

Ode News - An Occasional Newsletter about Dragonflies and Damselflies on Cape Cod

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Long-overdue greetings! It's been almost a year since publication of the last issue of *Ode News* and many of you no doubt have been wondering if this newsletter had fallen by the wayside. We're sure you all have been rushing to your mailboxes every day in eager anticipation of the next issue!?! We apologize for our extreme tardiness, but assure you that *Ode News* is alive and well, and we hope it will appear in a more timely fashion in the future. Although our masthead refers to the "occasional" nature of this missive, it has been and remains our intent to publish at least two issues per year.

One of the reasons for the lengthy absence of *Ode News* was a building project here at 2 Gilbert Lane that has greatly expanded the space available at our "editorial offices." We have also increased our computing capabilities and added software that should considerably facilitate publication of future editions. We also now have a Web site on the Internet, so those with access to cyberspace can read *Ode News* online. See page 11 for more on this new, ongoing development.

Our mailing list continues to grow beyond all anticipation, and now numbers over 200! *Ode News* is now being distributed to readers in 17 states, despite the narrow geographic scope of the newsletter's content. Which brings up a topic we have deliberated since the very first issue. We began with the modest intent of sharing our odonate sightings locally with a handful of people. However, as our readership has grown and our own interest in odonates has broadened beyond Cape Cod, we have continually debated the pros and cons of expanding the newsletter's coverage. Not wishing to bite off more than we can chew, we have pretty much resisted any dramatic changes. Perhaps inevitably, however, "outside interests" have resulted in a modest expansion in our geographic coverage over the previous six issues. This current edition has even more off-Cape news, such that we've added a section entitled "Field Notes from Afar." We view this development with a mix of excitement and trepidation. While we would love to see a statewide, or even New England wide publication, we're not at all sure that we're the ones to do it! Let us know your thoughts on this.

Features in this issue include 1996 highlights from Cape Cod, reports from the Connecticut River and Bluff Point, an update from Rhode Island, the second part of Photographing Dragons, and news about two new odonate books.

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1996 HIGHLIGHTS

The summer of 1996 was wet and cool with very high water levels at most sites, in sharp contrast to the very dry and warm conditions of 1995. As if the summer was not wet enough, the fall brought near-monsoon conditions, raising water levels higher than we have ever experienced. While such dramatic fluctuations in weather and water levels may have pronounced effects on many species, we can only speculate on what these effects might be. Some species seemed much reduced in numbers this year, while a few appeared to be more numerous.

As part of the massive clean-up efforts at the Massachusetts Military Reservation, Peter and Jeremiah Trimble were contracted to census adult odonates at 10 sites in the vicinity of the military base. The sites represented a variety of habitats and each was thoroughly surveyed three times between late June and late August. This is the first such census ever conducted in this area, and it may be repeated next summer. Although the results have yet to be published, there were a few surprises and some of the highlights are briefly described in the species accounts below. We hope to have a more complete description of this survey in a future issue of *Ode News*.

Topping the list of highlights this year were four species new to Cape Cod: Furtive Forktail (*Ischnura prognata* - new to New England!); Bar-winged Skimmer (*Libellula axilena* - new to Massachusetts); Lance-tipped Darner (*Aeshna constricta*); and Taiga Bluet (*Coenagrion resolutum*).

Furtive Forktail (*Ischnura prognata*): The greatest surprise this season was the fortuitous capture of this large, southern forktail at a densely vegetated vernal pool in Eastham on 2 June. Furtive Forktails are secretive denizens of wooded swamps as far north as Virginia. There is a record from New York, but the species was previously unrecorded from New England and was quite unexpected! This female was flying along the shaded shoreline when spotted by Jackie Sones and caught by Dick Forster. Because of its large size it was first thought to be a spreadwing (*Lestes* sp.)! Subsequent visits to the site failed to turn up any other individuals, so at this point we consider this to be an isolated case of vagrancy.

Bar-winged Skimmer (*Libellula axilena*): The first Massachusetts record of this southern species was provided by a male discovered by Blair Nikula and Jeremiah Trimble at another of the Eastham vernal pools on 6 July and captured the following day after more than an hour of stalking! Bar-winged Skimmers occur regularly north to New Jersey, and there are also a few

New York records. They are known to undergo northward movements at times, and Ginger Carpenter captured Rhode Island's first last year, so their appearance here was somewhat anticipated.

Lance-tipped Darner (*Aeshna constricta*): The Cape's first, a female, was netted by Jeremiah Trimble at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary in South Wellfleet on 22 September. Lance-tipped Darners were numerous at a number of sites in eastern Massachusetts and in Connecticut this year, and Ginger Carpenter reported that the species has been found on Block Island in the recent past, so we were on the lookout for the first local record. These darners are most often found hawking over open fields.

