

LEVELED BOOK • L

Dragonflies!

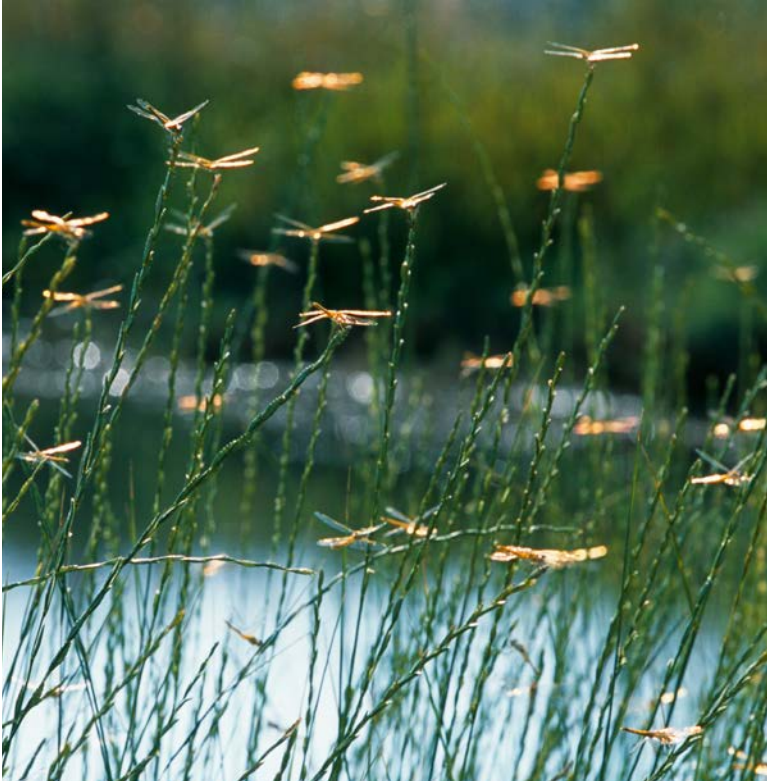


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level
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Written by Cheryl Reifsnyder

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Dragonflies!



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Focus Question

What makes the dragonfly an amazing insect?



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southern hawker dragonfly

Amazing Dragonflies

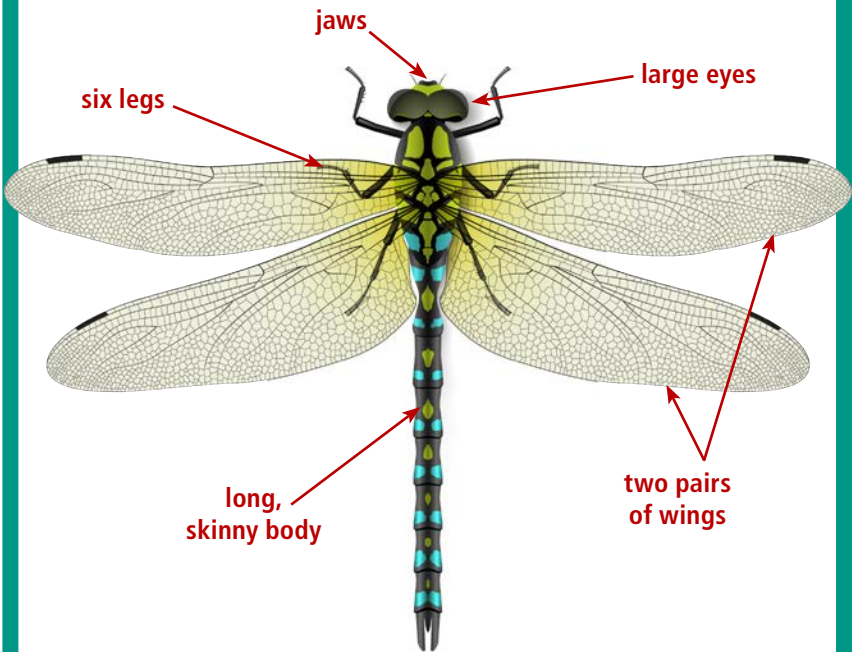
Bzzt! You're walking by a pond when something zooms past your head. It's bigger than a bumblebee. It's faster than a butterfly.

