

## Dennis Paulson: Dragonflies and damselflies of the east

Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2011, 538 pp, \$29.95, £19.95 (soft-back, ISBN: 978-0-691-12283-0), \$85.00, £59.00 (hardback, ISBN: 978-0-691-12283-0)

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This welcome guide is a companion to an earlier volume in the same series (Paulson 2009) dealing with the western fauna of North America, and follows the same clear and informative format. As a fully illustrated field guide to adults of the 336 species of Odonata in the region, it has the primary goals of enabling identification and presenting material on natural history to prompt wide interest in these already popular insects. The two books together comprise authoritative guides to the North American representatives, with the excellent colour photographs of living adults a major feature.

The book falls into three sections. The initial introduction is a wide-ranging account of the natural history of the Odonata, reflecting Paulson's wise perspective that 'they are such interesting animals that all who observe them in the field should know something about their lives'. It includes original and very readable accounts of many aspects of adult behaviour and biology, again with abundant high quality colour photographs adorning the book. I particularly liked the use of labeled colour photographs (rather than more conventional line diagrams) to indicate morphological features. Dennis Paulson writes enthusiastically and lucidly, and this section of the book encapsulates much very practical advice from his own extensive experiences with Odonata. The values of collecting (including roles in conservation) are noted, together with clear directions for specimen treatment. The short section on conservation is a succinct summary of threatening processes, and the limitations of the range maps given for each species are noted. Encouragingly, it is also noted (in context, p. 371) that the only odonate (*Somatochlora hineana*)

listed under the United States Endangered Species Act is now known to be 'much more widespread than was known when it was listed'.

The two major sections of the guide are systematic treatments of the damselflies (87 species) and dragonflies (249 species), each given a common name, some novel. The species accounts each have one or more photographs, a small range map, and the accompanying text written in a standard, easily comparable, format. That text includes sections on descriptive features and identification, detailing differences in appearance from related or similar-looking taxa, notes on natural history, the kinds of biotope frequented, flight season (with notes on differences across the range, where this is broad). In cases where examination of terminalia or other morphology is needed for clear identification (such as for the 'bluets', *Enallagma*) clear outline drawings of the features are gathered together for easy comparison, and given on clearly demarcated blue pages to render them easily found by 'page-flicking'. That use is facilitated also by a very comprehensive index to scientific and common names, a glossary of technical terms, and a short array of useful references and resources available to discover more about Odonata.

The book is compact, excellently produced and presented on high quality paper. It will have wide and enduring use, and be of immense value to students of Odonata in North America, and as an exemplar for emulation, and envy, elsewhere.

### Reference

Paulson D (2009) Dragonflies and damselflies of the west. Princeton University Press, Princeton

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