

# The Wood Duck

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*Aeshna canadensis* - the Canada Darner.  
Photo courtesy of Chris Earley. Not to scale...

# The First Annual Hamilton Odonate Count

by Carl Rothfels

The first annual Hamilton Odonate Count, held on July 11, 2004, was a great success. Eighteen people, divided into five teams, spent a fantastic day in the field, and when the results were tallied, we recorded a surprising 50 species!

The Hamilton Odonate Count is part of an increasing variety of insect counts, modeled after the popular Christmas Bird Counts. These counts seek to document the diversity and abundance of particular organisms - in this case, dragonflies and damselflies - within a given 15-mile diameter circle on a single day each year. They give a picture of the local diversity year after year, and provide a educational opportunity for getting people involved in an activity they might otherwise have passed by.

In the case of odonates, these benefits are particularly important since many naturalists are not familiar with these beautiful and (usually) easy to identify insects, and also because odonates can be important indicators of habitat health.

For the Hamilton Odonate Count, we choose the same circle as previously established for the Hamilton Butterfly Count (see article in the September 2004 issue of the *Wood Duck*). This circle, centred on Kirkwall in Flamborough, reaches into Wellington, Waterloo, and Brant Counties, and encompasses some particularly good odonate habitat, including large stretches of Spencer Creek, Valens Reservoir, Mill Creek, Puslinch Bog, and Crief Bog.

Our day's total of 50 species is a testament to the quality of these habitats. To put this



Above: *Libellula luctuosa*, the Widow Skimmer. Below: *Calopteryx maculata*, the Ebony Jewelwing. Photos: Brian Wylie.



result in perspective, the Algonquin Park Odonate Count (which is Ontario's oldest, attracting some of the most experienced odonate counters in the province, and is in an area full of excellent aquatic habitats) averages 49 species per year. Prior to this year, I would never have thought that Hamilton, with our general lack of cold, clean, fast moving waters, would be able to beat that average. Another way to put this result in perspective is to consider that, up to 2000, only 37 odonate species had been recorded for the entire Hamilton/Wentworth Region, and we found 50 in one day!

**Highlights:** We found an impressive diversity of odonates, including southern species like the red-winged *Hetaerina americana* (American Rubyspot), the tiny wasp-like *Perithemis tenera* (Eastern Amberwing), *Argia apicalis* (Blue-fronted Dancer), and *Enallagma anna* (River Bluet), locally-rare northern species like *Chromagrion conditum* (Aurora Damsel), *Libellula julia* (Chalk-fronted Skimmer), *Nehalennia gracilis* (Sphagnum Sprite – never common anywhere in the province, and extremely rare this far south), and *Leucorrhinia proxima* (Red-waisted Whiteface) and such generally scarce species as *Arigomphus villosipes* (Unicorn Clubtail), *Enallagma aspersum* (Azure Bluet), and the elegant *Lestes vigilax* (Swamp Spreadwing). It is difficult to imag-

ine another area in Ontario that could duplicate this particular variety of odonates.

The best find of the day was likely the *Dorocordulia libera* (Racquet-tailed Emerald) at Valens Reservoir; it's the first time this metallic green-black thread-waisted emerald has been recorded in Hamilton (BW, BC, ES.) Other new regional records include *Enallagma carunculatum* (Tule Bluet), *Enallagma civile* (Familiar Bluet), *Enallagma hageni* (Hagen's Bluet), and *Enallagma signatum* (Orange Bluet) all new for Wellington County (CJR, KB, GB, JB, MTJ), and *Ischnura posita* (Fragile Forktail) new for Waterloo Region (CJR, MTJ, JB).

While not new regional records, both *Leucorrhinia glacialis* (Crimson-ringed Whiteface) and *Leucorrhinia proxima* (Red-waisted Whiteface) may be new for the Hamilton Study Area (RC, RA, MP, NP, GS - they have been recorded from further north in Wellington County).