Taiga Bluet (*Coenagrion resolutum*): A male of this delicate, northern damselfly was captured by Blair Nikula at a large vernal pool in Bourne on 1 June, providing another first for Cape Cod. Previously, this species was known to occur only as far south as a few sites in extreme northern Massachusetts, so its appearance on the Cape is surprising. No others were found despite subsequent searches.

Spatterdock Darner (*Aeshna mutata*): This species appeared again, for the fourth consecutive year, at the so-called "Frosted Pool" in Eastham. A teneral male was photographed in a clearing near the pool on 10 June, and two were seen patrolling over the pool on 15 June. Our inability to find this species elsewhere, even at nearby pools, remains puzzling.

Canada Darner (*Aeshna canadensis*): A single male captured in Eastham on 28 July provided the only Cape record of this species in 1996. Although common in many portions of the state, there are only a couple of definite Cape records in recent years. Whether Canada Darners are scarce residents locally or merely occasional visitors from the mainland remains unknown. To date, we are unaware of any evidence of local breeding.

Green-striped Darner (*Aeshna verticalis*): At least four males were present at a small bog in Mashpee on 31 August. This is only our second Cape site for this species, the other also on the Upper Cape at a large, densely vegetated pool in Bourne. Although local breeding has not been confirmed, the patrolling behavior of males at these two sites is suggestive.

Spring Darner (*Basiaeschna janata*): This is another species that appears to be much scarcer on the Cape than inland. Our only sightings this year were from the Punkhorn Conservation Area in Brewster, an adjacent small stream in Harwich, and Moody Pond in Mashpee.

Fawn Darner (*Boyeria vinosa*): The Fawn Darner is another dragon that is common on the mainland, but apparently scarce and local on Cape Cod. Our only records this year came from the Skunknet River in Osterville, Mashpee/Wakeby Pond in Mashpee, and the Mashpee High School. At the latter site, a very late female seen inside the school building on 9 October was found dead the following day. Additionally, a nymph (which eventually emerged) was found along the Mashpee River-to our knowledge, the first proof of breeding by this species on Cape Cod.

Swamp Darner (*Epiaeschna heros*): In sharp contrast to last year, only a handful of Swamp Darners were found this year. The only indication of any movement was the sighting of 11 individuals passing Race Point in Provincetown in an hour and a half on 15 June. Otherwise, only a few were reported from various locations during the summer. Most notable was the discovery of an *Epiaeschna* exuvia in the Red Maple Swamp in Eastham on 18 July. To our knowledge, this is the first evidence of this huge, southern dragon breeding on Cape Cod.

Black-shouldered Spinyleg (*Dromogomphus spinosus*): In her book, Ginger Carpenter describes this large, handsome clubtail as "relatively uncommon in our area, having been collected at only 5 locations," and in 1994 and 1995 only a few individuals were found on the Cape. However, the Trimbles found them to be fairly common, though elusive, at some of the large Upper Cape ponds they surveyed this summer.

Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*): Individuals of this apparently scarce, but inconspicuous species were captured in the Punkhorn Conservation Area in Brewster and near the Skunknet River in Osterville. A few additional sightings of unidentified *Somatochloras* may have involved this species.

Frosted Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia frigida*): The first Cape records in three years of this small dragon came from a large pool in Bourne where one male was captured on 1 June and several were seen on 15 June. This is another species whose status in our area is unclear. Based upon our rather limited experience and published accounts from the past, the Frosted Whiteface appears to have declined in this area, though it is still quite common elsewhere in Massachusetts.

Lyre-tipped Spreadwing (*Lestes unguiculatus*): Our only record this year of this diminutive, easily overlooked spreadwing came from a small, densely vegetated pool in Bourne on 22 June. This site is near a larger pool where we found the species last year. We have now found Lyre-tipped Spreadwings at just these two Bourne pools, at a large pool in Eastham, and at a small pond in Sandwich; all four records have involved single males. However, a female captured at the smaller Bourne pool on 18 August this year appears to be this species as well.

Eastern Red Damsel (*Amphiagrion saucium*): Large numbers of this tiny red damselfly were noted again at the Quashnet River bog in Mashpee, where as many as 200 were seen on 9 June. To date, we have found this species only in the vicinity of the Quashnet and Mashpee Rivers, though there are older records from elsewhere on Cape Cod.

Powdered Dancer (*Argia moesta*): Prior to this summer, we had failed to record this handsome damselfly on the Cape, though both Ginger Carpenter and the Gibbs' found them in years past. It turns out we simply were not looking in the right places, as the Trimbles found them to be very common at several of the Upper Cape ponds (*e.g.*, Ashumet, John's, and Snake Ponds) they surveyed this summer.

Aurora Damsel (*Chromagrion conditum*): So far, we have found this distinctive damselfly only in the Quashnet River watershed. As many as 80 were estimated to be present at the Quashnet bog on 9 June.

Big Bluet (*Enallagma durum*): This largest of our bluets was found again at Mill Pond in Yarmouth and Nobska Pond in Woods Hole. Additionally, a few individuals were found among the masses of Familiar Bluets (*Enallagma civile*) on John's and Mashpee Ponds in Mashpee, Weeks and Triangle Ponds in Sandwich, and Ashumet Pond in Falmouth.

