



September 12, 2022

Contributed by Lin Moeller

THE DRAGONFLY—A FASCINATING INSECT

During my almost daily walks down our lane to check for mail, I notice the numerous dragonflies quickly moving about, above the meadow grasses, barely giving a quick pose for the camera! Although we always see them air borne and flitting about, they are actually classified as an aquatic species.

There are several species from the large, dark three-inch ones to smaller iridescent species. Its name *Anisoptera* is from the Greek meaning 'unequal wing' as the hind wing is broader than the fore



wing. All have transparent wings.

They are one of the oldest insects on earth with fossils of much larger ones dating back 325 million years.

Dragonflies begin and spend most of their life as nymphs living in the water, depending on the species from two months to over three years. The adult female near the end of her life, lays eggs either directly on the water's surface or on the emergent water plants. After hatching and going through

several nymphal stages, when it is ready to morph into an adult, it stops preying on insects, and rests on the water's surface as it adapts to breathing air. It then climbs up an emergent plant. Its nymph exoskeleton slowly dries and splits, allowing the adult dragonfly to emerge. Sadly, the adult stage lasts only a few weeks, flitting about meadows and gardens devouring insects. Too bad Japanese beetles are not on their diet!

