

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

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Greetings! It's hard to believe, but this issue of *Ode News* marks the beginning of our fourth year of publication. As usual, we are running behind our intended publication schedule: we were determined to have this issue completed before the new field season took over our lives, but we failed!

This issue, and our anticipation of the upcoming field season, are overshadowed by an intensely sad event. On April 1st, we suffered a devastating loss when a remarkable naturalist and very dear friend, Dick Forster, was stricken with a heart attack while shoveling snow and died at the much-too-young age of 52. Dick contributed to *Ode News* in many ways, and was a constant source of inspiration and energy. His razor-sharp mind and phenomenal memory, combined with an intense drive and infectious enthusiasm, made him an incredible resource and cherished field companion. Although Dick, like us, was fairly new to dragonflies, he attacked this new interest with characteristic intensity and in no time became a local authority, very quickly evolving from student to teacher. Words cannot begin to express the profound impact he had on us (and many others); he was a true mentor. His departure is not only a huge personal loss, but leaves a major void in New England odonatology as well. This and all future issues of *Ode News* are devoted to his memory.

This issue features early sightings from 1997, some additional reports from 1996, an article that Dick Forster was completing at the time of his death introducing the clubtails of Massachusetts, a piece by Jackie Sones recounting some of the many things she learned from Dick, and news on a new video and some recent or forthcoming publications.

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Early 1997 Sightings

In early April it appeared that the 1997 odonate season was about to get off to a very early start. Bob Barber reported many early odonates in southern New Jersey during the first half of the month, and several species of butterflies made record-early appearances locally. However, in mid-April cold, wet weather settled in and continued with little letup for the next month or so. Thus, the season ended up being very late instead. Indicative of the season's tardiness, last year we recorded 20 species of odonates on Cape Cod during May, while this year's total was just 11 species.

Initialed observers: Bill Loughran, Brian Malcolm, Blair Nikula, Jackie Sones, Peter Trimble, Jeremiah Trimble, and Dick Walton.

The first dragonfly sighting in New England was of two mature male Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*) on Block Island (*vide* Ginger Carpenter) on what may be a record early date of 8 April. A couple of others were reported from Massachusetts in mid-April, and two males in Cotuit on 29 April provided Cape Cod's first (BL). However, we neither saw nor heard of any during May! Common Green Darners are often the first species to appear in the spring. These early individuals are typically mature males and are presumed to be immigrants from the south.

Typically, the first species to emerge locally is the Eastern Forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*), and this year was no exception. Several were found in Eastham on 26 April (J&PT), and by late May the species had become common at a number of sites. The similar Fragile Forktail (*I. posita*) also emerges early, and the first detected this year was a single immature male in Eastham on 4 May (JT, BN); this is our earliest Cape Cod date for this tiny, inconspicuous species.

On 18 May, a small group led by Dick Walton gathered in Concord to search for the very rare Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*). The weather cooperated beautifully and, although we were unsuccessful in finding any boghaunters at an historical site, we did find both a male and a female at a new site! Later, three of us visited a traditional site for the species, Ponkapoag Bog in Canton, and found a single male. In all, we ended up with 11 species of odonates for the day, a nice total considering the late start to the season. Other species recorded included several Springtime Darners (*Basiaeschna janata*), three Harlequin Darners (*Gomphaeschna furcillata*), a Stream Cruiser (*Didymops transversa*), several Beaverpond Baskettails (*Epitheca canis*), many Hudsonian Whitefaces (*Leucorrhinia hudsonica*), several Dot-tailed Whitefaces (*L. intacta*), a White Corporal (*Libellula exusta*), a Four-spotted Skimmer (*L. quadrimaculata*), numerous Aurora Damsels (*Chromagrion conditum*), and a few Eastern Forktails (*I. verticalis*).

The season's first Common Baskettail (*Epitheca cynosura*) was found in Harwich on 20 May (JT) and a few others were reported by month's end. Also in Harwich on the 20th was a Northern Bluet (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). Clubtails, thought to be Lancet Clubtails (*Gomphus exilis*), had become numerous in the Concord area by the third week of May (DW), and the first of that species on Cape Cod were in Wellfleet and Barnstable on 26 May (BN). On the same date, several immature Blue Corporals (*Libellula deplanata*) were also found in Barnstable. On 27 May, Cape Cod's first Stream Cruiser (*D. transversa*) appeared in Wellfleet (JS, JT). The next day, several New England Bluets (*Enallagma laterale*) and a Pine Barrens Bluet (*E. recurvatum*), both state-listed species, were discovered in Harwich (JT). By the end of May, Ebony Jewelwings (*Calopteryx maculata*), Common Whitetails (*Libellula lydia*), and Twelve-spotted Skimmers (*L. pulchella*) had appeared in the Concord area (DW, BM).

