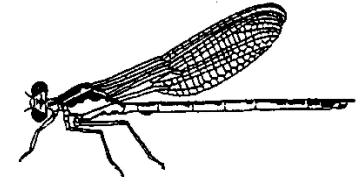


Ode News



An Occasional Newsletter about Dragonflies and Damselflies in Southern New England

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May 2002

Welcome to Volume 9 of *Ode News*. Another field season has gotten off to a very early start, though not quite matching the remarkable March 31st commencement of two years ago. This season began with an April 3rd sighting of an unidentified dragonfly at Plum Island, MA, by Tom Carrolan. April was peppered with additional green darner sightings and at least ten other species appeared, many during an exceptional heat wave mid month.

Other precocious April species in southern New England included (in order of appearance) Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*), Hudsonian Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia hudsonica*), Springtime Darner (*Basiaeschna janata*), Fragile Forktail (*Ischnura posita*), Eastern Forktail (*I. verticalis*), Common Baskettail (*Epiptera cynosura*), Harlequin Darner (*Gomphaeschna furcillata*), Beaverpond Baskettail (*Epiptera canis*), Boreal Bluet (*Enallagma boreale*) and White Corporal (*Libellula exusta*). Tune into the next *Ode News* for more on these early sightings.

With considerable regret, we report that Jackie Sones has left New England — temporarily we hope — for the Oregon coast where she will spend the summer and fall studying the endangered coastal subspecies of Zerene's Fritillary for The Nature Conservancy. Jackie has touched many with her passion and enthusiasm, and has introduced hundreds to the wonders of dragonflies (and many other aspects of the natural world). *Ode News* was Jackie's idea; it was her initiative and enthusiasm that brought this newsletter to fruition, and her sharp eye for detail that has kept

it largely error-free. Her departure marks the end of an era (though she promises to continue her editing chores from afar). We wish Jackie the very best and fervently hope for her swift return to this area.

On a happier note, it is with great pleasure — and no small sense of relief — that we can finally announce publication of the *Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies*, authored by Jackie Sones and Blair Nikula. For details, see page 3. You can order directly from us, with the proceeds helping to defray the costs of this newsletter and related web site. We would like to publish an unbiased review of the guide in the next *Ode News* — anyone interested in writing one?



© Blair Nikula

Common Baskettail (*Epiptera cynosura*) — male
Or is it? The status of this common(?) species in southern New England has recently been thrown in doubt. See page 8 for more on this subject.

Other new odonate publications continue to appear with pleasing regularity, and we review two of them in this issue: *Dragonflies of Indiana*, and *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Northeast Ohio*.

Much of this issue is devoted to an annotated list of species of interest in Massachusetts. This results from some discussion on the

Northeast Odonates listserve last fall which lead to the suggestion that it would be helpful for observers and potential *Ode News* contributors to have some idea which of their observations to submit for possible publication. It is hoped this article will provide such guidance and encourage greater participation from the increasing number of observers. Share your sightings with us!

Also in this issue is a review of the 2001 field season in Rhode Island, as well as a listing of upcoming walks and programs. We hope to see you at one or more of these, or elsewhere in the field this season!

2002 NORTHEASTERN DSA MEETING

This year's Northeastern DSA meeting will be held in upstate New York, on the Tug Hill Plateau, 12-14 July. The objective of the meeting will be to explore a very little surveyed wilderness in north-central New York. The Tug Hill is an extension of the Adirondack Mountains, but receives far more precipitation because it lies in the "rain shadow" of Lake Ontario. The center of the plateau is sparsely populated and abounds in aquatic habitats of all types, including bogs, marshy ponds, and small to medium sized streams.

Activities will include at least one full day on the plateau, with another day spent exploring the lower portions of one of the large streams that flow from the plateau. On Sunday, participants can stop at one of several inviting places on their way home, including St. Mary's pond and bog. This weekend will provide an ideal opportunity for beginning odonatists and their participation is encouraged.

The meeting will be based in Watertown. For further details, contact Nick Donnelly (607-722-4939 or tdonnel@binghamton.edu).

2001 MASSACHUSETTS WALKS AND PROGRAMS

Following are some of the activities scheduled in Massachusetts this season. Most of these events are free, but some are scheduled by organizations and require registration and a fee. Many are weather dependent, so if in doubt please call the leader to check.

15 May – 12 July: Athol Bird and Nature Club Dragonfly Workshop at the Miller's River Environmental Center in Athol. Registration and fee (\$60) required. For full details see page 3.

2 June (Sunday): Northern Worcester County. 9:00 a.m. An *Ode News* walk to search for the rare Ebony Boghaunter and other early species. Meet behind the Miller's River Environmental Center (100 Main Street) in Athol. Leaders: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348; odenews@odenews.net) and Dave Small (978-249-2094; dsmall@gis.net).

8 June (Saturday): Connecticut River canoe trip: 9:00 a.m. An *Ode News* trip to search for early flying river specialties, particularly the mysterious Midland Clubtail. Bring a canoe or kayak and lunch. Meet at the small dirt parking area on the west side of the river at the intersection of Route 116 & River Road (at the west end of the Sunderland Bridge) in Deerfield. Leader: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348; odenews@odenews.net).

