

The Second Annual Hamilton Odonate Count

by Carl Rothfels

My description of last year's inaugural Hamilton Odonate Count (*Wood Duck* 58(2):27-9) was full of well-deserved superlatives, yet this year we've gone and topped ourselves! Fourteen people, in five groups, found 4979 individuals of a whopping 51 species over the five hours we were in the field on Sunday, July 3rd.

The diversity of species around was extraordinary; we surpassed last year's exceptional tally of 50 species, while missing several common species (we ran out of time to get to their locations). It was the best day of odonate searching I have ever had.

Location: The Hamilton Odonate Count uses the same area as the Hamilton Butterfly Count: a circle 15 miles in diameter, centred on the village of Kirkwall in Flamborough. It thus extends a short distance into Wellington, Waterloo, and Brant Counties, and encompasses some excellent odonate habitat, including large sections of Spencer Creek, Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve ("Crieff Bog"), Valens Conservation Area, Beverly Swamp, Shade's Mill Conservation Area, Mill Creek, Puslinch Lake, Puslinch Bog, and Little Lake.

Highlights: The 2005 count boasts eight species that were unrecorded in 2004. *Lestes eurinus*, the Amber-winged Spreadwing, was present in strong numbers (12 adults), in the gravel pit north of the Crieff Fen. This species, associated with sphagnum bogs and fishless



The Comet Darner (*Anax longipes*). This is one big bug (insect - I mean insect!). And it is much more impressive in life (and in colour). Photo: Brenda Van Ryswyk - www.silentecho.com.

ponds, is only known from a handful of locations south of Lake Simcoe, and was a surprise highlight; the count record is a first for Wellington County.

Not be outdone, its cousin - *Lestes inequalis*, the Elegant Spreadwing - made two surprise appearances. First, Gordon Lewer and Richard Aaron found a female along Spencer Creek by Concession 5. Then "Team Four" (Heather Ducharme, Diane Green, Carl Rothfels, Ian Vaithilingam) found a male around Little Lake, as we were looking for Swamp Spreadwings (*Lestes vigilax*). We caught two large spreadwings with blue tail-lights; surprisingly, one was a Swamp, and the other an Elegant!

Other new dragonflies for the count included a female *Gomphus lividus* (Ashy Clubtail) from the Crieff Fen gravel pit, and a male Delta-spotted Spiketail (*Cordulegaster diastatops*) and two young Band-winged Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum semicinctorum*) from Fletcher Creek.

The spiketail, in particular, is an impressive beast, with its neat pairs of yellow spots down the dark body, and big yellow stripes on the thorax. This sighting comes from the same general location as the first record for Wellington, from earlier this season. The *Gomphus* is rare in our region, and the *Sympetrum*, while uncommon, tends to fly later in the season.

Then there were two migrant skimmers new for the count: an unsurprising (but still exciting) record of *Pantala flavescens* (Wandering Glider), and two very surprising records of Carolina Saddlebags (*Tramea carolina*), new for Wellington. This southern migrant is known from extreme southwestern Ontario (Peele, Rondeau, Windsor), with scattered records further north (fairly regular at Grenadier Pond in Toronto, and a 2004 record by Bob Curry from Waterdown). At a third location, Jerry Chapple saw an uncatchable red-coloured *Tramea* that was also likely a Carolina, so this rare species appears to have been present at three separate sites during the count.

The most significant highlight of the count, however, was a male Comet Darner (*Anax longipes*) netted in the Crieff area. This huge dragonfly has been seen twice before in Ontario (Peele Island and Windsor), but never captured or photographed. The Crieff individual was very fresh, suggesting that it likely emerged locally, rather than being a migrant from further south. These additions bring the total list for this count (including both years) to 58 species, 61 species if you include those seen during count week.

Other noteworthy highlights include nearly 900 Azure Bluets (*Enallagma aspersum*), strong numbers of both Lilypad and Unicorn Clubtails – *Arigomphus furcifer* and *villosipes* (Gord Lewer, the infamous Notleys, and the equally infamous Richard Aaron found eight Unicorn Clubtails along Spencer Creek – a strong population of this nationally rare species; then Brenda Van Ryswyk and Alison Watt found three more elsewhere, and Team Four found one, for a new record for Wellington County), the second record of Racquet-tailed Emerald

(*Dorocordulia libera*) at Valens (courtesy of Brian Wylie, Bob Botts, and Elaine Serena), high numbers of *Perithemis tenera* – the Eastern Amberwing (one last year, 20 this year), and surprising numbers of both Prince and Common Baskettails (*Epitheca princeps* and *Epitheca cynosura*). The baskettails, like the Chalk-fronted Skimmer (*Libellula julia*), may have been in high numbers because the count was a little earlier than last year (we had one Chalk-fronted Skimmer in 2004 and 20 of them in 2005).