Last year we were impressed with the extremely high water levels here on Cape Cod, commenting in the last issue of *Ode News* that we could not recall ever seeing them higher. It seemed inconceivable that they could rise even further, but that indeed has happened! The volume of water in local wetlands is mind-boggling. Bogs have become ponds, ponds have become lakes, lakes have become.....well, you get the idea! Shoreline vegetation is at least partially submerged and emergent vegetation will have a long stretch to reach the surface this summer. What effect this will have on odonates we can only guess, but the impact on odonatists is clear: access has become a serious obstacle at many sites. We may be swimming to the bugs this year!

Additional 1996 Highlights

In the last issue of *Ode News*, we presented some of the 1996 highlights from Cape Cod, as well as an article featuring some exciting finds from the Connecticut River. Following are some additional noteworthy reports from various places in Massachusetts. Many of these resulted from Dick Forster's extensive fieldwork. In the following species accounts, letters in brackets indicate the species state-listing: E = Endangered; T = Threatened; SC = Special Concern.

Initialed observers: Richard Forster, Dave McLain, Fred Morrison, Blair Nikula, Laurie Saunders, Jackie Sones, Fred Thurber, and Jeremiah Trimble

Sparkling Jewelwing (*Calopteryx dimidiata*): As many as 20+ of this striking damselfly were found on Fort Pond Brook at the Acton/Concord line, 9 July - 22 August (RF). Additionally, three individuals were found on two dates, 6 & 10 August, on the Squannacook River in W. Groton (RF *et al.*), apparently establishing a new northernmost North American record for this southern species.

American Rubyspot (*Hetaerina americana*): A few of this stunning damselfly were found at three sites (in addition to the Connecticut River report from the last issue) 17 August - 6 September: the Miller's River in Erving; Fort Pond Brook in Concord; and the Squannacook River in W. Groton (RF *et al.*). Although this species begins flying in Rhode Island in late June, we have yet to encounter it in Massachusetts before mid-August.

Emerald Spreadwing (*Lestes dryas*): This small, iridescent green spreadwing appears to be quite scarce and local in Massachusetts. Singles were found in Holliston 14 June & 8 July (RF); and 1-3 were at three sites in Sheffield on 17 June (JS *et al.*).

Dusky Dancer (*Argia translata*): A pair of this large, dark dancer was captured at the Sudbury Reservoir in Southborough on 12 August (RF), to our knowledge the first Massachusetts record in a decade or more. However, the species may be regular at large, poorly vegetated ponds, a habitat not attractive to most odonates and odonatists!

Tule Bluet (*Enallagma carunculatum*)[SC]: One or two of this state-listed species were found at three sites on the Connecticut River in Gill and Turner's Falls (JT *et al.*).

Attenuated Bluet (*Enallagma daeckii*)[SC]: On 7 July, two males of this lanky, pale bluet were at Ponkapoag Pond in Canton (RF), one of the few Massachusetts sites known for this southern damselfly.

Big Bluet (*Enallagma durum*): In addition to the Cape Cod and Connecticut River records detailed in the last issue, one or two individuals were on the Connecticut River in Gill and Turner's Falls, 19-20 August (RF *et al.*).

New England Bluet (*Enallagma laterale*)[SC]: This bluet is confined mostly to the coastal plain, so 10+ at Tully Pond in N. Orange (northern Worcester county) on 15 June (RF) is notable.

Scarlet Bluet (*Enallagma pictum*): This is another scarce coastal plain species, so 75± at Wallis Pond in Douglas on 9 August (RF) was surprising.

Variable Darner (*Aeshna interrupta*): This distinctively marked darner seems to be rare east of the Connecticut River, so five in Ashburnham on 10 August (RF) is of interest.

