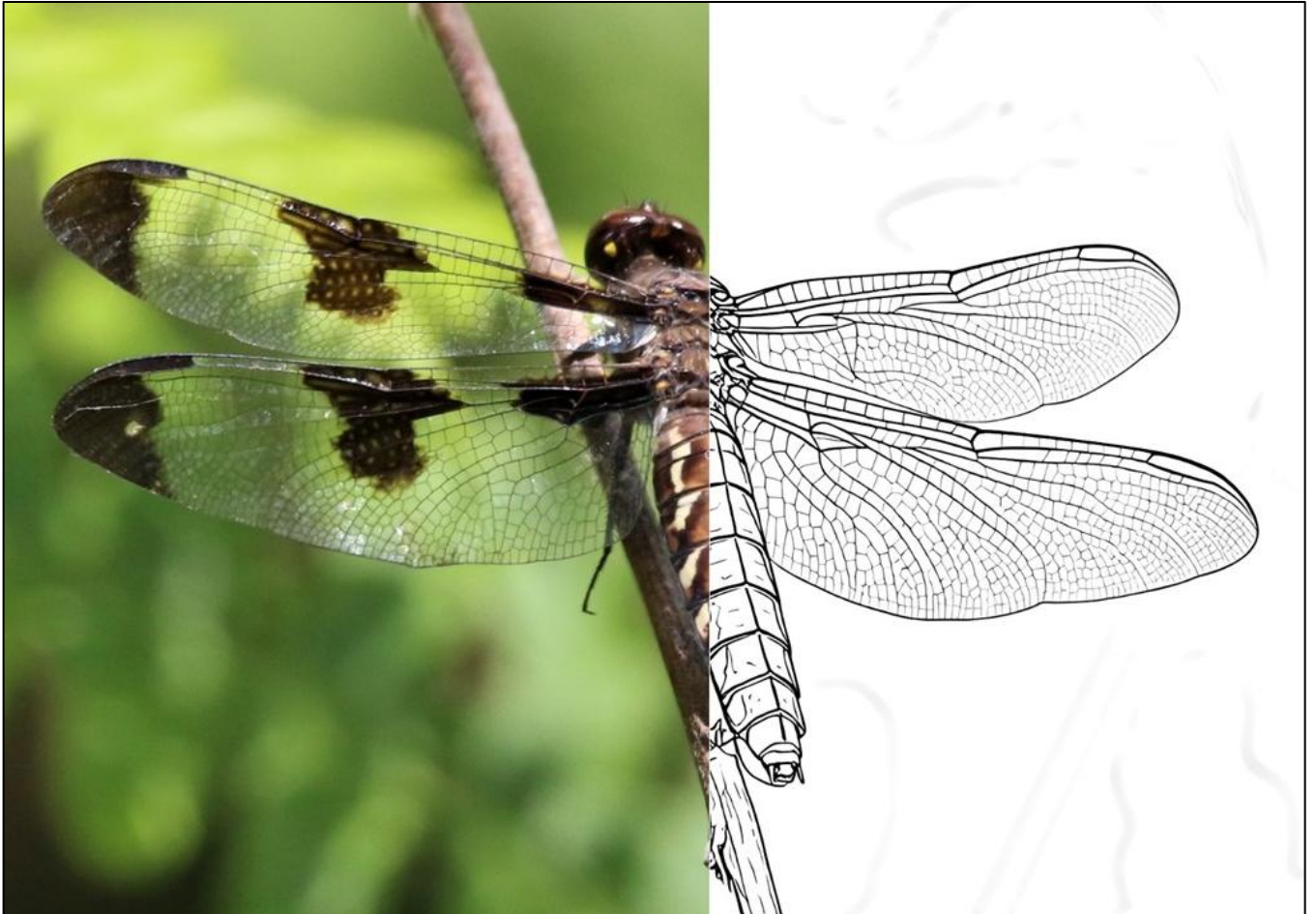


# Dragonflies of the Northeastern USA Coloring Book



**Coloring pages and photos of 10  
of our most common Dragonflies!**

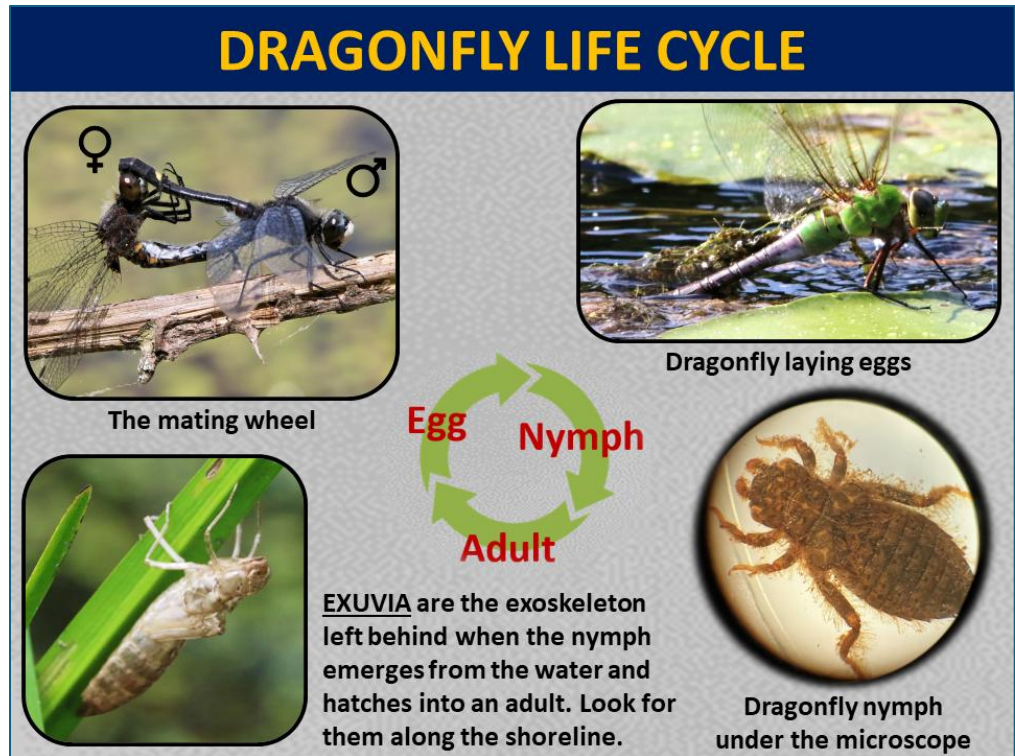
**By Bruce Taterka  
June 2026**

# About Dragonflies

Dragonflies are beautiful and fascinating insects. They are expert fliers, hunters and have lived on Earth for hundreds of millions of years. There are over 3,000 dragonfly species found all over the world.

Dragonflies need water to live. They hatch from eggs in water and spend the first part of their lives as a *nymph*, living in streams, lakes or ponds. When conditions are right, after months or even years in the water, the nymph will emerge, crawl out of its shell, and spread its wings as an airborne adult.

The adult lives for a single season, usually weeks or months, feeding and mating. The female dragonfly lays her eggs in the water, where the cycle begins all over again. For each species in this book, the adult flight season is described, which can vary depending on local climate.

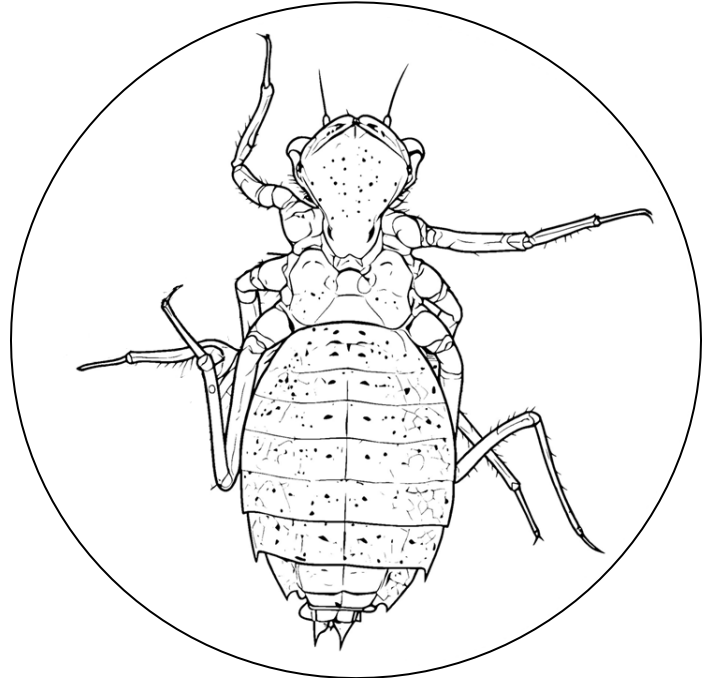


Because dragonflies spend the majority of their life in ponds and streams, they are excellent indicators of water quality. Some species live only in pure, unpolluted water. Other species can tolerate moderate levels of pollution. The presence of chemical pollution, garbage, sewage and runoff from farms can degrade water quality and make life impossible for dragonflies. Depending on a species' tolerance for pollution, its presence or absence can indicate whether the water is clean.

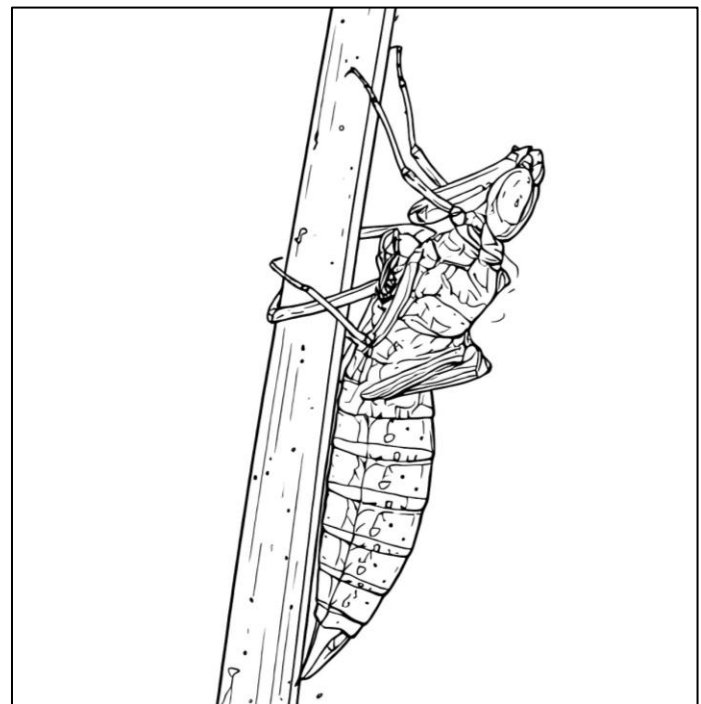
Northwest New Jersey, where the photos in this book were taken, happens to have high-quality, unpolluted streams and ponds due to the large amount of protected, undeveloped forest found there. In fact, Sussex County, which is in the northwest corner of New Jersey, has the highest dragonfly diversity of any county in the United States.

If you want to protect and conserve dragonflies, the best thing you can do is contribute to the effort to protect our natural forests, wetlands, streams, lakes, ponds and rivers. If we keep the water clean, the dragonflies will keep flying!

