in the future.

Reluctantly, we have decided that, for a variety of reasons, this will be the last printed (in the traditional sense) issue of *Ode News*. Future issues will be produced as electronic (pdf) files made available on the *Ode News* website. This will have many advantages for the editors and at least a few for readers as well (e.g., color!). See page 6 for more on this change.

## 2006 MASSACHUSETTS HIGHLIGHTS

Blair Nikula



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Black-tipped Darner (*Aeshna tuberculifera*) - ovipositing female  
Holliston, MA — 6 August 2006

*This was one of at least 10 ovipositing females in a late-afternoon breeding congregation at a small pond in Holliston. At times, there were as many as five individuals ovipositing in an area of 10 square feet. Often, the females placed their eggs in rushes that were 2-3 feet back from the water's edge.*

The 2006 season began (deceptively!) on a pleasant note, with a dry and mild April, and the first odonates appeared right on schedule. The first, a large dragonfly unidentified to species but probably a Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*), was seen in Norwell on 15 April by Fred SaintOurs. The first identified Common Green Darner in the state, undoubtedly a migrant, was seen by Jim MacDougall in Seekonk on 26 April. The first locally emerged dragonfly to appear in Massachusetts was, as usual, the Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*), four of which were found by Tom Murray in Harvard on 21 April. Nearly as early were four Beaverpond Baskettails (*Epitheca canis*) seen by Nancy Goodman in Amherst on 22 April. Rounding out the month, an American Emerald (*Cordulia shurtleffii*) seen by Julie Lisk at Fort Devens on 28 April may represent a

record early date for that species. On the same date in

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Harvard, Tom Murray and others found at least seven species of odes on the wing, an excellent total for so early in the season.

However, the sky fell — quite literally — in May, when copious rains arrived. Over 12” of rain fell in Boston during the month, more than four times the norm! Measurable precipitation fell on 13 days, and temperatures averaged somewhat below normal, adding to the misery. June provided no relief: although temperatures were close to normal, another 10” of rain fell in Boston, making it the 3<sup>rd</sup> wettest June on record. Precipitation fell on 15 days during the month. Many rivers exceeded flood stage and lentic habitats became equally inaccessible.

The remainder of the season returned to more typical conditions. July was warm (+2.1°F in Boston), while August was slightly cooler than average. Precipitation in both months was somewhat below normal. However, water levels remained very high throughout the summer, making many sites difficult, if not impossible, to access — at least on foot.

Although the impact of the early season conditions on observers was dramatic and obvious, we can only speculate on how the insects themselves were affected. Weather during emergence is assumed to be critical to survival, and it’s easy to imagine that the frequent, and occasionally torrential, rains and extreme water levels were devastating. Heavy rains and flood conditions undoubtedly wash away freshly emerged odonates, and those that survive emergence under such conditions might then be faced with prolonged wet periods during which finding food would be difficult at best. Consequently, odonates typically wait for favorable weather conditions to emerge. When a favorable weather window arrives, they

respond, presumably without knowing (assuming an insect can “know” anything) how long that window might last.

There is nothing to suggest that odonates have any particular abilities to predict the weather, and each individual, once it is ready to emerge, probably takes advantage of the first window to arrive. When the

windows are few and far between, presumably a much higher percentage of the population will emerge in each window. It may also be that some individuals get “tired” of waiting for a window, and emerge under less than favorable conditions. If the windows are both short-lived and infrequent, as was the case in 2006, many more individuals will either die before completing emergence or fail to survive the ensuing maturation period.

Mortality during conditions such as existed

in 2006 must be very high. However, mortality in any group of insects is extremely difficult to document and quantify. All we know — or think we know — is that odonate numbers seemed very low throughout Massachusetts during the summer of 2006, suggesting (but not proving) that few adults survived to maturity. Most species in this area emerge in June, so low survival during that month should be especially significant and affect the number of adults around throughout much of the summer.

