

# Significant 2005 Odonate Records from Halton Region

by Brenda Van Ryswyk and Carl Rothfels

The summer of 2005 was an exciting season for odonate-searching in Halton; among other discoveries we added seven new species to the regional list. The addition of these seven species brings the Halton list to an impressive 86 species! Of the new additions one is an S1 species for Ontario (fewer than six records in the province) and two are S3 species (fewer than 100 records in the province).

In the following article we will mention only those records which represent a new regional record of a species consid-

ered rare (1 – 5 locations) or uncommon (6 – 15 locations) in Halton, following the odonate checklist to be published shortly in the *Halton Natural Areas Inventory*. Other observers may of course have made odonate discoveries in Halton of which we are unaware.

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Ryswyk (BVR); Erica Scott (ES); Tracy Welch (TW); Kiirsten Van Wyck (KVV).

The S1 species is the **Slender Bluet** (*Enallagma traviatum*) which was found in a swamp near Lake Medad (CJR, BVR, CK, SL). The bluet was a phenomenal find—its distinctive markings sent the excitement level skyrocketing. This small damselfly is otherwise known in Ontario from only a handful of locations, none closer to Hamilton than London (Ontario Odonate Atlas). We will need to do more surveys in 2006 to see whether Halton supports a breeding population, or whether this individual was a waif.

The two S3 species were also found at Lake Medad: Swamp Spreadwing and Williamson’s Emerald. The **Swamp Spreadwings** (*Lestes vigilax*) turned out to be present in fair numbers around the lake (CJR, BVR, CK, SL). This large spreadwing was subsequently found at the Burns Conservation Area (BVR), for a second regional record.

**Williamson’s Emeralds** (*Somatochlora williamsoni*) were patrolling around the edge of the lake (CJR, BVR, CK, SL) and they made for a challenging capture due to their speed and agility. It turned out to be a good year for finding Williamson’s Emeralds, as we had the second regional record from the RBG Rose Garden (CJR, BP, RR), and the third from Ballinafad Bog, where several individuals were present (CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO).

That’s not all—Medad added another



The Eastern Red Damselfly (*Amphagrion saucium*), one of our smallest damselflies.  
Photo: Brenda Van Ryswyk.

## New Species for Halton Region in 2005

| Scientific Name                 | Common Name          | Prov. Rarity |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Aeshna tuberculifera</i>     | Black-tipped Darner  | S4           |
| <i>Enallagma traviatum</i>      | Slender Bluet        | S1           |
| <i>Enallagma vesperum</i>       | Vesper Bluet         | S4           |
| <i>Lestes forcipatus</i>        | Sweetflag Spreadwing | S4           |
| <i>Lestes inaequalis</i>        | Elegant Spreadwing   | S4           |
| <i>Lestes vigilax</i>           | Swamp Spreadwing     | S3           |
| <i>Somatochlora williamsoni</i> | Williamson’s Emerald | S3           |

regional species: **Vesper Bluet** (*Enallagma vesperum* – CJR, BVR, GL). The Vesper Bluets were an especially exciting find as they are crepuscular, and are thus often missed by regular ode inventories (they are also gorgeous!). We didn't see any until a few individuals started to fly as the sun was fading. As it became darker, hundreds of individuals appeared, their bright yellow bodies still visible in the half-light. Medad was also the seventh location for the uncommon **Autumn Meadowhawk** (*Sympetrum vicinum* - CK, SL, CJR, BVR). Lake Medad was quite the hot spot this summer!

The first **Black-tipped Darner** (*Aeshna tuberculifera*) for Halton was captured at Ballinafad Bog (CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO). This species is one of the more northern darners; we were excited to find it among the locally common Canada Darners (*Aeshna canadensis*). Ballinafad Bog also provided Halton's fifth record of **Variable Darner** (*Aeshna interrupta* - CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO). While the bog itself is extremely interesting, a nearby (and much easier to reach) stormwater management pond also provided some new finds: a **Wandering Glider** (*Pantala flavescens* - CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO) was observed there as well as a number of **Autumn Meadowhawks** (*Sympetrum vicinum* - CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO). These were the third and eighth records of these species, respectively.