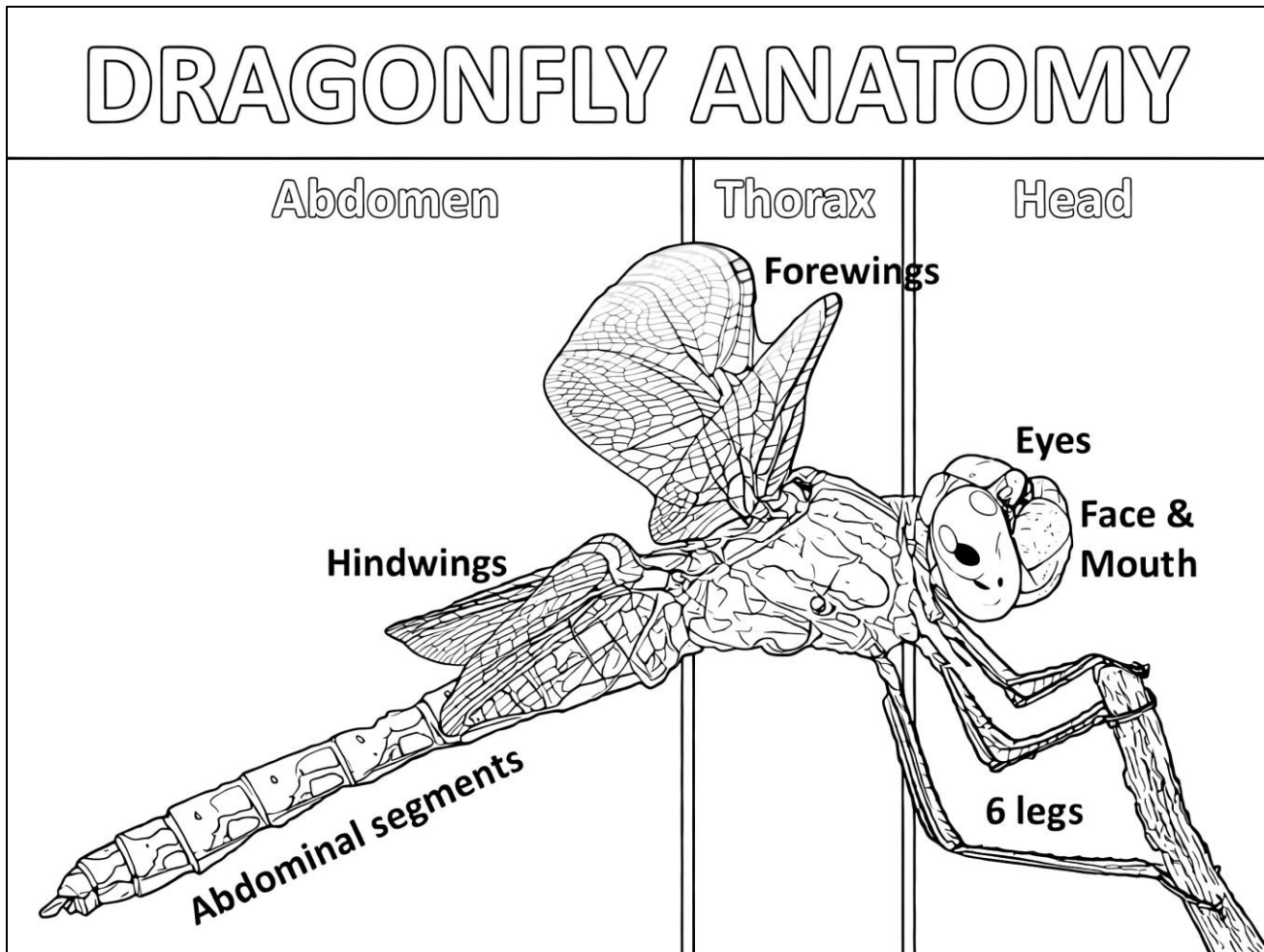
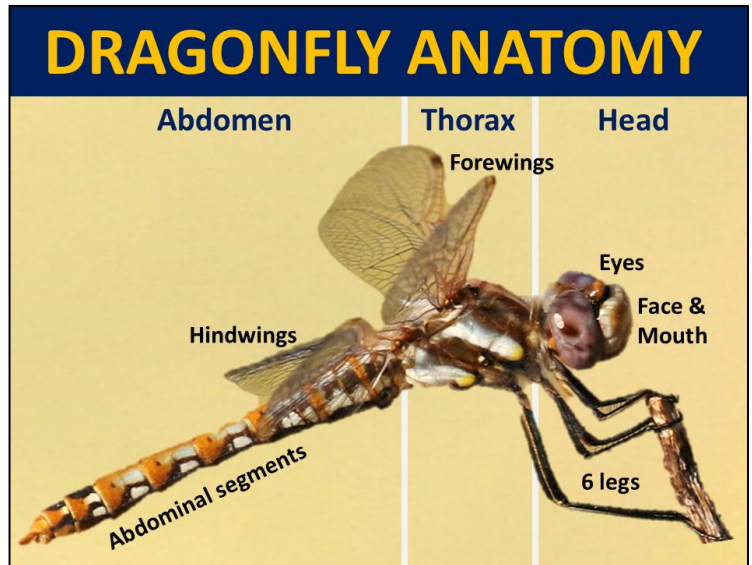
The photo below shows a dragonfly nymph under a microscope. The actual size of the nymph is about 3/8", easily visible with the naked eye. It was collected along the shore of a lake in northwestern New Jersey and released unharmed.



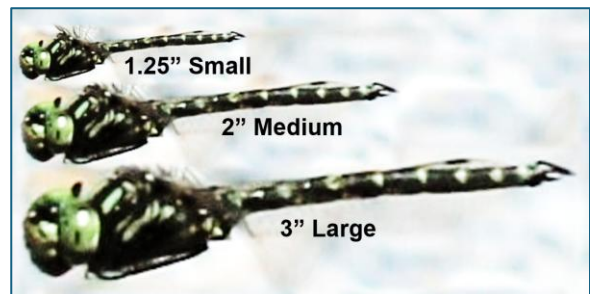
When a nymph is ready to become an adult, it climbs out of the water and attaches itself to a plant, tree, rock or other hard surface. The adult then climbs out of its shell and spreads its wings, getting ready to fly. The empty shell is called an *exuvia*, which is shown below. *Exuvia* are usually about 1", more or less, depending on the species. *Exuvia* can be found along the shoreline of waterbodies in dragonfly habitat, or sometimes on nearby trees.



Like all insects, dragonflies have segmented bodies. They have a head with large, compound eyes that allow them to track prey as they zoom through the air. They have a powerful thorax that drives their two forewings and two hindwings. An extended abdomen contains the animal's digestive and reproductive organs. Dragonflies have 6 legs. Some species are brightly colored while others are dull. Most species are *sexually dimorphic*, which means males look different from females.



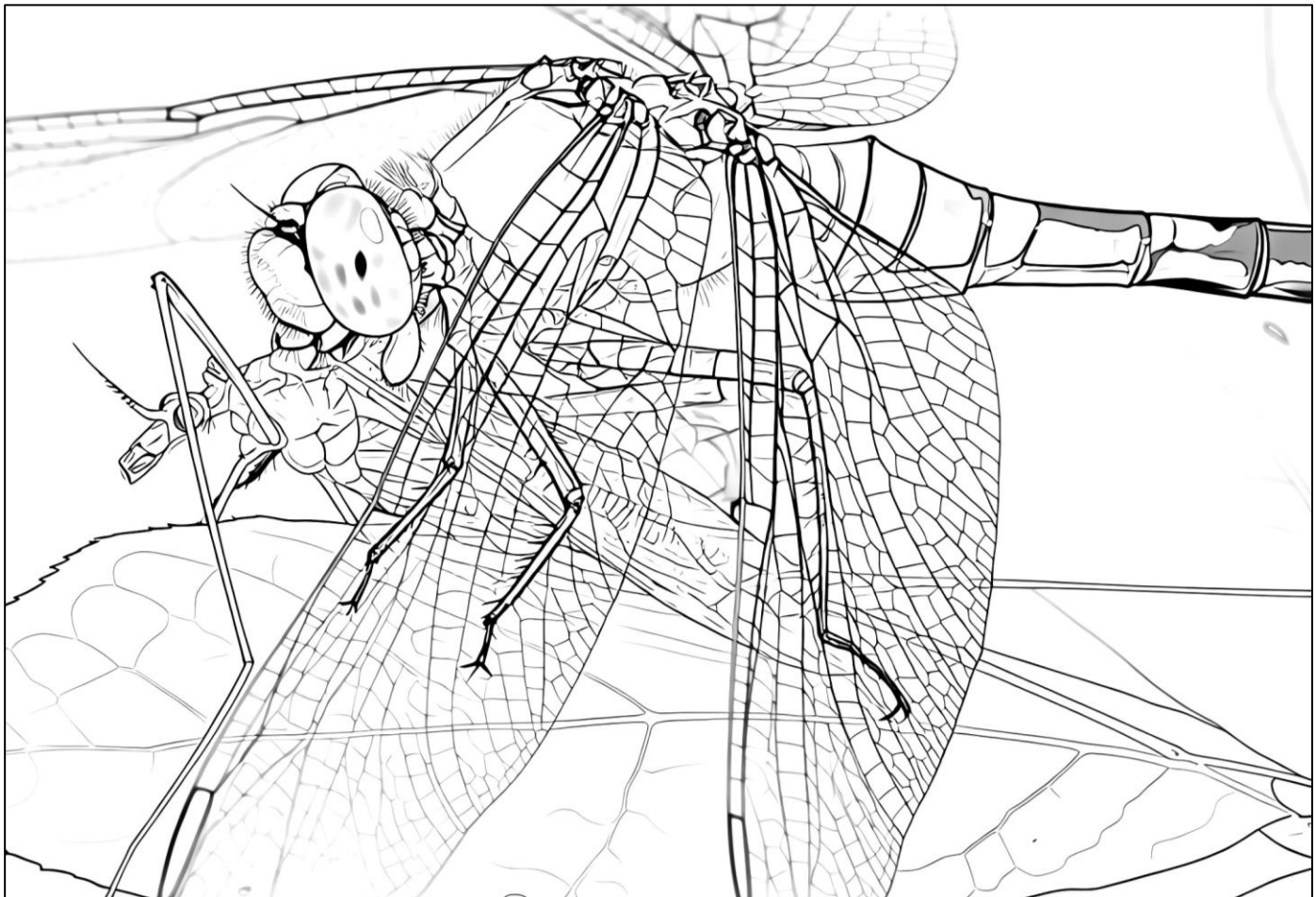
Worldwide, dragonflies range in size from about 6" to less than an inch. The dragonflies in this book range in size from a little less than 1" to about 3." For each species in this book, size is described as shown in the diagram at right.



Dragonflies are voracious predators, both in the aquatic nymph stage and as adults. With their large wings, adults are incredibly agile flyers and can reach speeds over 30 miles per hour. With their large eyes, they can track and intercept smaller insects and make a meal of them. Both nymphs and adults play an important role in controlling mosquito populations.



**Female Eastern Pondhawk eating its prey.**



# Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*)



Female



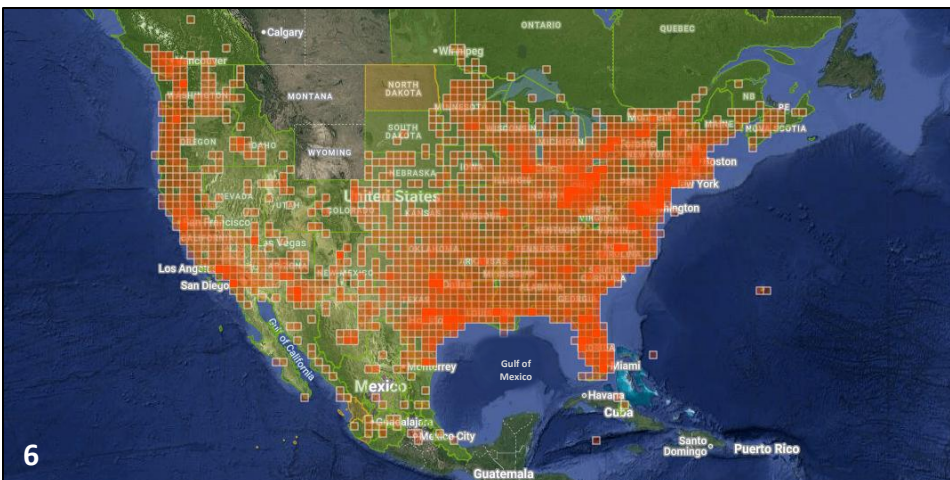
Male

Size: small

Flight: Spring - Fall

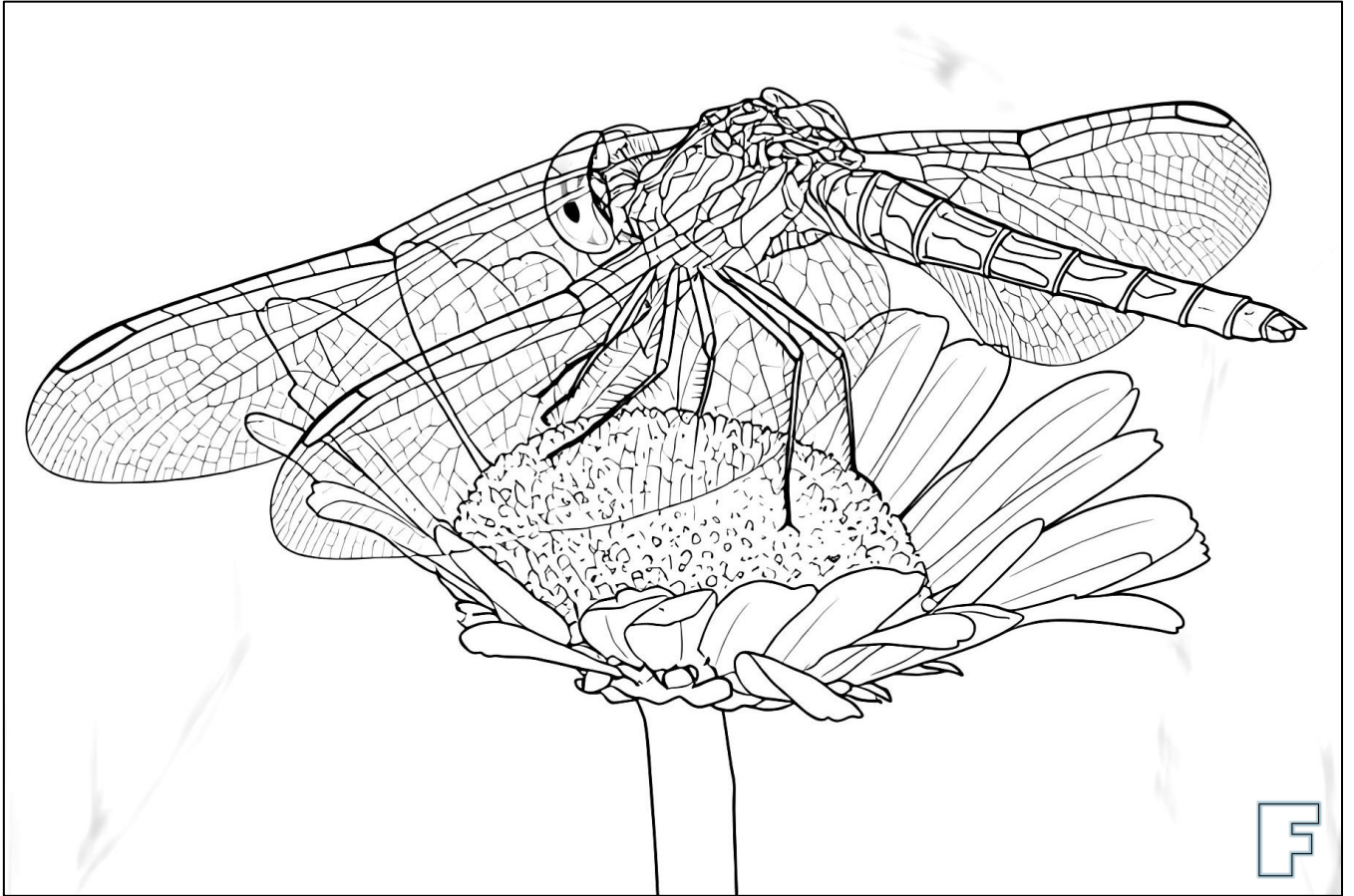
Found perching near ponds and wetlands with its wings pointed downward, sometimes with its abdomen angled upward. When Blue Dashers are present, it is often in large numbers.

