

**Observation from Dragonfly Walk
June 18, 2016
Norm Barrett**

Thanks to everybody who participated in the Rogue River Preserve Dragonfly walk on June 18. Weather turned out to be excellent for us and the dragonflies. Below is a list of species we saw on the walk, with accompanying photos for those who have already forgotten what they looked like! By the way, a special thanks to my highly successful team of netters that kept me well supplied with specimens to show everyone.

RED-VEINED MEADOWHAWK



The Red-veined Meadowhawk was the first species we encountered on the walk. We had several, mostly juveniles, in the meadows and away from the water.

BLUE-EYED DARNER



The darners we saw were generally foraging out over the meadows and impossible to approach or net. Not everybody got to see Blue-eyed Darners and not everybody got to see dragonflies breeding. This position is called the wheel, or the heart, or being in copula if you want to get technical. In this position the female (below) is taking the sperm from the male where he has stored in in the second abdominal segment.

BEAVERPOND BASKETTAIL



The Beaverpond Baskettails we saw were foraging over the small wet area alongside the river. Luckily we netted one and could look at the cerci (the sexual appendages at the end of the tail). On this species there is a small downward hook, just visible in this photo that identifies the species.



Someone in the group asked why the name “Baskettail”. This photo of a female shows how the abdomen spreads out to form a basket that fills with eggs. She then can drop a cluster of eggs all at once.

WIDOW SKIMMER



Fairly early in the walk we encountered a juvenile Widow Skimmer that looked much like this one on the left. This happens to be a female and will look like this throughout her life. A young male would also look like this but as he matures his abdomen develops a very pale blue/white powder coating seen on the right.

COMMON WHITETAIL



The closely related Common Whitetail has the same color change as the Widow Skimmer in the males. The left photo is a young male. The right is a mature male.

8-SPOTTED SKIMMER



12-SPOTTED SKIMMER



The 8-spotted and the 12-spotted Skimmers are named for the number of black spots on their wings. In flight try to look at the wing tips. If the tip is black it is a 12-spotted Skimmer. If it is white it is an 8-spotted Skimmer. Good luck seeing the wing tips! Note that a 4-spotted Skimmer has 2 large dark wing spots instead of 4. I have been told that in Europe they do actually have 4.

FLAME SKIMMER



CARDINAL MEADOWHAWK



We saw 2 red dragonflies on the walk. The first was the Flame Skimmer, seen along the small creek. It has a red/orange body with the red forming a large patch on the inner half of the wings. The Cardinal Meadowhawk tends to be a redder red and has red veins on the front of the wings, instead of a solid colored patch on the wing. They also have a very obvious white spot on the side of the body (thorax).

BLUE DASHER



WESTERN PONDHAWK



We also saw two small blue dragonflies on the walk. The Blue Dasher has a white face. Males are blue when mature but are black and white striped as juveniles, looking like females. The male Western Pondhawk has a lime green face and a blue body when it is mature. Young ones are lime green, like the females.

DOT-TAILED WHITEFACE



The appropriately named Dot-tailed Whiteface has a white face and a dot on its tail (abdomen). We netted one.

We were also lucky enough to find a few Damselflies. Damselflies are small dragonflies that perch with their wings folded back against or above their body. They also have long, needle thin abdomens.

PACIFIC FORKTAIL



Male Forktails are easily identified by the dark abdomen with a blue tip. Most females also follow this pattern. Here is a pair of Pacific Forktails. We found this species by the slough we visited last. Note the male, on the left has a black thorax front with 4 blue dots. The female has stripes there. Females can be blue, white, or a pale salmon pink with the black stripes.

NORTHERN BLUET



Bluets are really hard to ID. First, a bluet folds its wings down along the sides of the body when perched. Dancers (below) fold the wings up above the body. Male of both are blue and black. Females are a variety of colors but generally lack the intense blue of the males. Someone with a sadistic streak netted this female and passed it to me. I think it may possibly have a chance of being a Northern Bluet. I base this on having netted and confirmed a male of that species at the same place a week earlier and this female looks appropriate!

VIVID DANCER



This is a pair of Vivid Dancers in the courtship phase of their relationship. If she accepts him she will curl her abdomen forward for the sperm exchange. They are one of the dragonfly species that remain joined during egg laying. Note how the wings are above the body when resting, identifying them as dancers.