Odonate species are found both along the Hudson River and inland habitats. Some move far from water to bask and forage in meadows. Identification can be somewhat daunting as there are so many species, but there are good recent field guides that allow people to identify many species in the field or from photos.

Odonates are important prey for various organisms, such as fish, birds, bats, and others.

Ebony jewelwings are the only odonates in our region with entirely black wings.

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Spotlight on Odonates

Odonates (damselflies and dragonflies) are large, fast-flying, predatory insects and many are brilliantly colored. Some have complex social behavior (e.g., territoriality). There are more than 190 species of dragonflies and damselflies that have been documented in New York. Pictured here are just a few of the species that Hudsonia has encountered in the field.

Dragonflies and damselflies are useful for assessing water quality in streams, ponds, and wetlands. The larvae of many species are sensitive to water pollution and changes to water levels and flow. Both larvae and adults are carnivorous and rely on a variety of insects and other aquatic organisms for food.

Meadowhawk in Westchester County

Habitat loss and degradation are some of the main threats to odonate populations. This lovely lilypad forktail damselfly is one such species at risk and is considered Vulnerable (S3) by the New York Natural Heritage Program.

Stream in Columbia County, one of many kinds of odonate habitats

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1. Halloween pennant dragonflies in Milan
2. Dragonfly larva in the Upper Penhorn Marsh
3. Dragonfly exuvia (shed larval exoskeleton), Westchester County
4. Teneral (freshly metamorphosed) dragonfly, Binnwate Water Lakes
5. Common whitetail in Dover
6. Forktail damsels in mating wheel, Kearny Marsh

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