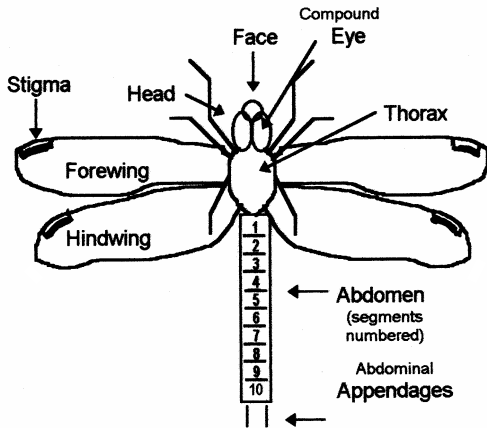


## SELECTED HOWARD COUNTY ODONATES

Insects of the Order *Odonata*, the odonates, often are seen by the naturalist in the field, especially around water. The order consists of *damselflies* and *dragonflies*.



**Damselflies** hold their wings together above the body. (Some species keep the wings partly open.) They are generally smaller than dragonflies and tend to stay down in the grass or emergent vegetation.

**Dragonflies** have hindwings that are broader at the base than the forewings. Compared to damselflies, they are generally larger, more colorful, more robust, and easier to spot. At rest, dragonflies hold their wings more horizontally outstretched. Their eyes are enormous, covering most of the head. Most of the odonates identifiable on the wing are dragonflies.

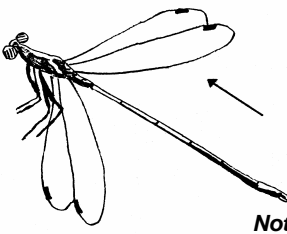
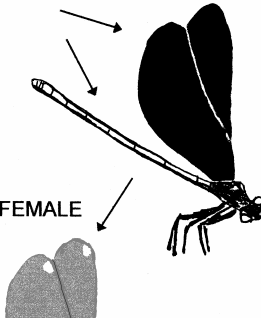
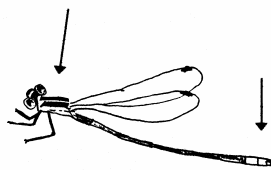
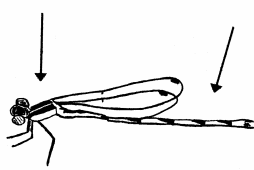
Like other insects, the odonate body consists of a **head**, **thorax**, and **abdomen**. Parts of the anatomy that are important for identification are shown in the illustration to the left. (These terms are used in the descriptions of the odonates in this guide.)

### Damselfly body length

Large (1.8-2.6 in.)

Medium (1.2-1.8 in.)

Small (0.8-1.2 in.)

DAMSELFLIES	
 <p><b>Spreadwings</b> <i>Lestes</i> sp. Medium to Large <b>May - Nov</b> <b>Male:</b> Thorax: some have visible stripes. Abdomen: dark, may have metallic reflections. <b>Habitat:</b> Usually in vegetation along pond edges, flying only when disturbed. <b>Note</b> narrow stalked wings PARTLY OPEN AT REST.</p>	 <p><b>Ebony Jewelwing</b> <i>Calopteryx maculata</i> Large (1.5-2.2 in.) <b>May - Sep</b> <b>Male:</b> Abdomen: metallic GREEN/BLUE. Wings: BLACK. <b>Female:</b> Wings: BROWN, often with dark tips. Stigmas: WHITE. <b>Habitat:</b> Running water with forested/ brushy edge.</p>
 <p><b>Violet Dancer</b> <i>Argia fumipennis violacea</i> Medium (1.1-1.3 in.) <b>May - Oct</b> <b>Male:</b> Head, Face, Thorax: PURPLE. Abdomen: purple-violet except seg 8-10 powdery BLUE. <b>Female:</b> Dark brown/dull purple. Abdomen: seg 8-10 PALE. <b>Habitat:</b> Streams &amp; pond edges.</p>	 <p><b>Dancers &amp; Bluets</b> <i>Argia &amp; Enallagma</i> sp. Small to Medium <b>May - Nov</b> <b>Male:</b> Many have BLUE/ turquoise thoraxes with BLACK stripes &amp; BLUE/ turquoise abdomens with BLACK marks. <b>Female:</b> Varies with species. <b>Habitat:</b> Often in great numbers skimming surface of ponds &amp; lakes. <b>Note:</b> Most species can't be identified on the wing.</p>

**Visual identification** of dragonflies through binoculars or at close range is based on certain key features. (Many damselflies are not easily identifiable to species through binoculars except as shown above.)