27 July (Saturday): Savoy State Forest. 9:00 a.m. An *Ode News* walk to look for Lake Darner, Lake Emerald and other northern species. Meet at the main parking lot of the Mohawk Trail State Forest on Route 2 (north side) in Charlemont. Leader: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348; odenews@odenews.net)

10 August (Saturday): Connecticut River canoe trip. 9:00 a.m. An *Ode News* trip to search for late flying river specialties. Details same as 8 June. Leaders: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348; odenews@odenews.net) and Fred Morrison (413-527-5903; anatfocus@aol.com).

31 August (Saturday): Northern Worcester County. 9:00 a.m. An *Ode News* walk to search for Subarctic Darner and other late season species. Meet behind the Miller's River Environmental Center (100 Main Street) in Athol. Leader: Blair Nikula (508-432-6348; odenews@odenews.net)

STOKES BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Blair Nikula and Jackie Sones
2002. Little, Brown & Company \$8.95

The beginner's guide written by your humble editors is finally out. This photographic guide has over 150 color photographs illustrating over 100 of the most common species in North America. For each species, the text includes information on identification, habitat, behavior, and flight season, as well as a range map. The introductory chapters cover natural history, identifying odes (including a quick find table), observation tips, and an introduction to the North American families of odonates.

Although this guide should be widely available in book stores, it can also be ordered directly from the *Ode News* crew, at a modest discount, with proceeds helping to defray the cost of producing this newsletter. To order, send a check (U.S. funds, payable to Blair Nikula) to: Ode News, 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646.

Special *Ode News* Pricing (shipping included):

- 1 copy = \$10
- 2 copies = \$18.00
- 3 copies = \$26.00
- 4 or more copies = \$8.00 each



ATHOL DRAGONFLY INSTITUTE 2002

The 3rd annual Dragonfly Institute will be held at the Millers River Environmental Center beginning 15 May 2002. The class, coordinated by Dave Small will feature some of New England's premier naturalists, including Blair Nikula, Chris Leahy, Gail Howe, Bob Bowker, and Jennifer Loose.

Classes will focus on the basics of dragonfly identification, but will also include discussions of dragonflies as indicators of environmental health, documentation of rare and unusual species, and dragonfly life history and behavior. The goal of the course is to teach the basic skills of odonate identification, providing a solid base for the continued study and enjoyment of these amazing creatures.

Lectures will be on 5/15, 5/29, 6/12, 6/26 and 7/10 from 7:00 to 9:00 PM with field trips generally on the following Saturday. Cost for the class will be \$50.00 per person for ABNC members, \$60.00 for non-members. Class participation is limited so reserve your space early. For more info contact Dave Small (978-249-2094; dhsmall@gis.net) or visit:

<http://www.mrec-athol.org/indexab.html>

2002 ANNUAL DSA MEETING

The 2002 annual meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas will be based in Lewisburg, West Virginia, from 21-23 June. Lewisburg is located in the mountains along the banks of the Greenbrier River which, along with its tributaries, should offer a rich assortment of riverine species. Other sites of interest in the region include Cranberry Glades (a high elevation bog), the Meadow River wetlands, Stephens Lake, and the Plum Orchard Lake Wildlife Management Area. Post-meeting trips will visit a couple of high elevation bogs near Elkins from 23-26 June, and the Ohio River from 26-28 June.

A web site for the meeting is available at:
http://www.dnr.state.wv.us/wvwildlife/nongame/2002_dragonfly_society_meeting.htm.
For more information, contact Jennifer Wykle (jwykle@mail.dnr.state.wv.us).

CONNECTICUT WORKSHOP ?

Dave Wagner is contemplating another odonate workshop at the University of Connecticut on 22 June. If interested, contact Dave (860-486-2139 or dwagner@uconnvm.uconn.edu).

2001 RHODE ISLAND SUMMARY

Ginger Brown

During the memorable 2001 Odonata season in Rhode Island, volunteers produced over 2000 dragonfly and damselfly records for the Atlas project. Among these were three species new to the Rhode Island list, which now numbers 133. The three new species are the Emerald Spreadwing (*Lestes dryas*), the Red-waisted Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia glacialis*), and the Crimson-ringed Whiteface (*L. proxima*). All three species were taken by the same collectors on a single sunny Saturday in June, a rare and exciting event. Emerald Spreadwings were found in two locations, as were Crimson-ringed Whitefaces. Both whiteface species were found in northern Rhode Island towns on the Massachusetts border.

Early in 2001, three new populations of the Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*) were discovered in two towns in the northern part of the state. To date, 23 populations of this rare, early flying dragonfly are known from Rhode Island. In addition to surveys of potential habitat, annual monitoring of a number of known *lintneri* populations occurs in the state. Exuviae are collected each week during emergence to generate a population estimate. Most populations range-wide contain fewer than 100 individuals, and a substantial number contain fewer than 50 individuals. One locale, however, produced 1525 *lintneri* exuviae in 2001, an astonishing occurrence for this species. Over the last few years we have watched this population double annually.