Movements: Although we again noted some migratory-type movements of dragonflies this year, they were generally of a lesser magnitude than those recorded a year ago. However, we were not in the field on at least a couple days when movements were noted by others. The first flight was on 21 May when Jackie Sones and Dick Forster saw over one hundred dragons moving northward along the Outer Cape in Provincetown and Truro. Among these were 62 Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*), 17 Spot-winged Gliders (*Pantala hymenaea*), and 14 unidentified gliders (*Pantala* spp.). The largest flight occurred in Provincetown on 14 July, the day after the passage of Tropical Storm Bertha. In two hours at Race Point, Blair Nikula and Dick Forster counted 1,420 Spot-winged Gliders, 13 Common Green Darners, and one Swamp Darner (*Epiaeschna heros*). A couple of smaller movements were also noted in Provincetown in June, and a friend reported "hundreds" of dragonflies moving along the dunes in Wellfleet late in the afternoon of 5 July. The same observer also noted "hundreds" of dragonflies along the outer beaches of Martha's Vineyard on 2 September, the day following offshore passage of Hurricane Edouard. We are now confident that dragonfly movements, particularly northward from late spring through mid-summer, are an annual event on Cape Cod, although the magnitude and species composition of these movements may be highly variable.

General observations: Although adult populations of many odonates seem to vary, in some cases extensively, from year to year, it is difficult, at best, to detect these changes without intensive, regular surveys. Such efforts, with one exception, have been lacking on Cape Cod. With that caveat in mind, we offer the following impressions of 1996 population levels. The reasons for any of these variations remain unknown, but last year's extremely low water levels and this year's contrastingly very high levels may have played some role.

Population levels of several species, including a couple of the most common and widespread odonates in this area, seemed to be noticeably low compared with the previous two years. Perhaps most striking in this regard were Eastern Forktails (*Ischnura verticalis*), normally common to abundant at most freshwater habitats. Sites where we have recorded hundreds on occasion in the past in most cases hosted only dozens or fewer this season. Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*) were also scarce, at least until late summer when modest numbers of young individuals appeared.

We also saw very few Wandering Gliders (*Pantala flavescens*) this year. This highly mobile species was very common last year, with occasional counts numbering into the hundreds. On the other hand, Spot-winged Gliders (*Pantala hymenaea*), which were seen in only small numbers last year, were widespread and at times abundant this year. In addition to the large movement witnessed in Provincetown (see Movements section above), about 150 were counted on Morris Island in Chatham on 21 July, and there were many reports of swarms of 10-30 individuals. The dramatic, sharply contrasting differences in the numbers of these two related species over the past two seasons is interesting—we'll be keeping a close eye on them in the future in hopes of learning more about these variations.

Another species that seemed more common than usual this year was the Painted Skimmer (*Libellula semifasciata*). Dozens of this colorful dragon were present at some sites this year, particularly small, grassy pools. Painted Skimmers have been seen in apparently migratory movements of dragonflies, and noticeable fluctuations in their populations, particularly near the northern limits of their range, have been reported elsewhere.

Sweetflag Spreadwings (*Lestes forcipatus*) were present in great abundance this year. Clouds of teneral were flushed from a number of sites in July, particularly grassy pools and small, densely vegetated ponds. By early August, hundreds of breeding pairs were evident at many of those same sites. While Sweetflag Spreadwings are one of the most common *Lestes* on Cape Cod, their populations this year seemed to reach exceptional levels.

COMMON NAMES FOR DRAGONFLIES

At long last there is now an official list of the common names of North American dragonflies and damselflies. Earlier this year, ballots (based upon the list originally drawn up by Sidney Dunkle and Dennis Paulson) were distributed to the membership of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas and the results of that election were tabulated and published recently in the Society's newsletter, *Argia*. While a few of the chosen names are disappointing to us, this was inevitable and we're quite pleased with the vast majority of them. It is a great relief to have such a list and we will be using these names hereafter (and hope that all other publications will as well). If you would like a copy of the list, send us a S.A.S.E.

Quite a few of the names have changed from those used in previous issues of *Ode News* (and in Ginger Carpenter's *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Cape Cod*). The changes are as follows:

Old Name	New Name
Violet Dancer (<i>Argia fumipennis</i>)	Variable Dancer
Bog Bluet (<i>Enallagma aspersum</i>)	Azure Bluet
Civil Bluet (<i>E. civile</i>)	Familiar Bluet
Doubleday's Bluet (<i>E. doubledayi</i>)	Atlantic Bluet
Lateral Bluet (<i>E. laterale</i>)	New England Bluet
Red Bluet (<i>E. pictum</i>)	Scarlet Bluet
Barrens Bluet (<i>E. recurvatum</i>)	Pine Barrens Bluet
Speartail (<i>Ischnura hastata</i>)	Citrine Forktail
Common Forktail (<i>I. verticalis</i>)	Eastern Forktail
Spring Blue Darner (<i>Aeshna mutata</i>)	Spatterdock Darner
Long-legged Green Darner (<i>Anax longipes</i>)	Comet Darner
Harlequin Bog Darner (<i>Gomphaeschna furcillata</i>)	Harlequin Darner