The late fall was exceptionally warm, November averaging almost 5°(F) above normal, and not surprisingly at least a few dragonflies were out and about through much of the month, though again activity seemed less than might have been expected given the conditions. Closing out the season was a very (record?) late Shadow Darner (*Aeshna umbrosa*) netted in Groton on 15 November (JL), and



© Blair Nikula

Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*) — female  
Harvard, MA — May 2006

*No, this is not a dragonfly earring! Sometimes the rare bugs just come to you! On a walk lead by Tom Murray to a site where this species is fairly common, several experienced bugwatchers spent much of the day searching in vain for boghaunters, despite great weather and the presence of numerous other early season odes. As the group trickled back to the parking lot, ready to call it a day, a cry went up “Don’t move!” There, perched on the side of Dave Small’s head, attracted to his gleaming white locks, was this female boghaunter — an unexpected but appropriate ending to a great day afield.*

unidentified meadowhawks, presumably Autumn Meadowhawks, in Lincoln on 24 November (S. Perkins, E. Nielson) and Marshfield on 1 December (F. Bygate), the latter one of very few December odonate records in the state.

One indication of the season's bleakness: the list of state-listed species that were *not* reported in 2006 (14 species) almost equals the list of those that were reported (16 species). To what extent this reflects a paucity of insects, as opposed to observer apathy, is unclear, but we suspect that some of these species may have been found but not reported. For the record, state-listed species that were not *reported* (to this publication, at least) in 2006 included: **Tule Bluet** (*Enallagma carunculatum*)[SC], **Subarctic Darner** (*Aeshna subarctica*)[T], **Ocellated Darner** (*Boyeria grafiana*)[SC], **Spine-Crowned Clubtail** (*Gomphus abbreviatus*)[E], **Harpoon Clubtail** (*Gomphus desertus*)[E], **Midland Clubtail** (*Gomphus fraternus*)[E], **Rapids Clubtail** (*Gomphus quadricolor*)[T], **Cobra Clubtail** (*Gomphus vastus*)[SC], **Riffle Snaketail** (*Ophiogomphus carolus*)[T], **Riverine Clubtail** (*Stylurus amnicola*)[E], **Umber Shadowdragon** (*Neurocordulia obsoleta*)[SC], **Coppery Emerald** (*Somatochlora georgiana*)[E], **Incurvate Emerald** (*Somatochlora incurvata*)[T], **Kennedy's Emerald** (*Somatochlora kennedyi*)[E]. As far as we know, Subarctic Darner has not been recorded in the state since 2001, Coppery Emerald not since 1999, and Kennedy's Emerald not since 2001 (and only once since 1989).

*Initialed Observers and Contributors:* Earle Baldwin, Bob Bowker, Jennifer Carlino, Glenn Corbiere, Jason Forbes, Chris Gentes, Nancy Goodman, Rick Heil, Lynn Harper, Allen Keith, Julie Lisk, Jim MacDougall, Frank Model (FMo), Tom Murray, Blair Nikula, Sharon Riley, Fred SaintOurs, Ken Shea, Dave Small, Peter Trimble, Michael Veit, and Richard Walton. Letters in brackets following the species name indicate Massachusetts state-listing designations: [E] = Endangered; [T] = Threatened; [SC] = Special Concern; [WL] = Watch Listed.

**American Rubyspot** (*Hetaerina americana*)[WL]: Dave Small and his merry minions apparently had the market cornered on this stunning damsel, finding 12 on Partridgeville Brook in Orange on 30 July; 20+ on the Millers River in Athol on 26 August and 29 (21 males, 8 females) at the same site on 4 September; and 30+ on the Tully River in Athol on

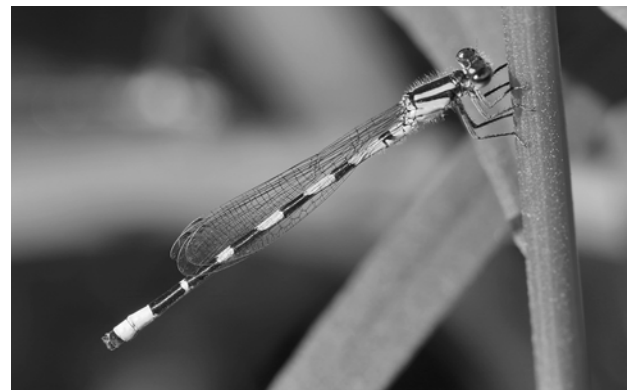
30 August with 64 (44 males, 20 females) at the same site on 4 September.