**Wandering Gliders** made a number of other appearances in Halton this year, with a fourth site being Lake Medad (CJR, BVR, GL), the fifth location in Hilton Falls (BVR) and a sixth location at Hendrie Valley (CJR, JS, TW).

At the Burns reservoir, an inconspicuous conservation area, a male **Elegant Spreadwing** (*Lestes inaequalis* - BVR), also new for Halton, was netted while

chatting with coworkers to display the presence of odes around the reservoir. It was photographed and released and not identified until much later, at which time the identification was a surprising treat. This is the first record of this attractive spreadwing in Halton. Burns also provided the second record for **Northern Spreadwing** (*Lestes disjunctus* - BVR) in Halton.

Burns also provide many other species records of regional significance and over the season provided much interest. A number of **Violet Dancers** (*Argia fumipennis violacea*) were also observed there, bringing this species' sites to 14, only two stations away from being considered common. **Halloween Pennants** (*Celithemis eponina*) were observed at Burns as well (a few males and one female), this being their sixth Halton location. While none were seen in tandem, the female was ovipositing in the open water. It was an exciting find but was short-lived. As she was ovipositing she went too far into the water and became trapped; she struggled to free herself from the water for a short time, well out of reach of rescue. Unfortunately, her struggles attracted unwanted attention and she was swallowed whole by a fish.

A **Sweetflag Spreadwing** (*Lestes forcipatus*), new for the region, was caught near a small seemingly plain pond in the Kelso Conservation Area (BVR). This small pond turned out to be a source of many pleasant finds through the summer, including a **Northern Spreadwing** (BVR) and **Northern Bluet** (*Enallagma cyathigerum cyathigerum* - BVR). This is the third location for the Northern Spreadwing and the second for the Northern Bluet. Both were collected for verification. These species are especially important to have vouchers for as they are difficult to conclusively identify and require inspection under a microscope for verification.

Kelso also yielded the seventh site for **Spotted Spreadwing** (*Lestes congener*) where they were subsequently found a number of times (BVR). Other new locations for this spreadwing were at the stormwater management pond near Ballinafad Bog (eighth location - CJR, BM, TW, RR, ES, PGO), and Burns CA (ninth location - BVR).

The impressive corduliidae the **Prince Baskettail** (*Epitheca princeps*) was found at two locations this summer—Hendrie Valley (CJR et al.) and Burns CA (BVR)—bringing its total site count to seven and lowering its status to uncommon. This large baskettail makes for a challenging capture as it is rarely seen resting and is very quick in the air. Despite its impressive size it is not invincible as one desiccated specimen was retrieved from a spider's web on the shores of Lake Medad. It was a little surprising to find a dragonfly of its size captured in a seemingly flimsy web, but the web proved to be stronger than it appeared.

Another interesting sighting was a male **Arrowhead Spiketail** (*Cordulegaster obliqua*) photographed while resting on some shrubs (BVR). This is the seventh location for this species in Halton, which is quite a feat as a few years ago it was considered to be almost extirpated from Ontario. It seems to have a sustained population in Halton with confirmed sightings for three consecutive years now. Oddly all the photos of this species were of naturally resting individuals; normally they spend most of their time in the air and are hard to observe.

Another nice find was photographing some **American Rubyspot** (*Hetaerina americana* – BVR, GL, et al.) damselflies along the Bronte Creek during the Bronte Creek Butterfly Count. This species was not found along the Bronte Creek during the inventories for the HNAI so we

feared that they might have been extirpated from this historical location. It is nice to know they are still present, at least in one location along the creek.

