

## BOOK REVIEW

**Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Algonquin Provincial Park and the Surrounding Area. By Colin D. Jones, Andrea Kingsley, Peter Burke and Matt Holder. Algonquin Field Guide Series, published by The Friends of Algonquin Park. 263 pp. ISBN 978-1-894993-29-6 (Soft cover: October 2008). \$28.95 CAN.**

This book is billed as a comprehensive field guide to the dragonflies and damselflies found in Algonquin Provincial Park and surrounding area, but it is much, much more than that. The coverage actually extends across south-central Ontario and into southwestern Quebec, and includes 135 out of the provincial total of 172 Odonata species. The detailed, full-colour illustrations set a new standard for the illustration of field guides with stunning watercolours showing the intricate colours of males, females and variants in brilliant detail.

The introductory text is excellent, with clear and nicely illustrated treatments of Odonata morphology, behaviour, and life cycle, but the real strength of this book is in the profusely illustrated and carefully organized identification tools that lead the reader to informative treatments of each species. There are no keys, but instead the authors have used tables and charts illustrated by line drawings, watercolors and some photographs. The nine families involved are easily separated using three colour pages devoted to diagnosing the families. Within each family there are pages combining line-drawings of the male and female genitalic characters that define the species. These are of tremendous value in confirming the identification of difficult species, but it is unlikely that the average user will refer to them very often; most users will instead identify their odonate finds by thumbing through the profusely illustrated species accounts in search of a “match”. Useful diagnostic characters are highlighted or indicated with arrows and captions, and actual size is indicated with a silhouette. Once a match is located, the reader is provided with a “description” (a one-paragraph diagnosis), a very useful discussion of similar species, and information about habitat, behaviour, abundance, and distribution. Flight period is given both in the text and in graphical form along the heading for each species.

This is a wonderful book that I think belongs on the shelf of every entomologist and naturalist in Ontario. Not only is it well organized, beautifully illustrated and informative, it is also well-packaged. At 14 x 21 cm, it is just the right size to fit into a jacket pocket or the outside pouch of a day pack, and it looks water-resistant and sturdy enough to hold up to a bit of bashing. My main criticism of the book centers on what might be perceived by some as its main strength, which is the degree to which it is focused on Algonquin Park.

As far as I know this book can only be purchased from bookstores or from Algonquin's website ([www.algonquinpark.on.ca](http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca)), which is likely to limit its readership despite the current popularity of Odonata among naturalists. The popular online bookseller Amazon.ca currently lists 36 books on dragonflies and damselflies (it is for good reason that dragonflies have been described as the "new butterflies"), but *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Algonquin Provincial Park* is not among them. This combination of limited availability and a local-sounding title is likely to limit the number of readers with interests outside the Algonquin area, which is unfortunate since this is a tremendously useful guide for most of Ontario, and indeed much of northeastern North America. I'm looking forward to a later edition, or a follow-up version including all 172 Ontario Odonata species!

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