

Photo Description



A dragonfly sits on a piece of wood with its big blue eyes and clear wings. The dragonfly has a long, thin body with yellow and black stripes. You can see its four wings spread out from its body.

Scientific Phenomena

This image shows the anchoring phenomenon of insect adaptation for survival. The dragonfly demonstrates specialized body structures that help it survive in its environment. Its large compound eyes provide excellent vision for hunting prey and avoiding predators. The four wings allow for incredible flight maneuvers, including hovering and flying backwards. The streamlined body reduces air resistance during flight, while the striped coloration may provide camouflage or warning signals to other animals.

Core Science Concepts

1. Animal Body Parts and Functions: Dragonflies have specialized structures like compound eyes for seeing, wings for flying, and strong legs for catching prey.
2. Adaptation for Survival: The dragonfly's body parts help it survive by finding food, escaping danger, and moving through its environment.
3. Life Cycles: Dragonflies undergo complete metamorphosis, starting as aquatic nymphs before transforming into flying adults.
4. Habitat Requirements: Dragonflies need both water (for reproduction) and air (for adult life), showing how animals depend on their environment.

Pedagogical Tip:

Use the "See-Think-Wonder" thinking routine when introducing this image. Have students observe what they see, think about what's happening, and wonder about questions they have. This builds scientific inquiry skills.

UDL Suggestions:

Provide magnifying glasses for students to examine real dragonfly images or specimens up close. Create tactile models of dragonfly body parts using pipe cleaners and cellophane for students who benefit from hands-on learning experiences.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

Zoom In: The dragonfly's compound eyes contain thousands of individual lenses called ommatidia. Each tiny lens captures a small piece of the visual picture, which the dragonfly's brain combines to create a mosaic-like view of the world with incredible motion detection.

Zoom Out: Dragonflies are important predators in freshwater ecosystems, controlling mosquito populations and serving as food for birds, fish, and spiders. Their presence indicates healthy wetland environments, making them important indicator species for ecosystem health.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think a dragonfly's large eyes help it survive in its environment? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
2. What would happen to a dragonfly if all the ponds and streams in its habitat dried up? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
3. Compare the dragonfly's wings to a bird's wings - how are they similar and different? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
4. Why might having four separate wings be better for a dragonfly than having two wings like a butterfly? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: "Dragonflies are harmful and will sting people."
Reality: Dragonflies cannot sting humans and are actually beneficial because they eat mosquitoes and other pests.
2. Misconception: "All insects have the same body parts."
Reality: While all insects have three body segments and six legs, they have different specialized parts like dragonflies' four wings versus butterflies' two pairs of different-sized wings.
3. Misconception: "Dragonflies live their whole lives flying around."
Reality: Dragonflies spend most of their lives (up to several years) as aquatic nymphs underwater before becoming flying adults for just a few months.

NGSS Connections

- Performance Expectation: 3-LS4-3. Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.
- Disciplinary Core Ideas: 3-LS4.C Environmental Changes, 3-LS1.B Growth and Development of Organisms
- Crosscutting Concepts: Structure and Function, Cause and Effect

Science Vocabulary

- * Compound eyes: Special eyes made of many tiny lenses that help see movement very well
- * Adaptation: A body part or behavior that helps an animal survive in its environment
- * Predator: An animal that hunts and eats other animals for food
- * Metamorphosis: The process of changing from one life stage to another, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly
- * Habitat: The natural place where an animal lives and finds everything it needs to survive

External Resources

- Children's Books:
- Dragonfly by Bianca Lavies

- Are You a Dragonfly? by Judy Allen
- Dragonflies by Gail Gibbons

YouTube Videos:

- "Dragonfly Life Cycle" - Educational video showing the complete metamorphosis from nymph to adult dragonfly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSjTXqV2kpw>
- "Amazing Dragonfly Facts for Kids" - Kid-friendly exploration of dragonfly adaptations and behaviors: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJJ_VbOqBdE