A number of rare clubtails were also documented this season. Two **Unicorn Clubtails** (*Arigomphus villosipes*) were photographed on the muddy shores of a private pond, and a few others were probably present there (BVR). This is a new station for the Unicorn Clubtail, its ninth. A **Lilypad Clubtail** (*Arigomphus furcifer*) was photographed on a floating mat of algae at the same pond (BVR), its fourth station. Both these species are rare for Ontario but showed up at a few locations in Halton this summer (two new locations for Lilypad, one new station for the Unicorn). Finding both these species at the same pond was a bit unusual, as the two species prefer different larval habitats. The Unicorn Clubtail larva prefer sluggish water with a soft muddy substrate to burrow into, while the Lilypad Clubtail larva frequent areas with aquatic vegetation to climb upon. As adults, they have characteristically different perch-

ing habits: the Unicorn prefers to perch on muddy ground around the shores and the Lilypad prefers floating vegetation on the pond or vegetation about a metre over the water.

Although briefly seen, an exciting find was a single **Pronghorn Clubtail** (*Gomphus graslinellus*) resting on the sandy shore of the small reservoir at Burns CA (BVR). It was a challenge to get a photo of, but I got one half-decent one before it flew off. This is the third Halton location for this rare Clubtail.

We found the rare **Eastern Red Damselfly** (*Amphagrion saucium*) at its fourth Halton station, in Hilton Falls (BVR). I first saw it in a complete uncharacteristic area: a dry old field below a dry escarpment slope. This find was perplexing as they are not known to stray far from their home seep and are weak flyers. On a later visit to Hilton Falls I found a nearby steep slope with a pond at its base. Along this slope was the seep necessary for this damselfly's habitat; sure enough a number of Eastern Red Damselflies were observed

flitting about the tiny seep stream. The mystery was solved! The damselfly would have continued to go unnoticed at this location if not for the stray individual who wandered so far from its home.

**Fragile Forktails** (*Ischnura posita*) were found at five new locations in Halton: Limehouse Conservation Area (CJR, TW, PGO, PB); Hendrie Valley (GL, KVW, RR, ES, TW); Lake Medad (CJR, BVR, GL); Kelso CA (BVR); and the Milton Mill Pond (BVR). These finds bring the total number of sites for this species to eight, more than double the known number last year! This species has obviously been strongly overlooked in the past.

An odd sighting was a pair of mating darners in Hilton Falls that turned out to be a **Lance-Tipped Darner** (*Aeshna constricta*) and a **Shadow Darner** (*Aeshna umbrosa* - BVR). They formed the wheel position for a few minutes and despite the lack of success to mate the male hung on to the female for some time. The seventh location for Shadow Darner was in the Hendrie Valley (CJR) where it was seen on two occasions.

**Orange Bluets** (*Enallagma signatum*) were seen at Kelso CA (BVR), Lake Medad (CJR, BVR, CK, SL), Burns CA (BVR) and the Milton Mill Pond (BVR) this summer bringing its count up to seven.

The **Tule Bluet** (*Enallagma carunculatum*) made its sixth appearance in Halton at Lake Medad (CJR, BVR, CK, SL) then was later found around the small pond in Kelso CA (BVR) for its seventh location.

**Beaverpond Baskettail** (*Epitheca canis*) was seen at its eleventh site this summer, Hendrie Valley (CJR), keeping its rank in Halton as uncommon. This is another species that requires capture and



Top: Williamson's Emerald (*Somatochlora williamsoni*).  
Bottom: the bright yellow Vesper Bluet (*Enallagma vesperum*).  
Both photos by Brenda Van Ryswyk, from Lake Medad.

close inspection to differentiate from its close relatives, so may be under-reported.

The **Common Baskettail** (*Epiptera cynosura*) also added an eleventh site to its locations this summer with one vouchered with a photo at Burns CA (BVR).

**Ashy Clubtails** (*Gomphus lividus*) were found at three new locations—Crawford Lake, Burns, and Guelph Junction Wood Extension—all with photo vouchers (BVR). These records bring its total sites to five, just barely within the rare range.

A male **Eastern Amberwing** (*Perithemis tenera*) was observed briefly on the Milton Mill Pond (BVR), its ninth location. A female was also seen resting in the regeneration area behind Conservation Halton's main office (BVR), far from water. Although it is not unusual for the females to wander far from water it was still an unexpected sight, and does not represent a new breeding population. The Mill Pond also provided a new location for the interesting little **Skimming Bluet** (*Enallagma geminatum* - BVR). This rare bluet occurred in fairly large numbers at this, its fourth location in Halton, but tended to spent most of its time out over the water or on floating vegetation only accessible by kayak (or canoe).