Alan Wormington found *Arigomphus furcifer* (Lilypad Clubtail), new for Wellington County, on the day before (during the Hamilton Butterfly Count); we found it again on the Odonate Count by Little Lake, on the northeast side of Puslinch Lake (CJR, JB, MTJ). Its close relative, *Arigomphus villosipes* (Unicorn Clubtail),

was another highlight. It's a provincially rare species whose Ontario population seems to be concentrated in the Hamilton Study Area. We found it twice during the count, once new for Waterloo Region (CJR, MTJ, JB) and at a new location along Spencer Creek (RC, RA, MP, NP, GS).

We also found a rare damselfly: *Enallagma anna*, the River Bluet. It was first discovered new for Ontario in 1998; we found it during the Count at two locations, one of them a new location in Hamilton (GL, JLS, IV, MF) and the second a first record for Waterloo Region (CJR, MTJ, JB).

**Participants:** Richard Aaron (RA), Glenn Barrett (GB), Kim Barrett (KB), Jerry Bloom (JB), Barb Charlton (BC), Bob Curry (RC), Marianne Fletcher (MF), Marc Johnson (MTJ), Bill Lamond (BL), Gordon Lewer (GL), Norm Pomfret (NP), Mary Pomfret (MP), Carl Rothfels (CJR), Elaine Serena (ES), Jenifer Sylvester (JLS), Glenda Slessor (GS), Ian Vaithlingam (IV), Brian Wylie (BW).

**References:** Regional statuses were determined by consulting the lists in Catling and Brownell's *Ontario Odonate Resource Guide* (2000), and by including more recent records with which I am familiar (but there could be post-2000 records that I've missed).



### Bateman Cards

It's that time of year again; the popular Robert Bateman season's greeting cards are back! This year, the Bateman design features "At the Cliff – Bobcat." Contact Zoë Green to pre-order yours today. They will also be available for purchase at the next monthly meeting for \$8.25 per box of 10, with proceeds going to support the HNC. They are available only while supplies last, so order yours today.



**Species List: Hamilton Ode Count****Total**

<b>Broad-winged Damselfly Family</b>		
<i>Calopteryx aequabile</i>	River Jewelwing	38
<i>Calopteryx maculata</i>	Ebony Jewelwing	627
<i>Hetaerina americana</i>	American Rubyspot	46
<b>Spread-winged Damselfly Family</b>		
<i>Lestes disjunctus</i> (cf)	Common Spreadwing	21
<i>Lestes dryas</i>	Emerald Spreadwing	78
<i>Lestes rectangularis</i>	Slender Spreadwing	17
<i>Lestes unguiculatus</i>	Lyre-tipped Spreadwing	99
<i>Lestes vigilax</i>	Swamp Spreadwing	4
<b>Pond Damselfly Family</b>		
<i>Amphiagrion saucium</i>	Eastern Red Damselfly	8
<i>Argia apicalis</i>	Blue-fronted Dancer	1
<i>Argia fumipennis</i>	Variable Dancer	79
<i>Argia moesta</i>	Powdered Dancer	11
<i>Chromagrion conditum</i>	Aurora Damselfly	1
<i>Enallagma anna</i>	River Bluet	11
<i>Enallagma aspersum</i>	Azure Bluet	10
<i>Enallagma carunculatum</i>	Tule Bluet	2
<i>Enallagma civile</i>	Familiar Bluet	155
<i>Enallagma ebrium</i>	Marsh Bluet	701
<i>Enallagma exsulans</i>	Stream Bluet	25
<i>Enallagma geminatum</i>	Skimming Bluet	12
<i>Enallagma hageni</i>	Hagen's Bluet	43
<i>Enallagma signatum</i>	Orange Bluet	346
<i>Ischnura posita</i>	Fragile Forktail	28
<i>Ischnura verticalis</i>	Eastern Forktail	251
<i>Nehalennia gracilis</i>	Sphagnum Sprite	2
<i>Nehalennia irene</i>	Sedge Sprite	33
<b>Darner Family</b>		
<i>Aeshna canadensis</i> (cf)	Canada Darner	1
<i>Aeshna interrupta</i>	Variable Darner	CW
<i>Aeshna umbrosa</i>	Shadow Darner	CW
<i>Anax junius</i>	Common Green Darner	81
<b>Clubtail Family</b>		
<i>Arigomphus furcifer</i>	Lilypad Clubtail	2
<i>Arigomphus villosipes</i>	Unicorn Clubtail	2
<b>Emerald Family</b>		
<i>Dorocordulia libera</i>	Racquet-tailed Emerald	1
<i>Epiplatia cynosura</i>	Common Baskettail	5
<i>Epiplatia princeps</i>	Prince Baskettail	4
<b>Skimmer Family</b>		
<i>Celithemis elisa</i>	Calico Pennant	6
<i>Celithemis eponina</i>	Halloween Pennant	3
<i>Erythemis simplicicollis</i>	Eastern Pondhawk	11
<i>Leucorrhinia glacialis</i>	Crimson-ringed Whiteface	2
<i>Leucorrhinia intacta</i>	Dot-tailed Whiteface	268
<i>Leucorrhinia proxima</i>	Red-waisted Whiteface	6
<i>Libellula julia</i>	Chalk-fronted Skimmer	1
<i>Libellula luctuosa</i>	Widow Skimmer	158
<i>Libellula lydia</i>	Common Whitetail	73
<i>Libellula pulchella</i>	Twelve-spotted Skimmer	81
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Skimmer	89
<i>Pachydiplax longipennis</i>	Blue Dasher	148
<i>Perithemis tenera</i>	Eastern Amberwing	1
<i>Sympetrum internum</i>	Cherry-faced Meadowhawk	13
<i>Sympetrum obtrusum</i>	White-faced Meadowhawk	37
<i>Sympetrum rubicundulum</i>	Ruby Meadowhawk	14
<i>Tramea lacerata</i>	Black Saddlebags	7
<i>Lestes</i> sp.	Unidentified spreadwings	355
<i>Enallagma</i> sp.	Unidentified bluets	1053
<i>Ischnura</i> sp.	Unidentified forktails	20
<i>Epiplatia</i> sp.	Unidentified baskettails	4
<i>Sympetrum</i> sp.	Unidentified meadowhawks	532
<b>Total Species:</b>		<b>50</b>
Total Species including Count Week ("CW"):		52
Total Individuals Identified:		3663
Total Individuals Seen:		5627