Spring Blue Darner (*Aeshna mutata*)[E]: Apparently substantial populations of this magnificent blue darner were found at four sites in central Massachusetts, two each in Hampden and Hampshire counties (FM,LS,DM).

Subarctic Darner (*Aeshna subarctica*): This species was present again at the same bog in Ashburnham where Dick Forster found the state's first in 1995; as many as six were noted in the period 10 August - 20 September (RF *et al.*).

Ocellated Darner (*Boyeria grafiana*)[SC]: This late summer species was discovered at several sites in central Massachusetts (DM,FM,LS), and as many as 10 were on the Green River in Colrain 19-20 August (RF *et al.*)

Cyrano Darner (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*): Numbers of this southern darner seemed much lower in 1996 than the previous year. The few recorded all occurred in the very narrow window of 13-15 June and included one on the Squannacook River in W. Groton, three in Holliston, and two at Tully Pond in N. Orange (RF).

Beaverpond Clubtail (*Gomphus borealis*)[SC]: This clubtail seems to be fairly common in the appropriate habitats (e.g., beaver ponds) in western portions of the state, as evidenced by small numbers at five sites in Berkshire county 17-18 June (BN *et al.*), and others in Conway and Royalston (the easternmost) in mid-June (RF).

Harpoon Clubtail (*Gomphus descriptus*)[E]: Several of this species were found at Stones Brook in Goshen on 16 June, and 1-2 were at two sites on the Farmington River in Otis on 17 June (JT *et al.*). We are aware of only a couple of previous state records for this species.

Cobra Clubtail (*Gomphus vastus*)[SC]: In addition to the Connecticut River records detailed by Dave Wagner and Mike Thomas in the last issue, five male Cobra Clubtails were in Deerfield on 19 August, with at least one still there the following day (RF *et al.*). Several newly emerged gomphids along the river in N. Sunderland on 16 June were thought to be this species as well (BN *et al.*).

Skillet Clubtail (*Gomphus ventricosus*)[SC]: A single male of this species was captured along the Mill River in Deerfield on 16 June (BN *et al.*). This is one of a number of species whose distribution and status in southern New England remains largely a mystery.

Southern Pygmy Clubtail (*Lanthus vernalis*): Single males of this tiny clubtail were captured at Johnson Brook in Colrain on 19 June (BN *et al.*) and in Sudbury on 2 July (RF). The status of this species in southern New England and its very similar sibling species, the Northern Pygmy Clubtail (*Lanthus parvulus*), remains very unclear; the two forms were split into separate species only a few years ago.

Brook Snaketail (*Ophiogomphus aspersus*)[SC]: A male of this small, bright green clubtail was captured at the Squannacook River on 6 August (BN), while single female *Ophiogomphus* collected at the same site 6 & 10 August may have been this species also, though there is some question over the identity of the specimens.

Riffle Snaketail (*Ophiogomphus carolus*)[T]: This state-listed species was recorded from several sites in Hampshire and Berkshire counties during the period 16-18 June, with 1-6 individuals per site (JT *et al.*). This species may be locally common on clear, swift rivers in the western part of the state.

Riverine Clubtail (*Stylurus amnicola*)[E]: A pair of this rarely seen species was captured on the Connecticut River in Deerfield on 20 August (JT *et al.*).

Zebra Clubtail (*Stylurus scudderi*)[E]: A single male of this handsome clubtail was captured at Fort Pond Brook in Concord on 29 July (RF), while on the Squannacook River in W. Groton four were noted on 10 August (BN *et al.*) and a single female was present on 31 August (RF).

Arrowhead Spiketail (*Cordulegaster obliqua*): A single male of this large dragon was captured in Callahan State Park in Framingham on 2 July (RF), and another was photographed in Westport in July (FT). This species inhabits very small, woodland streams where few other odonates are present.

Uhler's Sundragon (*Helocordulia uhleri*): At least 30 of this small emerald were estimated to be on the Squannacook River in W. Groton on 13 June (RF *et al.*). A few others were on the Fort River in Amherst on 16 June, on the Westfield River in Cummington on 16 June (JS *et al.*), and in Ashby on 26 June (RF).

Umbur Shadowdragon (*Neurocordulia obsoleta*)[SC]: This little-known, dusk-flying dragon was discovered at the Cambridge Reservoir in Waltham where as many as half-a-dozen were present from 1-30 July (JT *et al.*). Shadowdragons are among the most elusive of all odonates. They are subtly colored and active for only a very short period at dusk. Consequently, they may be much more common than is currently realized.