Also of note was the discovery of a large population of the Spatterdock Darner (*Aeshna mutata*) in the north central part of the state. This represents the only occurrence of the species in Rhode Island that is well-documented in terms of population size. Two other sites are known from the state, but they are documented by only a single individual each and no information about population size is associated with these. The newly discovered Spatterdock Darner population appears large and healthy. Dozens of fearless males were observed charging about a leech-infested pond that had been targeted for a species-based survey because its surface was covered with water lilies, including spatterdock, in which the darners lay their eggs.

Early summer was characterized by larger than usual numbers of the two less common baskettail species,

Spiny Baskettail (*Epitheca spinigera*) and Beaver-pond Baskettail (*E. canis*). *Epitheca* numbers in general were high, but *spinigera* and *canis* were known from just two locales in the state prior to 2001, and were found at 2 additional locations this year. They were often in mixed swarms with Common Baskettails (*E. cynosura*). Also in early summer, Twin-spotted Spiketails (*Cordulegaster maculata*) and Delta Spiketails (*C. diastatops*) were everywhere, landing in nets in several new locations, and occurring together on a number of streams. Spine-crowned Clubtails (*Gomphus abbreviatus*) turned up in two new locales in June, both in shallow, fast-flowing reaches of larger rocky rivers. A new population of Comet Darners (*Anax longipes*) was discovered in Westerly.

Large swarms of mosaic darners (Genus *Aeshna*), green darners (Genus *Anax*), and striped emeralds (Genus *Somatochlora*) were frequent in 2001, but the most spectacular was a swarm encountered on 13 August in a field on the Exeter/Richmond line. This swarm contained hundreds, if not thousands, of dragonflies of 14 species, most notably a large group of Coppery Emeralds (*Somatochlora georgiana*). This coppery emerald population is the second discovered in Rhode Island this year, bringing the total for this rare southern emerald here to five populations. Other dragonflies in this extraordinary group included Lance-tipped Darners (*Aeshna constricta*), Green-striped Darners (*A. verticalis*), Shadow Darners (*A. umbrosa*), Common Green Darners (*Anax junius*), Clamp-tipped Emeralds (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*), Brush-tipped Emeralds (*S. walshii*), Halloween Pennants (*Celithemis eponina*), Slaty Skimmers (*Libellula incesta*), Twelve-spotted Skimmers (*L. pulchella*), Wandering Gliders (*Pantala flavescens*), Ruby Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum rubicundulum*), Yellow-legged Meadowhawks (*S. vicinum*), and Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*).

Long after the field season is over, interesting records can be found in boxes of uncatalogued material. In January 2002, a specimen of the Pine Barrens Bluet (*Enallagma recurvatum*) was found in a volunteer's collection. The specimen represented the first of the species from a major watershed in southern Rhode Island. Perhaps even more interesting was the discovery of a specimen of the rare Zebra Clubtail (*Stylurus scudderi*), also in a volunteer's collection. This specimen documents the third locale known for the species in Rhode Island.

MASSACHUSETTS SPECIES OF INTEREST

Blair Nikula

Some readers have suggested that it would be helpful to have some idea what odonate sightings are worth reporting for possible publication in the *Ode News* seasonal summaries. The broad answer is that we're interested in everything! But realistically, of course, we have only so much space and must limit publication to those reports that seem most significant. While we strive to be completely objective in choosing which species to include, undoubtedly at least some subjectivity creeps in. The seasonal highlights section (which appears annually in the fall issue) has focused on new distributional data with a secondary focus on habitat selection and seasonality. Clearly, the first step in getting to know any creature is to first learn where and when it occurs. For a large number of odonates this most basic information is still incomplete, at best.

Although behavioral and life history observations have appeared rather infrequently in these pages, we are certainly interested in publishing more of these. We welcome any submissions on these topics, even if only a short paragraph or two. If you're unsure about the significance of an observation, give me a shout and let's talk about it.

Keep in mind that we may refrain from publishing sight reports of some difficult to identify species (or published them with qualifications). We maintain a conservative attitude about which reports to publish in *Ode News*, feeling that we would rather omit a good report than publish a bad one. Despite the recent appearance of several "field guides," confirmation of some species still requires (and will probably always require) in-the-hand evidence, and in some cases under-the-microscope examination.

With all this in mind, I offer the following annotated list of species that seem of particular interest. Of course, all of the 27 state-listed species should be reported; in the interest of space, I have listed them in the accompanying sidebar without comment. Six species that have been formally proposed for state-listing, as well as a variety of additional species for which there are significant gaps in our knowledge, are included with brief annotations. Many of these are on the state Natural Heritage Program's unofficial "watch list." These certainly are not the *only* species of interest, only some of the most prominent.

Superb Jewelwing (*Calopteryx amata*): This large, stunning damselfly is known primarily from cold, rocky streams in north-central portions of the state, where it seems rather scarce and local, and thus worth monitoring.

Sparkling Jewelwing (*Calopteryx dimidiata*): This southern jewelwing is known only from a few sites stretching in a band from Bristol County north to the New Hampshire border (I refer to this band as the "495 Corridor", as Interstate 495 runs through the heart of this area; more on this corridor in a future issue of *Ode News*). The habitat is rather sluggish, vegetated streams and small rivers.



