

Dragonfly Facts

Scientific name: *Odonata* or "tooth-jawed"

Dragonflies mouths were at one time the only way scientists could classify them, but now they also study the differences in dragonfly species' wings to tell them apart.

Here are some facts about dragonflies:

- » Dragonflies lay eggs in the water. They stay nymphs in the water with gills all but 2 months of their up-to-6-year lifespan. Their habitats are lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands.
- » Dragonflies metamorphosize from nymph to adults, just like butterflies and moths; but without a cocoon and in one night.
- » Dragonfly's eyes have about 30,000 lenses that see all the way around, but not very well.
- » Dragonflies are strong flyers with two sets of transparent, lacy wings. Their wings only beat 30 times per second (bees flap 300, flies 1000). They can fly like helicopters in all directions, forward, backward, up, and down as well as hovering. The fastest dragonfly was in Australia and flew 36 mph.
- » The oldest dragonfly fossil is from the Carboniferous period over 300 million years ago. The largest dragonfly fossil had a 2½ foot wingspan. Today, the largest wingspan on dragonflies is 7½ inches on some dragonflies that live in Costa Rica.
- » There are 5,000 dragonfly species, found all over the world except Antarctica. Only 450 of them are found in the United States. Only 80 species are found in British Columbia, while most are in the remote tropics.
- » Dragonflies are carnivores. They eat most other small insects like gnats, mosquitoes, and flies. They have mandibles and grab their prey with their legs in a "basket" shape. Their main predators are birds.



Dragonfly Drill

1. How long can dragonflies live?

2. How do nymph dragonflies change into adults?

3. If they have 2 sets of wings, how many wings do they have?

4. How fast was the fastest dragonfly? Where did it live?

