

Dragonflies and damselflies have a three-stage life cycle, consisting of egg, larva, and adult stages. After mating, females lay eggs quickly. Female damselflies and some dragonflies (darners, petaltails) have blade-like ovipositors which they use to insert eggs into vegetation and rotting wood. Females of all other dragonflies lack ovipositors and lay eggs directly into the water or splash them onto the shoreline. Eggs typically hatch within a few days to many months, depending on the species.



Common Green Darner

Upon hatching, the odonate larva begins its predatory life. The larval diet is composed of aquatic insects and their larvae, worms, basically anything that can be subdued, including tadpoles and small fish. As the larvae grow they must shed their exoskeleton many times. As with all insects, the period between molts are known as an instar.

The number of instars varies among species and usually number a dozen or more.

Once larval growth is complete, the larva exits the water and sheds its exoskeleton one last



Powdered Dancer

time to become an adult. The main prey of adults includes small flies, leafhoppers, and other insects, including other odonates.

While busy searching for mates and food, odonates must avoid being eaten themselves. Birds, fish, spiders, and other odonates are the main threats to adults.



Variegated Meadowhawk

Larvae are eaten by fish, reptiles, amphibians, aquatic beetles, and other odonate larvae.

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American Rubyspot



Familial Bluet

Photographs
 courtesy of
 Michael Bogan



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Dragonflies along the Santa Cruz River



Flame Skimmer



Blue Ringed Dancer



Desert Firetail

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Dragons and Damsels at a Glance

The Order Odonata is divided into two suborders – Dragonflies (Anisoptera) and damselflies (Zygoptera). Odonates are characterized by two pairs of many-veined wings, chewing mouthparts throughout the life cycle, predatory habits, large eyes, and small antennae. The two groups are very different in appearance despite their close relationship.



Mexican Amberwing

Dragonflies in general are large, robust insects, the hind wings are broader than the fore wings and rest with the wings outstretched.



Neotropical Bluet

Damselflies are generally smaller, delicate looking insects that have both pairs of wings similar in shape and rest with the wings folded above or alongside the abdomen.



Roseate Skimmer

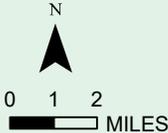
Dragonflies dazzle us with their unparalleled flying abilities, striking colors, and interesting behaviors.

Visit any pond, lake, marsh, stream, or river to observe these masters of the aerial realm. Dragonflies help control biting insects, such as mosquitoes and midges, and pose no threat to people at all.

PLACES TO VIEW DRAGONFLIES ON THE SANTA CRUZ

- 1** Historic Canoa Ranch
- 2** Heritage Project (Silverlake to Congress)
- 3** Mission Garden
- 4** Sweetwater Wetlands Park
- 5** Crossroads at Silverbell District Park
- 6** Twin Peaks Bridge (park on Tiffany Loop)
- 7** El Rio Preserve
- 8** Sanders Road Bridge

-  Reaches flowing with recycled water
-  Water Reclamation Facility



1 26 miles south