Sparkling Jewelwing - male
(*Calopteryx dimidiata*)

© Blair Nikula

American Rubyspot (*Hetaerina americana*): The initial discussion about species of interest in Massachusetts was spurred by this striking damselfly. Three questions are of particular interest. What is the current distribution in Massachusetts? Has the species declined locally? Are there two flight seasons in the state? Although once known from throughout the state (excluding the islands, and presumably only rarely on Cape Cod given the lack of suitable habitat), there are only one or two recent records east of Worcester County. Has the species largely disappeared from eastern portions of the state? Additionally, this species generally has a late flight season, in the Northeast running from early August to mid September and, to my knowledge, most, if not all, Massachusetts records have fallen in this period. However, in Rhode Island there is an early flight season (in addition to the late season?), that begins around mid June. I'm unaware of any such phenomenon in this state, but one must wonder why it would occur as nearby as RI and not here.

“Southern” Common Spreadwing (*Lestes disjunctus australis*): This southern form of the Common Spreadwing may be a distinct species. Although not yet recorded in Massachusetts, it occurs regularly as far north as New York, and has been found at least twice in southwestern Connecticut. It flies earlier than its northern cousin and should be looked for in June. It is very similar in appearance not only to the northern form, but to the Sweetflag Spreadwing (*Lestes forcipatus*) as well, and thus easily overlooked. Confirmation of this form in the state will require a specimen.

Lyre-tipped Spreadwing (*Lestes unguiculatus*): The most mysterious of the spreadwings locally, the Lyre-tipped was apparently once a rather common, widespread species throughout (at least) eastern Massachusetts. However, there have been very few records over the past couple of decades (most from Cape Cod), suggesting a significant decline. Densely vegetated wetlands, especially temporary pools, seem to be the preferred habitat and the flight season appears to run from mid June through July. This species requires in-the-hand identification.

Blue-fronted Dancer (*Argia apicalis*): This handsome damselfly seems to occur primarily on the larger rivers in the state (e.g., the Connecticut and the Merrimack) and was found last year on the Charles River, on the outskirts of Boston. Given its apparently restricted distribution and habitat requirements(?), additional information is desirable. Beware the very similar and much more widespread blue-form female Powdered Dancer (*A. moesta*).

Dusky Dancer (*Argia translata*): There are only a handful of records for this large, dark, southern dancer, all from rather barren ponds and reservoirs (e.g., Walden Pond in Concord, the Sudbury Reservoir), sites that typically host a low diversity of odonates. There certainly is no shortage of such habitat in the state and this species is likely much more common than the few records would suggest. Look for it during the mid-summer.

Taiga Bluet (*Coenagrion resolutum*): This northern damsel is at the southern edge of its range in Massachusetts and has been found only a handful of times, mostly near the state’s northern border. Preferred habitat is densely vegetated ponds and marshes, and it flies primarily in June.

Massachusetts State-Listed Odonates

DAMSELFLIES:

Tule Bluet (*Enallagma carunculatum*) – Special Concern
 Attenuated Bluet (*Enallagma daeckii*) – Special Concern
 New England Bluet (*Enallagma laterale*) – Special Concern
 Pine Barrens Bluet (*Enallagma recurvatum*) – Threatened

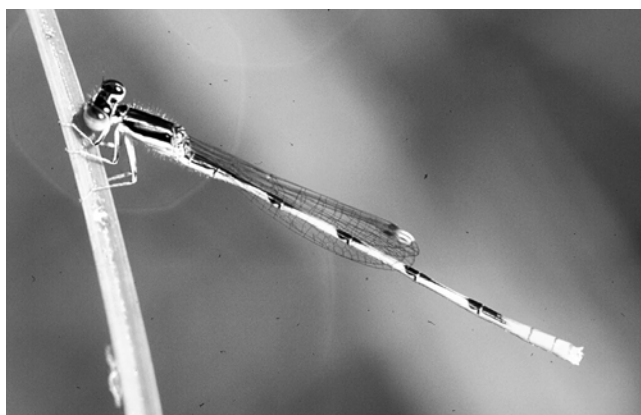
DRAGONFLIES:

Spatterdock Darner (*Aeshna mutata*) – Endangered
 Comet Darner (*Anax longipes*) – Special Concern
 Ocellated Darner (*Boyeria grafiana*) – Special Concern
 Spine-Crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*) – Endangered
 Beaverpond Clubtail (*Gomphus borealis*) – Special Concern
 Harpoon Clubtail (*Gomphus desertus*) – Endangered
 Midland Clubtail (*Gomphus fraternus*) – Endangered
 Rapids Clubtail (*Gomphus quadricolor*) – Threatened
 Cobra Clubtail (*Gomphus vastus*) – Special Concern
 Skillet Clubtail (*Gomphus ventricosus*) – Special Concern
 Brook Snaketail (*Ophiogomphus aspersus*) – Special Concern
 Riffle Snaketail (*Ophiogomphus carolus*) – Threatened
 Riverine Clubtail (*Stylurus amnicola*) – Endangered
 Zebra Clubtail (*Stylurus scudder*) – Endangered
 Arrow Clubtail (*Stylurus spiniceps*) – Threatened
 Umber Shadowdragon (*Neurocordulia obsoleta*) – Special Concern
 Lake Emerald (*Somatochlora cingulata*) – Special Concern
 Ski-tailed Emerald (*Somatochlora elongata*) – Special Concern
 Coppery Emerald (*Somatochlora georgiana*) – Endangered
 Kennedy’s Emerald (*Somatochlora kennedyi*) – Endangered
 Mocha Emerald (*Somatochlora linearis*) – Special Concern
 Ebony Boghaunter (*Williamsonia fletcheri*) – Endangered
 Ringed Boghaunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*) – Endangered