It's an amazing dragonfly!

What Are Dragonflies?

Dragonflies are flying **insects** with long bodies and two **pairs** of wings. They come in every color of the rainbow. Some dragonflies have colorful stripes. Some even change color over time.

What Makes an Insect a Dragonfly?



A dragonfly has a large head; a long, skinny body; and two pairs of wings.

Young Dragonflies

Dragonflies need water during every stage of their **life cycle**. Adults lay their eggs in water or on plants near water. The young dragonflies live in water for one or more years after they hatch.



Some dragonflies lay their eggs in rotting wood under water (main). Some dragonflies can lay hundreds of eggs at a time (inset).

Young dragonflies look very different from adult dragonflies. They have gills inside their bodies, which allow them to breathe under the water. Dull green or brown coloring helps them hide from fish, frogs, and other hungry animals.



young dragonfly

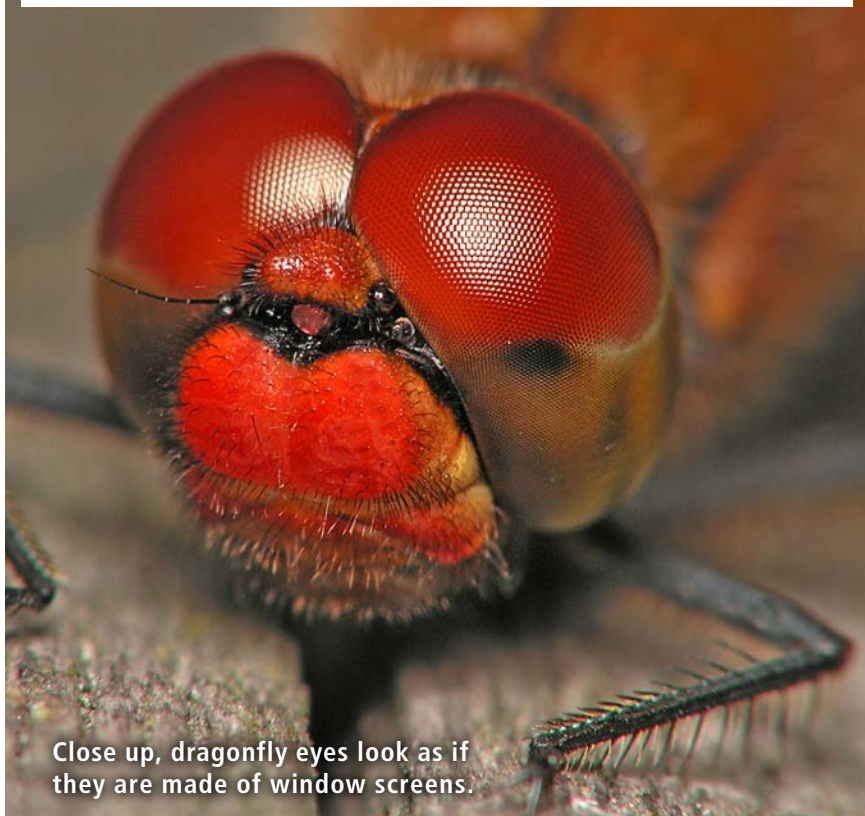


Young dragonflies
crawl out of their
outer shells when
they become adults.

As dragonflies grow, their skin doesn't grow with them. Instead, young dragonflies **shed** their entire outer layer every time they need to grow. When a young dragonfly is ready to become an adult, it crawls out of the water. The last layer of skin splits open, and the adult dragonfly climbs out.

Super Sight

Adult dragonflies have the largest eyes of any kind of insect. Each eye is made up of about thirty thousand tiny pieces. They can see in almost all **directions** at once. Dragonflies' super eyesight helps them catch prey.



