



THE BOGHAUNTER

Occasional News About the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Vermont

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From the Editor:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **THE BOGHAUNTER**, occasional news about the Odonata of Vermont. The inspiration for this modest newsletter is simply the ecology and conservation of dragonflies and damselflies. We know so little about the status of these insects in Vermont. And we can hardly protect what we don't know. As a result, I envision this newsletter as a forum for our discoveries, a conduit to share knowledge, even a celebration of these supreme insect predators. Additional inspiration comes from similar publications, including Blair Nikula's and Jackie Sones' *Ode News*, covering southern New England, and *Mainensis*, the newsletter of the Maine Damselfly and Dragonfly Survey. I can only hope to approach their high standards. To do so, I need your help. Donations to help offset printing and postage are welcome. But, more than anything, I need your contributions – words and photographs. With your articles and photos, future issues will be bigger and better, covering more topics, including a seasonal summary in the fall. **THE BOGHAUNTER** won't fly without you. I'm already looking forward to the next field season. Remember, "Good things come to those who wade."

Bryan Pfeiffer

Williamsonia fletcheri Discovered in Vermont

By Bryan Pfeiffer

I must confess to having a certain conflict of interest on the day Lori Barg and I discovered Vermont's first *Williamsonia fletcheri* (Ebony Boghaunter).

We were out in a fen on June 4, 2002, working for the Vermont Butterfly Survey, a statewide assessment of the status and relative abundance of those milder insects <www.vinsweb.org/conservation/vbs>. To be sure, I was after butterflies that day, but I had *Williamsonia* on my mind all the way.

After all, this rare species is known from limited sites in the Northeast, Great Lakes region and a few Canadian provinces. (Brunelle 2000; Kondratieff 2000; and Needham, Westfall and May 2000).

Along with its single congener, *Williamsonia lintneri* (Ringed Boghaunter), the preferred larval habitat is open pools in sphagnum bogs and fens. *W. fletcheri* was



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Williamsonia fletcheri
Ebony Boghaunter

first described nearly 80 years ago (Williamson 1923).

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Three New Damselflies Added to State List

By Michael Blust

Rutland County is not the most southwestern county in Vermont, but it does contain Vermont's "thumb." This is the region where the Poultney River becomes the border of Vermont as it widens into the lower end of Lake Champlain. The lowlands north of this region merge with the lowlands of the Hudson River valley, creating a natural corridor resulting in numerous "southern" bird sightings in Vermont. In fact, a canal connects Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. This physiographic setting makes the western section of Rutland County a fruitful area to look for species whose populations tend to be more common towards the south.

During the summer of 2002, I was fortunate enough to add three

species of Zygoptera to the Vermont State list while exploring this region: *Argia apicalis* (Blue-fronted Dancer), *Enallagma traviatum traviatum* (Slender Bluet), and *Ischnura kellicotti* (Lilypad Forktail). In addition to the three new species, this region is already the only Vermont location known for two other species of odonates, *Enallagma antennatum* and *Gomphus quadricolor*. Information on ranges is based on range information from Damselflies of North America by Westfall and May, the IORI website <www.afn.org/~iori/zyglist.html>, and Dot Map Project information from Nick Donnelly. Below is a summary of the discoveries.

Argia apicalis (Blue-fronted dancer) — Previously found in almost every state east of the Rocky Mountains except Vermont

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Ebony Boghaunter Discovered

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That *W. Fletcher* had gone undetected in Vermont until now is not surprising. Paul-Michael Brunelle reports there may be several reasons: First, the species has an early flight period – from May 11 to July 8 (Needham, Westfall and May 2000), and as a result may be most active before many researchers visit suitable sites for the species. Second, even during its peak flight period, the species may never be abundant. Some encounters involve only a single individual. Finally, *Williamsonia* sp. often stray from their natal bog or fen ponds to nearby, sunny, woodland clearings for courtship. But the probable explanation for the late discovery of this species is that few researchers were looking for it. During his Odonata survey in Vermont, Frank Carle listed both *Williamsonia* sp. as likely to occur (Carle 1994). *W. lintneri* is not yet known from Vermont.

On 4 June 2002, Lori Barg and I visited a fen my work on the Vermont Butterfly Survey. (At this point the landowner prefers that the location remain undisclosed.) Limited Odonata were flying at the site that day, including *Cordulia shurtlefferi*

(American Emerald), *Libellula julia* (Chalk-fronted Corporal), and *Leucorrhinia hudsonica* (Hudsonian White-face). The damselfly fauna was not investigated, with the exception of *Cromagrion conitum* (Aurora Damsel). Not yet flying was *Nanothemis bella* (Elfin Skimmer), which is known and common at this site later in June.