**Amber-winged Spreadwing** (*Lestes eurinus*): Individuals at a vernal pool in Norton on 14 & 22 June (JC) represented a new, though overdue, first for under-surveyed Bristol County.

**Attenuated Bluet** (*Enallagma daeckii*)[SC]: A dozen individuals were present during the last week of June at a recently discovered site in Wellfleet, and at a new site nearby in Truro three adults, including a pair in tandem, were found on 18 July (KS).

**New England Bluet** (*Enallagma laterale*)[SC]: One was found in Ashburnham on 16 June (MV), several were in the Townsend State Forest on 20 June (MV), and two males were in Chatham on 21 June (BN).

**Little Bluet** (*Enallagma minusculum*)[WL]: Two males were in Brewster on 27 June (BN), but no others were reported.



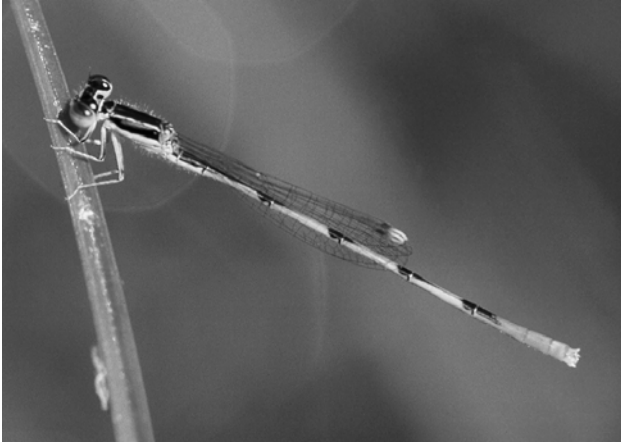
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Little Bluet (*Enallagma minusculum*) - male  
Brewster, MA—27 June 2006

**Scarlet Bluet** (*Enallagma pictum*)[T]: One male in New Bedford on 5 August (BN *et al.*) was the only report of this striking damselfly.

**Pine Barrens Bluet** (*Enallagma recurvatum*)[T]: This species was numerous in Myles Standish State Forest in Plymouth on 17 June, with a total of 70+, including 4 pairs, seen at three sites (BN *et al.*)

**Citrine Forktail** (*Ischnura hastata*): A single male netted at a dune pool in North Truro on 7 July (KS) was the only report for this mysterious little damselfly.



Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*) - male  
Eastham, MA — September 2000

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**Spatterdock Darner** (*Aeshna mutata*)[SC]: Three males were patrolling a vernal pool in Truro on 18 June (BN, SR), and another three were at a large vernal pool in Eastham on the same date (BN, SR). Others were seen on unrecorded dates in Pepperell (MV).

**Comet Darner** (*Anax longipes*)[SC]: Single males were seen in the Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth on 17 June (BN *et al.*) and at a coastal plain pond in Brewster on 14 July (D.Schall). The only other report, and by far the most surprising, was of one over a field in Concord on 9 July (RW); this impressive dragonfly very rarely is seen away from its coastal plain pond breeding sites.

**Taper-tailed Darner** (*Gomphaeschna antilope*): The only confirmed report was of one netted in Duxbury on 20 June (FSO), which provided a new site for this enigmatic southern species. Others thought to be this species included “a few,” presumably migrating, along the shore in Scituate – Marshfield on 19 June (FSO) and at least three among many other migrant species on Plum Island on 2 July (RH).

**Swamp Darner** (*Epiaeschna heros*): At least 10 individuals were patrolling along the dirt roads in the Freetown State Forest in Freetown on 2 July (BN, SR), and one male was still present on 5 August (BN *et al.*); it appears that a resident population may exist here. At least five were foraging over a field in the Noquochoke Wildlife Management Area in Dartmouth on 5 August (BN *et al.*). The only other report was of one, presumably a migrant, netted at the mouth of the North River in Scituate on 4 July (FSO).