Sand Dragon (<i>Progomphus obscurus</i>)	Common Sanddragon
Swift River Cruiser (<i>Macromia illinoiensis</i>)	Illinois River Cruiser
Prince (<i>Epitheca princeps</i>)	Prince Baskettail
Saltmarsh Dragonfly (<i>Erythrodiplax berenice</i>)	Seaside Dragonlet
Johnny Whiteface (<i>Leucorrhinia intacta</i>)	Dot-tailed Whiteface
Goldenwings (<i>Libellula auripennis</i>)	Golden-winged Skimmer
Black-faced Skimmer (<i>L. cyanea</i>)	Spangled Skimmer
Little Corporal (<i>L. deplanata</i>)	Blue Corporal
Corporal Skimmer (<i>L. exusta</i>)	White Corporal
Damson Skimmer (<i>L. incesta</i>)	Slaty Skimmer
The Widow (<i>L. luctuosa</i>)	Widow Skimmer
Wandering Globetrotter (<i>Pantala flavescens</i>)	Wandering Glider
Spot-winged Globetrotter (<i>P. hymenaea</i>)	Spot-winged Glider
Amberwings (<i>Perithemis tenera</i>)	Eastern Amberwings
Saffron-bordered Meadowfly (<i>Sympetrum costiferum</i>)	Saffron-winged Meadowhawk
Ruby Meadowfly (<i>S. rubicundulum</i>)	Ruby Meadowhawk
Band-winged Meadowfly (<i>S. semicinctum</i>)	Band-winged Meadowhawk
Yellow-legged Meadowfly (<i>S. vicinum</i>)	Yellow-legged Meadowhawk
Violet-masked Glider (<i>Tramea carolina</i>)	Carolina Saddlebags

FIELD NOTES FROM AFAR

Featured in this new section devoted to news from elsewhere in New England are some exciting finds from the Connecticut River in Massachusetts, a note on a fall dragonfly movement at Bluff Point in Connecticut, and a brief update on some species new to Rhode Island.

Big Days on the Big River

David Wagner and Mike Thomas

The stretch of the Connecticut River that runs north from the Sunderland Bridge in north central Massachusetts is one of New England's most remarkable sites for dragonfly watching. Ralph Charlton (Kansas State University) was the first to document the importance of the site. On his first visit on 5 June 1991, he found Cobra Clubtail (*Gomphus vastus* - exuviae abundant but no adults) and Skillet Clubtail (*G. ventricosus* - one adult). A few years later he returned on 7 July 1994 and found cast exuviae of both Riverine Clubtail (*Stylurus amnicola*) and Arrow Clubtail (*S. spiniceps*). [Charlton may also have shells (exuviae) of Midland Clubtail (*Gomphus fraternus*) and Elusive Clubtail (*Stylurus notatus*) but he has not yet sent these out for verification.]

We made three trips to the site this summer: one in June, a second in July, and the last in August. Mike visited the river on 15 June 1996, and observed a remarkable hatch of gomphids along both banks of the river, beginning about 8:00 AM and ending around 10:00 AM. Over this period more than twenty eclosing (emerging) Cobra Clubtails were noted on the sunny side of tree trunks and logs that issued directly out of the water (river level was high). Eclosion took approximately 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes to fully expand and harden the wings (n=9). Teneral then flew 15-25 feet up into trees growing along the river bank. At one point six adults were observed rising up to the canopy-for some reason sunlight virtually dances off the wings of teneral. Another 50 or more shells were noted, with most three to nine feet above the water. In addition, one recently emerged male Spine-crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*) was noted on a tree bole, just a few inches above the water's surface, and a few shells of Stygian Shadowdragons (*Neurocordulia yamaskanensis*) were recovered from tree boles.

We both returned to the river on 22 July 1996. We put in at North Sunderland and then drifted down to the bridge, stopping to look for exuviae on several sandy beaches and both of the islands. Three hours of paddling and "beach combing" yielded only 20 or so. (Presumably many shells had been washed away by Hurricane Bertha which swept through the area during the second week of July.) Our haul included: 1 Zebra Clubtail (*Stylurus scudderi* - fresh); 1 Riverine Clubtail (fresh), 10-12 Arrow Clubtails (fresh), 5 Cobra Clubtails (old) and 2 Stygian Shadowdragons (old).

