

Watching Dragonflies - Natures Aerialists

Watching dragonflies hover, fly backwards, and hunt for insects is an entertaining way to enjoy a moment in nature. They are remarkable and very beneficial to the environment. Some can be seen along streams and rivers, and others at still water like ponds and beaver marshes.

Dragonflies often symbolize transformation. They begin life in the water, eggs deposited by females as she dips her abdomen in the water or slits open a plant stem leaving the eggs inside. Nymphs emerge from the eggs and begin their predatory lifestyle feeding on small animals first and larger ones as they grow. The last stage of a dragonfly's life is the adult. Nymphs crawl up on a plant stem or rock, split their exoskeleton down the middle, release folded wings and now become an adult insect. Hemolymph (insect "blood") is pumped through the wings to allow them to uncurl and flight is delayed until the wings are dry.

Taking to the air, dragonflies now exhibit many behaviors the naturewatcher can explore. There are disputes, such as males chasing rivals from their territories. Mated pairs can be viewed as males clasp females behind the head or hover above during egg-laying. Male dragonflies often "patrol" an area, like a police officer on a regular beat! A dragonfly has two pairs of wings that can move independently. Perching dragonflies face the



Eastern Forktail

water, further monitoring for any dangers or looking over a good spot to find insect food. Catching insects with their first pair of legs while in flight is an amazing feat exhibited by these winged aerialists. And, anyone who has tried to catch a dragonfly themselves know it is not easy! Dragonflies have many facets to their compound eyes, increasing visual acuity, and are probably the fastest animal in the insect world, sometimes reaching the speed of 30 mph!

Dragonflies eat insects, including pests like mosquitoes. They are also important members of the food chain and are eaten by other animals, like fish and birds. Dragonflies are indicators of pollution as most need clean water for the development from nymphs to adult. They are amazing insects and provide the perfect subject to observe and enjoy in nature.



Twelve-spotted Skimmer



Blue Dasher

Website Updates

The Friends of Sessions Woods is currently updating and refreshing its website, friendsofsessionswoods.org and fosw.org. The site will include links to trail maps, bird lists, and tree identification brochures. There will be a calendar of events and an easy way to register for programs, too. If members wish to renew or make a donation to the educational efforts of the Friends of Sessions Woods, this can be completed on the website.

All photos by Paul Fusco unless otherwise noted.

To enhance and encourage the public use and awareness of Sessions Woods



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The Friends of Sessions Woods was established as an all-volunteer organization in 1998 to facilitate projects and programs that enhance the value of Sessions Woods.

Friends of Sessions Woods
c/o Sessions Woods WMA
PO Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013-1550
www.fosw.org

Ask a Naturalist

Brushy Brambles

Brambles are woody shrubs with thorns in the Rose (Rosaceae) family. Blackberries and raspberries are types of brambles. Wild brambles provide food for birds and mammals, including people! Summer is prime berry season and these fruits are filled with good-for-you vitamins, such as C, and many minerals, including iron, potassium, and magnesium. Because they are thorny, brambles are good cover for nesting birds and small mammals.



Bramble thickets are favorite habitats for Gray Catbirds, among many other types of wildlife.

It's Time to Renew Membership!

The Friends of Sessions Woods support the work and educational efforts at the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center and Wildlife Management Area. Past projects have included new exhibits, trail maintenance, and interpretive signage. Please renew your membership today, using the newsletter form!

Thank you for your membership!

Sessions Woods Calendar of Events

The Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center’s Public Program Series is a cooperative venture between the CT DEEP Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. For more information, please email friensofsessionswoods@gmail.com.

September 14, 2025 (Sunday), 1:00 p.m. Late Summer Forest Walk

Join Naturalist Laura Rogers-Castro for a 2-mile, roundtrip hike on the Beaver Marsh Trail at Sessions Woods. September is a great time to hear the last sounds of summer and view fall wildflowers, spider webs, buzzing pollinators, and busy wildlife. Appropriate shoes for a woodland trail are recommended. Meet at the gazebo in the parking lot.



Left to right: Northern walking stick, woodland spider web, gray squirrel, common buckeye.

Bird Walk Results

The Migratory Bird Walk, led by Paul Fusco and Laura Rogers-Castro, identified over 40 bird species on a chilly morning in spring. Tips were provided on distinguishing sounds and habitat preferences. Interesting birds counted, included chestnut-



sided, Blackburnian, and black-throated green warblers, along with Louisiana waterthrush and Baltimore oriole.

The entire list can be viewed on ebird.org with Sessions Woods as the location. Ebird is a wonderful tool showing birds seen and heard at various locations throughout the world. It also serves as a way to note trends over time.

Left: Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Above center: A good time was had by all; Above right: Louisiana Waterthrush.



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For new members only: Memberships received during the months of January to June are effective through June 30 of the following year.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We gratefully accept your contributions. Fees and contributions are fully tax deductible. My check for \$_____ is enclosed. Please send your check, made payable to Friends of Sessions Woods, to:

Friends of Sessions Woods
PO Box 1550
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