Finally, with four new locations the **Lyre-tipped Spreadwing** (*Lestes unguiculatus*) is now bumped up to a rank of "common," as these four locations brings its number of sites up to 18. It was seen at Hilton Falls, Sixteen Mile Creek CA, Lake Medad and the regeneration area behind Conservation Halton (BVR).

**References:**

Ontario Odonate Atlas. Accessible at: <http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/odonates/atlas.html>. ☒

**Changes in Regional Status Between 2004 and 2005**

| <u>Scientific Name</u>          | <u>Common Name</u>     | <u># of Sites (2004)</u> | <u># of Sites (2005)</u> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Aeshna interrupta</i>        | Variable Darner        | 4                        | 5                        |
| <i>Aeshna tuberculifera</i>     | Black-tipped Darner    | 0                        | 1                        |
| <i>Aeshna umbrosa</i>           | Shadow Darner          | 6                        | 7                        |
| <i>Amphagrion saucium</i>       | Eastern Red Damselfly  | 3                        | 4                        |
| <i>Argia fumipennis</i>         | Violet Dancer          | 13                       | 14                       |
| <i>Argomphus furcifer</i>       | Lilypad Clubtail       | 3                        | 4                        |
| <i>Argomphus villosipes</i>     | Unicorn Clubtail       | 8                        | 9                        |
| <i>Celithemis eponina</i>       | Halloween Pennant      | 5                        | 6                        |
| <i>Cordulegaster obliqua</i>    | Arrowhead Spiketail    | 6                        | 7                        |
| <i>Enallagma carunculatum</i>   | Tule Bluet             | 5                        | 7                        |
| <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>    | Northern Bluet         | 1                        | 2                        |
| <i>Enallagma geminatum</i>      | Skimming Bluet         | 3                        | 4                        |
| <i>Enallagma signatum</i>       | Orange Bluet           | 3                        | 7                        |
| <i>Enallagma traviatum</i>      | Slender Bluet          | 0                        | 1                        |
| <i>Enallagma vesperum</i>       | Vesper Bluet           | 0                        | 1                        |
| <i>Epiptera canis</i>           | Beaverpond Baskettail  | 10                       | 11                       |
| <i>Epiptera cynosura</i>        | Common Baskettail      | 10                       | 11                       |
| <i>Epiptera princeps</i>        | Prince Baskettail      | 5                        | 7                        |
| <i>Gomphus graslinellus</i>     | Pronghorn Clubtail     | 2                        | 3                        |
| <i>Gomphus lividus</i>          | Ashy Clubtail          | 2                        | 5                        |
| <i>Ischnura posita</i>          | Fragile Forktail       | 3                        | 8                        |
| <i>Lestes congener</i>          | Spotted Spreadwing     | 6                        | 9                        |
| <i>Lestes disjunctus</i>        | Northern Spreadwing    | 1                        | 3                        |
| <i>Lestes forcipatus</i>        | Sweetflag Spreadwing   | 0                        | 1                        |
| <i>Lestes inaequalis</i>        | Elegant Spreadwing     | 0                        | 1                        |
| <i>Lestes unguiculatus</i>      | Lyre-tipped Spreadwing | 14                       | 18                       |
| <i>Lestes vigilax</i>           | Swamp Spreadwing       | 0                        | 2                        |
| <i>Pantala flavescens</i>       | Wandering Glider       | 2                        | 6                        |
| <i>Perithemis tenera</i>        | Eastern Amberwing      | 8                        | 9                        |
| <i>Somatochlora williamsoni</i> | Williamson's Emerald   | 0                        | 3                        |
| <i>Sympetrum vicinum</i>        | Autumn Meadowhawk      | 6                        | 8                        |

The rare Unicorn Clubtail (*Argomphus villosipes*). Photo: Brenda Van Ryswyk.

