

Dragonflies— Hunters on the Wing

Walk along a marsh or pond and you will likely see dragonflies darting out to catch a fly or patrolling their territory along the shoreline. With their huge, complex eyes, made up of thousands of six-sided receptors, dragonflies are able to detect the slightest movement. Because of this, dragonflies are terrific hunters that consume huge numbers of insects that we consider pests.

Dragonflies spend the majority of their lives — months or even years — living underwater in their egg and larval (nymph) stages, eating aquatic insects such as mosquito larvae as well as other creatures such as tadpoles. With their final metamorphosis, they climb from the water to a stick or rock and emerge as the aerial adult with which we are familiar. As adults, most dragonflies live for 4-6 weeks, and while a few species migrate south in the winter, most die at the end of the season. Meanwhile their eggs and larvae live on in ponds and streams.

The future of dragonflies is tied to the health and abundance of our watery habitats. By keeping streams and waterways free of pollutants and by minimizing the use of herbicides, fertilizers and pesticides that find their way into our waters, we can help protect the breeding and hunting grounds of these amazing creatures. However, this is only part of the solution. Wetlands themselves need to be protected. At present, the majority of the wetlands in Loudoun County have not been delineated, and the buffers and other land management practices required for wetlands protection are not in place. All of us need to play a role in saving dragonflies and other wetland animals by protecting their habitats in our own yards and by encouraging our local government to do the same for the county.

Join us for our dragonfly walks throughout the summer months.

For more information visit our website:
www.loudounwildlife.org



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Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is dedicated to promoting the preservation and proliferation of healthy wildlife habitats in Loudoun. We offer educational programs and field trips, habitat and species monitoring, habitat restoration projects and conservation advocacy. Newsletter *Habitat Herald* available. Membership: \$10 student, \$20 individual, \$30 family

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Dragonflies of Loudoun