Mature males have bright green eyes and a powdery blue abdomen with a black tip. Females and immature males have red eyes and a black-and-yellow abdomen. Both sexes have mostly clear wings with some amber coloration at the base. The thorax is brown with yellow stripes.

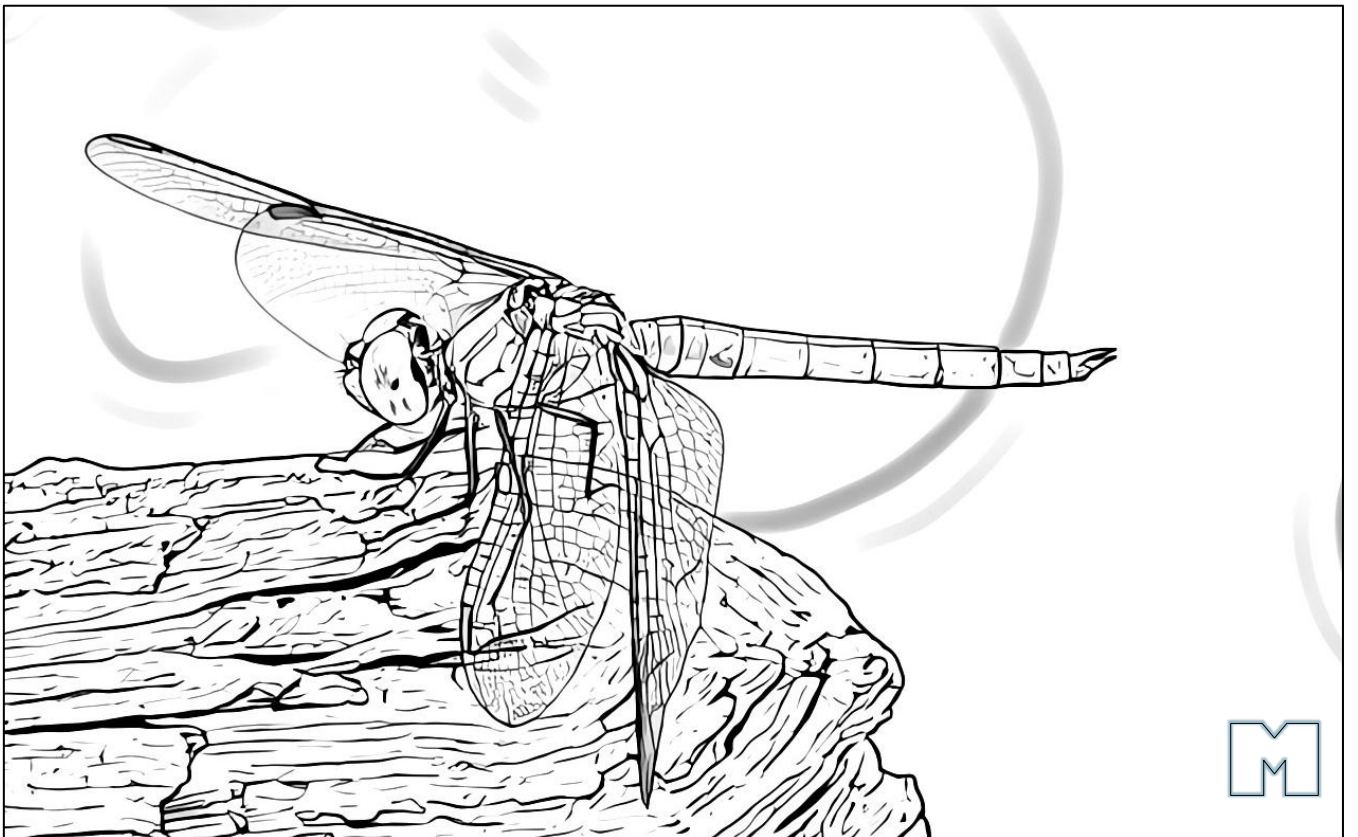


Blue Dasher Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Blue Dasher

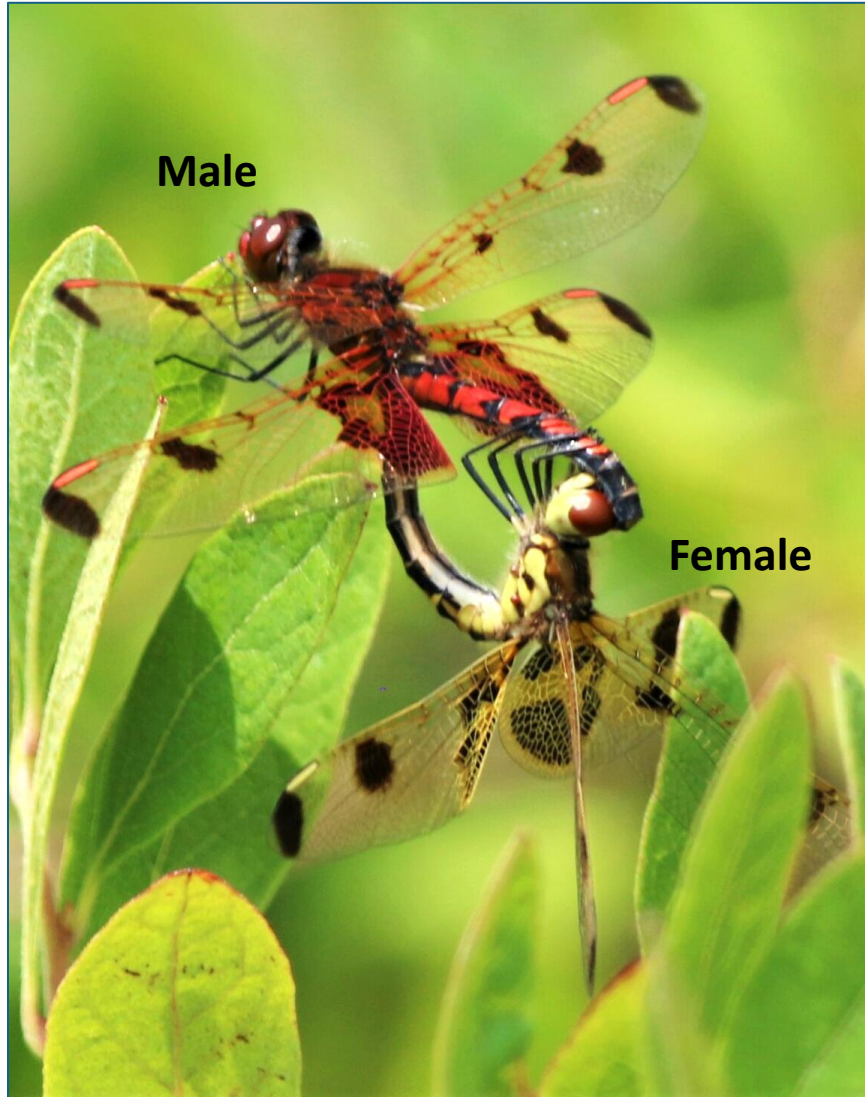


F



M

# Calico Pennant (*Celithemis elisa*)



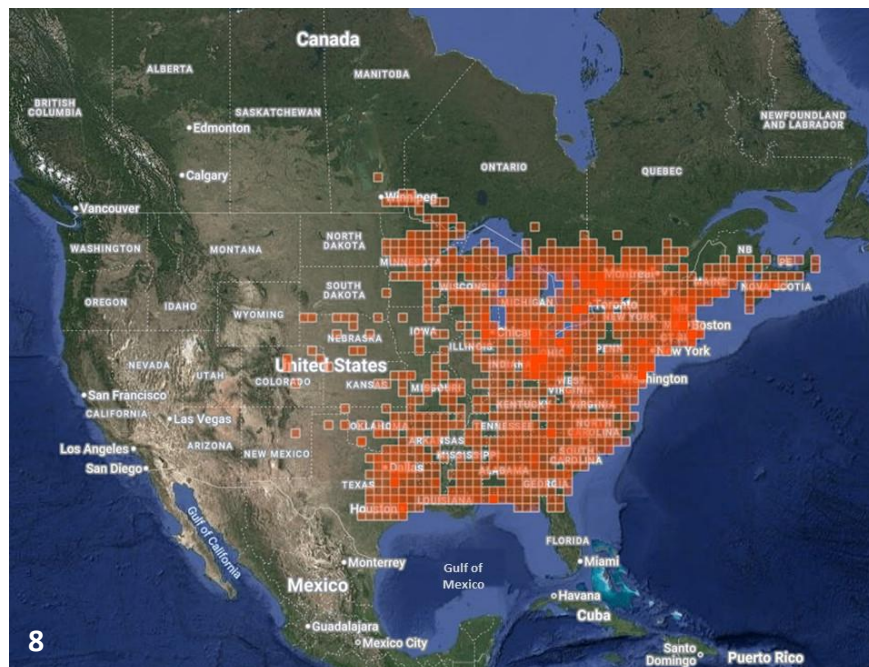
Size: Small

Flight: Spring – Fall

The Calico Pennant is found perching on the tips of vegetation in meadows near water. They are easily recognized by their bright colors and striking wing patterns. Both males and females have a brown patch at the base of the hind wing and on wingtips. Males are bright red while females are yellow.

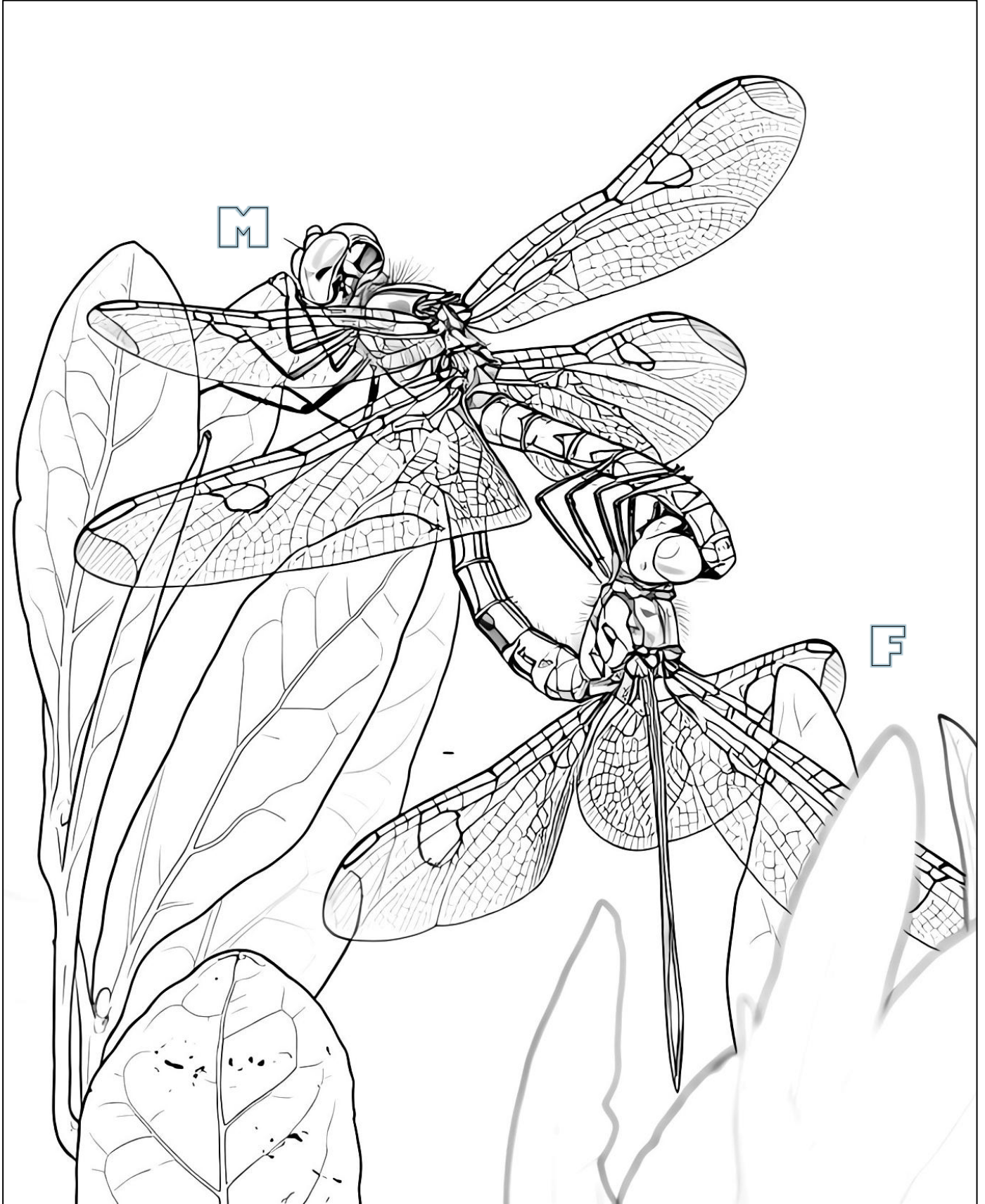
## Dragonfly Mating

The photo shows how dragonflies mate. The male grasps the female by the head with the tip of his abdomen, either in flight or perched. If the female is receptive, she extends the tip of her abdomen to a structure at the base of the male's abdomen. This is known as "wheel" or "heart" position. The male then transfers sperm to the female, completing the process.