Scarlet Bluet (*Enallagma pictum*): This stunning red damsel is another Northeastern endemic, whose range seems to be centered in southeastern Massachusetts where it is fairly common. Recent surveys by Leah Gibbons on Cape Cod located Scarlet Bluets at 17 ponds. Although primarily a coastal plain species, it was found at a site in the southern Connecticut River valley last year and has recently been found at several sites in southern Maine, suggesting that it may be more widespread than currently known. It recently was proposed for state-listing, and additional surveys, especially west and north of Boston would be desirable. Scarlet Bluets inhabit ponds with water lilies — one of the few odonates that seems to have a strong association with an aquatic plant. They spend most of their time sitting on water lilies, often some distance from shore, making them easy to overlook. Carefully scanning the surface of lilies with binoculars, searching for a little red streak, seems to be the best

way to find this species. However, beware of the red form females of the Lilypad Forktail (*Ischnura kellicotti*), which occur in the same habitat and are quite similar in appearance and behavior.

Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*): This tiny, yellow damsel is an enigma. It is known from only five counties, all in the eastern half of the state, and rarely has been reported more than two or three times a year. Citrine Forktails prefer small wetlands with dense grasses, though occasionally show up in brackish or even saline habitats. They are very inconspicuous, often requiring getting one's nose down low into the vegetation to find, but seem to have a long flight season with records extending from early June into mid September.



Citrine Forktail — male
(*Ischnura hastata*)

© Blair Nikula

Rambur's Forktail (*Ischnura ramburii*): A southern damsel at the northern edge of its range in Massachusetts, this forktail is found primarily in brackish habitats along the southeastern coast. There are few records north of Cape Cod, but it may well be more common as far north as the New Hampshire border. It's habitat preferences and similarity to the abundant Eastern Forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*) have likely resulted in its being overlooked. The flight season is mid-summer.

Lake Darner (*Aeshna eremita*): This large, northern darner is at the southern limits of its range in Massachusetts, and is known primarily from a few sites at higher altitudes in the state. It was "common" at North Pond in Florida in the early 1970s, but more recently has been found only on Mt. Watatic in Ashburnham and Mt. Everett in southern Berkshire County. As the name suggests, Lake Darners breed

in large, shallow lakes, and should be looked for in such habitats in northern and western areas of the state. Like most darners, they wander widely and all recent records are from mountaintops, where they swarm among other *Aeshnas*. Look for them in July and August.

Subarctic Darner (*Aeshna subarctica*): This northern darner was first discovered in Massachusetts in 1995 and is known from just two sites, both in Ashburnham. It inhabits wet sphagnum bogs, so apparently suitable sites are present elsewhere in north-central and northwestern portions of the state. The flight season is quite late, extending from mid August into late September (or later?).

Swamp Darner (*Epiaeschna heros*): A huge, southern darner near the northern edge of its range here, Swamp Darner numbers seem to vary considerably from year to year. It is at least partially migratory, and substantial northward incursions occur in some years (perhaps related to drought in the Southeast?). Like most migratory species, it is most common along the coast. The flight season is lengthy, extending from early June through early September.

Taper-tailed Darner (*Gomphaeschna antilope*): The status of this species in Massachusetts is a great mystery. It was first found in Holliston in 1997, then went unrecorded until 2001, when an unprecedented, migratory-type influx occurred, especially in Essex County (perhaps just reflecting observer bias). There is no previous evidence of migratory behavior in this species, so its sudden appearance in numbers along the coast is puzzling (see the last *Ode News*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, for more on last year's phenomenon). Taper-tailed Darners are very similar to the more common and widespread Harlequin Darner (*Gomphaeschna furcillata*), and are thus easily overlooked; confirmation requires careful in-the-hand examination. June seems to be the month to look for Taper-taileds.

Cyrano Darner (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*): This is another southern darner near the northern edge of its range in Massachusetts. It seems to occur primarily at lower elevations in eastern and central portions of the state, though is absent from the coastal plain. It has an early flight season, extending from early June into early July.

Northern Pygmy Clubtail (*Lanthus parvulus*) and **Southern Pygmy Clubtail** (*Lanthus vernalis*): These two tiny clubtails were long considered to be the same species; not until 1980 were they described as distinct from one another. Thus, the historical status of these two species in the state is unclear. Recently, the Southern Pygmy Clubtail has been found at a number of sites in eastern Massachusetts and once in the lower Connecticut River Valley, all at tiny, shaded, and often semi-permanent streams where few other odonates are present. There are only two recent records for Northern Pygmy Clubtail, one from Berkshire County and the other from Franklin County. So, based upon the rather few records over the past decade, it seems that the Southern occurs at lower elevations, primarily in eastern portions of the state (another Route 495 Corridor species?), while the Northern occurs at higher elevations in central and western areas (as well as on somewhat larger streams). However, the two species have been found together at the same sites elsewhere in their ranges, so these habitat/distributional distinctions may not be absolute. A re-examination of the few historical specimens from the state would be desirable.