1. Color of **abdomen** & any pattern of spots or rings; any constructions or swellings. The abdomen may show **pruinescence** (a blue or white bloom developing with age).
2. Color & pattern (spots or bands) of **wings**.
3. Color of **thorax** & any pattern of spots & stripes on top & sides.
4. Color & size of **eyes**. Eyes show color in *sun* but seldom in *shade*.
- 5.

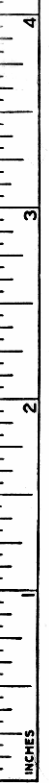
### Dragonfly body length:

Medium (1.8-2.6")

Large (2.6-3.3")

Small (1.2-1.8")

Tiny (0.8-1.0")



**Dragonhunter**

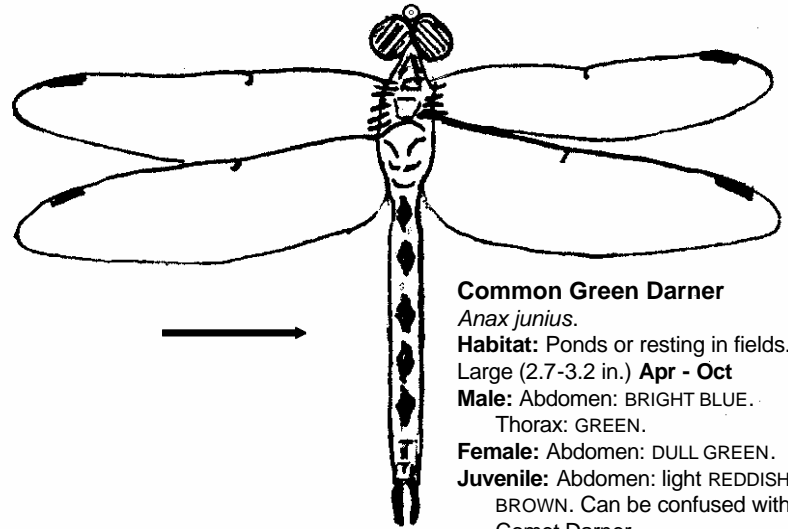
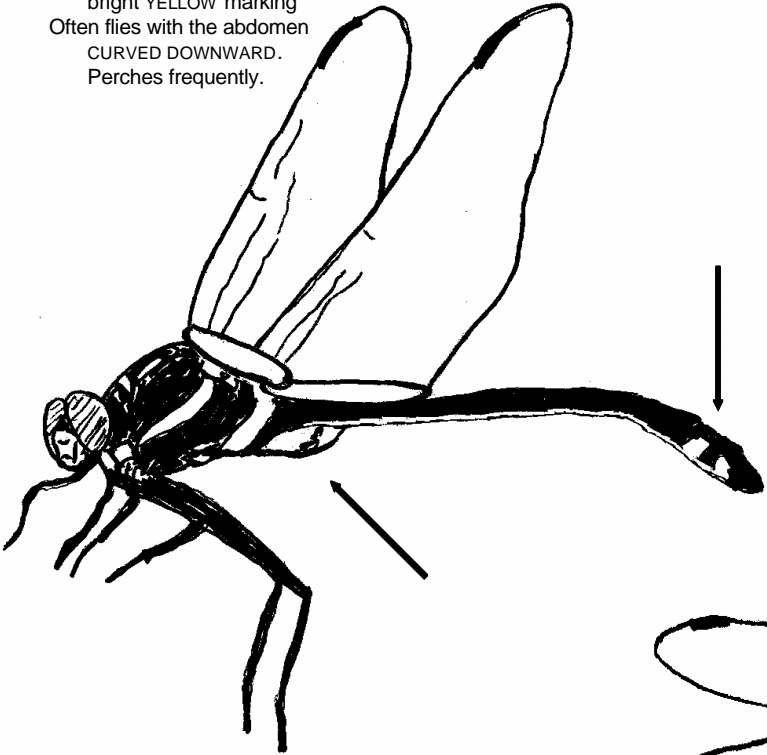
*Hagenius brevistylus*

**Habitat:** Rivers, streams, and adjacent fields

Very Large (3.0-3.4 in.)

**Jun - Aug**

Eyes: green. Thorax & Abdomen: BLACK with bright YELLOW marking  
Often flies with the abdomen CURVED DOWNWARD.  
Perches frequently.