While crossing the fen in the vicinity of the pond, I noticed and netted a small Cordulid — a male *W. fletcheri*. Having obtained prior permission to secure significant voucher specimens during my butterfly work at this site, I kept the individual according to standards adopted by The Dragonfly Society of the Americas (DSA 1994). The time of capture was 1155 hrs. Ambient temperature was 71°F. Cloud cover was approximately 5 percent and wind speed was approximately 5 miles per hour. In the immediate vicinity, a portion of fen dominated by sedge species and flooded, we observed approximately five other *W. fletcheri*.

Lori and I briefly explored sun-lit portions of the woods west of the fen, finding no other *W. fletcheri*. This search was by no means comprehensive. Upon returning

to the fen, we encountered additional *W. fletcheri* in other areas, for an estimated total of 8 to 12 individuals, including a male sunning on exposed perches (photo on page 1).

The discovery of *W. fletcheri* in Vermont confirms many long-held suspicions of its presence in the state. It is likely that Vermont has other sites for *W. fletcheri*. With growing interest in Odonata in the state, perhaps this significant discovery can fuel even more interest and investigation.

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Three New Damselflies

(Continued from page 1)

and New Hampshire. Found July 9, 2002, at Cogman Pond, within a couple of hundred yards of the Poultney river.

***Enallagma traviatum traviatum* (Slender Bluet)** — Previously found in all eastern states except Vermont and Maine. New Hampshire is questionable. Not found in Canada. Subspecies *E. t. traviatum* is generally east of the Appalachians while subspecies *E. t. westfalii* occurs west of the Appalachians. Found July 9, 2002, along the Poultney River. Several tandem pairs were seen. They caught my attention in that both male and female were bluish. A tandem pair was collected (on the Vermont side of the River.)

***Ischnura kellicotti* (Lilypad Forktail)** — Another species formerly known from most of the east with the exception of Vermont and New Hampshire. This species was collected July 16, 2002, in the southern section of Lake St. Catherine, and again a day later in the lily pond at the northern end of the same lake. An emergence of *E. vesperum* (Vesper Bluet) was occurring on these dates as well.



***Argia apicalis*
Blue-fronted Dancer**

A dirt road that parallels (and gets flooded by) the Poultney River in this region is the only known Vermont location for *Gomphus quadricolor* (Rapids Clubtail). The region contains slow, sandy river and border marshes (neither of which seems ideal breeding locations for this species). Cogman Pond is an interesting site that holds much potential; it also contains a healthy population of *Perithemis tenera* (Eastern Amberwing), and Vermont's only known location for *Enallagma antennatum* (Rainbow Bluet). Lake St. Catherine, especially the lily pond at the north end, is another interesting site. While I was collecting at this site, emerging *Celetehemis eponina* (Halloween Pennant) were observed. Of course the discovery of this ode next to its exuvium on a white lilypond blossom occurred after I used up my last frame of

film!

The author thanks Nick Donnelly for confirmation on the identifications of all three of the new species, and for subspecific identification of *E. traviatum traviatum*.

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BOOK REVIEW

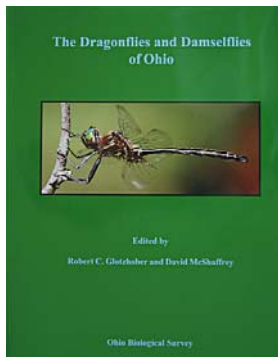
The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio

By Don H. Miller

As someone who tends to operate in an intellectual vacuum, as far as having regular direct help by mentoring, colleagues, etc., I'm always thrilled to find an excellent book on any subject of my interests. I prefer one that is well written, with good keys and illustrations, and that has a good review of the literature. *The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio*, edited by Robert Glozhober and David McShaffrey, meets the test.

The work comes in two versions: a regular bound hardback version and one with a spiral plastic binding that allows the book to open flat. With 384 pages of text, a bibliography, and informative appendixes, the book is extremely well done; indeed, I would say it comes close to being a scholarly masterpiece.

One of the book's strengths is that it draws upon various recognized experts. For example, Ken Tennesen did much of the section on the Gomphidae (Clubtails). The book is laced with superb line drawings that illustrate most of the features mentioned in the keys. A series of wonderful close-up color photographs accompany many species. Among many superb features of the book is an excellent chapter on methods of collection and preserva-



tion by Dr. Dave McShaffrey.

The discussions of the ecology of each species are arguably the best I've seen. With each species is an accompanying figure that reflects its seasonal occurrence. One can, at a glance, determine the first and last dates of record each year for a species and when each species was most frequently recorded over the season. The number of records for each species is given. This, I feel, is quite unique among any general text I've seen. The reader gets immediate information about the database for each species. Were more of us to publish data like this, regional patterns in the phenology of occurrence would become much more clear and, from these comparisons, other ecological questions could be addressed that are relevant to understanding many basic questions about the ecology and zoogeography of our odonate fauna. Field naturalists can make an immense contribution here.