Ski-tailed Emerald (*Somatochlora elongata*)[SC]: One or two individuals were found in Ashburnham on 10 & 22 August (RF *et al.*).

Incurvate Emerald (*Somatochlora incurvata*): At least 10 individuals were present on 12 July at Tom's Swamp in Petersham (RF), site of the first state record for the species in 1995. So far, the species has not been found elsewhere in Massachusetts.

Mocha Emerald (*Somatochlora linearis*)[SC]: Single males of this southern emerald were found in Holliston on three dates in the period 27 July - 30 August (RF *et al.*), and single females were captured in Monson on 23 July (FM *et al.*) and Williamsburg on 14 September (FM *et al.*)

Ebony Boghaunter (*Williamsonia fletcheri*)[E]: This rare and local emerald was present again at Tom's Swamp in Petersham, where six males were noted on 27 May (BN *et al.*) and three on 6 June (RF *et al.*). This is one of only two known sites for this species in Massachusetts.

Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*)[E]: This candidate for Federal Listing was present again at a traditional site, Ponkapoag Bog in Canton, where as many as six were found on 7,8, & 14 May (RF *et al.*).

Banded Pennant (*Celithemis fasciata*): This small dragon is found primarily in the coastal plain, and generally in very small numbers. Thus a count of 30 at the Whitinsville Reservoir in Douglas seems notable (RF).

Elfin Skimmer (*Nannothemis bella*): This delightful, tiny dragon was detected at Tom's Swamp in Petersham where two females were present on 26 June (RF), and at Ponkapoag Bog in Canton where 15 were counted on 7 July (RF).

White-faced Meadowfly (*Sympetrum obtrusum*): A single male of this species in Dover on 14 October (RF) apparently constitutes the first state record in a decade or more. This northern dragonfly has either declined over the past 20 years or so, or is simply being overlooked among the masses of other meadowhawks typically present during the fall.

In Focus: The Clubtails (Family GOMPHIDAE) - Part 1

by Richard Forster

(Editor's note: Dick was writing this article at the time of his death. Sadly, he was not able to finish it, but we decided to include it here with a few minor changes. Dick introduces the clubtails, describes the most common species found on Cape Cod, and begins to describe some of the other groups found elsewhere in Massachusetts. In a future issue of Ode News we will follow up with an article covering the remaining groups, i.e., Hanging Clubtails [Stylurus], Snaketails [Ophiogomphus], Pygmy Clubtails [Lanthus], and Least Clubtail [Stylogomphus].)

The Clubtails represent an ancient form of dragonfly and are generally highly specialized in their habits and behavior. They are characteristically inhabitants of rivers and streams but a few are routinely found around ponds and lakes. Clubtails derive their name from the expanded or flared distal portion (segments 7 through 9) of the abdomen in males. The extent of this flaring is variable, at times being very exaggerated, but in some cases barely noticeable. Females have rather straight abdomens which are stouter than the males and are only slightly flared. Unlike most dragonflies whose eyes are connected (or nearly so) on the top of the head, the eyes of clubtails are widely separated, a trait they share with damselflies. They tend to perch on the ground in open or exposed areas, or on low-lying rocks and logs in or adjacent to the water. Clubtails are generally brownish in coloration with yellow, green, or greenish/yellow markings. The markings on the thorax appear as dorsal and lateral stripes which can often serve as aids to identification.

The nymphs are also very different from other dragonflies. With only a few exceptions, they are burrowers, unlike the nymphs of most dragonflies which forage over the substrate or on submerged vegetation. The type of substrate may determine which clubtails are present. Some prefer sandy bottoms, others may prefer gravel, and still others show an affinity for a silty substrate. In general terms the composition of the substrate is largely responsible for determining the distribution of various species. Clubtails characteristically prefer highly oxygenated waters, hence their preference for rivers and streams, and their apparent intolerance of pollution.