**Common Green Darner**

*Anax junius*.

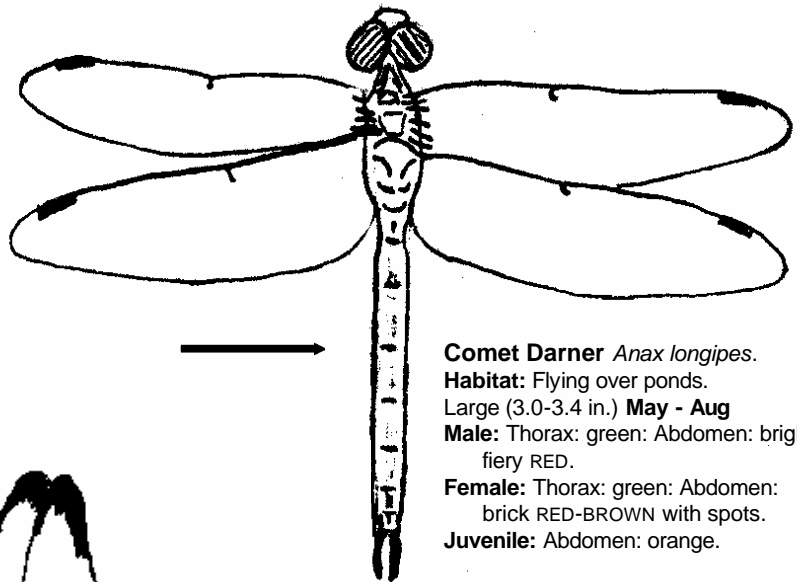
**Habitat:** Ponds or resting in fields.

Large (2.7-3.2 in.) **Apr - Oct**

**Male:** Abdomen: BRIGHT BLUE. Thorax: GREEN.

**Female:** Abdomen: DULL GREEN.

**Juvenile:** Abdomen: light REDDISH-BROWN. Can be confused with Comet Darner



**Comet Darner** *Anax longipes*.

**Habitat:** Flying over ponds.

Large (3.0-3.4 in.) **May - Aug**

**Male:** Thorax: green: Abdomen: bright fiery RED.

**Female:** Thorax: green: Abdomen: brick RED-BROWN with spots.

**Juvenile:** Abdomen: orange.

**Common Baskettail**

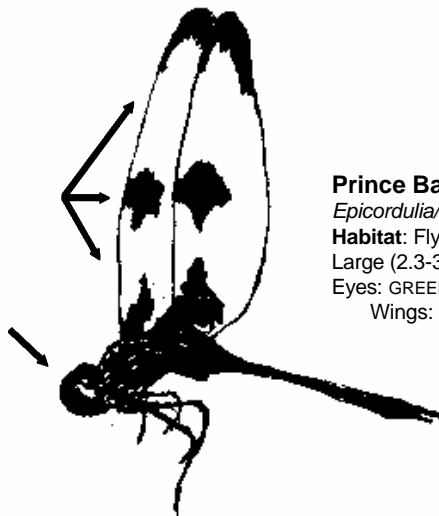
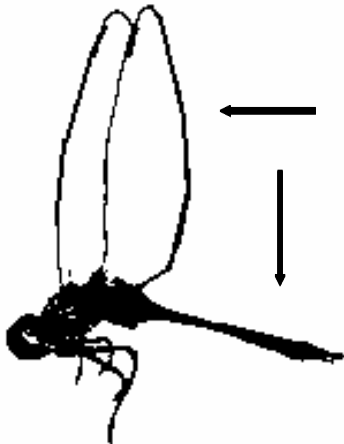
*Tetragoneuria/Epitheca cynosura* (var. *simulans*)

**Habitat:** Flying over ponds, slow-moving streams; may perch on shore vegetation

Medium (1.5-1.7 in.)

**Apr - Jun**

Abdomen: DARK  
Wings: CLEAR



**Prince Baskettail**

*Epicordulia/Epitheca princeps*

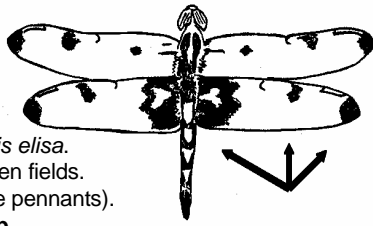
**Habitat:** Flying over ponds; seldom perches.