Calico Pennant Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Calico Pennant



# Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*)



Male

Size: Large

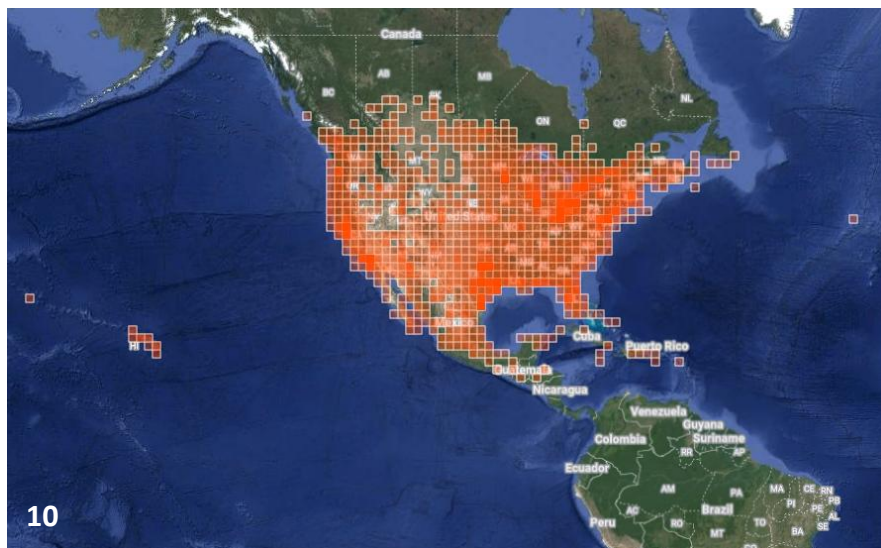
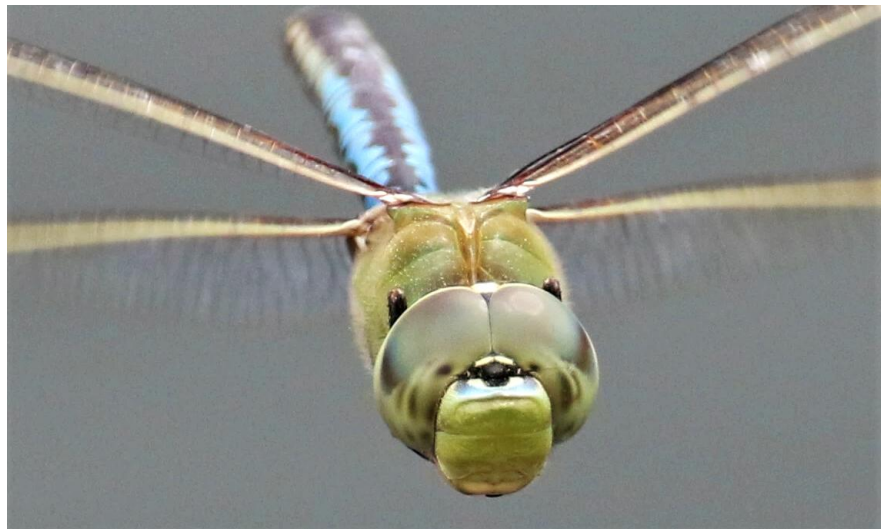
Flight: early Spring – late Fall

This bright, striking species is found flying fast and intermittently hovering over ponds, wetlands and fields.

Both sexes have a green thorax. The male has a bright blue abdomen that turns reddish-purple in cool weather. The female abdomen is slightly duller in coloration.

## The Dragonfly Head

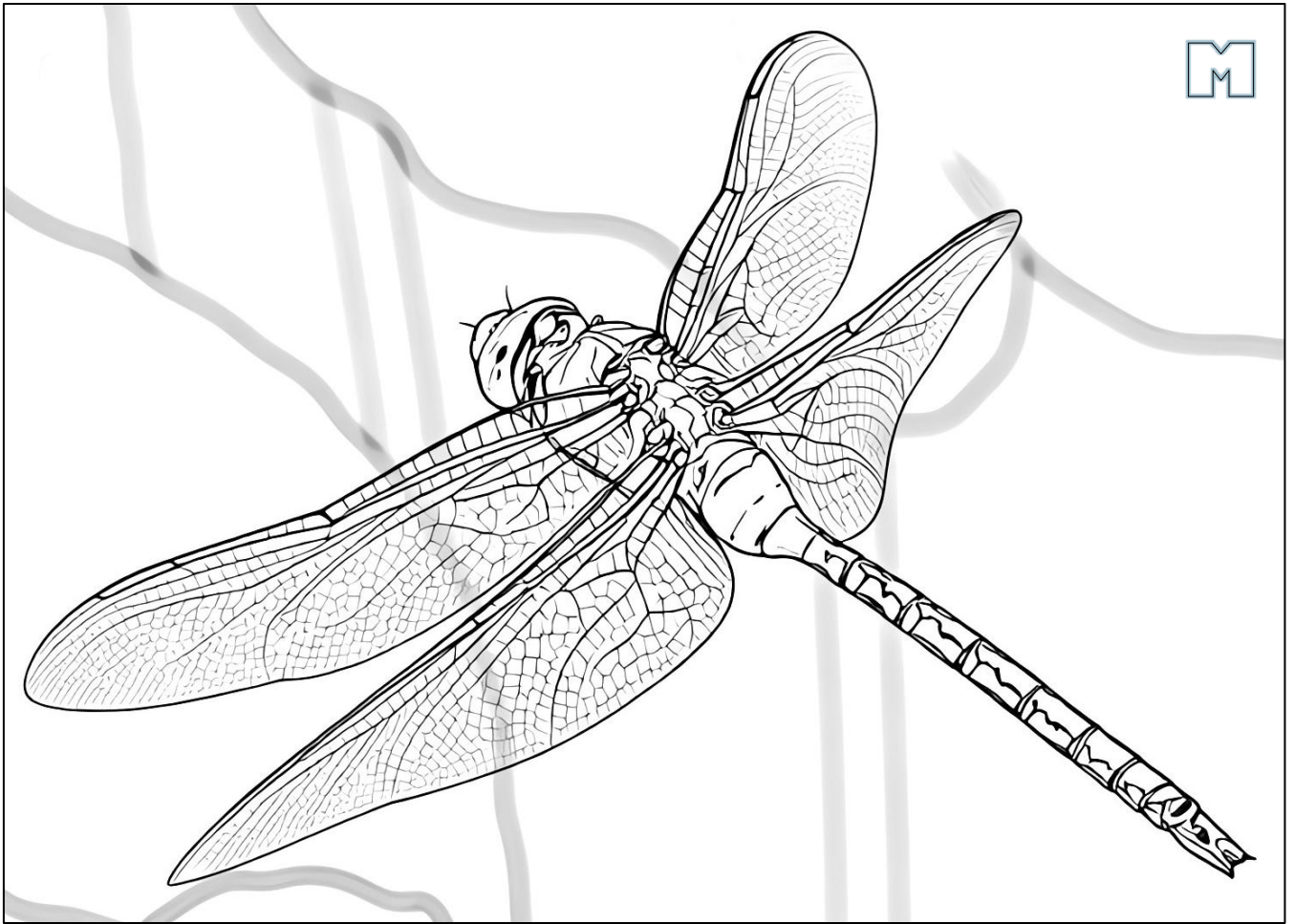
The second photo shows a male Common Green Darner's head, which is similar in shape to most dragonfly species. There are two large green compound eyes above a greenish-white face and mouth.



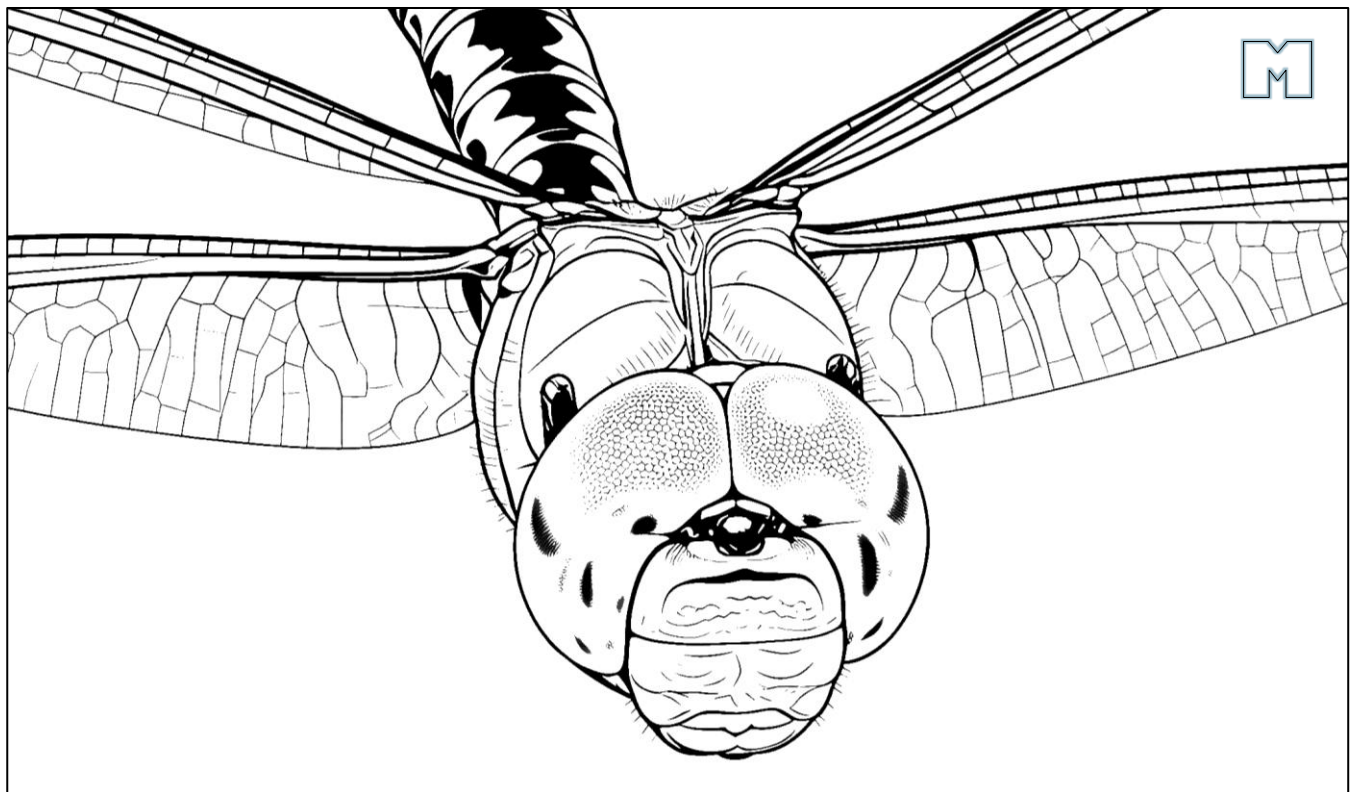
Common Green Darner Range Map, [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Common Green Darner

M



M



# Common Whitetail (*Plathemis lydia*)

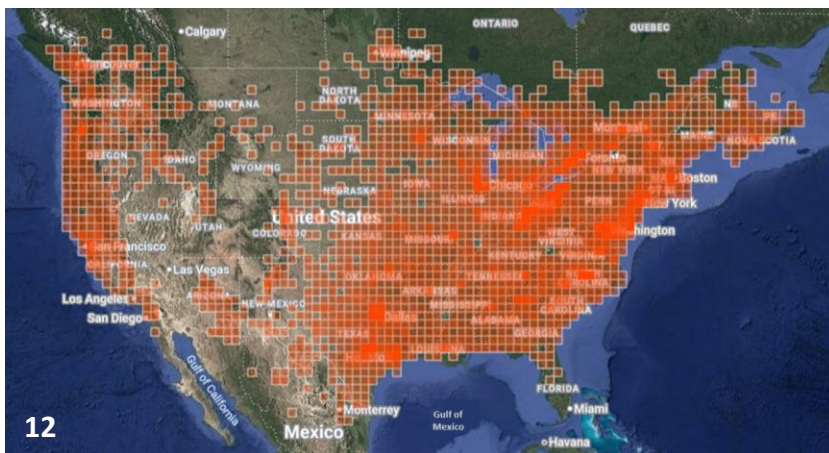


Size: Medium  
Flight: Spring – Fall

The Common Whitetail is one of the most common dragonflies in the United States. It is easily recognized by its chunky abdomen and bold wing pattern on both males and females. They are found perching on the edges of ponds and wetlands, hunting small insects.



