



Aeshnidae



Gomphidae



Cordulegastridae



Petaluridae



Macromiidae



Corduliidae



Calopterygidae



Lestidae



Coenagrionidae



Libellulidae

## Nymph Cove



By Marla Garrison and Ken Tennesen

Introducing *ARGIA*'s Nymph Cove, a new column focusing exclusively on odonate nymphs. Although the nymphal stage makes up the predominant part of a dragonfly's life and nymphs are superbly adapted for an aquatic existence and the challenges it poses, they have not been emphasized to the same extent as adults. Nymph Cove's mission is to highlight the amazing lives of Odonata nymphs through a series of articles explaining how to find nymphs and exuviae, how to handle and care for them, how to identify them, and ways to study their development. We hope that the information presented will provide further understanding of, and appreciation for, the complete life cycle of Odonata.

Many of us struggle with nymph identification. Upcoming educational features will include tips on how to identify nymphs first to family and then to lower levels of classification. Field characters and important microscopic morphological details will be presented and explained. Information and images will be delivered, in part, in a print-friendly format that can also be downloaded to a mobile device for easy access in the field.

We also plan to present the artistic side of dragonfly nymph pursuit using stories, poetry, photographs and videos

*striped eyes  
on this darner nymph  
like warpaint*

*-K.J. Tennesen, 2020*

*if beauty was only skin deep  
there would be no exuviae  
only nymphs*

*-M.C. Garrison, 2019*

of nymphs in action, and drawings (either technically accurate or with creative license). We invite readers to submit their writings and images to the editor of *ARGIA*.

One more note: Disturbing reports are circulating about drastic insect declines around the world. What about dragonflies? Apparently, long-term data on dragonfly populations is a rarity. Assessing future survivability and determining conservation strategies depend in large part on understanding population trends. Simple long-term studies of nymph habitats can inform us on the status of dragonfly populations. Are certain dragonfly species decreasing in some areas, increasing in others? And, what can we do to contribute to this knowledge base? One answer involves local nymph habitat surveys. Do you have a pond, lake or stream near your place of residence that you could sample for nymphs once or twice a year? We will present guidelines, including equipment and data gathering, for quick habitat surveys in the next installment of Nymph Cove. The pandemic has taken its toll this year on our health, social, and economic wellbeing. Perhaps in our required isolation there is also the opportunity to redirect our stressed attentions in pursuit of local data. As the Aggasiz quote goes "I spent the summer traveling... I got as far as halfway across my backyard." Together,



if we each take a little time, we can discover what is happening to our dragonflies.

---

*Marla Garrison is a faculty member in the Department of Biology at McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, Illinois. She is author of Damselies of Chicagoland published online by Chicago's Field Museum <https://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/guides/guide/388>. She may be contacted via email at [mgarrison@mchenry.edu](mailto:mgarrison@mchenry.edu) or by phone (815)479-7627.*

*Ken Tennesen has published over 80 technical papers on Odonata. His recent book, Dragonflies Nymphs of North America, was published by Springer in 2019.*