The majority of clubtails are early season species, often emerging in the latter portion of May and completing their adult lives by the beginning of July. Many dragonflies emerge on vegetation in a vertical position, but clubtail nymphs prefer a broad, flat surface such as a rock, log, or vertical river bank. Since the flight season is short, there is often a synchronous mass emergence, resulting in large concentrations of exuviae (cast skins) assembled in small areas. Like most odonates they disperse very shortly after emerging to adjacent woodlands, so that the accumulated exuviae may be the only evidence of their presence. The immature dragonflies take approximately one to two weeks to mature, during which time they occasionally are encountered along paths or in clearings. Even when they mature and return to aquatic breeding sites adults of some species are rarely encountered. This seems to be particularly true of some riverine species.

The presumption is that when they are not patrolling along the river, they are resting out of sight in the vegetation along the banks, or on the tops of leaves or branches, perhaps high in the trees.

Twenty-seven species of clubtails are known from Massachusetts. Of these, about 10 species are very rare, may occur only as vagrants, or are known primarily from the collection of nymphs or exuviae. In addition, many of the remainder appear to be quite uncommon. Since freshwater streams or rivers are not a feature on Cape Cod, it comes as no surprise that clubtails are poorly represented there. Three of the six species recorded on Cape Cod, the Spine-crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*), the Midland Clubtail (*Gomphus fraternus*), and the Dusky Clubtail (*Gomphus spicatus*) are known only historically or as vagrants and are unlikely to be encountered on the peninsula. It is interesting to note that one of these, the Spine-crowned Clubtail, was first known to science from a specimen obtained in Provincetown!

The most common and widespread clubtail on Cape Cod, and indeed in the entire state, is the **Lancet Clubtail** (*Gomphus exilis*). It is a small, nondescript dragonfly, pale brown in coloration, with yellowish-green markings. It has very fine, dull yellowish mid-dorsal arrow (or lancet) shaped marks on the abdomen. The abdomen is only slightly flared in males. Lancet Clubtails prefer the sandy edges of exposed areas of ponds (less commonly streams or rivers) where they perch on the ground. They are frequently encountered in woodland clearings and along woodland roads, and are present from the latter part of May to early August.

The only other widely distributed clubtail on Cape Cod is the **Common Sanddragon** (*Progomphus obscurus*). This medium-sized dragonfly is dark brown with bright yellow markings. The most distinctive feature is a row of yellow triangles down the mid-dorsum of the abdomen. The abdomen is moderately flared and the terminal abdominal appendages are bright yellow. Sanddragons occur along the exposed sandy shores of ponds and lakes. They emerge in mid-June, somewhat later than Lancet Clubtails, and fly into early August. In Massachusetts, the Common Sanddragon is confined primarily to Cape Cod and adjacent Bristol and Plymouth Counties. Elsewhere in the Commonwealth they are rare or absent. Curiously, in our area the Common Sanddragon is decidedly a pond species, but farther south where they are more common they are predominately riverine.

The least common of the regularly occurring clubtails on the Cape is the **Black-shouldered Spinyleg** (*Dromogomphus spinosus*). This is a medium to large sized, dark clubtail with yellowish markings. The markings on the sides of the thorax often appear as an irregularly shaped grayish or putty-colored blotch. Spinylegs are further characterized by having exceptionally long femurs on the hindlegs that are adorned with long spines. The Black-shouldered Spinyleg is infrequently encountered on Cape Cod and seems to occur only on the larger ponds in the Mid and Upper Cape. However, next to the Lancet Clubtail this species is probably the most widely distributed clubtail elsewhere in the state. The flight season extends from early July to late August. They seem to be an aggressive predators and I have observed them taking a Peck's Skipper and a grasshopper. Although they are normally associated with sluggish rivers, they can also be found along the shores of ponds and lakes.

Among the clubtails not recorded from Cape Cod is a group known as the Pond Clubtails (genus *Arigomphus*), of which two species are known from Massachusetts. One of the more commonly

found clubtails around ponds in the eastern part of the state is the **Unicorn Clubtail** (*Arigomphus villosipes*). It is a medium-sized clubtail with a greenish overall coloration and a dark abdomen with yellow markings. Unicorn Clubtails are normally found around small ponds with muddy bottoms and sparse shoreline vegetation. They perch on exposed muddy shorelines, less often on logs or rocks, and occasionally even floating vegetation. The flight season is from early June to the end of July. Although fairly widespread, the species apparently is absent in the southeastern portion of the state. The closely-related **Lilypad Clubtail** (*Arigomphus furcifer*) occurs throughout much of the same area as the Unicorn Clubtail. The two species look very much alike and are best identified by the shape of the terminal abdominal appendages of the males. In both species these appendages are yellow. Lilypad Clubtails seem to occur along ponds with more shoreline vegetation or along swampy streams. They tend to perch on shoreline vegetation about one meter above the ground.