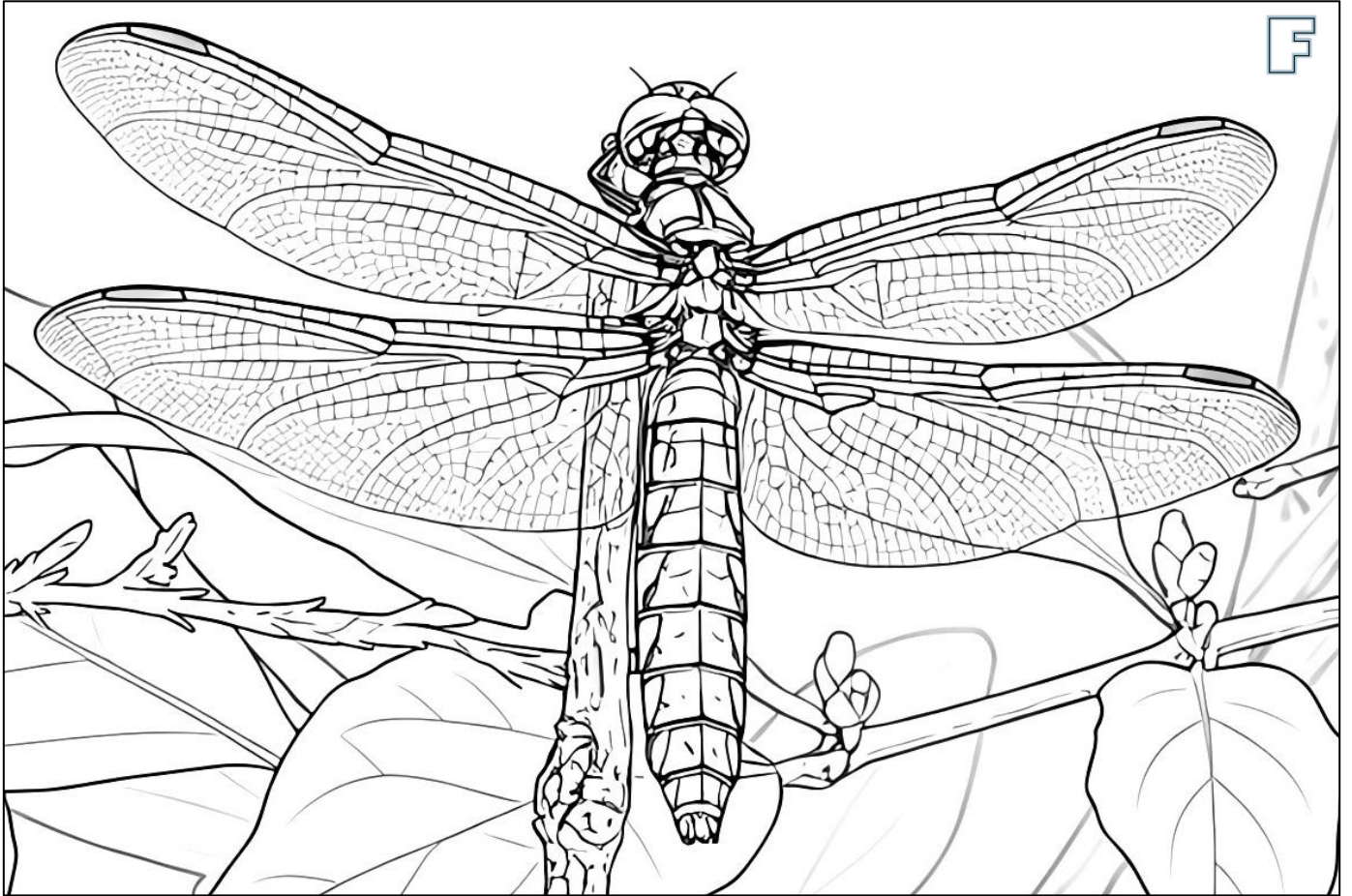
The abdomen of the immature male and female is brown with yellow markings on the side. As the male matures, the abdomen turns powdery blue.



Common Whitetail Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Common Whitetail

F



M



# Eastern Amberwing (*Perithemis tenera*)



**Female**

Size: very small

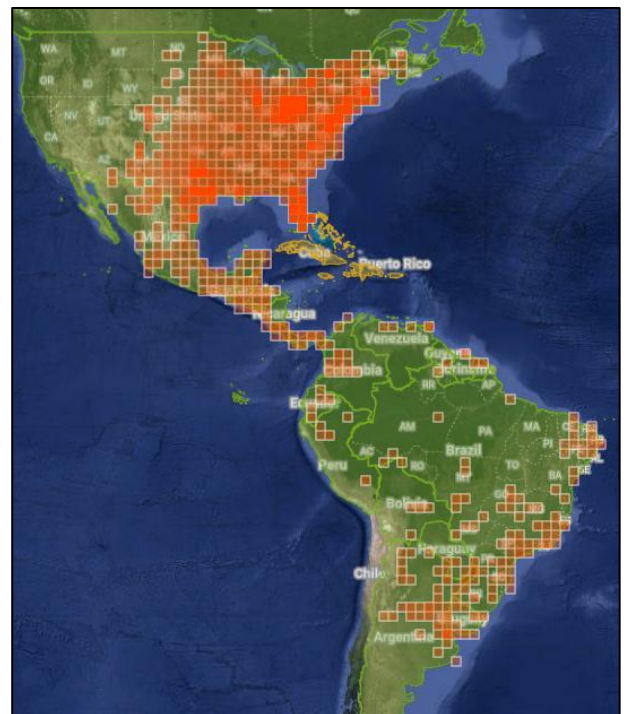
Flight: Spring – Fall

The Eastern Amberwing is one of our smallest dragonflies, less than 1" in length. The male has striking orange-amber wings and a brown abdomen with yellow stripes. The female has clear wings with brown patches and a short, wide, brown abdomen.



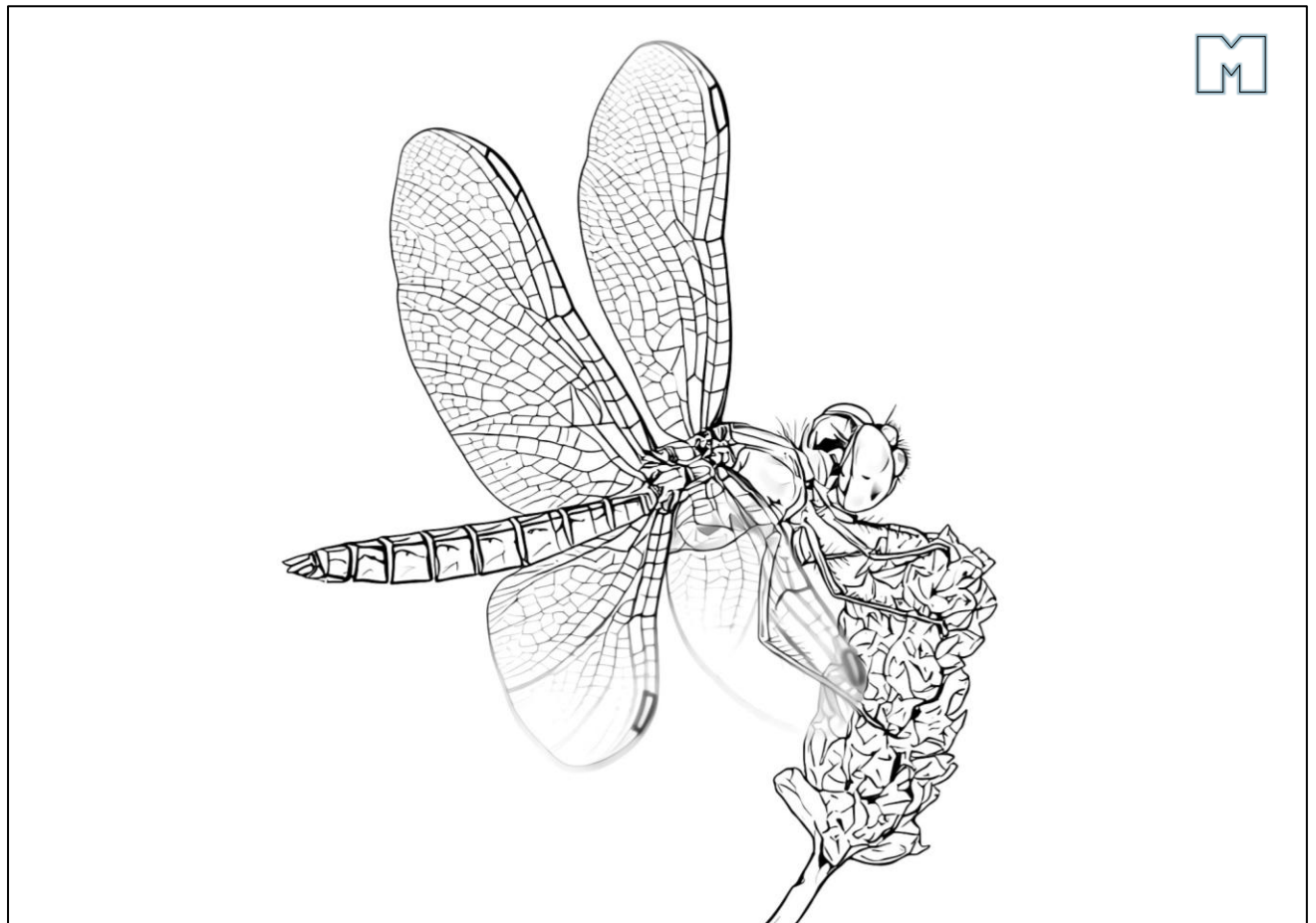
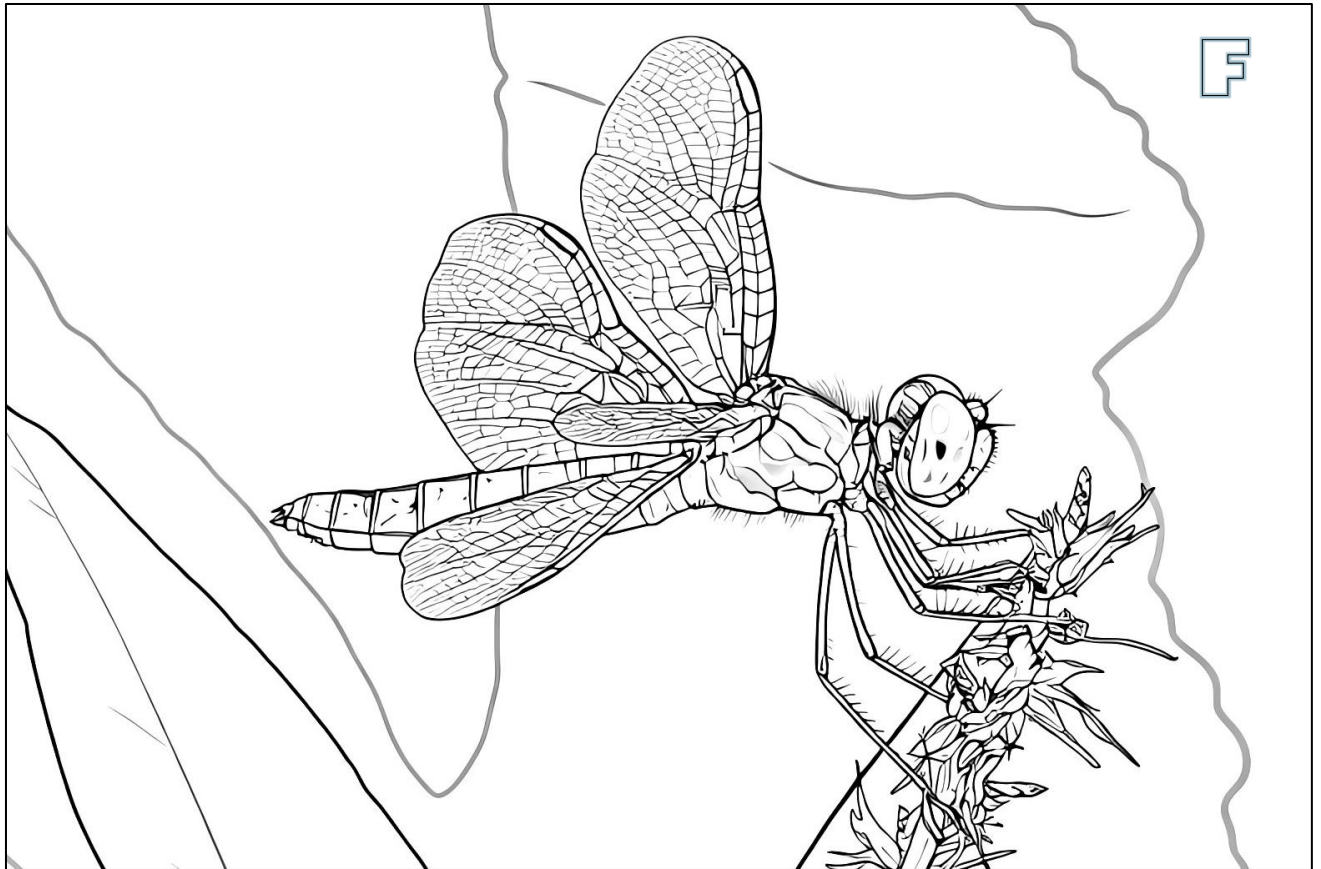
**Male**

The Eastern Amberwing is found flying low over lakes and ponds, or perched nearby.