**Skillet Clubtail** (*Gomphus ventricosus*)[SC]: The only report was of three adults, one photographed, found during three hours of tromping around at the base of Mt. Holyoke in a light rain on 26 June (D. Paulson) – further evidence that persistence can pay off even under unfavorable conditions!

**Southern Pygmy Clubtail** (*Lanthus vernalis*)[WL]: The only report of this diminutive dragon was of a teneral individual on 28 May at a traditional site in Norwell (FSO).

**Brook Snaketail** (*Ophiogomphus aspersus*)[SC]: An individual on the Nissitissit River in Pepperell on 15 June (MV) was the only one reported.

**Maine Snaketail** (*Ophiogomphus mainensis*)[WL]: The only report of this species was also of one on the Nissitissit River in Pepperell on 15 June (MV).

**Zebra Clubtail** (*Stylurus scudderii*)[E]: No adults



Swamp Darner (*Epiaeschna heros*) — female  
Freetown State Forest, Freetown, MA — July 2006

© Blair Nikula

were reported this year, but four nymphs were dredged from the South Fork of the Souhegan River in Ashby on 15 April (LH, MV), yet another new site for this distinctive clubtail.

**Arrow Clubtail** (*Stylurus spiniceps*)[T]: Eight adults were found along the Assabet River in Concord on 16 August (DS, J. Miller), another new site for the species, and 10 exuviae were on the Connecticut River on 20 July (CG).

**Arrowhead Spiketail** (*Cordulegaster obliqua*) [WL]: At least one was patrolling a small stream in Norwell in early July (FSO), and in Sherborn, one was seen on 11 June and at least five on 18 June (BB).

**Petite Emerald** (*Dorocordulia lepida*)[WL]: One female was captured in the Freetown State Forest in Freetown on 2 July (BN, SR).

**Stygian Shadowdragon** (*Neurocordulia yamaskanensis*)[SC]: As usual, no adults were seen, but exuviae were found on the Millers River in Athol on 25 & 31 May (LH), and on the East Branch of the Tully River on the Athol/Orange border on 11 June (LH), the latter a new site for the species (though within the Millers River watershed).

**Ski-tailed Emerald** (*Somatochlora elongata*)[SC]: The only report was of a female netted in New Salem on 19 June (JF); a male emerald caught at the same site may also have been this species.

**Forcipate Emerald** (*Somatochlora forcipata*)[SC]: A teneral female at a traditional site in Ashburnham on 16 June (MV) was the only one reported.

**Mocha Emerald** (*Somatochlora linearis*)[SC]: Six females were netted among a large swarm of *Somatochloras* in the Freetown State Forest in Freetown on 5 August (BN *et al.*). The only other report was of one in Norwell on 28 July (FSO).

**Clamp-tipped Emerald** (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*): Although the most common and widespread of its genus in the state, 50+ individuals (plus another 50+ unidentified large emeralds that were likely this species) swarming over a dirt road in the Freetown State Forest in Freetown on 5 August (BN *et al.*) was a notable concentration for any member of this genus in southern New England.



Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*) - male  
Freetown State Forest, Freetown, MA — July 2006

© Blair Nikula

**Ebony Boghaunter** (*Williamsonia fletcheri*)[E]: The only report this year was of two photographed at a traditional site in Petersham on 26 May (FMo).

**Ringed Boghaunter** (*Williamsonia lintneri*)[E]: A single was found at a new site on the outskirts of Worcester on 1 May (G. Howe *et al.*), and as many as eight individuals were seen in Harvard during the period 21 April — 7 May (TM *et al.*). One especially cooperative female in Harvard on 7 May was attracted to Dave Small's sexy white beard (v.ob.; see photo on page 2)!

**Martha's Pennant** (*Celithemis martha*)[WL]: Two females were photographed in a field in Harwich on 9 August (BN), a mile or more from suitable habitat.

**Four-spotted Skimmer** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*): Individuals found at a vernal pool in Norton on 13 & 14 June (JC) represented a long-overdue first for Bristol County.

**Elfin Skimmer** (*Nannothemis bella*)[WL]: At least 50 individuals were in Barnstable on 4 July (BN, SR), but no others were reported.

