



Dragonflies

Iridescent, jeweled "mosquito hawks"

Dragonflies are common in the Tsal-Luk-wah Prairie. From swimming larvae to flying adults, each part of this super predator's life cycle is closely linked to the various parts of the wet prairie. You can commonly see dragonflies between May and August.

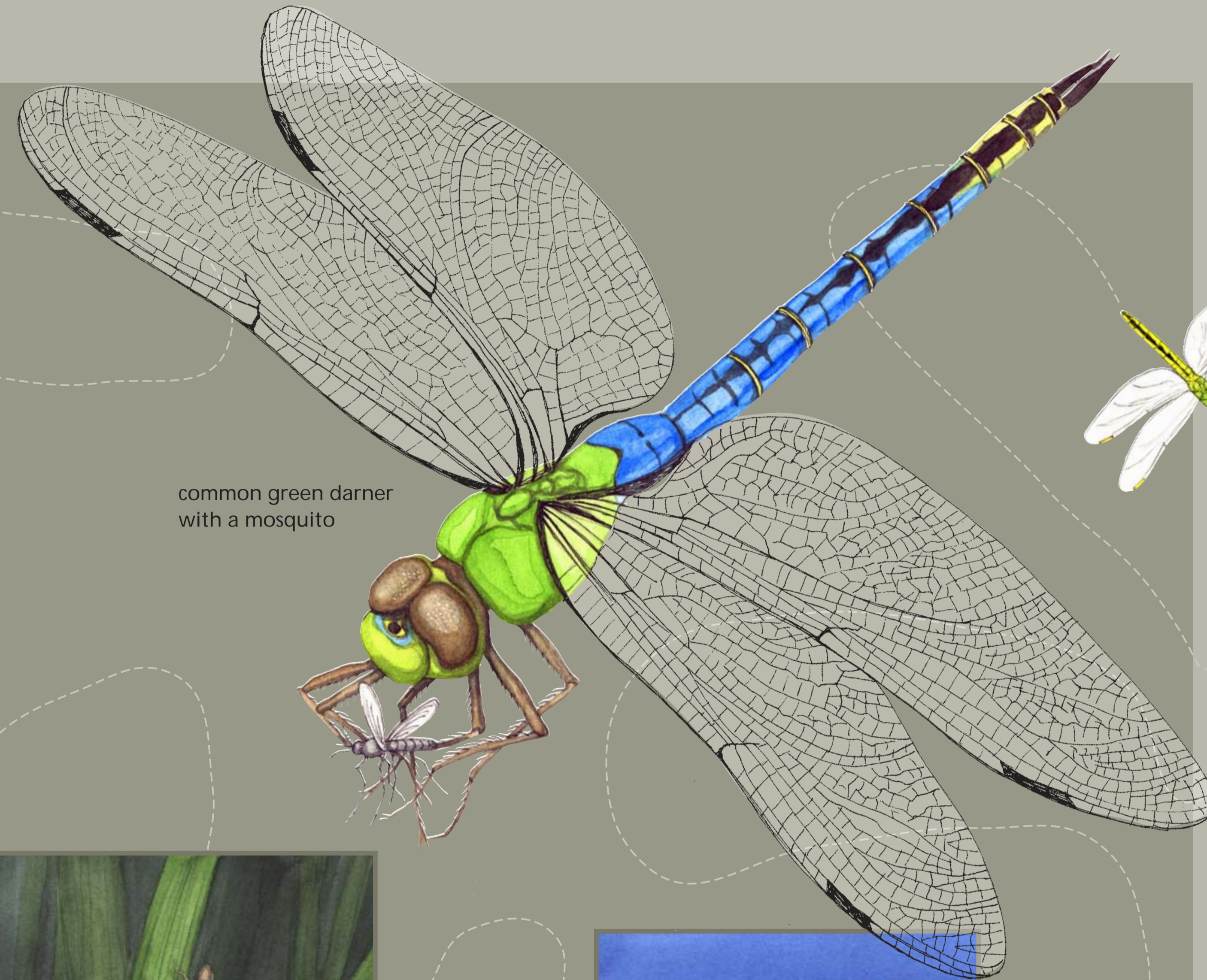
common green darner with a mosquito

Steve and Esther see many types of dragonflies. There are over 30 different species in the West Eugene Wetlands. "I didn't realize dragonflies came in so many different colors," says Steve. Help them find the two that are alike.



Do you see a place that dragonfly nymphs could live? (Remember, water has to be there all year long.)

Steve and Esther discovered so many new things at the wetlands. They can't wait to go back to tell Mr. Whitley that the wetlands are a great place to visit on a field trip.



The life of a dragonfly begins when an adult female dragonfly lays eggs on the surface of the water or inside the stems of aquatic plants, just below the water's surface. Eggs are laid in Amazon Creek or in a nearby pond that holds water year around.



Young dragonflies – called nymphs – spend all their time in the water. They hatch from eggs about two weeks after being laid and live in water for one to three years. The nymphs feed on mosquito or mayfly larvae or just about any other creature smaller than themselves. When prey swims by, they catch it by shooting out their lower lip, much like a frog catching food with its tongue.



When the nymphs are ready to become adults, they climb entirely out of the water on the stem of a plant. Splitting their skins, the adults emerge. A few hours later, their wings slowly unfold, dry, and harden, and they are ready to begin their new stage of life in the air.



Adult dragonflies cannot walk at all. They do everything while flying - hunt, feed and mate. With huge compound eyes and the ability to fly 35 miles per hour, they are like helicopters with jaws and 30,000 eyes! They catch prey by scooping it up in their basket-like legs.