Large (2.3-3.1 in.) **May - Sep**

Eyes: GREEN. Abdomen: DARK (with narrow yellow rings)

Wings: variable BLACK SPOTS at base, middle, & tips

ALL DRAWINGS ARE LIFE SIZE



**Calico Pennant** *Celithemis elisa*.

**Habitat:** Weedy ponds & open fields.

At rest, *wings flutter* (like pennants).

Small (1.1-1.3 in.) **May - Sep**

**Male:** Abdomen: jet black, red spots on top. Forewing & Hindwing: 3 DARK RED SPOTS. Stigmas: *bright red*.

**Female:** YELLOWISH instead of red. Stigmas: pale yellow.



**Halloween Pennant** *Celithemis eponina*.

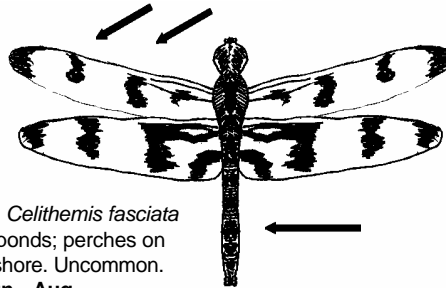
**Habitat:** Ponds, marshes, & adjacent fields.

At rest, *wings flutter* (like pennants).

Medium (1.4-1.7 in.) **Jun - Sep**

**Male:** Wings: ORANGE with brown spots/bands. Stigmas: RED.

**Female:** YELLOWISH instead of orange. Stigmas: pale yellow.



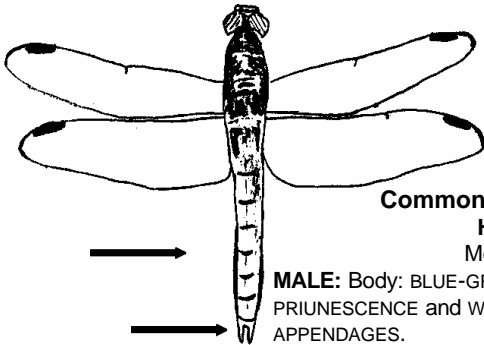
**Banded Pennant** *Celithemis fasciata*

**Habitat:** Marshes & ponds; perches on vegetation near shore. Uncommon.

Small (1.1-1.5 in.) **Jun - Aug**

Abdomen: BLACK (dark blue)

Wings: BLACK SPOTS/bands (variable)



**Common Pondhawk** *Erythemis simplicicollis*.

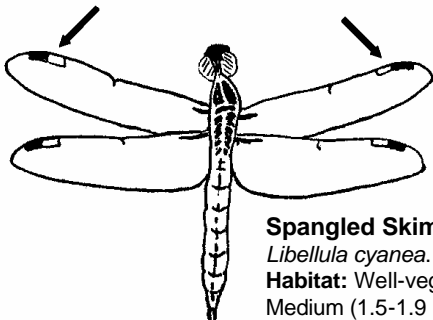
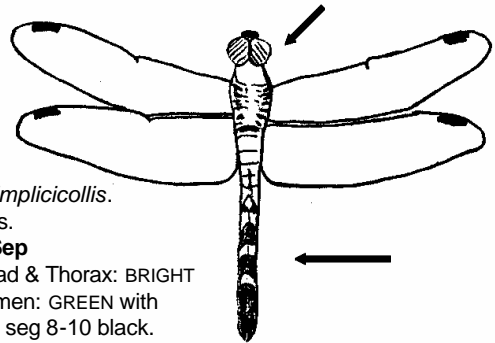
**Habitat:** Ponds & shorelines.

Medium (1.4-2.0 in.) **May - Sep**

**MALE:** Body: BLUE-GRAY PRIUNESCENCE and WHITE APPENDAGES.

**FEMALE:** Head & Thorax: BRIGHT GREEN. Abdomen: GREEN with BLACK SPOTS, seg 8-10 black.

**Note:** Immature male is similar to female. MALES of Common Pondhawk & Blue Dasher are similar!



**Spangled Skimmer**

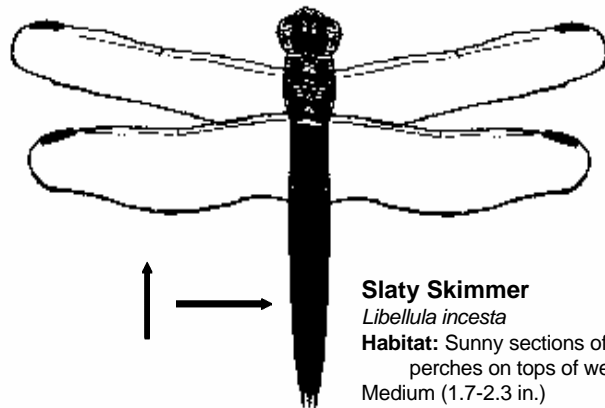
*Libellula cyanea*.