The previously discussed Lancet Clubtail is part of a group of rather small, slender clubtails (placed in the subgenus *Phanogomphus* by some authors) which are fairly widespread, with different species occupying different habitats and different geographical portions of the state. All are extremely similar in appearance and are best identified by the distinctive shapes of their abdominal appendages. One of the commonest of these is the **Dusky Clubtail** (*Gomphus spicatus*). It apparently is fairly common about swampy ponds and lakes in the higher elevations of the state and may be uncommon and overlooked in eastern portions. The similar **Ashy Clubtail** (*Gomphus lividus*) is rather uncommon, and seems to prefer gentle, slow-moving grassy streams. Its distribution appears to be confined to the lower elevations of the state, though it is unknown from the coastal plain. The **Beaverpond Clubtail** (*Gomphus borealis*) is apparently somewhat restricted to swampy areas, especially beaver ponds in western Massachusetts. Two additional species, the **Harpoon Clubtail** (*Gomphus descriptus*) and the **Rapids Clubtail** (*Gomphus quadricolor*) are both poorly known in the state and apparently prefer rather swiftly flowing rocky streams. All of these species are early flyers and should be looked for in June and early July.

No account of clubtails would be complete without mentioning the awesome **Dragonhunter** (*Hagenius brevistylus*), the largest clubtail in North America. It is a magnificent black and yellow beast with green eyes. The Dragonhunter frequents shady forest streams and is widespread in the state, except in the southeast. They have a small head, large thorax and the abdomen is slender with a barely perceptible flaring at the tip. The legs are notably long for a gomphid, especially the hind legs. The flight is sluggish, often with the tip of the abdomen held in a down-curved position. Dragonhunters frequently perch on branches over streams or bare twigs at eye level. Their flight season is from mid-June to late August. As the name implies, Dragonhunters prey on other dragonflies, some of considerable size. The nymphs are possibly the most distinctive of any odonate, with a discoidal abdomen roughly the size and shape of a quarter.

Lessons from a Naturalist

by Jackie Sones

Dick Forster was an extraordinary naturalist. I learned many things from him and I thought that if I wrote them down, others might learn from him as well.

Think about the possibilities. What would occur in this particular habitat, on this date, given these weather conditions?

Question. What field marks were visible? Was it mature? What was it doing? Are you sure?

Look carefully. Spend time using your eyes. Develop a search image. Scan the horizon. Sit and watch the sky. What have you seen fly by?

Listen intently. Spend time using your ears. Were those the chip notes of a Red Crossbill? Is that a stream in the distance?

Consider habitats. What species are to be expected given a particular habitat type. For example, if you are near an Atlantic White Cedar Swamp, be on the look out for Hessel's Hairstreak and Ringed Boghaunter.

Study. Compare similar species. Memorize field marks. Ask the experts for background information.

Read. Take in the words of naturalists that wrote of their adventures and discoveries. Glean what you can from their observations. Delve into records from the past.

Share. Talk to people about what you are seeing and about what they are seeing. You can learn something from everyone. You can teach something to anyone.

Ask. Contact people with experience and write letters asking your questions. How do I go about finding a shadowdragon?

Wonder. Would it be possible to find an Ocellated Emerald in Massachusetts? Can I find a Pygmy Snaketail? Will I see a Spoonbill Sandpiper?

Laugh. Have fun. Take a step back and see all of the humor in natural history adventures.

Learn. Take it all in and build on your experiences. Learn from your mistakes and move forward.

Explore. Wander around and see what you can find. Investigate new areas.

Scout. Analyze topographic maps and road maps. Check out potential field trip sites. Discover access points.

Describe. Use words and drawings to explain physical characteristics and behaviors. Try to be as detailed as possible.

Discuss. Talk one-on-one and in groups about any topic of interest.

Write. Submit articles about what you've seen or what you've studied.

Record. Be diligent about maintaining records of your observations. Put in the time and it will pay off.

