



The Dragonhunter

#10: Summer 2010

Newsletter of the New Hampshire Dragonfly Survey

(The NHDS is a partnership of N.H. Audubon, N.H. Fish and Game, and UNH Cooperative Extension)

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www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Nongame/dragonflies.html

Coordinator's Greeting,

As I think most of you have realized by now, the spring of 2010 was simply phenomenal for dragonflies in New Hampshire. Not only was the season record early, but we were blessed with warm sunny weather for most of June—in stark contrast to the monsoons of 2009. Attendance at the three training workshops (Concord, Haverhill, and Lancaster) set an all time record with 85 participants! Hopefully some of these new recruits (yes, I mean YOU!) will contribute valuable data for northern parts of the state this year and next. In the articles that follow, I'll provide a summary of some the finds for the year-to-date, and throw down a challenge for Dragonhunters new and old.

Happy hunting!
Pam

2010 Highlights: April-June

Global Warming Anyone?

Readers of the "Summer 2009" issue of *The Dragonhunter* may recall that I commented on the fact that 8 species of odonates were flying in April last year, and that this was a remarkable event for New Hampshire. This year we managed to trump that previous record, and trump it in style. The season started on April 14, when Dennis Skillman reported Hudsonian Whitefaces in Brentwood, two weeks earlier than any previous record. In the ensuing weeks, there were also record early dates for Eastern Forktail, Springtime Darner, White Corporal, and at least half a dozen other species. By the end of May, over 70 species had been recorded in the state. Compare that to a comment I made back in 2008, when 40 species in the same time frame was cause for celebration. Time will tell what this exceptionally early season will mean for activity in September, but I'm sure we'll all be out there finding out firsthand.

Boghaunters Revisited

For the 2nd year in a row, volunteers found two new sites for the state-endangered Ringed Boghaunter. This brings the number of towns with the species to 11, all to the south and east of Concord. Ebony Boghaunter was found at one new site (Strafford).

It's interesting to note that there are three towns with both species present in close proximity (Hooksett, Northwood, and Strafford), indicating that we are located right at the edges of their respective ranges.

In the process of searching for Ringed Boghaunters in the Kingston cedar swamps on May 7, three of found something even better: a rare butterfly known as Hessel's Hairstreak. This cedar specialist had not been recorded in NH since the 1980s! Bob Shea took the photo below when the butterfly conveniently landed on the road in front of us.



A Good Spring for Clubtails

Volunteers searching along rivers in May and June turned up almost every species of clubtail known to occur in NH. Highlights included the rare Rapids Clubtail (a new site along the Blackwater River in Salisbury) and both species of pygmy clubtails. Holly Grant photographed this Southern Pygmy Clubtail in New Durham on May 31, providing a first record for Strafford County.



Bugs to Watch For - *Somatochlora*

Of the 17 species known to occur in NH, but not yet recorded during the NHDS, six are *Somatochlora* emeralds. These are predominantly northern dragonflies, and are much sought after by odonate enthusiasts because they are elusive and live in cool habitats such as bogs and fens. Even the common species are rarely reported because they tend to occur in low numbers, and are often not found at water like most other dragonflies.



Cricenti Bog in New London: a closed bog typical of many *Somatochlora* sites. Forcipate Emerald has been found here!

July is the peak month for most *Somatochlora* species, so all “Dragonhunters” are encouraged to try something a little different this month: look for dragonflies along wooded roads. While most of these emeralds breed in bogs or slow streams, they do a lot of foraging along open areas away from water. They tend to fly back and forth in a straight line, and in this context woods roads can be excellent places to find them, at least if you’re near breeding habitat. Bog-breeding species also patrol over the open bog mat.

Although these emeralds can be active at any time of day, some of the best hunting is in the late afternoon or early evening. At this time, many species will forage along roads, presumably eating the flies and mosquitoes that come out as the day cools down. Some species will also join damner swarms.

Catching emeralds requires a keen eye, patience, and a quick net. It’s best to watch where the dragonfly is patrolling, either along a road or over a bog, and get a feel for its pattern. It’s usually a lot easier to sit and wait for these guys than to try running them down (especially on a bog!). If you’ve had luck with darners, *Somatochlora* are actually a little easier in many ways, perhaps because they are more likely to fly in a straight line.

To the right is a brief summary of the *Somatochlora* of northern NH. Not included are three more widespread species (Clamp-tipped, Brush-tipped, and Williamson’s Emeralds), and two that occur in cedar swamps in southern Rockingham County (Coppery and Mocha Emeralds). Consult your field guide or “species supplement” for more details. If you need the latter, it is available at the NHDS Google Group site:

<http://groups.google.com/group/nh-dragonfly-survey?hl=en>

And while you’re searching for emeralds, especially in the far north, be sure to keep an eye out for three rare darners: Sedge, Zigzag, and Subarctic. All of these have only been recorded 1-2 times in NH, so finding one would be a major feat!

Some *Somatochlora* emeralds of Northern New Hampshire:

S. albicincta - Ringed Emerald. Restricted to high elevation lakes of the White Mountains and northern NH.

S. cingulata - Lake Emerald. Similar to above, but more widespread. Also occurs in the western highlands. Worth looking for at high lakes and ponds in the Monadnock Region.

S. elongata - Ski-tipped Emerald. Primarily found along slow streams. Also look for it along moss-lined ditches or outlets of beaver ponds. This is probably the most frequently encountered species of those listed here.

S. forcipata - Forcipate Emerald. Similar in distribution to the previous, and often in similar habitats. Also commonly found in bogs, especially those where there is relatively little open water.

S. franklini - Delicate Emerald. A smallish and slender species of northern bogs, often in closed bogs with scattered small trees. So far only recorded in Coos County.

S. incurvata - Incurvate Emerald. A large species known only from Kingston and Church Pond, but it could easily occur elsewhere. Prefers *Sphagnum* bogs.

S. kennedyi - Kennedy’s Emerald. A small, early-flying species, with the bulk of NH records in June. Most are from the north, but a handful of records from southern counties suggest that it is more widespread.

S. minor - Ocellated Emerald. Another small northern species of bogs and small streams. Mostly at lower elevations.

To test your identification skills, below are two *Somatochlora* species in the hand. The upper bug was captured at a bog in Maine on June 25, 2010, while the lower is from Concord on August 17, 2008. And that’s all I’m going to tell you except that 1) they are approximately to scale and 2) both species DO occur in NH. Answers in the next *Dragonhunter*.