Eastern Amberwing Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Eastern Amberwing



# Eastern Pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*)

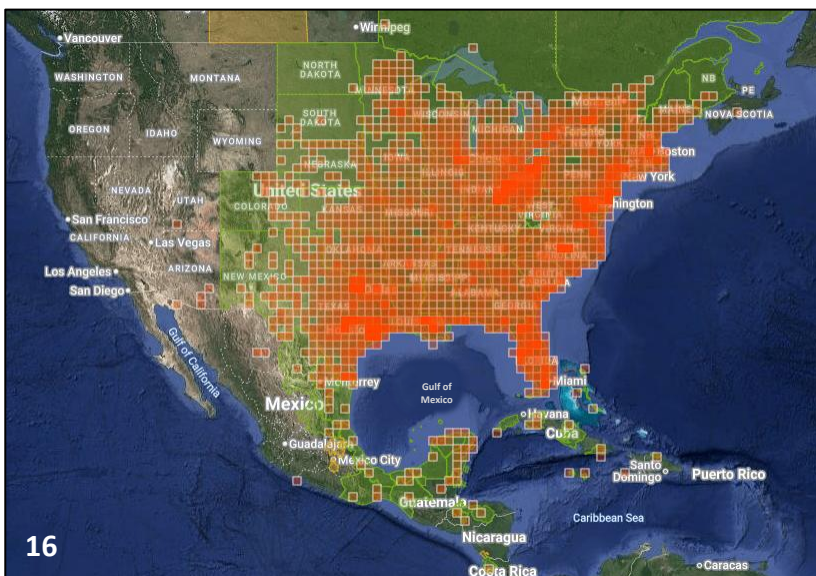


Size: Medium  
Flight: late Spring – early Fall

The Eastern Pondhawk is found in and around almost any aquatic habitat. It is often seen on the ground near water, even on paths and walkways. It can sometimes be seen eating other dragonflies and damselflies.



The abdomen of immature male Eastern Pondhawk looks like that of the female, but turns powdery blue with age.



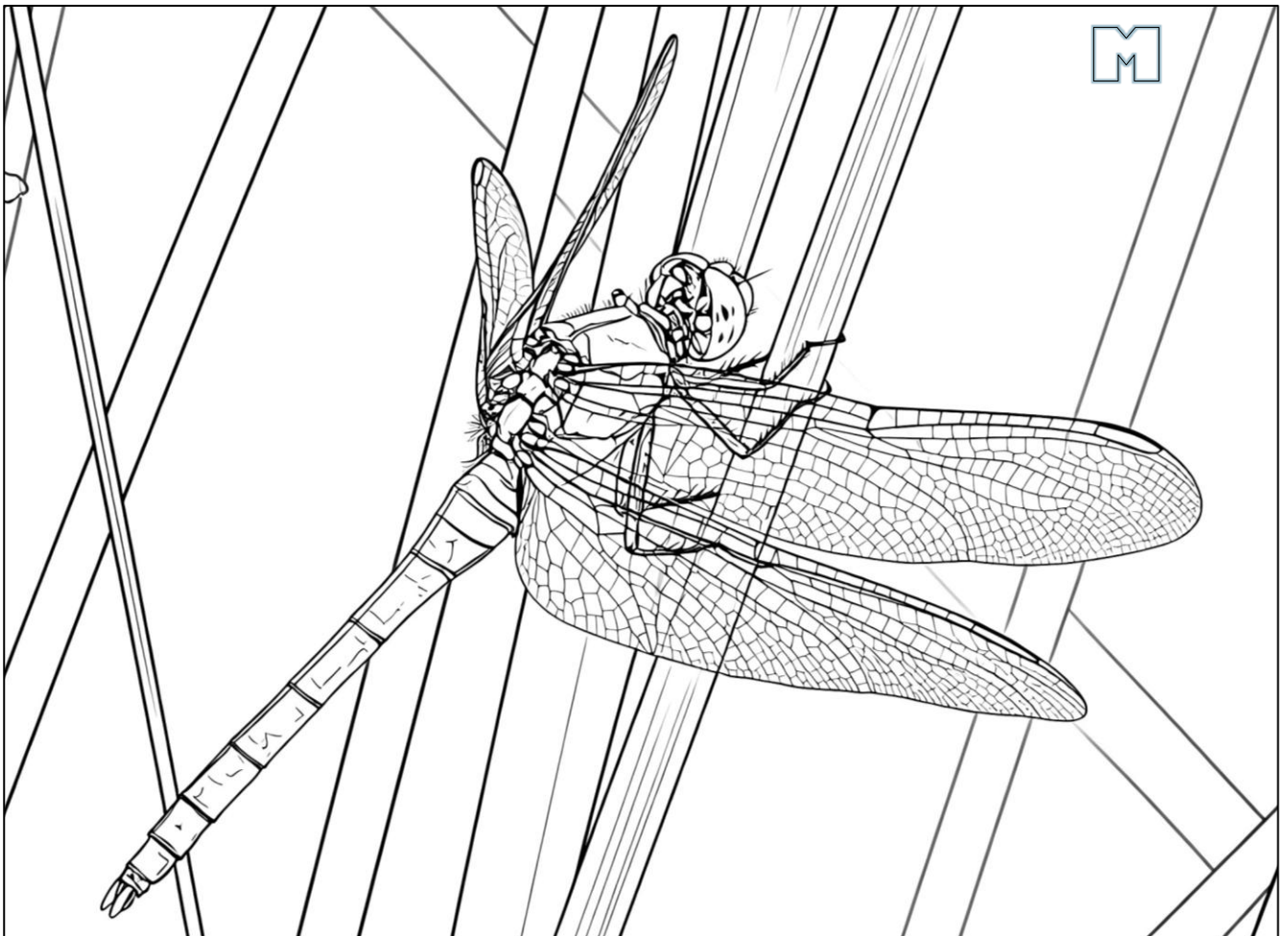
Eastern Pondhawk Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Eastern Pondhawk

F



M

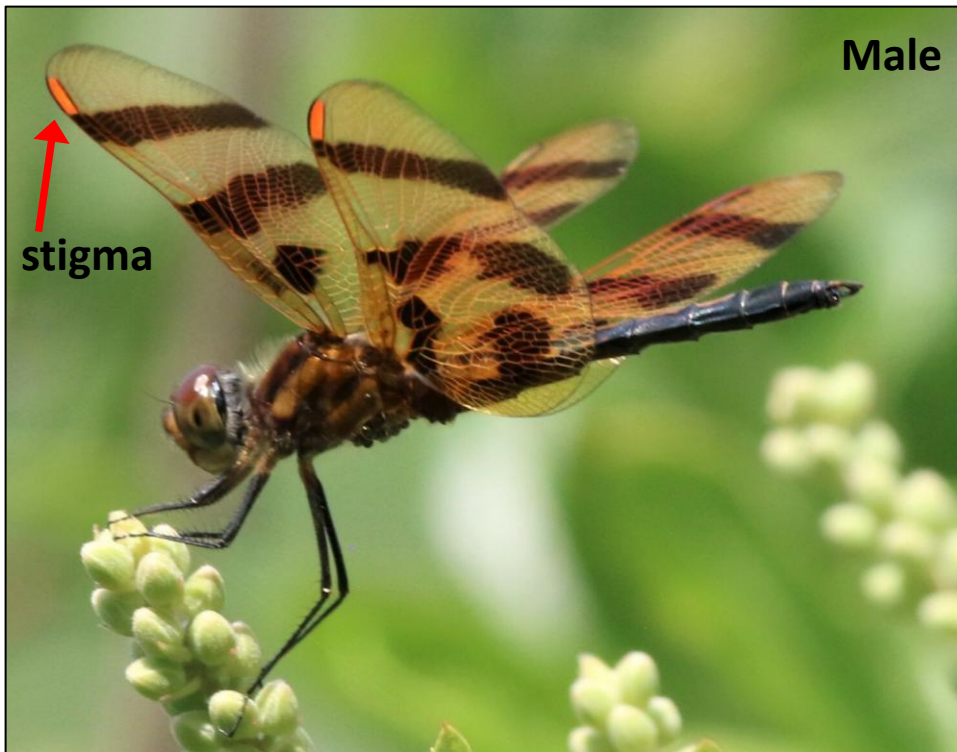


# Halloween Pennant (*Celithemis eponina*)

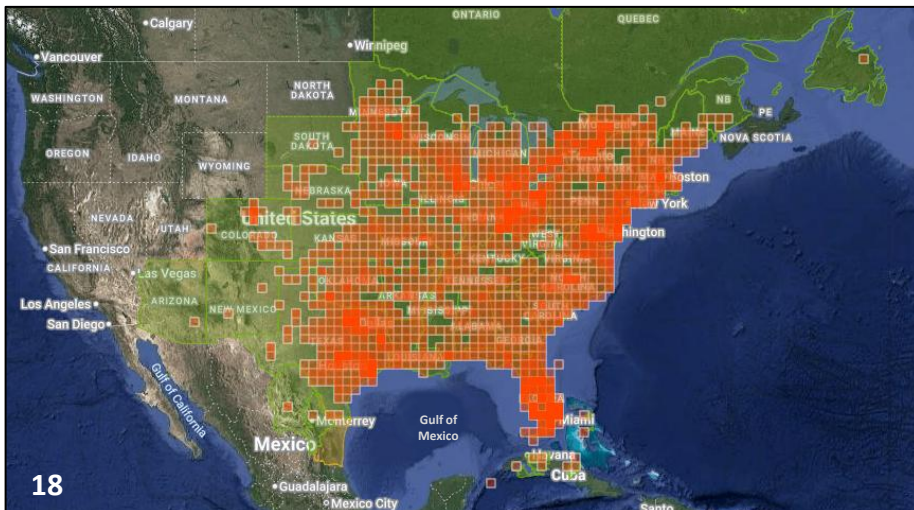


Size: small  
Flight: Spring – Fall

The Halloween Pennant is brightly colored with striking wings. Males have orange wings with brown patches and a bright orange *stigma*. The abdomen is black and orange. Females have yellow wings with brown patches, yellow *stigma*, and a black and yellow abdomen.