Remember. Concentrate on what has been found in the past. Who else has seen this? Where? When?

Plan ahead. What sites should I visit in June? In July? In August?

Set goals. Think about what you'd like to accomplish. Write down your goals and review them through the season and at the end of the season. Set new goals for next year.

Feel the excitement. Experience the feeling of finding a new species or a new site, of recording a high count or a late date, of observing a new yard bird, of noticing a common species do something you've never seen it do before.

Search. Actively pursue your targets. Go for it!

1997 Dragonfly Society Meeting

by Blair Nikula

I have just returned from the 1997 annual meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas which was hosted this year by the International Odonata Research Institute in Gainesville, Florida, June 6-8th. Nearly 60 people from all over the U.S. attended, making it the society's largest gathering yet. The weather was mostly cloudy and unusually cool (although it's difficult for a New Englander to think of temperatures in the mid-70s as cool, normal highs in Gainesville in early June exceed 90°!). Consequently dragonflies were rather hard to find (or maybe they were lying low simply because they got word that a crowd of net-wielding fanatics were in town!). Nonetheless, it was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend offering a wonderful opportunity to meet and compare notes with odonatists of every experience level.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the chance to explore the facilities of the International Odonata Research Institute located at the Florida State Collection of Arthropods of the University of Florida. One of the largest odonate collections in the world is housed here and one could spend days browsing drawer after drawer containing many of the world's most amazing dragonflies and damselflies. The chance to spend a couple of hours sampling the many

specimens was an exhilarating - though overwhelming - experience and helped compensate for the relative paucity of live bugs in the field.

Despite the disparate backgrounds and range of experience of the attendees, a sense of warm camaraderie infused the weekend. Many of the top odonatologists in the country were present and, without exception, they were friendly and willing to share their considerable knowledge with even the rankest novice. The informal evening programs were both entertaining and informative.

Next year's meeting will be in Nebraska, probably sometime in July - perhaps I'll see you there!

News & "Noduses"

1997 Field Trips

We've scheduled three field trips for the upcoming field season. All trips are highly weather-dependent, so be sure to check with the leader the day before if the weather seems questionable.

June 28: Squannacook River, W. Groton

Leader: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348)

E-mail: odenews@capecod.net

The Squannacook River is one of the most pristine in eastern Massachusetts and supports a rich riverine odonate fauna. Some of the species we hope to see are Moustached Clubtail (*Gomphus brevis*), Ashy Clubtail (*G. lividus*), Twin-spotted Spiketail (*Cordulegaster maculata*), Illinois River Cruiser (*Macromia illinoiensis*), and Uhler's Sundragon (*Helocordulia uhleri*). We'll also visit some other potentially productive habitats in the area.

⇒ Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the North Middlesex Regional Technical High School on Route 119 in Townsend (turn into the school parking lot at the blinking yellow light, across from McDonald's and just east of Dunkin Donuts and Subway).

July 19: Athol/Petersham area

Leader: Dave Small (508-249-2094)

E-mail: dhsmall@tiac.net

This trip is offered in conjunction with the Athol Bird & Nature Club and will visit a variety of habitats, including Tom's Swamp where several species of emeralds (Corduliidae) are possible, in particular the Incurvate Emerald (*Somatochlora incurvata*) which is known in Massachusetts only from this site.

⇒ Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Quabbin Woods Restaurant near the intersection of Route 122 & Route 32 in Petersham.

August 23: Connecticut River, Deerfield

Leader: Dave McLain (413-584-6940)

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The Connecticut River is home to several species of rare (or at least rarely seen) state-listed clubtails (Gomphidae), including at least three species in the genus *Stylurus* which fly late in the season. There is a chance we could find all three of these elusive bugs on this trip. Several other riverine species are also possible.

⇒ Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the dirt parking area on the west side of the river, just north of the Sunderland Bridge (off Rte. 116). Call Dave or Blair (508-432-6348) for specific directions.

Northeast Dragonfly Video!