**Habitat:** Well-vegetated ponds.

Medium (1.5-1.9 in.) **May - Aug**

**Male:** Face: BLACK. Thorax & Abdomen: dark blue priunescence. Stigmas: BICOLORED black & white.

**Female:** Abdomen: YELLOW & BROWN. Stigmas: BICOLORED.



**Slaty Skimmer**

*Libellula incesta*

**Habitat:** Sunny sections of ponds; perches on tops of weeds & twigs

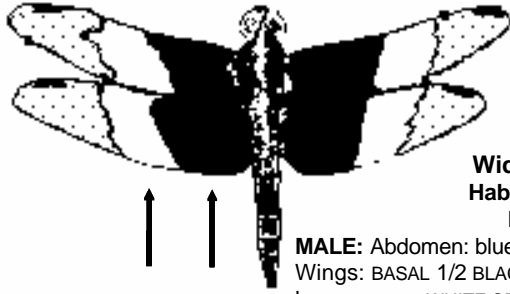
Medium (1.7-2.3 in.)

**May - Sep**

Abdomen: BLACK (slate-colored)

Wings: CLEAR (or black streaks)

ALL DRAWINGS ARE LIFE SIZE



**Widow Skimmer** *Libellula luctuosa*.

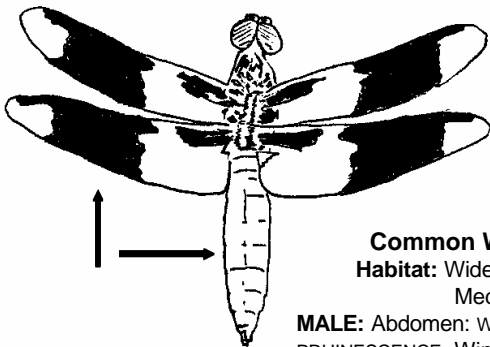
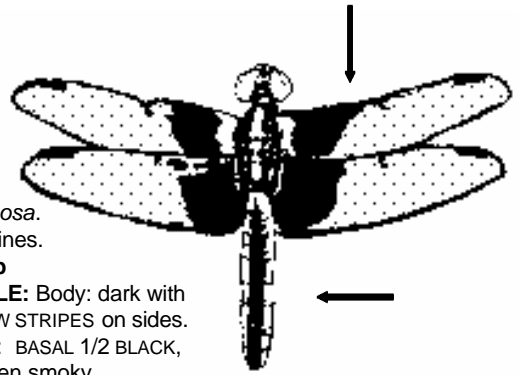
**Habitat:** Ponds, marshes & shorelines.

Medium (1.7-2.0 in.) **Jun - Sep**

**MALE:** Abdomen: blue or dark.  
Wings: BASAL 1/2 BLACK, then large opaque WHITE SPOTS; tips clear.

**FEMALE:** Body: dark with YELLOW STRIPES on sides.  
Wings: BASAL 1/2 BLACK, tips often smoky.

**Note:** Immature male is similar to female.



**Common Whitetail** *Plathemis/Libellula lydia*.

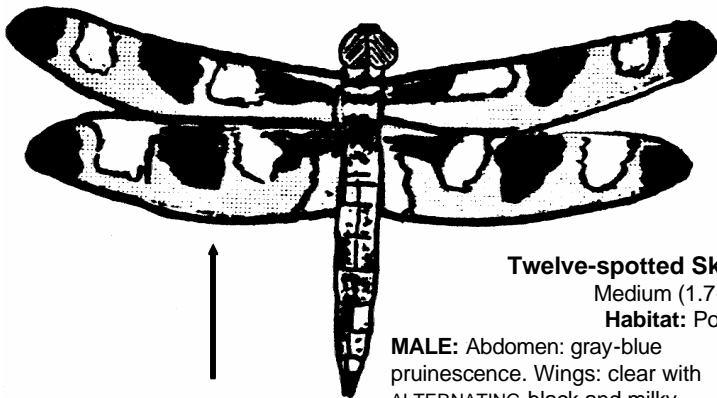
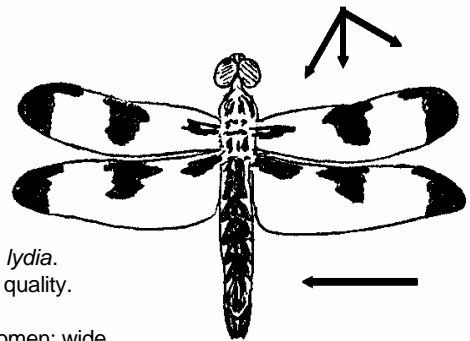
**Habitat:** Wide variety. Tolerates poor water quality.

