

## The Great Lakes Entomologist

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Volume 45  
Numbers 1 & 2 - Spring/Summer 2012 *Numbers*  
1 & 2 - Spring/Summer 2012

Article 10

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April 2012

**Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East. Dennis Paulson. 2011. Princeton University Press, 576 pp. , 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, 675 color photos. 350 line illus. 333 maps. ISBN: 9780691122830. (paperback) \$29.95.**

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### Recommended Citation

O'Brien, Mark F. 2012. "Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East. Dennis Paulson. 2011. Princeton University Press, 576 pp. , 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, 675 color photos. 350 line illus. 333 maps. ISBN: 9780691122830. (paperback) \$29.95.," *The Great Lakes Entomologist*, vol 45 (1)  
Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/tgle/vol45/iss1/10>

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## BOOK REVIEW

*DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES OF THE EAST.* Dennis Paulson. 2011. Princeton University Press, 576 pp. , 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, 675 color photos. 350 line illus. 333 maps. ISBN: 9780691122830. (paperback) \$29.95.

For many years, Odonatologists “toiled” in relative obscurity. Oh, we knew that dragonflies and damselflies were really fascinating, but with few books other than Needham and Westfall and the 3 volumes of *Odonata of Canada and Alaska*, it appeared that identifying Odes required arcane knowledge and a fascination for wing venation. That has all changed for the better over the past 20 years. The Ode community has grown tremendously, and as a result, we have had benefited from the publication of many nice regional guides, as well as more comprehensive volumes. It’s hard to have a successful guide without an audience, so as the guides get better, the audience benefits and grows, and interest in the Odonata has never been larger than it is now.

With that bit of background, I am pleased to review Dennis Paulson’s latest comprehensive guide that will certainly be the most-carried Odonata book in the coming years. This book is well-suited for Michigan Odonata enthusiasts, as all of the species in the state are found within.

I truly believe that if there is such a thing as the “must-have” book, *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East* is it. Paulson has paid attention to the shortcomings of some previous comprehensive guides, and has incorporated some very useful features and additional information that makes this book the best yet. It contains all 336 species of Odonata that have been found in eastern North America. Not just dragons **or** just damsels, but **all** Odonata. That means **one** book for everything. It has excellent full-color photographs that are large enough to see coloration and patterns that are important, as well as line drawings of genitalia of males and females where they are important to separate out species. I have used a lot of identification manuals, and I find that the inclusion of line drawings of claspers and subgenital plates, etc., are actually more useful than most photographs. One can simplify the important features in a drawing and it does make identification much easier. Therefore, that is an excellent addition to this book, especially when grouped on pages where appropriate. I also really like his introductory chapter on morphology, with its well-labeled and clear images.

The maps are also well-done with range approximations that are based on data from *Odonata Central* and from the dot-maps project that was published by Nick Donnelly in the *Bulletin of American Odonatology*. The maps are just large enough to give the reader a good idea of the species’ ranges. Some of the changes in outlier dots and recent range extensions are not seen in these maps, but that’s where regional guides or atlases are still very relevant and necessary.

*Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East* is well organized, and I really appreciate the effort and arguments that Dennis Paulson makes for the collecting of vouchers and the value of collections. These aspects are rarely emphasized in field guides, and we cannot advance the science of the group without collections. In addition, his explanation of the methods used for preservation, study, and photography are well-done. The species accounts are very informational with reference to similar species when appropriate. The natural history summaries for genera are excellent, and valuable information for any Ode enthusiast. I like the presentation and the format of the book, and I really have nothing but praise for it. It is printed on glossy paper, so be careful in the field. The text is densely packed on the pages, and at 538 pages, that is quite understandable. Nobody wants to lug a 750-page book around. At the suggested retail price of \$29.95, this book is such a bargain, that it might be good to buy a couple of them. There is also an e-book version, which I have not seen, but it would probably

be very useful on a color e-book-reader in the field such as the Kindle Fire or Nook Color. I doubt that most people want to carry an Apple iPad into the field.

In short, if you are going to buy any book to identify Odonata in eastern North America --*Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East* is that book.

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