Although we may have to wait awhile longer for a thorough field guide to dragonflies, we are delighted to report that there is now a dragonfly video available! Dick Walton and Dick Forster have combined their many talents to produce "Common Dragonflies of the Northeast." The video presents superb footage of 44 species of dragonflies (no damselflies) commonly found in the northeastern states, and covers identification, behavior, and habitats. If you've been wondering exactly what a Prince Baskettail, or a Springtime Darner, or a Widow Skimmer looks like, this video is what you've been waiting for! The video runs for about 30 minutes and sells for \$24.95 plus \$5.00 S&H. It is scheduled to be available June 25th and can be ordered from: NHS, 7 Concord Greene #8, Concord, MA 01742. Make checks payable to: NHS.

Vermont Dragonfly Meeting

The Dragonfly Society of the Americas is holding their Northeastern Regional Meeting in Castleton, Vermont on the weekend of 20-22 June. Castleton is just west of Rutland, near the New York border, south of Lake Champlain. One of the focuses of the meeting will be the Poultney River on the New York/Vermont border. The meeting organizer is Paul Novak of the New York Natural Heritage Program. We plan to attend and will provide a report on the weekend's activities in the next *Ode News*.

Ode News Online

Jackie Sones has continued to update the *Ode News* Web site. There are now almost 200 (!) links to other odonate-related Web sites from around the world. Additionally, there are 160 photographs of 131 Massachusetts species, and we hope to add even more photos in the near future. Viewers can also see past issues of *Ode News* and read about recent odonate sightings. The address is:

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

To view the photographs, go to either the Cape Cod or Massachusetts checklists and click on the name (and sex, where applicable) of the species you wish to see.

Clubtail Database Program

Blair Nikula has been working with John Robinson of Lanius Software, producer of the Lanius birding software, on a new computer program, "Clubtail." This is a powerful, yet simple to use database program which allows the user to record dragonfly sightings and to output the information in a wide variety of ways.

The program requires an IBM compatible 386 or faster computer and Windows95. Clubtail sells for \$99.95 and can be ordered from [Lanius Software](#), 1470 Creekside Drive, Suite 23, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; phone: (510) 932-4201. However, Blair Nikula has a few copies available at a special introductory price of \$85, ppd. Contact [Blair](#) at 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646; ph. (508) 432-6348.

Publication News

One of the biggest frustrations facing odonatists of all experience levels is the relative paucity of publications on these fascinating creatures, particularly non-technical, field-oriented publications. This situation is very slowly improving and we will endeavor to keep *Ode News* readers up-to-date on any new or forthcoming publications on North American odonates. Some recent news:

Checklist of Kansas Dragonflies

A great booklet on dragonflies has recently become available: **Checklist of Kansas Dragonflies** by Roy J. Beckemeyer and Donald G. Huggins. This 16-page publication contains a brief introduction, an identification key to live dragonflies, an annotated checklist of the 80 species of dragonflies recorded from Kansas (damselflies are not included), a brief section on studying dragonflies, and a list of 27 references. Of greatest interest to those of us in the Northeast are the

well-reproduced photographs, all but one in color, of 26 species of dragonflies, 16 of which occur in New England. This checklist is part of the Kansas School Naturalist series (Vol. 43, No. 2) and is available (free! - though contributions are welcome) from: Kansas School Naturalist, Division of Biology, Box 4050, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS 66801.

The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Canada and Alaska

One of the classics in North American odonatology is Edmund Walker's three-volume **Dragonflies and Damselflies of Canada and Alaska**. Long out-of-print (the first volume was published in 1953, the last in 1975) and much-sought-after, they are virtually impossible to find used - we've been trying for three years! Though the species descriptions are technical, there is a great deal of natural history information in these works. The good news is that the Toronto Entomologists Association is reprinting all three volumes. The price is expected to be about \$175 - expensive, but less than the used sets sell for (assuming you can find one). For more information contact: T.E.A., c/o Alan Hanks, 34 Seaton Drive, Aurora, Ontario L4G 2K1; phone: 905-727-6993; e-mail: nmg.vanderpoorten@sympatico.ca

Dragonflies through Binoculars

Sid Dunkle, author of the very popular and useful Florida dragonfly and damselfly guides, is working on a new photo guide which will cover most of the North American dragonflies. This undoubtedly will become THE guide for field identification across the continent, but publication is probably at least a year away.

Ode News

Editorial Staff & Production...Blair Nikula and Jackie Sones

Illustrations...Fahy Bygate, Jackie Sones, and Jeremiah Trimble

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, write to: *Ode News*, 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646, or send e-mail to: odenews@odenews.org.

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