



Delta Discovery

Connecting Classrooms to Nature at the
Nueces Delta Preserve

Dragonfly



Fast Facts:

Scientific name: *Order Odonata*

Common name: Dragonflies & Damselflies

Habitat: *Variety, usually near water*

Fun fact: *Dragonflies with a two foot wing span have been found in fossil records*

Spotlight on a Species

Fact sheets discussing species found on the Nueces Delta Preserve

Dragonflies are flying insects in the order Odonata (toothed one) along with the damselflies. The easiest way to distinguish between dragonflies and damselflies is to look at their wings when they are perched or resting. Only damselflies can fold their wings back to touch each other. Dragonflies rest with their wings spread, just like the pondhawk pictured above.

There are over 50 species of dragonfly and damselfly in Nueces County alone. The website Odonata Central will produce a checklist for other counties. All dragonflies are predators and consume smaller flying insects such as mosquitoes and gnats. Dragonflies use their feet to catch their prey. One study found that dragonflies successfully eat 90% of the prey released into their enclosure.

Dragonflies lay eggs in water and some species larval stage can last up to two years. Even as larva the dragonfly is carnivorous. Larvae consume tadpoles, small fish, and each other. Small insect larvae are an important component in many aquatic food webs- providing a rich diet for many animals that live there.

The largest dragonfly in the state of Texas is the giant darner, which is found primarily in west Texas. This species is the largest species in North America and flies slowly due to its large size.

Sources for Further Reading:

http://www.odonatacentral.org/index.php/ChecklistAction.showChecklist/location_id/13957 (Nueces Co.)

<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/2011/07/08/largest-texas-dragonfly/>

<http://blogs.smithsonianmag.com/science/2011/10/14-fun-facts-about-dragonflies/>