



Outdoors

Our lives in the Northwoods

Wildflower Watch

This week's featured flower
SPOTTED TOUCH-ME-NOT



Look for the **Touch-Me-Not**, otherwise known as Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis*, near water, where it often grows in small patches. It's called Touch-Me-Not because the seed pods, once mature, can "explode" if even lightly touched, sending the tiny seeds scattering.

The dangling, yellow flowers resemble a "horn of plenty" and have numerous tiny red spots, mostly towards the opening of the flower.

This is a valuable nectar source for hummingbirds in late summer. It's also useful for humans, as the sap found inside the translucent stems is a common remedy for the itch and sting and nettles or poison ivy.

Outdoors in brief

DNR asks hunters not to shoot collared bears

REGIONAL — The Minnesota bear hunting season opens Tuesday, Sept. 1, and the Department of Natural Resources is asking hunters to avoid shooting marked research bears.

These bears are marked with distinctively large, colorful ear tags and have radio collars.

Researchers with the DNR are monitoring about 20 radio-collared black bears across the state, especially in bear hunting zones 27, 25 and 45, and in parts of the no-quota zone. Most of them are in or near the Chippewa National Forest between Grand Rapids and Bigfork. Others are near Voyageurs National Park or around Camp Ripley.

"We're asking hunters to avoid shooting these valuable research bears. These collared bears give us much of the data we use in bear management," said Dave Garshelis, DNR bear research scientist.

Trapping new bears every year to replace the ones killed cannot substitute for long-term data on individuals.

The bear's coat often hides the collar, especially in the fall, and most of the collars are black. But all collared bears have large (3 by 2 inch), colorful ear tags so hunters can simply identify a collared animal by these large tags, whether or not a collar is visible. The tags should be plainly visible when a bear is at a bait, or on trail cam photos.

DNR officials recognize that a hunter may not be able to see a radio collar or ear tags in some situations. For this reason, taking a bear with a radio collar is legal; however, waiting a few minutes to get a clear view of the bear's head would reveal whether it has large ear tags, which indicates that it is collared.

Any hunters who do shoot a collared bear should bring the collar to a bear registration station and call the DNR Wildlife Research Office in Grand Rapids at 218-328-8879 or 218-328-8874 to report shooting a collared bear.



THE ODONATA

Dragons on the wing

Embarrass nature enthusiast captures the beauty of a remarkable insect family

For most residents of the North Country, our knowledge and interest in dragonflies can be as fleeting as their appearance over the dock, the patio, or the garden. I've always looked at the dragonflies as my allies when I'm working in my vegetable beds. By early June, the mosquitoes and deer flies are typically out in full force, which can make it pretty miserable to spend time outdoors, at least here on the edge of the Lost Lake Swamp.

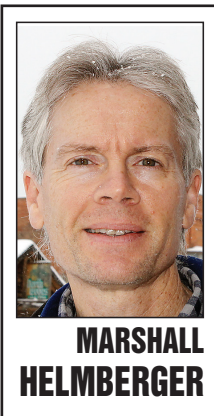
But then the dragonflies arrive, having emerged from the watery world in which they live most of their lives, to spend a few weeks putting the fear of the dragon into those pesky biting bugs. Often, they arrive like a squadron of fighter jets and, just like magic, the deer flies seem to disappear.

For a long time, I was content to cheer them on, without paying much more attention.

It was much the same for many years for David Smith and Suzanne Winckler, who spend the warmer months on their former Finnish homestead in Pike Township. They've been students of the natural world for years. We're friends, as well. We've birded together numerous times, visited remnant prairies in northwestern Minnesota together, and searched for early summer orchids in the Lost Lake Swamp.

Yet, up until this year, the subject of dragonflies never really came up. It's now their newest obsession.

"It's a little embarrassing I've overlooked them all these years," said Suzanne, who initially followed David's lead into the world of these remarkable insects, but has since found them to be as fascinating as he does. Longtime, avid birders, they more often train their binoculars on these smaller subjects these days. Even with binoculars, however, it can be difficult to identify dragonflies in the field. So, David has begun photographing them as well, which makes identification



MARSHALL HELMBERGER



See DRAGONS...pg. 5B



All photos by David Smith

Top: A White-faced Meadowhawk perches with its abdomen raised to reduce overheating in the sunny meadows where this species likes to hunt.

Above: A mating pair of Common Green Darners in what's known as the "wheel position." The female, (below) is held in place by claspers at the tip of the male's abdomen.

Above: A Blue Dasher is among a number of species of dragonflies that rest their wings in a forward position.

Left: An Ebony Jewelwing is one of about 25 species of damselflies found in the North Country.

Fishing reports

Ely area

Walleye fishing slowed considerably this past week as several fronts blew through the area. Still several anglers reported an excellent trolling bite. Deep diving crankbaits that reach 15-30 feet were key to anglers success. Anglers simply trolled over large flats or open

water during the evening hours.

Lake trout fishing has been good this past week. Anglers have been catching lakers trolling spoons with leadcore or with down riggers. Anglers have been trolling over deep water fishing 20-30 feet down.

