

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

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Left to right: female widow skimmer; male widow skimmer; American rubspot damselfly. Photos by Kathie Bowers, Kabby Photography.

Dragonflies and Damselflies (*Odonata order*)

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Dragonflies were the first insects to evolve around 300 million years ago. They are meat eaters, which means they predominantly eat other smaller insects. As such, they are great for controlling other insects such as mosquitoes.

Dragonflies are born in water and can spend anywhere from one to three years living in a larval stage. When they finally come out, they typically only live a few months while they breed. Since they lay their eggs in water, streams and ponds are the best places to find dragonflies. Because they need the heat of the sun to get their energy, they will tend to perch in a sunny area.

It is easy to confuse dragonflies and damselflies. The quickest way to tell them apart is to observe them at rest. As you can see in the photos above, the wings of the dragonfly will be spread out whereas the wings of the damselfly will be behind and above the main body.

To learn more, visit [the Ohio Division of Wildlife's Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ohio Field Guide](#).

FUN FACTS

- Some dragonflies, such as the Green Darner, can be so dense when they migrate that they will show up on weather radar.
- If you see a dragonfly perched (usually in the sun) and it flies off, stay still and wait. It very well might come back to that same perch.
- Dragonflies grab their prey with their feet while they are flying. They may then take a rest on a perch to feed.
- In many cases, the female and male have different coloring on their wings or bodies as can be seen by the Widow Skimmer photos above.