Close up, dragonfly eyes look as if they are made of window screens.



Dragonfly wings move so fast that they are hard to see.

Amazing Flight

Dragonflies can speed up faster than the world's fastest race cars! Dragonflies are among the world's fastest flying insects. Large dragonflies reach speeds greater than 22 miles (36 km) per hour.

Unlike most flying insects, dragonflies control each wing on its own. This skill lets them swoop and dive like fighter jets. They can fly forward, backward, and even upside down.



Dragonflies can swoop and dive through the air.

Do You Know?

Scientists study dragonfly flight to learn how to make better airplanes and helicopters.



Damselflies make good meals for dragonflies.

Amazing Hunters

Adult dragonflies are high-speed flying hunters. They surprise mosquitoes and other small insects by attacking from behind and below. They kill their prey with a fast, powerful bite. Dragonflies often eat their catch without bothering to land.



An adult bee-eater holds a dragonfly in its beak.

Dragonflies for Dinner

Many animals like to eat dragonflies—birds, lizards, frogs, spiders, and even other dragonflies. Dragonflies' flying skills help them avoid danger. Not many animals can catch these speedy insects.

Humans eat dragonflies, too. In many parts of the world, dragonflies are a special treat. You can buy dragonflies on sticks for a snack.

Swarms

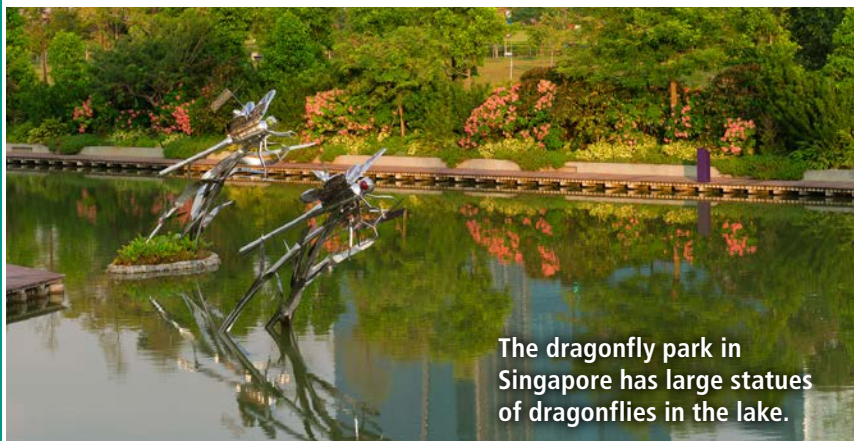
Dragonflies sometimes travel in huge groups, called *swarms*. They travel in swarms for food and to go south for the winter.



Scientists say it is hard to take pictures of dragonfly swarms.

A Safe Place for Dragonflies

In 1985, people in Japan created the world's first dragonfly park. Today there are also dragonfly parks in Europe and the United States. Dragonflies are amazing creatures—and people all over the world are starting to realize it!



The dragonfly park in Singapore has large statues of dragonflies in the lake.

Dragonflies Worldwide

There are nearly three thousand kinds of dragonflies. They are found all around the world, in almost every kind of **habitat**. Check out your closest stream, pond, or lake. See if you can spot them for yourself!

Glossary

- directions** (*n.*) the ways or courses
toward which
something moves
or faces (p. 9)
- habitat** (*n.*) the natural
environment of a plant
or animal (p. 15)
- insects** (*n.*) small animals with six
legs, three body parts,
and usually two sets
of wings (p. 5)
- life cycle** (*n.*) the stages of change
that an organism goes
through during its life
(p. 6)
- pairs** (*n.*) sets of two (p. 5)
- shed** (*v.*) to drop skin, feathers,
hair, or antlers (p. 8)

Words to Know

directions

habitat

insects

life cycle

pairs

shed

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Dragonflies!

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Connections

Writing and Art

Using the information in this book, write a personal narrative from the perspective of a dragonfly.

Science

Design a habitat for a dragonfly. Use facts from the book to create your habitat.


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