

QUICK GUIDE TO DAMSELFLY & DRAGONFLY FAMILIES

Most useful features for identification:

	Damselfly (pg. 2)	Dragonfly (pg. 3-4)
Head	eye color; eye spots/bars	eye color & shape; color & markings on face (T-spot, line)
Thorax	shape & color of stripes on top & sides	presence, shape, and color of stripes on top & sides
Abdomen	color; markings on top, esp. S2 and S8-S10	color; markings on top & underside; presence of “club” at tip
Wings	color & shape of stigma; orientation when perched	color of wing bases, veins, and stigma; color & shape of wing spots, bands, or patches
Legs	color	color

Forewings & hindwings similar in size & shape, held together over abdomen or no more than partly spread when perched; eyes widely separated (i.e., by the width of the head)



Damselfly



Vivid Dancer (*Argia vivida*); CAS Mazzacano

Hindwings broader than forewings; wings held out horizontally when perched; eyes meet at front of head or slightly separated (i.e., by less than the width of the head)



Dragonfly



Cardinal Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum illotum*);
CAS Mazzacano

DAMSELFLIES

2

Wings narrow, stalked at base

Wings broad, colored, not stalked at base

3

Wings held askew when perched

Wings held together when perched

Broad-winged Damselfly
(*Calopterygidae*); streams

Spreadwing
(*Lestidae*); ponds

Pond Damsels (*Coenagrionidae*);
ponds, streams



River Jewelwing (*Calopteryx aequabilis*);
CAS Mazzacano

4

Wings held above abdomen; vivid colors

Dancer (*Argia*);
streams

Wings held alongside abdomen; mostly blue

Bluet (*Enallagma*);
ponds

Dark abdomen with blue tip; small projection off top of S10

Forktail (*Ischnura*);
ponds/streams



California Spreadwing
(*Archilestes californicus*);
CAS Mazzacano



Vivid Dancer (*Argia vivida*); CAS Mazzacano



Tule Bluet (*Enallagma carunculatum*);
CAS Mazzacano



Pacific Forktail (*Ischnura cervula*); CAS Mazzacano

DRAGONFLIES

2

Eyes touch along all or most of inner edges

Eyes separated or touching only at single point on head

Darners, Skimmers, Emeralds , Cruisers

Clubtails, Spiketails, Petaltails
(see next page)

large; body green or blue; stripes on thorax; eyes touch; perch vertically

→ Darner; streams, ponds

wide range of colors; wings often with color or pattern; may be pruinose

→ Skimmer; ponds

eyes green; thorax hairy, iridescent

→ Emerald; streams, lakes

large; iridescent blue thorax with yellow stripes

→ Cruiser; streams



Blue-eyed Darner male (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*); CAS Mazzacano



Western River Cruiser male (*Macromia magnifica*); Jim Johnson/Encyclopedia of Life



American Emerald (*Cordulia shurtleffi*); CAS Mazzacano



Flame Skimmer male (*Libellula saturata*); CAS Mazzacano

3

DRAGONFLIES

Clubtails, Spiketails, Petaltails

4

eyes separated; terminal segments of abdomen expanded; green & brown or black body



Clubtail*; mostly streams



Bison Snaketail male (*Ophiogomphus bison*); CAS Mazzacano

eyes touch at single point; large; brown or black & yellow body; lower tip of female abdomen has spike; perches at 45° angle



Spiketail; small streams



Pacific Spiketail male (*Cordulegaster dorsalis*); John Martin/iNaturalist

eyes separated; large; black body with yellow spots on thorax & abdomen



Petaltail; bogs, seeps



Black Petaltail (*Tanypteryx hageni*); CAS Mazzacano

*In 2017, the genus *Gomphus* was re-organized and is no longer recognized as valid in North America. Visit www.OdonataCentral.com and click on Official Checklist to North American Odonata for current genera.

Cordulegaster dorsalis is the only spiketail species known in Oregon.

Tanypteryx hageni is one of only two petaltail species in North America & has a very narrow western range; the Gray Petaltail (*Tachopteryx thoreyi*) is found in the east.