Medium (1.7-1.9 in.) **Apr - Oct**

**MALE:** Abdomen: WHITE  
PRUINESCENCE. Wings: middle 1/3 is DARK.

**FEMALE:** Abdomen: wide, brown with lateral yellow (or white) SPOTS. Wings: 3 black SPOTS on each.

**Note:** FEMALES of Common Whitetail, Twelve-Spotted Skimmer & Painted Skimmer are similar!



**Twelve-spotted Skimmer** *Libellula pulchella*.

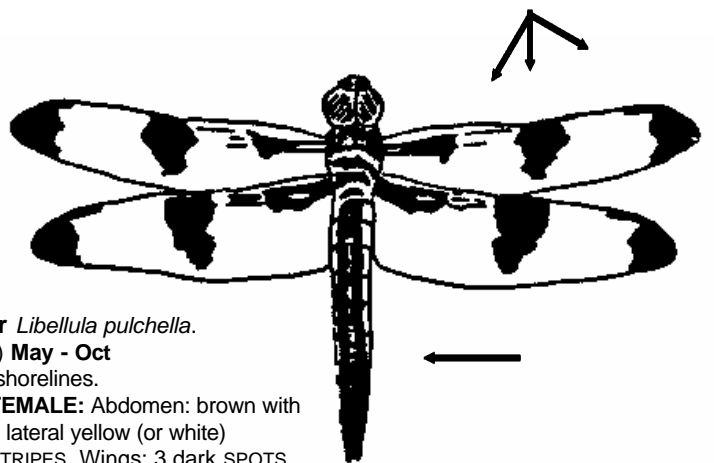
Medium (1.7-2.5 in.) **May - Oct**

**Habitat:** Ponds & shorelines.

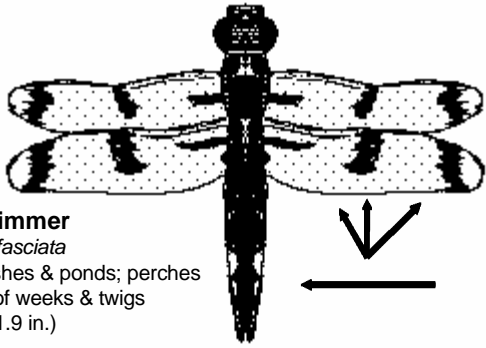
**MALE:** Abdomen: gray-blue  
pruinescence. Wings: clear with ALTERNATING black and milky white SPOTS (10 white, 12 black).

**FEMALE:** Abdomen: brown with 2 lateral yellow (or white) STRIPES. Wings: 3 dark SPOTS on each.

**Note:** FEMALES of Common Whitetail, Twelve-Spotted Skimmer & Painted Skimmer are similar!



ALL DRAWINGS ARE LIFE SIZE



**Painted Skimmer**

*Libellula semifasciata*

**Habitat:** Marshes & ponds; perches on tops of weeds & twigs

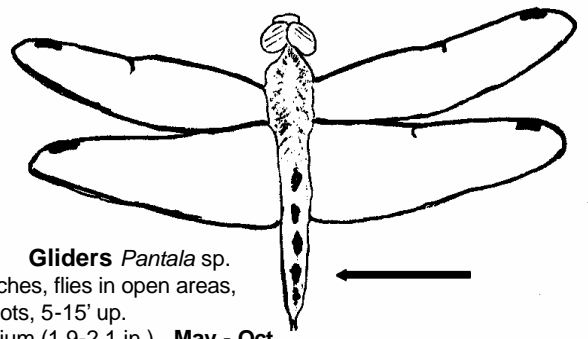
Medium (1.4-1.9 in.)

**May - Aug**

Abdomen: DARK with ORANGE lateral spots

Wings: gold tinge with AMBER spots.

