

Damselfly groups—



American Rubyspot



Vivid Dancer



Boreal Bluet "wheel"



Plains Forktail



Great Spreadwing

Checklist of Damselflies

Broad-winged damselflies
 American Rubyspot

Spreadwings
 Great Spreadwing
 Spotted Spreadwing
 Northern Spreadwing
 Lyre-tipped Spreadwing

Pond damselflies
 Vivid dancer
 Double-striped Bluet
 Boreal Bluet
 Tule Bluet
 Familiar Bluet
 Alkali Bluet
 Northern Bluet
 Plains Forktail
 Western Forktail

Hint: Spreadwings hold their wings at about 45 degrees to the body. Bluets hold their wings parallel over their abdomens. Dancers hold their wings slightly raised over their abdomens.

Books

Common Dragonflies of the Southwest: A Beginner's Pocket Guide
 Kathy Biggs

Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies
 Blair Nikula, Jackie Sones, Donald & Lillian Stokes

Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West
 Dennis Paulson

Websites

<http://www.boulderaudubon.org/dragonflies.htm> — for common local species

<http://www.odonatacentral.org/> — for country-wide information



Dragonflies and damselflies have exoskeletons and must shed to grow. They do this several times as larvae in the water. The final molt (shedding) happens when water-based larvae crawl out onto a stem, twig or rock, split out of their tooth-tight shells, and become flying adults. It takes a while for them to become strong fliers and newly-hatched (teneral) are fragile and vulnerable—easy prey!

Look for dragonfly and damselfly hatch cases on cattails, twigs, handy trees, the boardwalk and fishing piers at Walden Ponds.



Boulder County Parks
 and Open Space

Common Dragonflies of



Walden Ponds

Twelve-spotted Skimmer

Dragonflies and damselflies are insects in the order Odonata, or "toothed ones." They are fierce predators, both as larvae growing in the water and adults after they emerge. They are told apart by these features:

Dragonflies

Sturdy, strong fliers
 Perch with wings out to side (see picture above)
 Front and hind wings a different shape
 Eyes touch, or nearly touch, at top of head

Damselflies

Delicate, weak fliers
 Perch with wings folded over abdomen
 Front and hind wings the same shape
 Eyes separated by gap—a "dumbbell" look



"Toothed ones" - the jaws of a dragonfly larva!

Dragonfly groups—

Darners . . . strong fliers that rarely perch



In a “mating wheel, a male clasps the female’s head with tip of his abdomen while the female reaches with her abdomen to collect sperm from underneath his second segment. This leads to the heart-shaped arrangement seen to the left.

Paddle-tailed Darners in a “wheel”



Common Green Darners “in tandem”

Many species, like these green darners above, stay in tandem, with the male guarding his mate while she lays eggs. This is one way he ensures the offspring are his!

Clubtails . . .



Pale Snaketail

Emeralds . . .



Dot-winged Baskettail

Checklist of Dragonflies

Darners

- Variable Darner
- Paddle-tailed Darner
- Blue-eyed Darner
- Common Green Darner

Clubtails

- Pale Snaketail
- Sulphur-tipped Clubtail
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Emerald

- Dot-winged Baskettail
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Skimmers

- Calico Pennant
- Halloween Pennant M/F
- Western Pondhawk
- Dot-tailed Whiteface
- Widow Skimmer
- Twelve-spotted Skimmer
- Four-spotted Skimmer
- Blue Dasher
- Eastern Amberwing
- Common Whitetail
- Variegated Meadowhawk
- White-faced Meadowhawk
- Striped Meadowhawk
- Band-winged Meadowhawk
- Autumn Meadowhawk M/F
- Black Saddlebags
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-

Skimmers mostly perchers and easier to watch!



Calico Pennants

Males and females of many dragonfly and damselfly species may vary greatly in looks.

In some cases, you could easily mistake the different sexes as entirely different species.

The male and female “versions” of the Calico and Halloween Pennants, Western Pondhawk, Widow Skimmer, and Common Whitetail are unlike each other.

One way to learn these variations is to watch carefully mating pairs—wheels and tandems—to see who goes together.



Widow Skimmer male



Common Whitetail male



Blue Dasher



Eastern Amberwing



Western Pondhawk male



Dot-tailed Whiteface



Autumn Meadowhawks



Black Saddlebags