We beached our canoe at the northern tip of the second island for a walk about the flooded willows around 11:00 AM. Perched about seven feet above the water was a male Cobra Clubtail. In a clump of willows, perhaps no more than a foot or two above the water's surface, we roused a pair that presumably had just broken up. We then paddled down the channel between the first island and the east shore. Here the river was swift but without riffles (at least during the high water period when we visited). We saw no less than 10 Cobra Clubtails over territory. Males very much favored the sun-shade interface that ran along the east side of the river, drifting in and out of the sun. They became almost invisible whenever they entered the shade. Interactions among males were frequent but short-lived, lasting but a second or two. Although males appeared to be mostly in "display mode," they were observed taking prey as well. In full sun the yellow on the club was dramatic and visible from quite a distance even though the Cobra Clubtail has the least amount of yellow of any of the New England clubtails in the subgenus *Gomphurus*. Because of the vagaries in lighting, males were very inconspicuous on the river overall and easily might have been missed, but once we knew where to look they could be observed readily. Males hovered 8-20 inches above the water with the abdomen raised about 20° above horizontal, the flared yellow and black club providing a striking image.

Males showed a level of fearlessness about our canoe and little respect for our nets, often flying close for inspection, landing briefly on the canoe and even our nets. The most befuddling pass came from a male that bisected the canoe as both Mike and I sat at the ready. After hovering just upriver from us it suddenly blistered over the middle of the canoe. Had either of us swung the other would likely have been knocked unconscious. Taking swipes at the males as we drifted broadside down the river was great sport -a couple of efforts nearly capsized the canoe.

At the southern tip of the first island we paddled to a large log jam that, predictably, had four or five Black-shouldered Spinylegs (*Dromogomphus spinosus*) perched atop. Blue-fronted Dancers (*Argia apicalis*) were quite common along the sun-shade interface of the boat launch area and parking lot near the west end of the Sunderland Bridge. They were not seen at the river, preferring off-river perching sites, with the ground being favored over vegetation.

Our last trip was on 27 August 1996, when we were joined by Dave McLain and Fred Morrison. Again we put in at North Sunderland off of Falls Road. In contrast to the two previous visits the river was low. Shell collecting was very slow, perhaps two Cobra Clubtails (old), four Arrow Clubtails (newish) and one Riverine Clubtail (newish) were taken by the four of us.

The biggest surprises were adults of American Rubyspot (*Hetaerina americana* - three, including one teneral) and Big Bluet (*Enallagma durum* - one). To the best of our knowledge this is one of the most northerly inland sites for the latter species in the Northeast, including New York (though on the coast it has been recorded as far north as Acadia National Park in Maine). We netted an old female Cobra Clubtail; her colors were dull and a bit washed out. Later, from 11:30 AM to 12:15 PM, we saw two males over the water, in the middle of the channel, toward the west bank-this time in full sun!?

The portion of the river that had Cobra Clubtails on our previous trip now had a new resident-while working our way down the east shore we observed about 30 individuals of a mystery gomphid, especially between the second island (north of bridge) and the east bank, from about 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. They seemed nervous and only rarely approached within 10 feet of us. They were no more approachable in the canoe. After nearly 60 minutes the four of us were still scoreless, three of us never even got a swing. (We did see a 15-inch largemouth bass rocket out of the water to snatch one...remarkable!) It's our guess that the gomphid was the Arrow Clubtail. Compared to the Cobra Clubtails on the same stretch of the river a month earlier, they seemed more nervous, not as inclined to hover, more of a patroller, and moved quickly over the water at heights of only 5-8 inches. Additionally, they appeared to be a bit larger and less brightly marked. The club was not pronounced on the wing and the abdomen was held only about 5° above the horizontal. Several individuals were seen to hit the water 2-4 times (with three being the norm), apparently for a drink, then rise into the nearby canopy. The one individual that took only two drinks hit the water rather hard the second time, and maybe decided it was best to "get out of Dodge." This species also liked the sun-shade interface but didn't seem as linked to it as Cobra Clubtails had been on the 22nd of July: It seemed to remain in shady areas for longer periods, but also spent more time patrolling portions of the river in full sun. More than 15 Illinois River Cruisers (*Macromia illinoensis*) were seen as well.

Even if Midland Clubtails and Elusive Clubtails turn out not to be resident, this stretch of the river has at least five rare Odonata listed as S1 (Critically Imperiled) or S2 (Imperiled) species in Massachusetts: Skillet Clubtail, Cobra Clubtail, Riverine Clubtail, Zebra Clubtail, and Arrow Clubtail (all Gomphidae). In addition, the populations of Stygian Shadowdragon (Corduliidae), American Rubyspot (Calopterygidae), and Big Bluet (Coenagrionidae) at Sunderland strike us as noteworthy.

Odonata are very vulnerable when they first eclose from their nymphal skins. A single gust of wind or wave can mean doom. Both Ralph Charlton and Fred Morrison had occasion to witness the results of boat wakes along the Connecticut River that effectively crippled a newly emerging gomphid. Taxa that eclose on the beach or very close to the water (*e.g.*, *Stylurus*) are especially susceptible. One reason the Sunderland site may be so rich in dragonflies is because speed limits are so low there that few motor boaters choose to navigate this part of the river.