**Note:** FEMALES of Common Whitetail, Twelve-spotted Skimmer & Painted Skimmer are similar!



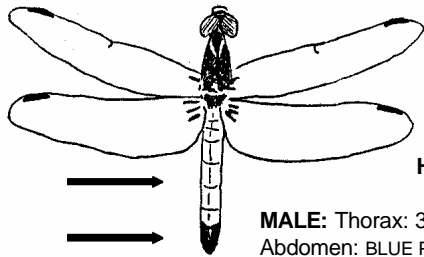
**Gliders** *Pantala* sp.

**Habitat:** Seldom perches, flies in open areas, including parking lots, 5-15' up.

WIDE WINGS. Medium (1.9-2.1 in.) **May - Oct**

**Wandering G.** (*P. flavescens*): Abdomen: GOLDEN YELLOW.

**Spot-winged G.** (*P. hymenaea*): Eyes: RED-BROWN. Abdomen: RED-BROWN; brown spots at base of hindwing (not easily seen).



**Blue Dasher** *Pachydiplax longipennis*.

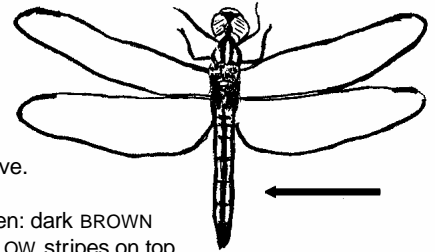
**Habitat:** Weedy water. Often seen perching. Aggressive.

Small/Medium (1.1-1.8 in.) **May - Sep**

**MALE:** Thorax: 3 brown stripes.

Abdomen: BLUE PRUNESCENCE and BLACK tip; amber in wings.

**Note:** MALES of Eastern Pondhawk & Blue Dasher are similar!



**FEMALE:** Abdomen: dark BROWN with 2 broken YELLOW stripes on top.

**Eastern Amberwing** *Perithemis tenera*.

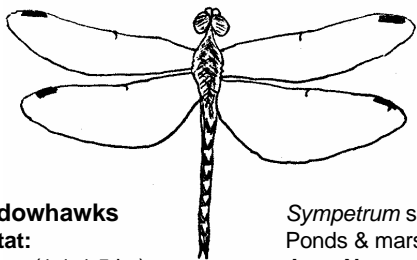
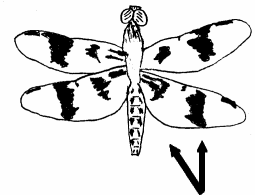
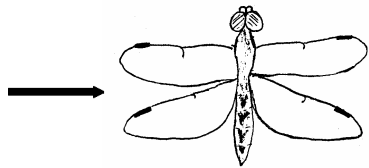
Tiny (0.8-1.0 in.) **May - Oct**

**Habitat:** Still waters; perches on tips of weeds & floating vegetation close to water's surface.

Tolerates poor water quality.

**MALE:** Thorax & Abdomen: brown. Wings: ORANGE.

**FEMALE:** Thorax & Abdomen: like male (but abdomen has yellow markings on top). Wings: BROWN spots on CLEAR wings.



**Meadowhawks**

**Habitat:**

Medium (1.1-1.5 in.)

**Male:** Abdomen: RED on top with BLACK markings.

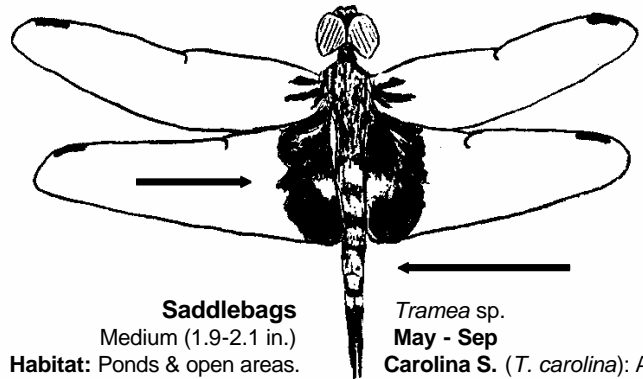
**Female:** Usually BROWNER.

**Note:** Several species. Ruby (*S. rubicundulum*) & Autumn (*S. vicinum*) have different leg color. Blue-faced (*S. ambiguum*) has blue face. Band-winged (*S. semicinctum*) has large brown/amber spots at base of wings.