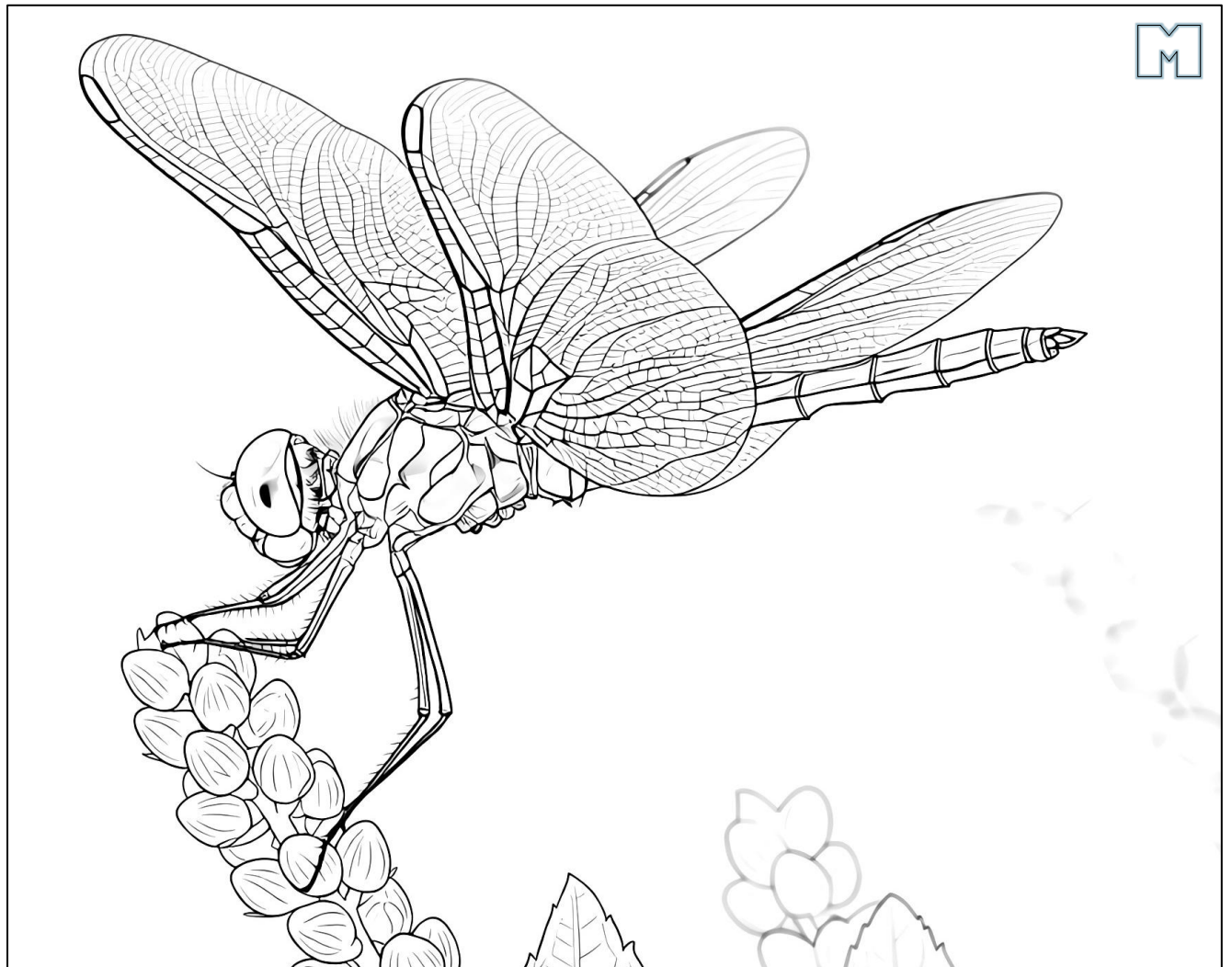
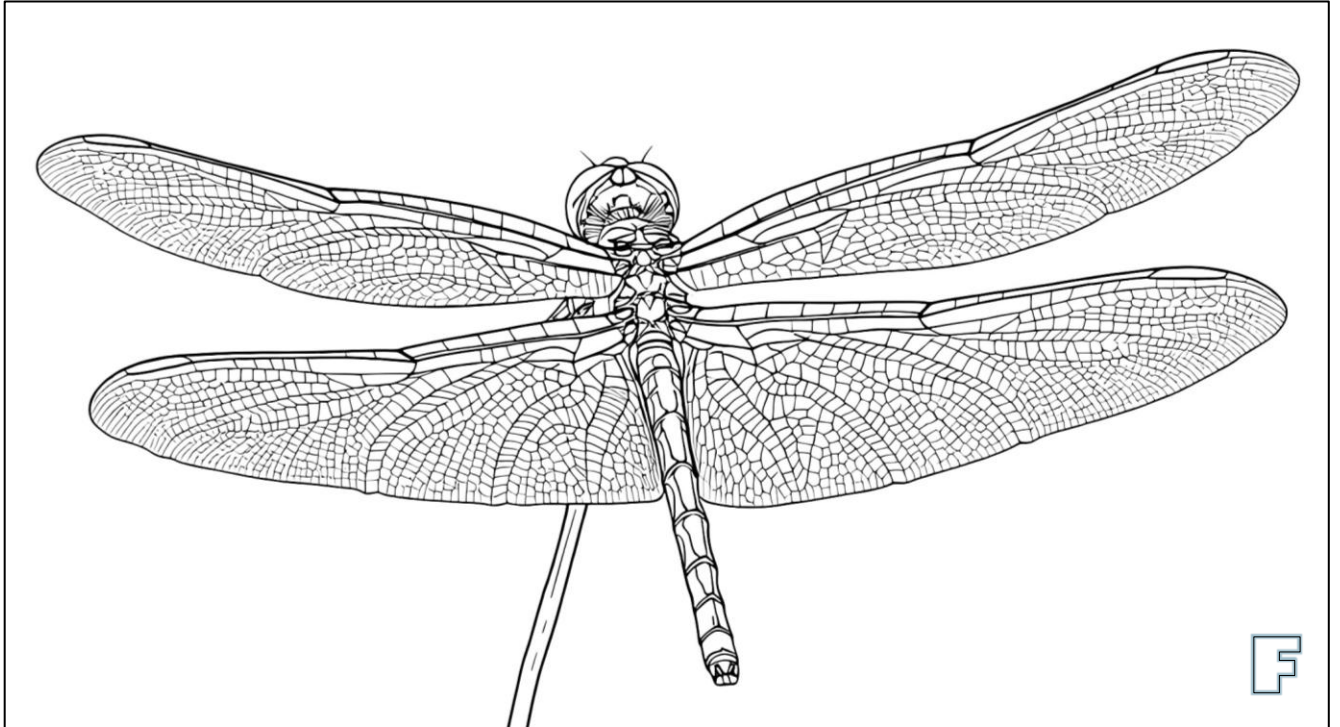


They are found in meadows near water bodies, perching from the very tips of grass and other plants, sometimes hanging on in the wind.



Halloween Pennant Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) 2026

# Halloween Pennant



# Slaty Skimmer (*Libellula incesta*)

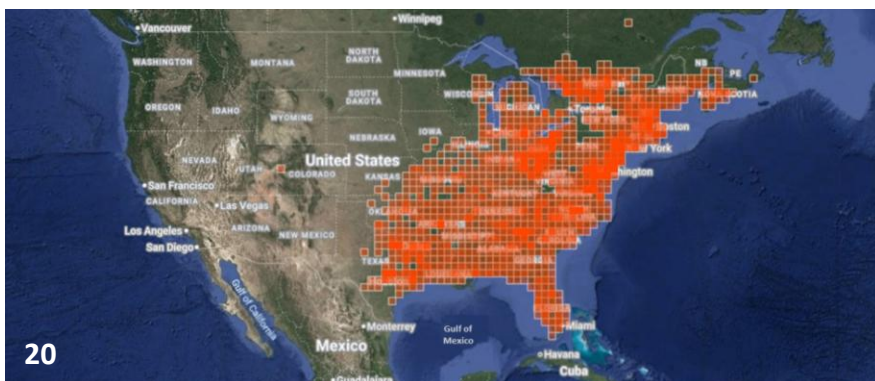


Size: Medium  
Flight: Spring – Fall

The Slaty Skimmer is found perching on vegetation along the shoreline of ponds and wetlands. Females and immature males have a yellow thorax with a brown stripe down the middle. The thorax turns dark purplish-blue on mature males.



Both sexes have clear wings with a dark *stigma*, which helps distinguish this species from the Spangled Skimmer, which has a bright white *stigma*. Young individuals may show dark wingtips that disappear with age.



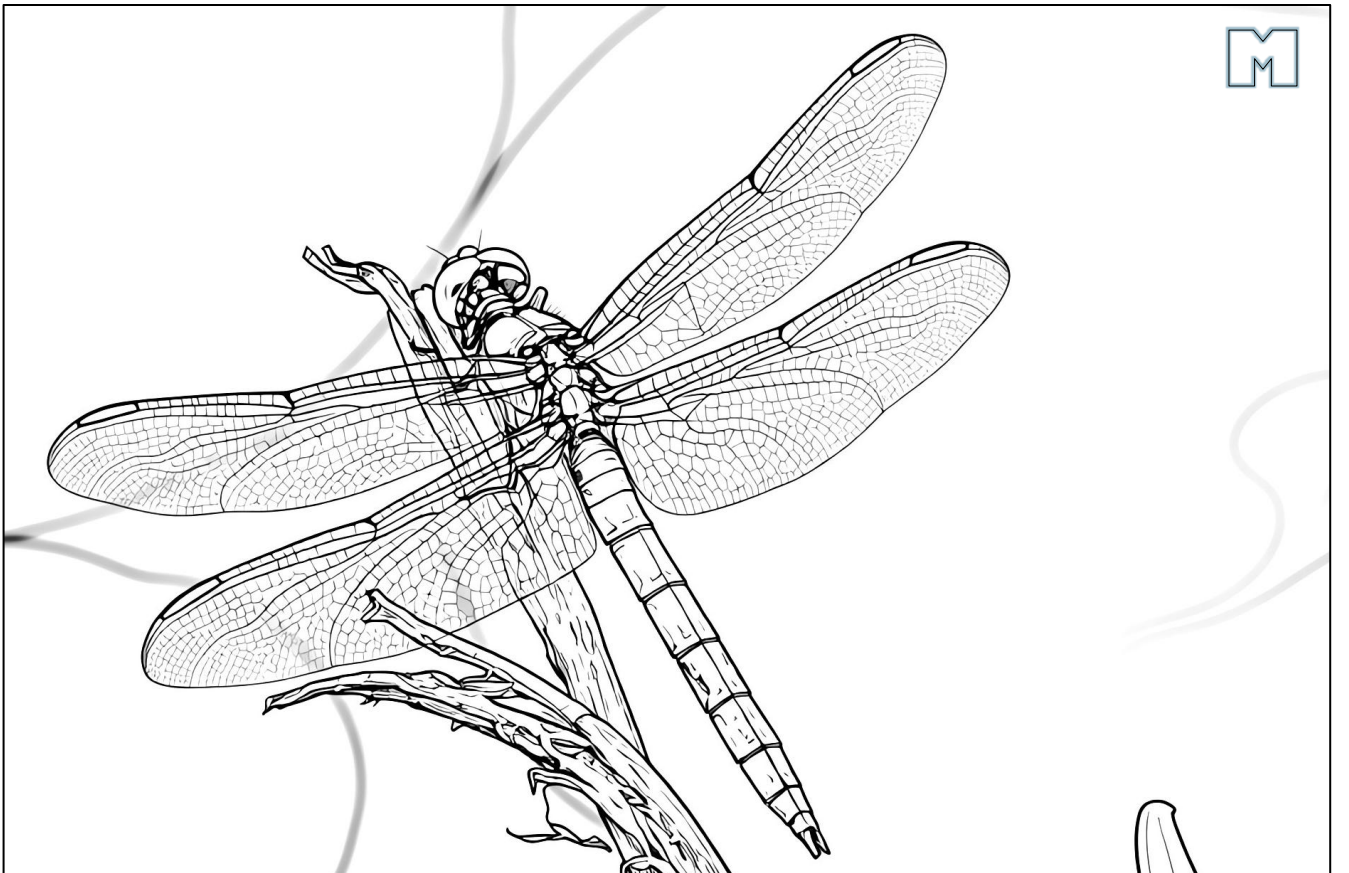
Slaty Skimmer Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) May 2026

# Slaty Skimmer

F



M



# Spangled Skimmer (*Libellula cyanea*)



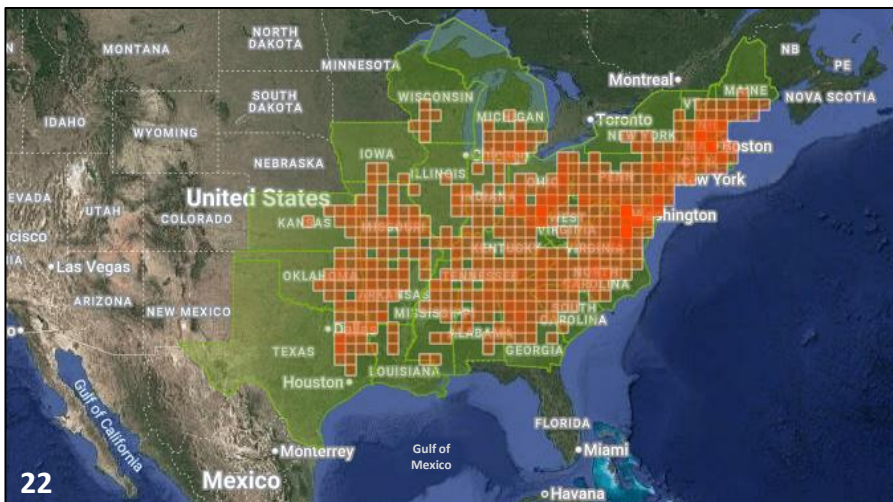
Size: Medium  
Flight: Spring – Summer

The Spangled Skimmer is found perching on vegetation along the shoreline of ponds and wetlands.

Females and immature males have a yellow thorax with a brown stripe down the middle. The thorax turns powdery blue on mature males.