Our thanks to Dave Wagner and Mike Thomas, two of Connecticut's most active and knowledgeable odonatists, for this contribution to Ode News - eds.

Dragonfly Movement at Bluff Point

Jackie Sones

Bluff Point, located along the southeastern shore of Connecticut, may very well turn out to be one of the better places to observe autumn dragonfly movements in New England. Part of an 806-acre coastal reserve in Groton, the point juts down into Fisher's Island Sound—a perfect set up to concentrate migrants. This fall the Hartford Current published an article discussing Bluff Point's recent emergence as a new birding "hotspot." When Jeremiah Trimble started school at Connecticut College in nearby New London, we were looking for such spots, not only to observe birds, but dragonflies, too.

On a few different mornings in early September Jeremiah and I were lucky enough to witness the early morning flight of hundreds of migrant songbirds at Bluff Point. On 30 September, however, we were there in the afternoon and caught up with some dragonflies moving along the coast. From 1:45 PM to 3:45 PM we counted the following:

Unidentified Blue Darners (<i>Aeshna</i> spp.)	2
Mottled Darner (<i>Aeshna clepsydra</i>)	1
Lance-tipped Darner (<i>Aeshna constricta</i>)	1
Green-striped Darner (<i>Aeshna verticalis</i>)	2
Common Green Darner (<i>Anax junius</i>)	700
Twelve-spotted Skimmer (<i>Libellula pulchella</i>)	5
Blue Dasher (<i>Pachydiplax longipennis</i>)	1
Wandering Glider (<i>Pantala flavescens</i>)	2
Spot-winged Glider (<i>Pantala hymenaea</i>)	12
Carolina Saddlebags (<i>Tramea carolina</i>)	10
Black Saddlebags (<i>Tramea lacerata</i>)	20

The *Aeshnas* were unexpected; we hadn't heard of this genus being recorded in migratory movements before. Although it is quite possible that they were local residents which had

wandered out to the coast, we did observe them moving along the beach, flying in the same direction as the other dragons. Who knows what will turn up at Bluff Point in the future... needless to say, we'll be spending more time there! We'll keep you updated!

Rhode Island Update

Ginger Carpenter reports that she and Nina Briggs added nine species of odonates to the Rhode Island state list this season. Foremost among these was a Taper-tailed Darner (*Gomphaeschna antilope*) caught by Ginger; this is a southern species not previously recorded anywhere in New England! It's not yet clear whether this individual was a vagrant or part of a local breeding population. Also new was another southern species, the Great Blue Skimmer (*Libellula vibrans*). Although this species was found in several Massachusetts locations last year, to our knowledge the Rhode Island individual was unique in New England in 1996. Rounding out the list of new species were seven that were more expected: Blue-fronted Dancer (*Argia apicalis*); Dusky Dancer (*Argia translata*); Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*); Mottled Darner (*Aeshna clepsydra*); Black-shouldered Spinyleg (*Dromogomphus spinosus*); Spine-crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*); and Mocha Emerald (*Somatochlora linearis*).

PHOTOGRAPHING DRAGONS, PART II

Blair Nikula

In the first part of this article, I described the equipment I use to photograph odonates and other insects. Here I will briefly discuss film and then some of the other considerations in this type of photography. As in the previous installment, I have assumed that the reader understands basic photographic principles.

Photographers today are blessed (or cursed, depending upon your point of view) with a rich and somewhat bewildering array of film choices. The first choice is between slide or print film. I shoot slide film exclusively for several reasons: 1) I occasionally give slide programs; 2) slides are preferred by most publishers; 3) the color in slide film tends to be somewhat more vivid; and 4) slide film is less expensive to process. There are so many good slide films on the market today you really can't go very wrong. In general, any of the films produced by Kodak or Fuji will provide excellent results. Film speed is an important consideration: as a rule, the slower the film speed the better the quality. Film speeds in the range of 50-100 ISO provide the best results, but because of their slow speed are more difficult to work with, in most cases requiring the use of a tripod or flash to provide sharp results. For the past couple of years I have been using Fuji Sensia (100 ISO) almost exclusively. However, Kodachrome (64 ISO), Kodak Elite (50 & 100 ISO), Kodak Lumiere (100 ISO), and Fuji Velvia (50 ISO) are all superb films. Once you find a film you like, it's a good idea to stick with it, as over time you will develop a feel for its nuances.

Once you have chosen your equipment and film, it's time to head into the field and start exposing some film. The first step, of course, is to find some bugs -a relatively easy task if the sun is shining. Cloudy days provide more of a challenge, for not only are odonates much less active, but light levels are reduced as well. However, a high, thin overcast affords a soft, even light that can be very attractive.