As with any book, one can always find minor things to carp about. I had some difficulty in keying a specimen of *Enallagma* that was in my collection. (This may have been more me than the key?) There is no index, so it is a bit vexing to quickly track down a particular description of a species in the book. I also found, in my copy, that some of the pages

seemed to stick together a bit, as if the glue was affected by high temperatures and/or humidity. A minor problem perhaps, but still a bit annoying after shelling out 40 bucks.

In my experience, this is the only currently available book on odonates whereby the serious amateur or professional can find, under one cover, detailed information, keys, superb drawings, and literature on both damselflies and dragonflies. When I "head for the field," as we field naturalists exclaim, for odonates this book is always with me. It is no-nonsense, a gold mine of information.

We are indebted to the editors and the Ohio Survey for producing such a magnificent tome. If we had more like it, life would be more simple and enjoyable for all of us who pursue our individual interests in the world, a world about which we know practically nothing and, even worse, about which few seem to really care. We all need to strive mightily to change that attitude. Let's hope that the Green Mountain State emulates what the State of Ohio has done and continues to do with respect to educating its citizens about the world around them. In addition to the latest tome on Odonata, the Ohio Survey has produced excellent reviews of other natural history topics.

Don H. Miller is Professor Emeritus, Lyndon St. College, Science Department, Lyndonville, VT.

Yes, But Do They Wear Swimsuits?

By Chip Darmstadt

A little known fact about Montpelier, Vermont, is that it is home to the largest asphalt swimming pool in the world. This outdoor pool is only approximately 50 meters from the North Branch of the Winooski River, and happens to be a popular haunt of the elusive *Stylurus scudderii* (Zebra Clubtail).

While many residents decry the limited season of the pool, it does happen to correspond well with the flight period of *S. scudderii*. On visits to the pool in the past two years, always with family and hence without optics or net, I have observed *S. scudderii* hovering low over the pool and not infrequently landing on the heads of unsuspecting, and subsequently fear-stricken, chil-

dren. The clubtails are quite unwary of humans at the pool and, if approached slowly, a hovering *S. scudderii* will land on an outstretched hand. This made identification possible without my eyeglasses, and also resulted in some impromptu natural history lessons for anyone standing nearby. Perhaps most interesting is my observation of female *S. scudderii* ovipositing in the chlorine-laden waters of the pool. I observed at least one female releasing an egg mass directly into the water with a quick dab of her abdomen. I assume that these eggs are doomed never to hatch and, to date, I have not observed the larvae of this species (or any other species) in the pool.

Chip Darmstadt (cdarmstadt@vinsweb.org) is director of the North Branch Nature Center in Montpelier.

An Ode to Odonata Data

Where can you find *Perethemis tenera* (Eastern Amberwing) in Vermont? When do *Aeshna* swarms show up at mountain-tops? And which damselfly species prefer active beaver ponds?

We can't know much about the state's Odonata fauna until we all combine our observations. Only when we pool data can we draw conclusions about ode abundance and distribution. It's a prerequisite to conservation.

With that in mind, I'm announcing the Vermont Odonata Database. I urge folks to use the database to record vital infor-

mation about ode field observations and voucher specimens. Even noting the date and location for each observation would help. But the database allows us to record habitat preferences, water quality, behavior, shore plants, and much more.

The database is in Microsoft Access, and easy to use. I'll provide it to anyone interested (along with a tutorial). Or I'll offer a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that will also work. There's even a paper version. For more information contact Bryan Pfeiffer at (802) 454-1874 or Bryan@VermontBirdTours.com.

-Bryan Pfeiffer

THE BOGHAUNTER is an occasional newsletter about the dragonflies and damselflies of Vermont. It is available for no charge, although contributions to help offset postage and printing are welcome (\$5 per year would be plenty). To contribute (articles or money) or to subscribe, contact the editor, Bryan Pfeiffer, at:

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Ode Notes

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DSA Northeast Regional Meeting
May 23-25 / Marietta, OH
Visit www.marietta.edu/~odonata or contact mshaffd@marietta.edu for details.

DSA Annual Meeting
June 20-22 / Williams, CA
For details on the annual meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas, visit www.sonic.net/~bigsnest/DSA2003/.

Dragonfly and Butterfly Walk
June 28 / Groton State Forest / 10-3
Join Bryan Pfeiffer of Vermont Bird Tours for a look at flying jewels in varied habitats. Fee: \$25.

BOOK NOTES

Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies
By Blair Nikula and Jackie Sones
This guide is simply the finest introduction to Odonata in print. Price **\$8.95???**



UVM COLLECTION UPDATE

The Odonata collection at the University of Vermont is gradually becoming a resource for students of these insects. Most of the dragonfly (Anisoptera) specimens are labeled and arranged for easy study in insect drawers. Much of the damselfly (Zygoptera) collection still needs to be determined to species. Identification work on the collection is a long-term project. To visit the collection or help identify species, contact Bryan Pfeiffer at (802) 454-1874 or Bryan@VermontBirdTours.com or Ross Bell, professor emeritus of zoology, at (802) ???-???? or Ross.Bell@uvm.edu.

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