

DRAGONFLIES AT THE RIDGES SANCTUARY

When dragonflies hatch, they spend the first part of their lives as an aquatic nymph. This process can range from only a few months to more than five years, and during this time the nymphs need water that is clean, has vegetation for shelter, and other insects to eat.

The swales at The Ridges Sanctuary provide excellent habitat for dragonfly nymphs. This is one of the reasons why dragonflies and their smaller cousins the damselflies are found in great numbers on our property.

In our last survey, The Ridges Sanctuary was home to over 40 species of dragonflies and damselflies, setting 5 county records and identifying 2 species of Special Concern in Wisconsin, along with the federally endangered Hine’s Emerald



MISSION

The mission of The Ridges Sanctuary is to promote positive environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land management and protection, and ecological research.

THE RIDGES SANCTUARY

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Preservation | Education | Research

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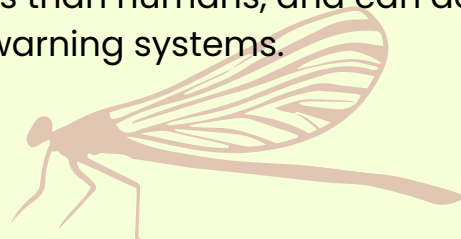


WHAT IS A BIOINDICATOR?

Bioindicators are species which are closely connected to a specific feature or condition of their environment. Scientists and individuals can look at bioindicators to gain information which might not be readily available to human senses.



One of the most famous bioindicators is the coalmine canary, which coal miners would use to detect carbon monoxide levels before they became hazardous to the miners. Many bioindicator species have lower tolerances to hazardous conditions than humans, and can act as early warning systems.



Other bioindicators might have strong ties to a particular place or have many interconnections with the species around them, which can inform scientists about the conditions of a particular place. Dragonflies, as a predator species that spends the first part of its life in a single body of water, can serve both of these purposes.

DRAGONFLIES AS BIOINDICATORS

WATER Quality:

Since dragonfly nymphs spend their entire life in one body of water, they are an excellent species to look at to understand water conditions in a specific place. Other species, like birds or fish, can move around and pick up contaminants from different places.



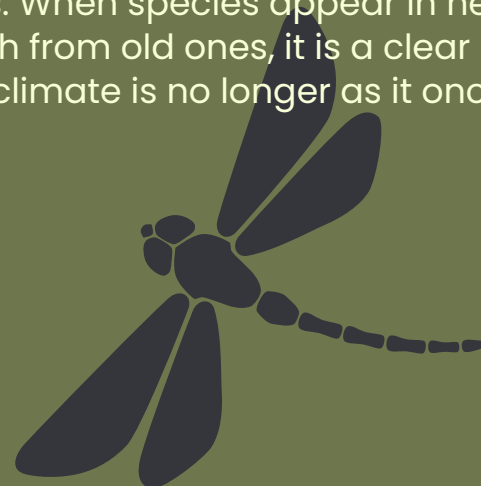
Mercury Monitoring:

The National Parks Service uses dragonfly nymphs to track and monitor mercury levels at National Parks and Monuments all across the United States. These nymphs are one of the best species for accurately showing mercury levels, and can be used to predict the mercury levels in species higher up the food chain, including those eaten by humans. The Dragonfly Mercury project is both the oldest and largest biological mercury monitoring project in the United States



Climate Change:

Dragonflies and damselflies are both very good at crossing large distances to lay their eggs. When species appear in new places or vanish from old ones, it is a clear sign that the climate is no longer as it once was.



Keep It Green, Keep It Clean:

Dragonflies need water that is clean and that has lots of vegetation near the shoreline. Consider planting local plants and pollinators and be careful about disposal and use of chemicals outdoors. Keeping your local environment green and clean is one of the best ways to attract and care for dragonflies and their communities of other local insects.



Drive 35:

Dragonflies cannot avoid cars going more than 35mph. When driving near areas with lots of dragonflies, especially Hine's Emeralds, please consider driving slower.



Get To Know Your Neighbors:

Take a look at the Dragonflies around you. What are their prominent colors on their bodies, wings, and eyes? Where do you usually see them? What times of the year are they around? You can use all this information to look up exactly what species are in your area.

