

Massachusetts Animals - Dragonfly

Facts at a Glance

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Insect

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Libellula forensis

FOUND WHERE

All across the continental North America

HEIGHT/LENGTH

1.4 – 1.9 in. (36 – 48 mm)

WEIGHT

Incredibly light animals, only about 2- 3 g

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



Small, agile fliers that live up to their namesake – dragonflies are easily identifiable by their distinctly segmented and almost scaly-looking bodies. Dragonflies are slender yet heavy-bodied and come in a variety of colors depending on their species. There are more than 2,000 + species worldwide. One of the most common species to New England is the eastern pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*), known for its powdery bluish-grey or bold green body. Most dragonflies have slightly iridescent and translucent wings that are held flat away from the body, unless in flight. They are predators, truly acting as tiny dragons.

HABITAT

Dragonflies, like the eastern pondhawk, can be found all across the globe with the exception of Antarctica. Pondhawks are commonly found across Massachusetts and the eastern United States. They are a widespread species and can commonly be found resting on vegetation near water.

DIET

Dragonflies live up to their namesake, the dragon, by being small, yet masterful aerial hunters. They prey on a large variety of insects, including midges, mosquitoes, moths, butterflies, and smaller dragonflies or damselflies.

Unlike the dragons of fairy tales - Dragonflies are of no risk to humans. In fact, a healthy dragonfly population is beneficial to humans as they commonly keep pests, such as mosquitoes, subdued!

LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

Like many insects, dragonflies start their lives as larvae in water. The young, often known as nymphs or naiads, grow in the water, feeding on aquatic insects until they are mature enough to crawl onto land and, eventually, take flight. Males and females generally differ in color. Males will aggressively defend their territories near the water's edge. Yet, a healthy dragonfly population generally means healthy waterways.

FUN FACT

Dragonflies have acute eyesight and can see faster than humans.

On average, humans see about 60 images per second, while dragonflies see about *200 images per second*. This makes the world look almost in slow motion!