# Spencer Gorge Wildflowers

by Bill Lamond

A splendid hike with great weather! On July 3rd about 12 people showed up and a couple of other people were picked-up along the way. Anthony Goodban led us from Tew's Falls over to Webster's Falls, looking at the valley-rim oak forests and savanna remnants, including *Aureolaria virginica* (Downy False Foxglove) and *Helianthus divaricatus* (Woodland Sunflower). Then we headed down into the gorge at the Webster's Falls staircase.

We looked at the more mesic forest species within the gorge, including interesting species such as the ferns *Asplenium rhizophyllum* (Walking Fern) and *Polypodium virginianum* (Common Polypody) and the lily, *Disporum lanuginosum* (Yellow Mandarin). There were excellent views of the creek, slopes and cliffs from here. We cut across the old Dundas railway station site and started the ascent back up to Dundas Peak (using the more leisurely switchbacks). Noteworthy species here included *Quercus muehlenbergii* (Chinquapin Oak), *Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly Weed), *Andropogon gerardii* (Big Bluestem), and *Polymnia canadensis* (Small-flowered Leafcup).

Then we headed back along the valley rim to Tew's Falls, checking out things like *Lespedeza intermedia* (Wandlike Bush Clover), *Ceanothus americanus* (New Jersey Tea), and *Taenidia integerrima* (Yellow Pimpernel). Along the way we talked a lot about different plants, the natural history of Spencer Gorge and the prairie/savanna connection in the area.

Anthony distributed copies of the Hamilton prairie paper he presented at the North American Prairie Conference back in 1996 (published in 1999) as well as a site summary on Spencer Gorge from an MNR publication on the Escarpment ANSI's (Riley et al. 1996). The hike took just over four hours and everyone enjoyed it with some noting that it was more detailed than most hikes. Some participants were catching dragonflies and looking at butterflies which rounded out the hike very well. Thanks Anthony for an excellent outing!