Northern Pygmy Clubtail — male
(*Lanthus parvulus*)

© Blair Nikula

The Snaketails (genus *Ophiogomphus*): Like so many of the clubtails, the members of this genus present many questions about both their distribution and habitat requirements in the state. Most fly early in the season, generally from early June through mid July. Two of the five species are state-listed, but the other three all seem to be candidates for listing. Like the very similar, state-listed **Riffle Snaketail** (*Ophiogomphus carolus*), the **Maine Snaketail** (*O. mainensis*) is found on swift, rocky streams. The former is known only west of the Connecticut River,

while the latter occurs somewhat further east (into Worcester County), though neither seems very common. Although recorded from several counties historically, the **Rusty Snaketail** (*O. rupinsulensis*) recently has been found only on the Millers and Connecticut rivers. Although sometimes considered more tolerant of disturbed conditions, this species has been recorded no more frequently than some of its congeners over the past decade. The most mysterious of the group is the **Pygmy Snaketail** (*O. howei*), which is known only from one 1922 record in Amherst – the type specimen for the species! It seems to prefer streams with sandy or fine gravel substrates and occasional riffles. Does the Pygmy Clubtail still occur in the state? The rediscovery of this tiny clubtail would be a real coup for the diligent – or lucky – observer!

Arrowhead Spiketail (*Cordulegaster obliqua*):

Until recently known from only a handful of records in the state, this handsome species has been found at a number of new sites just in the past 3-4 years. However, its distribution seems to be limited to eastern portions of the state (the 495 Corridor again). It inhabits very small, often semi-permanent streams. Both the habitat and distribution seem to mirror those of the Southern Pygmy Clubtail. Although neither species is state-listed, their habitat seems fragile and easily degraded and both should be monitored closely.

Common Baskettail (*Epitheca cynosura*): Until recently, I would not have considered this common, widespread species the subject of particular interest, though I've often puzzled over the occurrence and relative distribution of dark-winged and clear-winged forms. However, Nick Donnelly, (one of the deans of North American odonatology), has recently examined a number of Massachusetts specimens initially identified as this species and determined that many of them (14 of 15 specimens that I sent him) are actually Mantled Baskettails (*E. semiaquea*), a southeastern species not previously known to occur anywhere in New England. However, there are some very difficult taxonomic issues with these two forms as well as some other closely related species in the southeastern U.S. A treatment of these issues is well beyond the scope of this article (as well as, perhaps, my comprehension!), and it's not clear to me at this point that these two forms are even separate species. Suffice to say, resolution of the problem will likely require a large series of specimens from throughout southern New England.

Stygian Shadowdragon (*Neurocordulia yamaskanensis*): The Shadowdragons is another difficult group to get a handle (or net!) on. They fly for only a brief period at dusk and, occasionally at least, dawn when they are tough to see, never mind catch. Where they spend the day, God only knows, but it is presumed to be high in the trees. The Stygian is known only from the Connecticut River and has been proposed for state-listing. Further north this species also occurs on large lakes and it should be looked for at such sites in central and western parts of Massachusetts. The flight season appears to extend from mid June through July.

Forcipate Emerald (*Somatochlora forcipata*): First recorded in 1973 in Berkshire County, this slender emerald went unrecorded for the next 25 years, but has recently been found on several occasions at four new sites, three of them in northern Worcester County. The species recently was proposed for state-listing. Forcipate Emeralds inhabit sphagnum bogs, though there is yet no evidence of breeding in the state. Local records range from 7 June to 19 July. Identification is possible only in the hand.

Incurvate Emerald (*Somatochlora incurvata*): This large emerald was first recorded in the state in 1995 and since has been found at just one other site; both sites are in northern Worcester County. It has been proposed for state-listing. Incurvate Emeralds breed in sphagnum bogs (often quite dry) and fly somewhat later than most of their congeners: from mid July into early September.

White-faced Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum obtrusum*): This is another species that appears to have declined recently. Though once found throughout the state, there have been but one or two records in the past decade. It is a northern species at the southern edge of its range here. Has its range contracted northward in response to the warming climate? Like most of its congeners, it flies primarily in August and September. A meadowhawk with a bright white face is almost certainly this species, but confirmation requires careful in-the-hand examination.

While learning more about the status and distribution of these species is a priority, there are many other topics of interest, and even the most common and widespread species are potential mines of information. Questions abound about every aspect of odonate natural history. A few that come to mind are:



White-faced Meadowhawk — male
(*Sympetrum obtrusum*)

© Blair Nikula

Migration: There is still a great deal to be learned about the comings and goings of the several “migratory” species. Although it is clear that some northward movement occurs annually from mid May into July and southward movement occurs from mid August into early October, the magnitude of these movements seems to vary substantially (at least by an order of magnitude?) from year to year. However, most observations to date have been brief and incidental, involving random observations covering an hour or two, or at most part of a day. Anyone willing to spend prolonged periods sitting on a sand dune along the coast, or perhaps a hilltop inland, making systematic counts could add a great deal to our understanding of this phenomenon.