One of the easiest groups to photograph are the skimmers (Libellulidae). These are large dragonflies, the males of which are often brightly colored and tend to perch in the open on emergent vegetation, exposed branches, logs, or sandy shorelines. Additionally, the males are often territorial and even when spooked will frequently return to the same or a nearby perch, permitting the patient photographer multiple opportunities. Most of the other dragonfly groups are very difficult to photograph, although you will, on rare occasions, come across unusually cooperative individuals. Clubtails (Gomphidae) often sit in the open, but tend to be quite skittish and when flushed, almost never return to the same perch. Darners (Aeshnidae) and Emeralds (Corduliidae) spend considerable time on the wing, often at altitudes of 10-20 feet, and when they land it is usually hanging from a branch high in the shadows of a tree, far out of the range- and generally out of sight-of the frustrated photographer. Most damselflies are relatively cooperative, but because of their small size, require a very close approach: in most cases two feet or less. Even the most cooperative subject will become jittery when a potential predator lurks within two feet!

Once you have located a subject, there are several considerations to take into account before beginning your approach. First, what type of photograph are you after? Do you simply want a picture of a dragonfly? Or are you interested in a more artistic rendering of the subject? Perhaps you wish to obtain an identifiable portrait of a particular species. This latter has been my primary objective over the past couple of years. (As most of our readers will readily attest, the biggest frustration facing the aspiring odonatist is the paucity of illustrations available in any one source. Field guides, with a couple of notable exceptions on the regional level, are lacking and it's very difficult to learn what some of these magnificent creatures look like. In hopes of overcoming this obstacle, I have undertaken a concerted effort to photograph all the 175+ species found in New England.)

Another important consideration, as in any photograph, is lighting. If you're trying for a recognizable image of the species, you'll want the light at your back so that the subject is evenly and well-lighted and the exposure relatively straightforward. For an artistic approach, side-lighting or even back-lighting may produce a more interesting image, although you'll have to be very careful of the exposure. Backlighting will often result in underexposed images if you rely on your camera's automatic exposure capabilities; it's safest to adjust your exposures manually.

Before beginning an approach, you also need to decide whether you want to photograph the insect from the side or above (or perhaps even head on), as this, in combination with the direction of the light, will determine the angle at which you approach. Most damselflies, with the possible exception of the spreadwings (Lestidae), are best photographed from the side. Dragonflies, on the other hand, are most often (and in many instances most attractively) photographed from above, although side views are often crucial for identification purposes. A particularly cooperative subject may permit you both dorsal and lateral shots. However,

impenetrable vegetation, deep water, or a host of other obstacles may prevent an approach from the angle you desire, in which case the only options are to make due with whatever angle and lighting are available, or to move on to another subject. In the case of some of the territorial perchers, such as many of the skimmers (Libellulidae), flushing the bug might result in it landing in a more favorable position nearby.

Also think about whether a horizontal or vertical format will provide the most pleasing image. In many cases, a standard horizontal shot will be best, but for those species which hang from perches (e.g., Darners [Aeshnidae], Emeralds [Corduliidae], and the Spreadwinged Damsels [Lestidae]) a vertical image may be preferable.

Once you begin your approach, move slowly, increasingly so the closer you get to the insect. Most (if not all) species seem particularly sensitive to lateral movements, thus the importance of choosing your angle of approach beforehand to minimize any motion once you get close to the insect.

One of the greatest difficulties in any close-up photography is obtaining enough depth of field to insure that as much of the subject as possible is in focus. I always try to shoot with an f-stop of f16 or smaller, though that is not always feasible. One of the advantages of using flash is that you will be able to choose any f-stop you desire, without the trade-off of a slower shutter speed. In any event, before pushing the shutter, be sure the film plane (i.e., camera back) is as parallel to the insect's body as possible. In other words, both the insect's head and the tip of its abdomen should be the same distance from the camera.

The lighting in close-up photography is often very tricky. Although the automatic exposure capabilities of modern cameras are remarkably accurate in most instances, I still prefer to set my exposures manually. If a picture comes back poorly exposed, I at least know that the error was probably mine and not the camera's. To increase the chances of obtaining properly exposed images, I always bracket my exposures extensively. When I locate a cooperative subject, it's not unusual for me to fire off a roll or two of film in a matter of minutes, particularly if it's a species I've not photographed before. This can result in many usable slides of the same image, but that's fine with me: It's much less expensive to make duplicates in the camera than to have a photo-lab do it later.

Always pay attention to the background. This is the rule I violate most frequently, to my continual frustration. No matter how well the subject is lighted and composed, a distracting background can greatly detract from, and in the worst cases virtually ruin, an otherwise fine image. Generally, the most pleasing backgrounds are those that are uniform with little contrast, such as water or a dense stand of grasses. The farther the background is from the subject, the more likely it will be rendered as a pleasing, out-of-focus blur of color and texture. Often you will have little or no control over the background. However, when working at very close distances, even a slight shift of the camera position—a fraction of an inch in many cases—can result in a dramatic change in the background and make a big difference in the quality of the final image. Also keep an eye out for shadows cast across a portion of the subject. Even the smallest blade of grass can cast a shadow that, while not particularly evident in the field, can be distractingly obvious in the photo.