The final highlight that needs mention is a large dark-and-yellow dragonfly that eluded Ian Vaithilingam's net. Ian only got a brief look at it, but harbours strong and festering convictions that it was an Arrowhead Spiketail (*Cordulegaster obliqua*), and that I thus owe him the five bucks I promised anyone who could find that rare species on the count. You can rest assured that Ian (and I!), will be paying special attention to the Puslinch Lake area in the 2006 Hamilton Odonate Count.

Lowlights: Some species were found in very low numbers, especially the spreadwings, and some of the bluets. The common *Enallagma ebrium* (Marsh Bluet), for example, was down to 321 individuals from 701 in 2004, and its close relative, Hagen's Bluet (*E. hageni*) was down to three individuals from 43. These low numbers are likely a result of fewer counters comfortable with identifying damselflies, and also, at least in the case of the spreadwings, due to the earlier count.

Then there were some species that we missed altogether, even though they almost certainly were present in reasonable numbers. The American

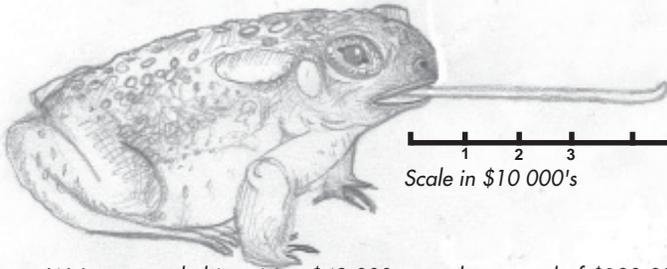
Rubyspot (*Hetaerina americana*) frequents a particular stretch of Spencer Creek where we counted 46 individuals in 2004; this year we didn't visit that spot, and missed the species entirely. Similarly, we missed the Common/Sweetflag Spreadwings (*Lestes disjunctus/forcipatus*) because we didn't make it to the Puslinch Bog (21 seen last year), and somehow we missed the Lyre-tipped Spreadwing (*Lestes unguiculatus*), which was one of our most common damselflies last year (99 seen).

Count Week: The three days before and after the count ("count week") yielded one other species in the count circle: Brian Wylie caught a Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*) in the Crieff area the day after the count. So we finally have one of the elusive *Somatochlora* on our Hamilton Odonate Count spreadsheet, but we've yet to find one on the count itself. We need to leave something for next year, I guess. On that note, Brian also had some Autumn Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum vicinum*) just outside the count circle; I bet we'll add this species to the count next year.

All-in-all, it was a spectacular count, further assisted by Jerry Bloom's wonderful hospitality and cold beverages for our post-count tally. Thanks Jerry, and thanks to all the counters for your efforts. We will hopefully all see each other in the field for Hamilton Ode Count '06.

Participants: Richard Aaron, Bob Botts, Jerry Chapple, Heather Ducharme, Diane Green, Gord "traffic ticket" Lewer, Evan Notley, Louise Notley, Carl Rothfels (compiler), Elaine Serena, Ian Vaithilingam, Brenda Van Ryswyk, Alison Watt, and Brian Wylie. ☒

Help the Cartwright Toad get dinner!



We've succeeded in raising \$48 000 towards our goal of \$180 000 for the Cartwright Nature Sanctuary. Please give! Contact the Club treasurer (Jim Stollard - 905 634-3538; jstollard@direct.com) or sanctuary director (Warren Beacham - 905 627-3343; wbeach808@sympatico.ca) for more information.