Swarming and hilltopping behavior: Repeated observations, such as the ongoing study of Fred Goodwin in Topsfield, could provide much insight into these interesting phenomena.

Population fluctuations: Repeated, systematic surveys could contribute to an understanding of the often dramatic annual and inter-annual variations in odonate numbers. Pick a favorite local wetland, visit it regularly, and record the number (to the extent possible) of each species you see. Over time, some patterns may emerge.

Late flight dates: Although we have a decent idea of when species emerge, the end of the flight season for most species is poorly delineated.

This list could go on for pages, but the bottom line is anyone can make significant contributions. So, get out and watch, then let us know what you find!

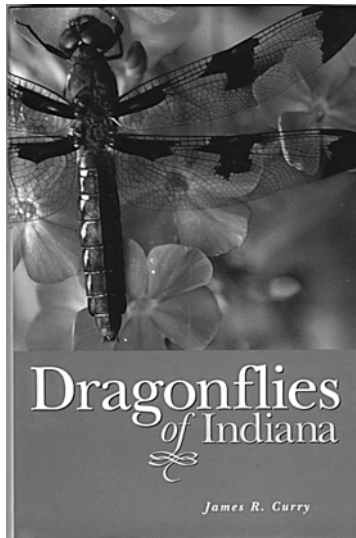
DRAGONFLIES OF INDIANA

James R. Curry. 2001. *Indiana Academy of Science*. 304 pages. 250+ photographs. Hardcover. 5¾" x 8¾" \$32.00.

Of the various regional odonate guides that have appeared in recent years, this is one of the most impressive and attractively produced. It is hardcover, printed on high quality, glossy paper throughout, with an abundance of nicely reproduced color photos.

Unlike most other regional guides, this publication covers only dragonflies (Anisoptera), 97 species of which are known from Indiana. Damselflies (Zygoptera) are excluded. Hopefully, the author is at work on a follow-up publication on this sub-order!

The introductory sections are amply illustrated and include brief but informative chapters on the history of dragonfly study in Indiana, dragonfly anatomy, life cycle, conservation, collecting, preservation of specimens, classification, and photography. The species accounts are divided into sections entitled Recognition, Size, Indiana Flight Season, Status, Description, Habitat, Behavior, and Range; also included are county maps and phenograms for each species. I particularly enjoyed browsing the informative behavior sections.



The format for the species accounts consists of photographs, which for most species includes two color photos, on one page with text on the facing page, one species per page. Thus, each species receives a full two pages of coverage — a delightful extravagance in an odonate guide! The photos, most taken by the author, are large (typically 3½" x 4½") and beautifully printed, the nicest yet to appear in a regional guide. In addition to the species photos, there are many attractive and pleasantly evocative habitat photos.

Two photographs appear to be misidentified, or at least are of very atypical individuals: the immature male Yellow-legged Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum vicinum*) on page 258 and the adult male of the same species on page 274 both show very black legs and much more black on the abdomen than that species should. Otherwise, I could find little to quibble with.

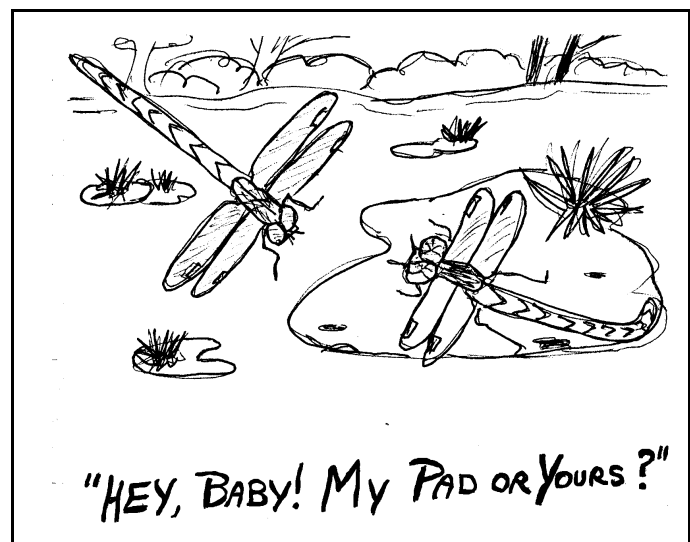
This is a handsome book and, given the high quality of the production, quite reasonably priced. For ordering information, visit:

<http://www.indianaacademyofscience.org/specialpubs.html>

Blair Nikula

LATE 2001 HIGHLIGHTS

An incredibly warm late fall in 2001, with temperatures running about 3½°F above average in November and almost 7°F in December(!), produced a remarkable number of late flying dragonflies. November reports of Yellow-legged Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum vicinum*) are not unusual, and were especially numerous in 2001. However, December reports of this species, very rare in the past, included five individuals in Topsfield, MA, on 1 December and 14(!) still on the wing there on 5 December (F. Goodwin), while another individual was in Rochester, NH, on 4 December (S. Mirick). Equally noteworthy was a Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*) in Topsfield on 1 December (J. MacDougall).