One method for photographing the more elusive species, if you're not too concerned with the artistic aspects of the results, is to capture the insect (for many species, a difficult undertaking in itself!) and then pose it. Many dragonflies are surprisingly cooperative after they've been in the hand for a few minutes and, when placed in a natural pose, will sit for a minute or two, sometimes longer, affording the opportunity for at least a few quick shots. Curiously, damselflies are much less cooperative in this regard. Before placing the bug, pick a suitable, well-lighted perch and get the camera in place and ready to shoot. Chilling the bug, either by placing it in a cooler for a while or by dunking its abdomen in the water for a minute or so will often immobilize it for a time. Purists will find posing the subject distasteful-as do I. Be advised, as well, that a posed dragonfly rarely appears completely natural and an experienced odonatist will be able to detect such photos. Nevertheless, some species are virtually impossible to find, never mind photograph, perched in the wild; obtaining photos of these species often requires less than "pure" methods.

Finally, keep in mind the three "P"s: practice, patience, and persistence. No matter how good your equipment, there is simply no substitute for experience-and no way to acquire experience without spending time, time, and more time in the field. Be prepared for frequent frustrations; accept them and keep plugging away. Take your time: Rushed photos invariably reveal themselves through fuzzy images, poor exposures, distracting backgrounds, annoying shadows, or assorted other maladies. Of course, the quest may be of much greater interest to you than the results, in which case ignore everything you've just read and simply go out with your camera and have a good time! The most important thing is to enjoy and appreciate these amazing creatures. If you can learn something about both dragonflies and photography in the process, all the better!

ODE NEWS ONLINE

Ode News is now online! Through the efforts of Jackie Sones, with technical assistance and encouragement from Fahy Bygate, we now have a Web site where Internet surfers can access back issues of *Ode News*. Also available at the site are over 100 links to other odonate-related Web sites from throughout the world, as well as a checklist of Cape Cod odonates. Many species on the checklist are linked to photos and we hope soon to have photos of virtually all Cape Cod odonates on the site. The site address is:

<http://www.capecod.net/~bnikula/odenews.htm>

We also have an e-mail address:

odenews@capecod.net

If you have a chance to view our Web site, let us know what you think. We're always happy to hear your suggestions and criticisms.

NEW DAMSELFLY MANUAL

One of the biggest events in North American odonatology this year was the publication of *The Damselflies of North America* by Minter Westfall and Michael May. This long-awaited 649-page book covers all 161 species of North American damselflies (Zygoptera), including a few from northern Mexico that have not yet been recorded in the U.S.

The Damselflies of North America is not a field guide; it is a manual geared toward identification in the hand and/or the laboratory. Although there are eight plates of color photographs, only 31 species representing 20 of the 28 genera are illustrated. There are many black-and-white illustrations, both photos and drawings, of terminal appendages and other anatomical features that are critical for identification, but which are visible only in the hand and usually only with magnification. However, there are also some drawings of thoracic and abdominal patterns that can be useful for field identification.

The 58-page introduction includes an extensive discussion of adult and larval morphology, as well as sections titled "Life Cycle," "Adult Behavior," "Larval Behavior," "Physiology," "Biogeography," and "Habitats and Conservation." The species accounts comprise 525 pages and are detailed and technical. The book concludes with an impressive 14-page glossary and 26-page bibliography.

This monumental production is destined to be THE damselfly reference for many years to come. Although beginners may find it a bit overwhelming, anyone seriously interested in odonates will want it on their bookshelf. It can be ordered directly from the International Odonate Research Institute, c/o Division of Plant Industry, P. O. Box 147100, Gainesville, FL 32614-7100. The price is \$69.50 plus \$5.00 shipping. Through the end of the year, a 15% discount is available for members of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas and students.

This and other odonate books are also available from Flora and Fauna Books, P. O. Box 15718, Gainesville, FL 32604 and from Patricia Ledlie Bookseller Inc., P. O. Box 90, Buckfield, ME 04220 (207-336-2778).

ALGONQUIN DRAGONFLY GUIDE

Another new publication, "The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Algonquin Provincial Park" by Matt Holder (Algonquin Park Technical Bulletin No. 11), will be of interest to everyone, particularly beginners. This 40-page booklet contains species accounts and full color paintings of the 36 most common odonate species in the park; 35 of these species also occur in southern New England. The species accounts are clearly written and contain a wealth of useful information for the field observer. The seven page introduction covers some of the basics of dragonfly biology and the book ends with a glossary and park checklist (85 species). Not only is this delightful publication very well done, it is also one of the biggest bargains in the publication industry today: the price is only \$2.95 Canadian! Order from: The Friends of Algonquin Park, P. O. Box

248, Whitney, ONT, K0J 2M0 (credit cards accepted). Order several and give them to your friends!

Ode News

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Ode News is available at no charge (for now!) to anyone interested.

If you have any questions, comments, or contributions, or wish to be placed on the mailing list



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