Species List: Hamilton Odonate Count 2005

Species	Total			
Broad-winged Damsel Family				
<i>Calopteryx aequabile</i>	River Jewelwing	62		
<i>Calopteryx maculata</i>	Ebony Jewelwing	559		
Spread-winged Damsel Family				
<i>Lestes dryas</i>	Emerald Spreadwing	14		
<i>Lestes eurinus</i>	Amber-winged Spreadwing ..	12		
<i>Lestes inaequalis</i>	Elegant Spreadwing	2		
<i>Lestes rectangularis</i>	Slender Spreadwing	2		
<i>Lestes vigilax</i>	Swamp Spreadwing	1		
Pond Damsel Family				
<i>Amphiagrion saucium</i>	Eastern Red Damsel	30		
<i>Argia fumipennis</i>	Variable Dancer	69		
<i>Argia moesta</i>	Powdered Dancer	11		
<i>Chromagrion conditum</i>	Aurora Damsel	3		
<i>Enallagma anna</i>	River Bluet	15		
<i>Enallagma aspersum</i>	Azure Bluet	898		
<i>Enallagma carunculatum</i>	Tule Bluet	1		
<i>Enallagma civile</i>	Familiar Bluet	78		
<i>Enallagma ebrium</i>	Marsh Bluet	321		
<i>Enallagma exulans</i>	Stream Bluet	7		
<i>Enallagma geminatum</i>	Skimming Bluet	6		
<i>Enallagma hageni</i>	Hagen's Bluet	3		
<i>Enallagma signatum</i>	Orange Bluet	469		
<i>Ischnura posita</i>	Fragile Forktail	6		
<i>Ischnura verticalis</i>	Eastern Forktail	237		
<i>Nehalennia irene</i>	Sedge Sprite	21		
Darner Family				
<i>Anax junius</i>	Common Green Darner	58		
<i>Anax longipes</i>	Comet Darner	1		
Clubtail Family				
<i>Arigomphus furcifer</i>	Lilypad Clubtail	7		
<i>Arigomphus villosipes</i>	Unicorn Clubtail	12		
<i>Gomphus lividus</i>	Ashy Clubtail	1		
Spiketail Family				
<i>Cordulegaster diastatops</i>	Delta-spotted Spiketail	1		
Emerald Family				
<i>Dorocordulia libera</i>	Raquet-tailed Emerald	3		
	<i>Epitheca cynosura</i>		Common Baskettail	25
	<i>Epitheca princeps</i>		Prince Baskettail	16
	<i>Somatochlora tenebrosa</i>		Clamp-tipped Emerald	CW
Skimmer Family				
	<i>Celithemis elisa</i>		Calico Pennant	33
	<i>Erthemis simplicicollis</i>		Eastern Pondhawk	30
	<i>Leucorrhinia glacialis</i>		Crimson-ringed Whiteface	1
	<i>Leucorrhinia intacta</i>		Dot-tailed Whiteface	279
	<i>Leucorrhinia proxima</i>		Red-waisted Whiteface	8
	<i>Libellula julia</i>		Chalk-fronted Skimmer	15
	<i>Libellula luctuosa</i>		Widow Skimmer	158
	<i>Libellula lydia</i>		Common Whitetail	197
	<i>Libellula pulchella</i>		Twelve-spotted Skimmer	116
	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>		Four-spotted Skimmer	52
	<i>Pachydiplax longipennis</i>		Blue Dasher	60
	<i>Pantala flavescens</i>		Wandering Glider	2
	<i>Perithemis tenera</i>		Eastern Amberwing	20
	<i>Sympetrum internum</i>		Cherry-faced Meadowhawk ..	11
	<i>Sympetrum obtrusum</i>		White-faced Meadowhawk	2
	<i>Sympetrum rubicundulum</i>		Ruby Meadowhawk	11
	<i>Sympetrum semicinctum</i>		Band-winged Meadowhawk ...	2
	<i>Tramea carolina</i>		Carolina Saddlebags	6
	<i>Tramea lacerata</i>		Black Saddlebags	8
	<i>Lestes</i> sp.		Unidentified spreadwings	49
	<i>Enallagma</i> sp.		Unidentified bluets	545
	<i>Ischnura</i> sp.		Unidentified forktails	90
	<i>Aeshna</i> sp.		Unidentified mosaic darners...	1
	Gomphid sp.		Unidentified clubtails	1
	<i>Arigomphus</i> sp.		Unidentified pond clubtails	3
	<i>Epitheca</i> sp.		Unidentified baskettails	23
	<i>Sympetrum</i> sp.		Unid. meadowhawks	305
	<i>Tramea</i> sp. (red)		Unidentified saddlebags	1
	Total Species:		51
	Total Species including Count Week:		52
	Total Individuals Identified:		3962
	Total Individuals Seen:		4979