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DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES OF NORTHEAST OHIO

Larry Rosche. 2002. Illustrated by Jacquelyn Haley, Jennifer Brumfield, & Kevin Metcalf. Cleveland Museum of Natural History. 94 pages. 43 color illustrations. 5½" x 8½" \$18.95. To order email Renee Boronka at: rboronka@cmnh.org

Of the regional publications now appearing on a regular basis, this attractive new guide is one of only a couple to rely on paintings rather than photos to illustrate the species, and is thus somewhat reminiscent of Ginger Carpenter's seminal (and now out-of-print) 1991 Cape Cod guide and Matt Holder's 1996 Algonquin Park guide. Also like those two works, this new guide is geared to beginners, and covers a rather small geographic area — in this case, just nine counties in the northeast corner of Ohio, which has a known odonate fauna of 124 species (81 dragonflies and 43 damselflies).

This is primarily an identification guide. Although there are very brief descriptions of habitat and flight season, natural history information is largely absent. The format is the familiar and very functional text on one page with corresponding illustrations on the facing page. For each species, the plate indicates whether the species is shown life size or some percentage thereof, a helpful feature. The book is wire-bound, making it easy to use in the field.

In most field guides, the reader's attention is drawn first to the illustrations, and in this case, the illustrations (water colors?) are very nice and should prove quite helpful to beginners. There is enough detail to show most of the important characteristics, without overwhelming the reader with meaningless features. Wings are shown only for those species with conspicuous wing patterns, and then only simply (without venation). Most species are rendered in life-like poses, with accurate colors. However, the Cyrano Darner (page 16) is much too green (the abdominal markings actually being a duller, blue-green in life) while, in contrast, the Spatterdock Darner (page 14), a striking species in life, is much too drab and colorless. At the end of the book are four very useful plates illustrating identification characteristics of spiketails (genus *Cordulegaster*),

clubtails (Gomphidae), bluets (*Enallagma*), and dancers (*Argia*).

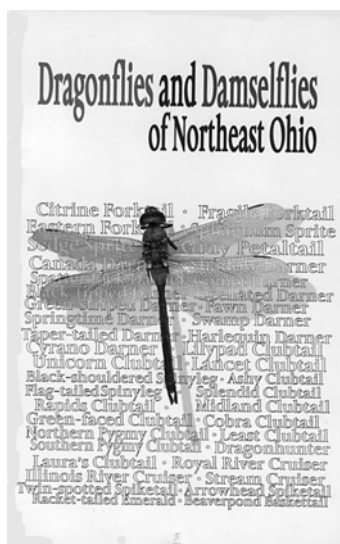
Although the illustrations are generally well-done, I do have a few criticisms. All of the dancers (*Argia*) are drawn with the abdomens cocked down at about a 45° angle, a very unnatural position (suggesting they were perhaps drawn from specimens). The terminal appendages of many of the damselflies have been grossly exaggerated, making them proportionally much larger than they are in life. Presumably this was done to emphasize the importance of this feature in identifying many species, but the effect is to give the erroneous impression that the appendages are readily visible in the field. This artifact is especially apparent (and annoying) in the forktails (*Ischnura*) and, to a somewhat lesser degree, in the bluets (*Enallagma*) and spreadwings (*Lestes*). The appendages of forktails in particular are tiny, difficult to see even in the hand, never mind from a distance of several feet in the field, and to suggest otherwise does a disservice to the novice.

The guide focuses on adult males, illustrating females only for some of the more common and conspicuous species (e.g., the skimmers (Libellulidae).

While this is certainly understandable in an introductory guide, the absence of at least a representative illustration for some females is curious and lamentable. This is especially true for female meadowhawks (*Sympetrum*) and bluets (*Enallagma*), both of which are abundant and routinely encountered but nowhere to be found in this guide. Illustrating just one representative of each, with appropriate caveats about identification, would have prevented a great deal of head-scratching among beginning odonatists. Likewise, the numerous and bewildering females of the Eastern Forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*), the source of much confusion for novices, are not shown, though they do at least receive a brief description in the species account.

These shortcomings are rather minor. On the whole, Larry Rosche and the artists are to be commended for producing a very nice guide, one which odonatists throughout the Northeast will find useful and worth adding to the bookshelf (with an extra for the field!).

Blair Nikula



2002 HUMBOLDT COURSE

Paul Brunelle's popular week-long odonata course at the Humboldt Field Research Institute in Steuben, Maine is being offered again this year. Topics to be covered include collection and taxonomic study, life stages, morphology, behavior, and distribution. Both larvae and adults will be sampled for taxonomic study and rearing. Reference specimens of larvae and adults will be available for comparative study. Determination to species using morphology and appearance will be the emphasis of lab work, with consideration given to preservation and record-keeping methods. The course will be held the week of 26 May – 1 June. The tuition for the course is \$435, with room and board available at an additional cost (we hear the food is great!). For more information contact:

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 P. O. Box 9, Steuben, ME 04680-0009
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