Courtesy of Arrowhead Outdoors, Ely

LAKE COUNTRY FORECAST

from NOAA weather

Friday					Saturday					Sunday					Monday					Tuesday				
81 60					73 55					74 54					73 53					71 47				
Ely	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Emb.	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Cook	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Orr	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.	Tower	Hi	Lo	Prec.	Sn.
08/10	73	58	0.09		08/10	75	58	0.19		08/10	75	57	0.74		08/10	75	54	1.51		08/10	75	56	0.65	
08/11	76	45	0.00		08/11	75	46	0.00		08/11	75	55	0.00		08/11	79	52	0.00		08/11	75	47	0.00	
08/12	80	48	0.00		08/12	79	49	0.00		08/12	79	56	0.00		08/12	79	52	0.00		08/12	78	50	0.00	
08/13	79	51	0.00		08/13	79	49	0.00		08/13	78	56	0.00		08/13	73	57	0.00		08/13	78	51	0.00	
08/14	77	62	0.23		08/14	75	61	0.30		08/14	75	59	0.78		08/14	72	61	0.92		08/14	76	63	0.65	
08/15	75	57	0.76		08/15	75	55	1.17		08/15	71	56	0.81		08/15	73	54	1.02		08/15	73	55	1.40	
08/16	75	49	0.01		08/16	75	48	0.00		08/16	72	56	0.00		08/16	75	54	0.00		08/16	74	48	0.00	
Total			13.32		YTD Total			13.91		YTD Total			19.06		YTD Total			NA		YTD Total				15.41

DRAGONS...Continued from page 4B

far easier. "I've always wanted to know what I was looking at but was always frustrated trying to remember details in order to identify them in a guide," said David. "When I started taking photos of insects, it made all the difference. You can sit at home at your leisure and figure out what these things are."

Dragonflies make a particularly appealing target for his photography, both because they're large for insects and because they are often brightly colored. Suzanne offers a more superlative description: "They are absolutely stunningly gorgeous," she said.

The couple's interest in dragonflies now extends well beyond their backyard in Embarrass. They observe and document dragonflies during the winter months near their home in northwestern Mexico. And they recently traveled to northern Wisconsin to look for species they hadn't found here in Minnesota.

Just as birders go "birding", they even have a name for their treks in search of dragonflies.

"We call it 'odonating,'" said Suzanne, a reference to the family of insects, Odonata (pronounced OH-doh-nah-tah), which includes the dragonflies and their close relatives, the typically-more delicate damselflies, both of which appeal to David and Suzanne. The North Country is home to about 70 species of dragonflies and another 25 species of damselflies.

David, a retired research cell biologist for the Mayo Clinic, is detail oriented and that's where he finds the most satisfaction



Above: David Smith, camera in action, on a recent hunt for an Elfin Skimmer in an Embarrass bog.



Above right: A Green-striped Darner captured in flight.



Right: A Kennedy's Emerald in the process of emerging from its nymph case.

from his newfound interest. "As you really look at the detail, you just get fascinated by the beauty of these creatures," he said.

For David, in particular, the interest in Odonates goes beyond just hunting, photographing, and identifying species he hasn't seen before. He's also delved into learning much more about the lives of the species he finds. While there isn't a vast literature on the Odonata, there are certainly some books that David has found extremely helpful as he pursues his newfound passion. You'll find more on his recommended books at the end of this story.

The number of books on the subject is likely to continue to increase as interest in the

Odonata grows. Some have compared "dragonflying" as it's more often described, to the early days of birding, and it has attracted a wide spectrum of interest, from the casual to the hardcore.

David admits he's moved beyond mere casual interest. "You could call me an enthusiast," he said. His involvement now includes corresponding with some of the top experts in the world on the Odonata, whom he has found to be remarkably accessible and encouraging of his work.

"Turns out all these people are extremely nice, at least as long as you're talking about dragonflies," he said. "They're interested in novel reports, and share in the excitement of seeing

something unusual."

While David hasn't found anything out of the ordinary in Minnesota, at least not yet, he's had more interesting finds near his winter home in Alamos, Mexico, so he's had plenty to talk about with some of the field's top researchers.

It's all helped to fuel his interest in the hunt for new Odonata, and both he and Suzanne are routinely exploring new habitats around the North Country. Suzanne, a semi-retired journalist and longtime birder, notes that Odonates are often as tied to specific habitats as birds. The damselflies, in particular, are found along streams, but even within that broad category of habitat are numerous micro-habitats, that depend on the type of vegetation found streamside, or whether the location is sunny or shaded. "It's fun to go into all the different habitats and have an idea of what might just turn up where," said Suzanne.

There's also the question of when. While most of us recognize that dragonflies are only active in the summer here in the North Country, the summer can actually be divided into many of

its own "seasons" when you can expect to find certain Odonata. These insects spend the vast majority of their lives as underwater nymphs, and only live as modern day dragons for a few weeks each summer. Certain species emerge for their reign in the sky in early June, only to be replaced by other species in turn as the summer wears on. With many dozens of species, it's a lot to learn, but for now David and Suzanne are eagerly soaking it all up.

And their hunt for new species shows how interest in Odonates can lead to new explorations. David is now on the hunt for a highly specialized species of dragonfly, known as the elfin skimmer, which at just three-quarters of an inch in length, is the smallest dragonfly in North America. They're found almost exclusively in alkaline or calcareous floating bogs. He's now researching the locations of such formations in hopes of adding one of these tiny, bright blue dragons to his Odonata life list.

For Suzanne, delving into the world of the Odonata, is simply an extension of her and David's longtime interest in the natural world. "I can't imagine not having that base of interest in what's around me," she said. "It's what makes life rich."

Books on Odonata
Dragonflies of the North Woods, by Kurt Mead

Dragonflies and damselflies: A natural history, by Dennis Paulson.

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