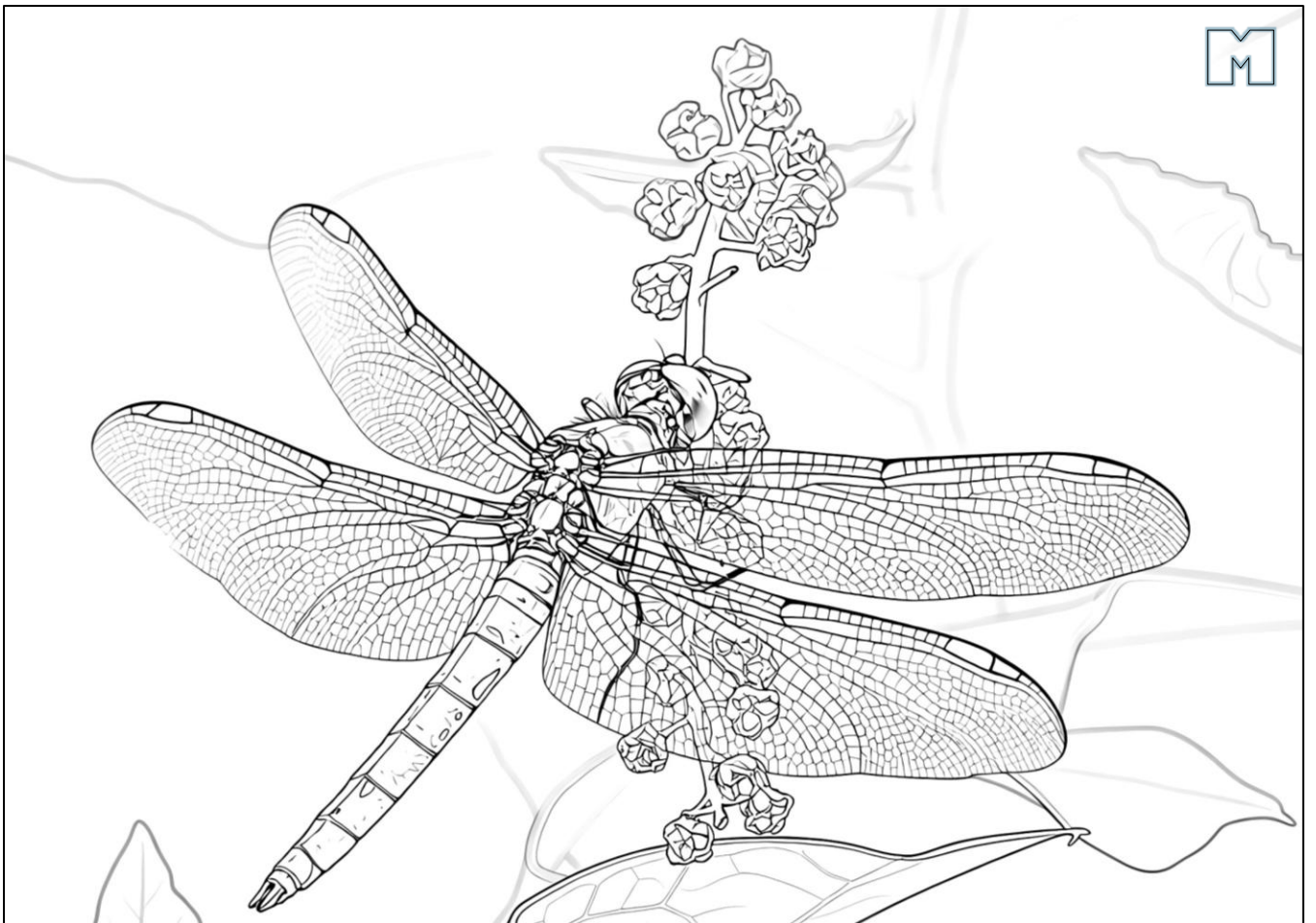
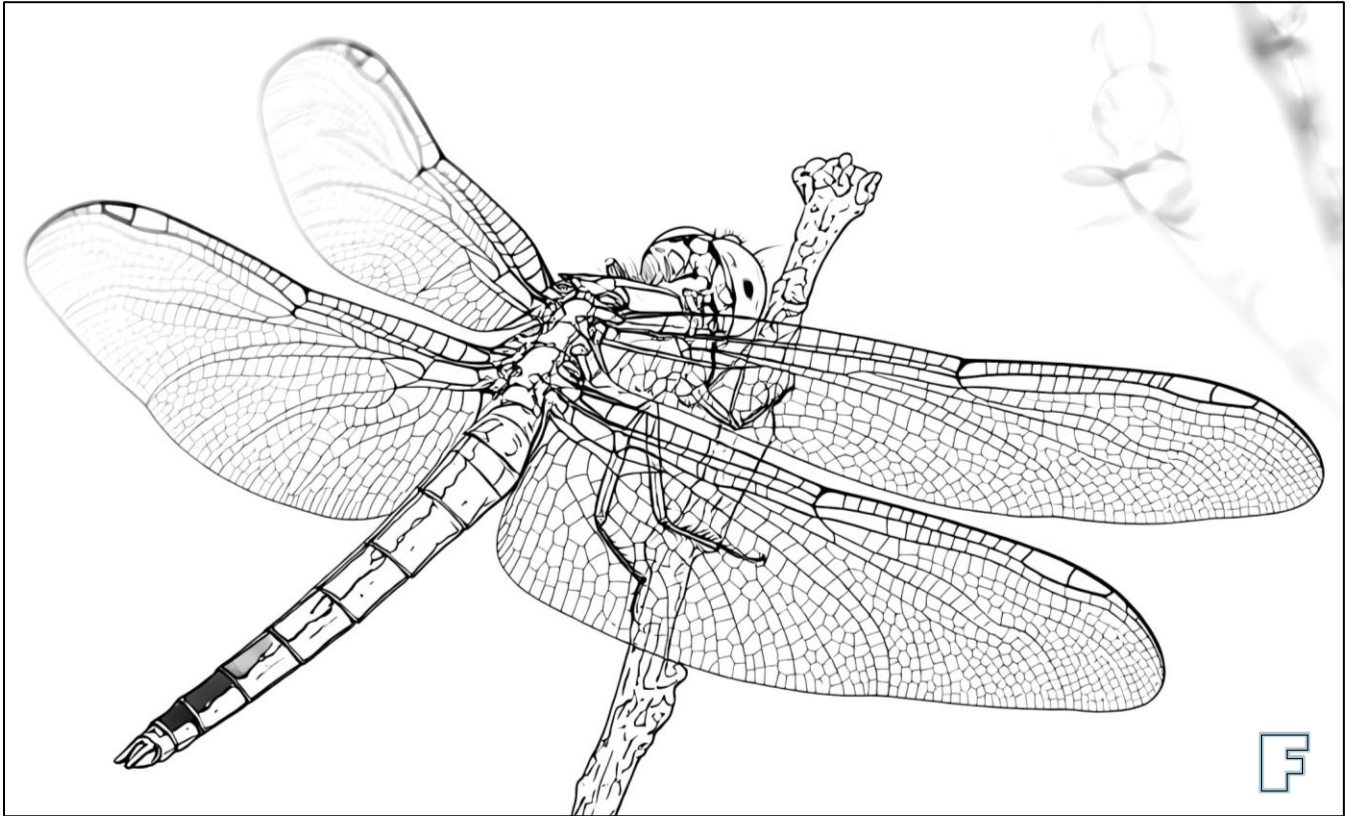


Both sexes have clear wings with a white *stigma*, which makes this species easy to distinguish from the Slaty Skimmer, which has a black *stigma*.



Spangled Skimmer Range Map,  
[www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org), May 2026

# Spangled Skimmer



# Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*)



Female



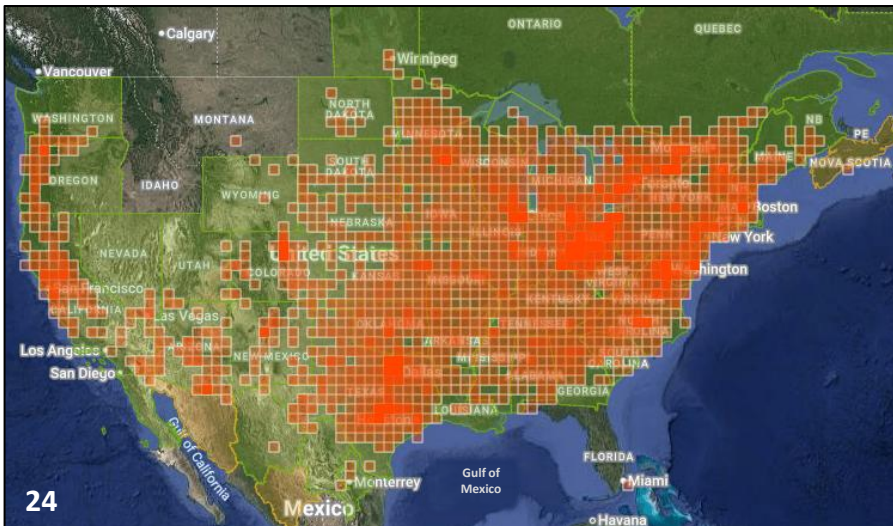
Male

Size: Medium  
Flight: early Spring – Fall

The Widow Skimmer is one of our most common species. Females and immature males have a yellow thorax with a brown stripe down the middle. The thorax turns powdery blue on mature males.

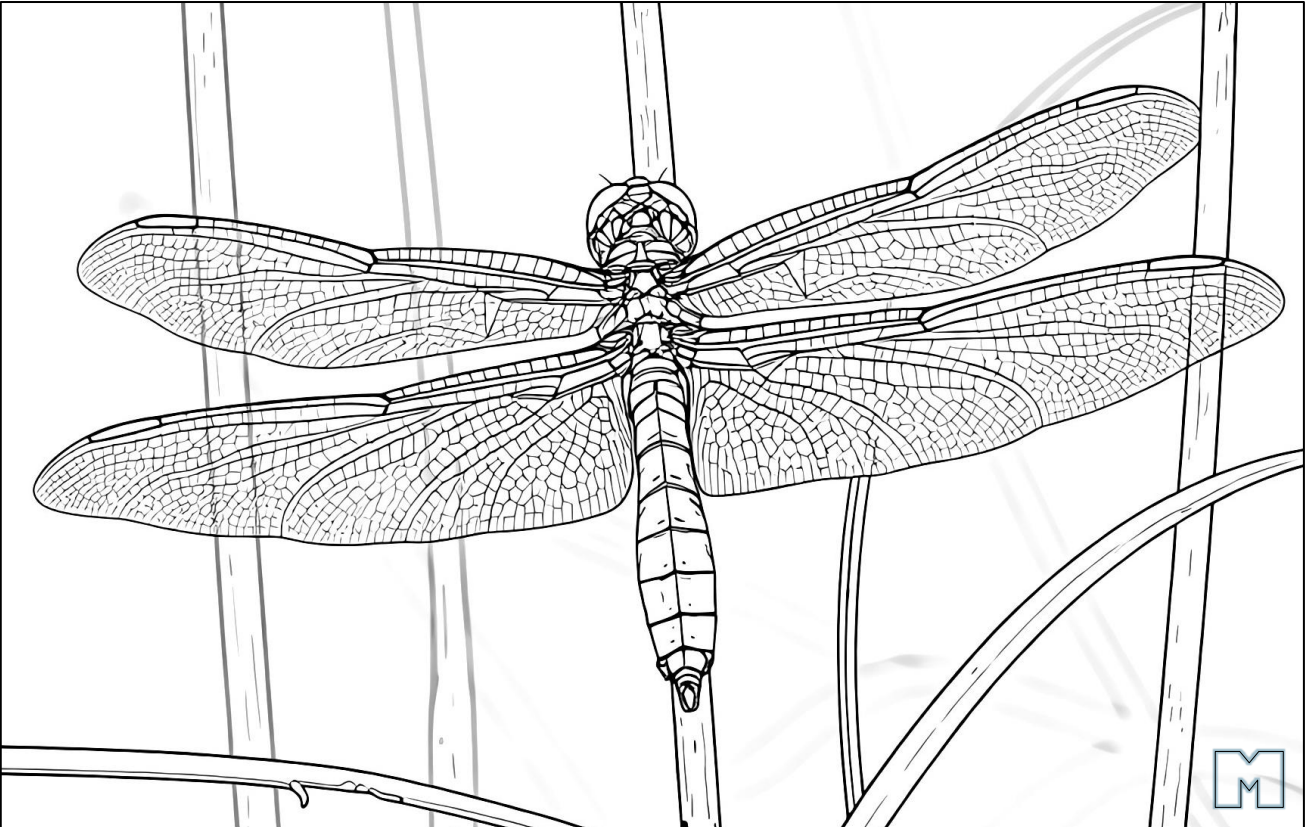
Both sexes have large brown patches on the base of the fore and hind wings. On mature males, the brown patches are darker and edged by powdery blue bands.

Widow Skimmers can be found perching near lakes, ponds, and other water bodies.



Widow Skimmer Range Map, [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org), May 2026

# Widow Skimmer



## About this Book

All photos in this book (except the one below) were taken by Bruce Taterka in the northwest part of New Jersey, mostly Sussex and Warren Counties. Dragonfly diagrams were created by Bruce Taterka. Coloring images were created using [www.mimi-panda.com](http://www.mimi-panda.com). All images and diagrams, and this entire book, may be freely used and reproduced for **non-commercial purposes**. This book may not be offered for sale.

## About the Author

Bruce Taterka is a retired high-school Environmental Science teacher. He enjoys exploring the world's natural places with his wife, Tanya Sulikowski. At home, Bruce enjoys hiking through the forests and along the streams of northwestern New Jersey and photographing wildlife, especially dragonflies.

Bruce is the coauthor, with Tanya Sulikowski, of the New Jersey School of Conservation's Wildlife Pocket Guide series. As of June 2026, he is approaching 8,000 wildlife observations on iNaturalist. His photographs can also be found on Instagram.



**Harlequin Darter on the author's face.**

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iNaturalist](#)**



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Instagram](#)**



**[This book and  
the NJSOC  
Wildlife Pocket  
Guides](#)**

