

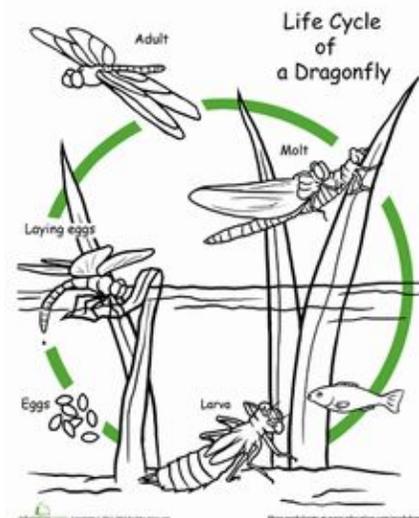
## Odonata: Our Neighbors in Cambridge

Odonata is an order of Animalia that includes only dragonflies and damselflies.

Wetlands and bodies of water are required for the laying of Odonata eggs and the survival of the nymphs, which are aquatic. Once they are adult, many species of Odonata are more commonly seen in wetlands, and over ponds, and lakes. But you can also see adults in big fields, parks and even on city streets in Cambridge. You may see them on the Charles River, in Danehy Park, and Fresh Pond Reservation. At certain times you may see them flying in swarms.

### Both dragonflies and damselflies:

- have two pairs of long wings with a strong crossvein and many small veins that criss-cross in the wings, adding strength and flexibility to the wings.
- eat other insects; the nymphs (juveniles) live in water and eat aquatic insects and tiny crustaceans.
- are eaten by a range of predators including birds, fish, frogs, other Odonata, water spiders, water beetles, backswimmers and giant water bugs.
- have a little dot of pigment called a “stigma” on their wings. Despite its small size, the stigma is important. It can act as a tiny weight that affects wing vibrations, helping the animal fly more efficiently.



### How do you tell the difference between dragonflies and damselflies?

**Dragonflies:** The rear wings of dragonflies have a broader base and are larger than the front pair. Dragonflies do not have hinges enabling them to fold their wings together when resting, instead spreading their wings when resting.

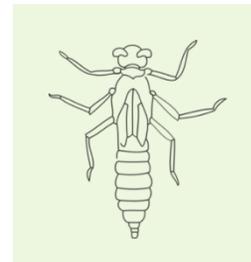


Fragile Forktaile (Damselfly) photographed at Alewife Reservation, © Mike Mulqueen, CC BY

**Damselflies:** Damselflies have front and hind wings that are similar in shape; and as a result they fly more slowly than dragonflies. Damselflies have wing hinges enabling them to fold their wings together when resting. Damselflies generally have more slender bodies than dragonflies, and their eyes do not overlap.



Eastern Amberwing (Dragonfly) photographed by the Charles River near Flag Street, © Donald Fraser CC BY-NC



*Dragonfly nymph*>

**Dragonflies and damselflies eat mosquitoes and gnats!**