**Migratory Movements:** Observations of migrant dragonflies were almost non-existent and, with one exception, involved relatively few individuals. Small numbers of northbound Spot-winged Gliders (*Pantala hymenaea*) were seen, including an unusually early movement on 29 May when 50 were counted in 3¾ hours passing Pilgrim Heights in Truro (BN *et al.*), and another 10+ were noted in Plymouth County (FSO). On 18 June, 24 were counted in 1¼ hours in Truro (BN *et al.*), and 105 were counted in three-quarters of an hour on 15 July at Race Point in Provincetown (BN). The 18 June movement included 13 Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*), but otherwise these movements were largely devoid of other species.

By far the largest movement of the season was reported on 2 July at Plum Island in Newburyport where hundreds of migrants were seen late (after

4:00 p.m.) in the day (RH), including 200+ Common Green Darners, at least five Ten-spotted Skimmers (*Libellula pulchella*), 100+ Blue Dashers (*Pachydiplax longipennis*), 300+ Spot-winged Gliders, and 10+ Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*). Other species present were five or more *Aeshnas* (species uncertain), at least three probable Taper-tailed Darners, one Prince Baskettail (*Epiptera princeps*), 30+ Seaside Dragonlets (*Erythrodiplax berenice*), and three Common Whitetails (*Plathemis lydia*).

Substantial movements of dragonflies were seen along the Connecticut shoreline on 3 July, 13 July, and 31 July (Bill Yule), but no movements were reported in Massachusetts on those dates.

## ODE NEWS INTO THE FUTURE

With this issue of *Ode News*, we have reached a milestone, as this will be the last issue to be published as a hard copy. Future issues will be published only in digital pdf format and made available at the *Ode News* web site.

This decision generates a mix of melancholy and relief. We, as much as anyone, enjoy curling up on a couch with a good read (though we are perhaps being immodest in considering *Ode News* a “good read”), and we, too, find it hard to read more than a few paragraphs at a time at the computer screen without our eyes glazing over.

However, it now costs about \$700 a year to print and mail the newsletter, a financial commitment that, despite the very generous and much appreciated contributions of a few readers, becomes increasingly burdensome each year. Additionally, each issue involves many hours of collating, folding, stapling, addressing, and posting, as well as the time involved in maintaining the mailing list — time we would much prefer to spend at more meaningful, or at least more enjoyable, tasks!

Thus, after a couple years of wrestling with the decision to go entirely digital, we reluctantly have

concluded the time has come. Aside from the savings in time and money, another advantage is that we will now be able to publish in full color, providing a better showcase for these dazzling insects.

As the first step in this direction, we have recently made the past several years of *Ode News* available online in pdf format. Previously, text-only versions of the newsletter were posted on the web site, but the pdf versions have full graphics (though only in black-and-white, as the newsletters were originally published). To download past issues, go to:

[www.odeneews.org/on3.htm](http://www.odeneews.org/on3.htm)

We’ll be creating an email list to notify interested readers when each new issue becomes available. To be added to that list, contact us at: [odeneews@odeneews.org](mailto:odeneews@odeneews.org). Alternatively, you can just watch the *Ode News* web site ([www.odeneews.org](http://www.odeneews.org)) for announcements when new issues are posted.

Of course, readers will still have the option of printing the newsletter on their home printers and curling up on the couch with a hard copy. That’s what we’ll be doing!

## DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES OF GEORGIA AND THE SOUTHEAST

*Giff Beaton. 2007. University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA. 355 pages. 6"x 9." 430+ color photos. \$24.95.*

New regional odonate guides are appearing at a pace that's becoming difficult to keep up with. Latest, and one of the best, is this impressive work by Giff Beaton, Georgia's leading odonatist (and one of the state's top birders — yet another birder who has expanded his horizons!). A profusion of color photos, clear, succinct text, and a colorful, appealing design combine to make this guide both very attractive and eminently useful.

The bulk of the book, 262 pages, is, of course, devoted to the species accounts. Of the 171 species recorded from Georgia at the time the book went to press (two more have been added since), 150 (47 damselflies and 103 dragonflies) are accorded full treatment, with the additional 21 species, all of which have been recorded five or fewer times in the state, briefly covered (but not illustrated) in an annotated appendix. Each of the primary 150 species receives a minimum of a full-page treatment, and many get two pages and a few three. The number of photos per species ranges from one to four, and virtually all are at least life-sized, and most 2-3 times life size, making many identification features readily visible. For almost all species, both males and females are illustrated.