*Sympetrum* sp.

Ponds & marshes.

**Jun - Nov**



**Saddlebags**

Medium (1.9-2.1 in.)

**Habitat:** Ponds & open areas.

**Black S.** (*T. lacerata*): Abdomen: BLACK. Hindwings: BLACK basal spot on clear wing.

*Tramea* sp.

**May - Sep**

**Carolina S.** (*T. carolina*): Abdomen: RED, seg 8-10 BLACK. Hindwings: dark REDDISH basal spot on clear wing.

## Selected Howard County Odonates

### BROAD-WINGED DAMSELS

05/11 09/21 Ebony Jewelwing (*Calopteryx maculata*)

### DARNERS

03/15 11/09 Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*)

05/22 08/30 Comet Darner (*Anax longipes*)

### CLUBTAILS

06/02 09/02 Dragonhunter (*Hagenius brevistylus*)

### EMERALDS

05/29 09/03 Prince Baskettail (*Epicordulia princeps*)

04/17 06/30 Common Baskettail (*Tetragoneuria/Epitheca cynosura*)

### SKIMMERS

05/10 10/05 Calico Pennant (*Celithemis elisa*)

06/17 10/08 Halloween Pennant (*Celithemis eponina*)

06/08 08/11 Banded Pennant (*Celithemis fasciata*)

05/15 10/12 Commonawlk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*)

### (SKIMMERS)

05/14 08/23 Spangled Skimmer (*Libellula cyanea*)

05/23 09/21 Slaty Skimmer (*Libellula incesta*)

05/20 10/08 Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*)

05/11 10/17 Twelve-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula pulchella*)

04/29 08/28 Painted Skimmer (*Libellula semifasciata*)

05/10 10/13 Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*)

05/08 10/26 Wandering Glider (*Pantala flavescens*)

05/16 10/07 Spot-winged Glider (*Pantala hymenaea*)

05/13 10/07 Eastern Amberwing (*Perithemis tenera*)

04/17 10/21 Common Whitetail (*Plathemis/Libellula lydia*)

06/01 10/30 Ruby Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum rubicundulum*)

06/21 12/06 Autumn Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum vicinum*)

04/19 10/13 Carolina Saddlebags (*Tramea carolina*)

05/02 10/07 Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*)

Numbers expected to be seen daily:  
(in correct habitat)

— 1-5 (rare to uncommon)	= 6-50 (common)	≡ 51+ (abundant)
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MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Name
		≡	≡	≡	≡	≡				<b>Ebony Jewelwing</b> <i>Calopteryx maculata</i> <b>Dragonhunter</b> <i>Hagenius brevistylus</i>
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Common Green Darner</b> <i>Anax junius</i> <b>Comet Darner</b> <i>Anax longipes</i>
		—	—	—	—	—				<b>Prince Baskettail</b> <i>Epicordulia princeps</i> <b>Common Baskettail</b> <i>Tetragoneuria cynosura</i>
	—	—	—	—	—	—				<b>Calico Pennant</b> <i>Celithemis elisa</i> <b>Halloween Pennant</b> <i>Celithemis eponina</i>
		—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Banded Pennant</b> <i>Celithemis fasciata</i> <b>Common Pondhawk</b> <i>Erythemis simplicicollis</i>
		—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Spangled Skimmer</b> <i>Libellula cyanea</i> <b>Slaty Skimmer</b> <i>Libellula incesta</i>
		—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Widow Skimmer</b> <i>Libellula luctuosa</i> <b>Twelve-spotted Skimmer</b> <i>Libellula pulchella</i> <b>Painted Skimmer</b> <i>Libellula semifasciata</i>
		—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Blue Dasher</b> <i>Pachydiplax longipennis</i>
		—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Wandering Glider</b> <i>Pantala flavescens</i> <b>Spot-winged Glider</b> <i>Pantala hymenaea</i>
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Eastern Amberwing</b> <i>Perithemis tenera</i> <b>Common Whitetail</b> <i>Plathemis lydia</i>
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		<b>Ruby Meadowhawk</b> <i>Sympetrum rubicundulum</i> <b>Autumn Meadowhawk</b> <i>Sympetrum vicinum</i>
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			<b>Carolina Saddlebags</b> <i>Tramea carolina</i> <b>Black Saddlebags</b> <i>Tramea lacerata</i>

Howard County Phenograms from 1996-2004 records by Jo & Bob Solem, et al; compiled by Bob Solem.