

# Dragonfly



GARDEN EARTH  
NATURALIST  

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ECO-SERVICE CARDS

# DRAGONFLY

FAMILY: several

ORDER: Odonata

## IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ body 3/4 - 5 inches; wingspan 5/8 - 7 1/2 inches
- ◆ large head and eyes; mandibles with sharp teeth
- ◆ thin neck allows flexible movement of head
- ◆ legs long and thin, spined; shorter forelegs
- ◆ two pairs of long membranous veined wings, sometimes colored



### Where to Look:

Dragonflies can be seen near still and running water during the day zooming back and forth above the water protecting their territory.

### Who Eats It?

The adult dragonflies are eaten by birds. The young aquatic naiads are fed upon by fish, water bugs and beetles.



### LIFE CYCLE

#### COMPLETE METAMORPHOSIS

Adults female deposits eggs in water. The aquatic, predatory young that hatch out are called naiads. When mature, the naiad climbs out of the water onto a plant and sheds its skin and spreads its wings.

### What It Eats.

Dragonflies are ferocious predators. The adults feed on flying insects and the young naiads feed on the larvae of insects like mosquitoes. Naiads will also consume tadpoles and small fish.

### Role in the Ecosystem

As predators, dragonflies play an important role in controlling populations of insect pests such as mosquitoes.



### Did You Know

Dragonflies were among the first flying insects. In dinosaur times some had wingspans of close to 30 inches.