

Dragonflies and Damselflies of Mill Creek Nature Center

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Dragonflies and damselflies are members of the scientific order Odonata (meaning “toothed”). Dragonflies belong to the suborder Anisoptera (meaning “uneven-winged”), and damselflies belong to the suborder Zygoptera (meaning “even-winged”).

Dragonflies, which are generally larger and chunkier than damselflies, perch with their wings opened and have eyes that connect at top of the head. Damselflies are smaller and more slender; perch with their wings closed over their abdomen; and possess eyes that do not connect. There are, per usual, a few exceptions to these rules but they are a good place to start in differentiating dragons and damsels.

Mill Creek Nature Center and the Ivy Creek Greenway possess many distinct habitats including sandy streams, well vegetated wetlands, shaded swamps and sloughs, and storm-water retention ponds. This diversity of habitats is the reason for the impressive odonate diversity. Currently, 63 species of odonates have been observed at Mill Creek Nature Center and the Ivy Creek Greenway; 43 of the 63 species are dragonflies and 20 are damselflies.

Zygoptera - Damselflies

Ebony Jewelwing
Swamp Spreadwing
Great Spreadwing*
Slender Spreadwing
Southern Spreadwing
Variable Dancer*
Powdered Dancer
Blue-fronted Dancer*
Blue-ringed Dancer
Blue-tipped Dancer
Familiar Bluet
Double-striped Bluet*
Azure Bluet
Slender Bluet
Turquoise Bluet*
Stream Bluet
Orange Bluet*
Citrine Forktail
Fragile Forktail
Furtive Forktail*

Anisoptera - Dragonflies

Gray Petaltail
Shadow Darner
Common Green Darner
Comet Darner
Fawn Darner
Swamp Darner
Lancet Clubtail
Ashy Clubtail
Blackwater Clubtail*
Dragonhunter
Common Sanddragon
Black-shouldered Spinyleg

Stream Cruiser*
Prince Baskettail
Common Baskettail
Clamp-tipped Emerald*
Mocha Emerald
Calico Pennant*
Halloween Pennant
Banded Pennant
Swift Setwing
Eastern Pondhawk
Little Blue Dragonlet
Blue Corporal
Spangled Skimmer
Golden-winged Skimmer*
Slaty Skimmer
Bar-winged Skimmer
Great Blue Skimmer
Widow Skimmer
Twelve-spotted Skimmer*
Common Whitetail
Painted Skimmer
Roseate Skimmer
Blue Dasher
Swift Setwing
Wandering Glider
Spot-winged Glider
Eastern Amberwing
Blue-faced Meadowhawk
Autumn Meadowhawk*
Carolina Saddlebags
Black Saddlebags

* species that have been observed less than 3 times