The species accounts include the expected sections on Identification, Similar Species, Habitat, and Behavior. These sections are written in the concise, telegraphic style typical of field guides. An inch-wide vertical bar, color-coded to family (*e.g.*, light blue for the pond damsels, *Coenagrionidae*) runs down the edge of each species account. At the top of this bar is a small map showing the species' range in the southeastern U.S., in some cases the map distinguishing between the species' primary range and where it occurs occasionally. Within the colored bar

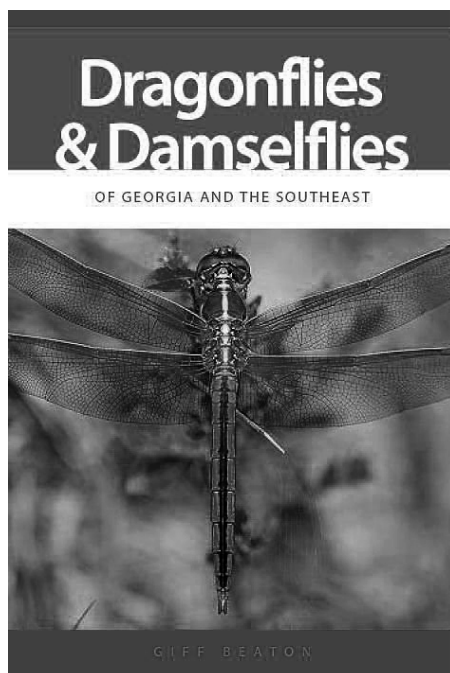
is a black size bar, a written description of the size (in both inches and millimeters), a description of the species' status in Georgia, and a flight calendar.

Over 430(!) photos embellish the guide, the vast majority taken by the author, though another nine photographers also contributed. The photo quality is uniformly excellent and the photo reproduction is very good as well.

The guide begins with the obligatory introduction to odonates (is this still necessary for odonate guides — bird guides abandoned these sections long ago), in this case 34 pages of lucid and profusely illustrated text. This is followed by seven pages on odonate

identification, perhaps the most clearly written treatise on this subject yet to appear on this continent, though it would have been enhanced by a good drawing illustrating some of the features discussed (*e.g.*, antehumeral stripe) — the small, unlabelled photos fall short in this respect. The final several pages in the introductory sections describe the layout of the species accounts.

A final 6-page chapter describes 20 of the top odonate viewing sites in Georgia. Several appendices include a list of state rankings for Georgia's odonate species, bar graphs illustrating flight dates in chronological order (a nice feature), a list of resources, a glossary, a section on resources for odonatists, and an index.



This is an excellent and superbly produced field guide, though the size is a bit large for easy transport afield, and the price is amazingly reasonable. Roughly 60% of the species covered in this guide occur in southern New England (with more likely to appear on the heels of global warming!), so even enthusiasts in this area will find much useful information within its pages, and the wonderful photos alone make it a highly recommended purchase.

*Blair Nikula*

## 2007 NORTHEAST DSA MEETING

The Northeast regional meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas will be held in northwestern New Jersey the weekend of 21-24 June. The meeting will be based in Sussex County, which claims the longest odonate list of any county in North America at 145 species! Additional information and registration is available at:

<<http://njodes.com/DSA/default.htm>>

## 2007 DSA NATIONAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas will be held in Springerville, Arizona, 27-30 July. A post-meeting trip will travel 80 miles south to Safford, AZ. Mid-summer may seem like an odd time to be heading to Arizona, but it's actually the peak of the odonate season in the Southwest. Additional details can be found online at:

<[http://odonatacentral.bfl.utexas.edu/dsal/annual\\_meeting.htm](http://odonatacentral.bfl.utexas.edu/dsal/annual_meeting.htm)>

## Ode News

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*Special thanks to Thompson's Printing in Orleans for their generous assistance in the production of Ode News!*

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