



What's Happening?

at the Kingston Historical Museum

AUGUST 2023

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This Month

Keep on the lookout for 'dragons' in your yard. Not the kind you see on fantasy TV programs, but flying predators whose ancestors go back to a time before the dinosaurs!

If you would like to help out at the museum, please contact us. Perhaps you might write about your time as a volunteer for a future issue of the newsletter!

Last month's "What Is It?" may have been a puzzler! A photo of it is found on page two. I wonder how many were able to identify it?

So you don't miss an issue of the "What's Happening" newsletter, just go the town's website and select to receive the newsletter by email. You can also download past issues from: <https://www.kingstonnh.org/historical-museum-committee/webforms/whats-happening-newsletter-archives>

The museum is operating on its regular schedule of opening the museum buildings the second Saturday of each month (June-October, 1-4 PM). Along with the main Nichols Memorial Library building, the 1895 Firehouse, the 1880s Cobbler Shop, the 1907 Tramp House. The 1833 Grace Daley barn will be closed for maintenance. We are here on Wednesdays from 9:00 AM until noon! We can also be here by appointment. Call or email us using the information on page three of this newsletter

Kingston Stories

Here be Dragons!

By Steve Sousa

"King Philip Came Over For Good Spaghetti" is a mnemonic device I learned in my high school biology days. The initial letter in each word represents the name of the organizing level in the Linnaean system of classifying organisms: (K)ingdom, (P)hylum, (C)lass, (O)rder, (F)amily, (G)enus, and (S)pecies. Each step down from Kingdom becomes more specific in describing particular types of organisms, where all the members of that step share some similar characteristics. This month I'd like to focus on a particular Order of Insects, the *Odonata* whose members include damselflies and dragonflies. As a kid, these "bugs" scared me and my friends. Their huge eyes and long sideways wings gave them a prehistoric look and kid anecdotes report that they sewed up your lips or gave you painful bites. When encountered, they were given a wide radius!



The Common Clubtail Dragonfly: note 3

The *Odonata* order first appears in the fossil record during the late Carboniferous Period, a bit more than 300 million years ago¹, about 100 million years before the dinosaurs! It was during this time that the great coal deposits found in Europe and North America were put down. The environment during this time of Earth's history was more humid, tropical, and had a somewhat uniform climate. Many of the plants and animals we recognize today had their origins during this period.

The damselflies and dragonflies we see today possess some structural similarities: they have two pairs of long, transparent wings that for the damselflies fold together above their body, while for dragonflies, their wings remain outstretched to the sides of their body, like airplane wings. The central thorax is large, roundish and is where the legs and wings attach. The abdomen is usually longer than the length of the wings. They are voracious predators of aquatic and terrestrial bugs and even small fish.²



Blue Damselfly see note 4

(Here be Dragons continues on next page)

(Here be Dragons continued)

Dragonflies and damselflies begin life as eggs laid in or near water. The hatchlings, called nymphs, are aquatic, feeding on mosquito larvae and other small critters sharing the pond with them. After a period of weeks to several years, depending upon the species, the nymph will crawl onto a plant stalk to molt from their 'skin' into the flying adult stage.

The adults are extraordinary fliers. The large eyes provide them with excellent vision and the two pair of wings give them acrobatic maneuverability in flight. They are able to catch other flying insects on the wing. They are a great consumer of mosquitoes. It is a good idea to protect streams and ponds near your property to encourage them to hunt in your backyard!

There are nine Families of odonates that can be found here in New Hampshire, three families of damselflies and six of dragonflies. For the damselflies, there are the Broad-winged Damsels (family Calopterygidae), the Spreadwings (family Lestidae), and the Pond Damsels (family Coenagrionidae). The six families of dragonflies are the Darners (family Aeshnidae), the Clubtails (family Gomphidae), the Spiketails (family Cordulegastridae), the Cruisers (family Macromiidae), the Emeralds (family Cordulidae), and the Skimmers (family Libellulidae).

Age and knowledge have tempered the uneasiness I used to feel about these critters. They perform a variety of important 'ecosystem services' (activities that make a positive contribution to nature and ourselves). For example, they feed on bugs that feed on me. Doing so, they reduce the number of mosquitoes in an area. This means less need for pesticides. One action you could do to help these marvelous creatures: when visiting streams and ponds, don't pile up stones together; the undersides of the stones provide places to lay eggs. Placing the stones out of the water disturbs their lifecycles!

During the summer in my backyard, I've seen them congregate in large numbers. They are going after small flying insects coming out of the ground from their seasonal lifecycle. There are so many dragons that my yard looks like a miniature airport, the mini dragons zipping back and forth, changing direction instantaneously as they hunt their prey.

I now take joy in having these 'dragons' visit my yard. I love pointing out their behaviors to our grandchildren, hoping that they will not fear having their mouths being sewn shut and find amazement in seeing a group of critters whose origins are so long ago in the past.

What Is It?



July's mystery item is a closeup of an Underwood manual mechanical typewriter, Model 4, circa 1900s to 1920s. Underwood typewriters were the first widely successful modern typewriters.

During the second World War the Underwood Company contracted with the US Army to produce M1 Carbine rifles! About 545,616 carbines were made at the Harford, Connecticut plant between 1942 and 1944. Each carbine cost the US Government \$47.82!

(<https://m1family.com/a-little-history-of-underwood-and-its-carbines-t14.html>)

Donated to the museum by the family of James and Faith Hume of Kingston, NH.

Donations Needed

If anyone has any left over lumber and white paint, we could use these items for our maintenance and exhibit programs. Pre-lit artificial Christmas trees, 6 - 7 feet tall, as well as Christmas decorations are also needed. The museum could also use office supplies, a used TV/DVD with HDMI, and a computer monitor with cord.

Volunteer Hours Contributed

For the month of July, the volunteers have contributed 128.5 hours and 631 hours for all of 2023. Thank you all so much.



The Kingston Historical Museum is headquartered at
The Nichols Memorial Library
169 Main Street,
Kingston, NH 03848

The Museum is open each Wednesday from 9:00 AM until 12:00 noon and on the second Saturday, June through October, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Appointment to conduct research or a tour can be arranged for another date.

For more information, please call Ruth Albert at 603-642-5508 or email us at museuminfo@kingstonnh.org.

Notes for Here Be Dragons!- Kingston Stories

1. The Carboniferous Period. <https://ucmp.berkeley.edu/carboniferous/carboniferous.php> 27 June 2023
2. Odonata. <https://www.britannica.com/animal/Odonata> . 27 June 2023
3. The Common Clubtail Dragonfly
https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/vector-realistic-gomphus-vulgatissimus-dragonfly-close-up-top-view-isolated-white-background_11058550.htm#query=dragonfly&position=1&from_view=keyword&track=sph 28 June 2023
4. Mayfly
https://www.freepik.com/premium-ai-image/bug-with-wings_46501746.htm#query=mayfly&position=7&from_view=search&track=sph 28 June 2023

Coming Events

Coming on **September 9th and 10th** is the town's celebration of Kingston Days. The Museum will be hosting a presentation titled "*Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor -- A Visual History of the Declaration of Independence*" by Sarah Leety-Stevens. The presentation will be held in the town hall.

Get your teams together, for on 14th of **October**, the Friends of the Kingston Historical Museum will be sponsoring a Corn Hole Tournament. The event will be run by the Wicked Corn Hole of Tewksbury, MA. Look for more info coming soon!

Dragonfly Coloring Page!

Use your imagination to make your own colorful dragonfly!!

The Common Clubtail Dragonfly

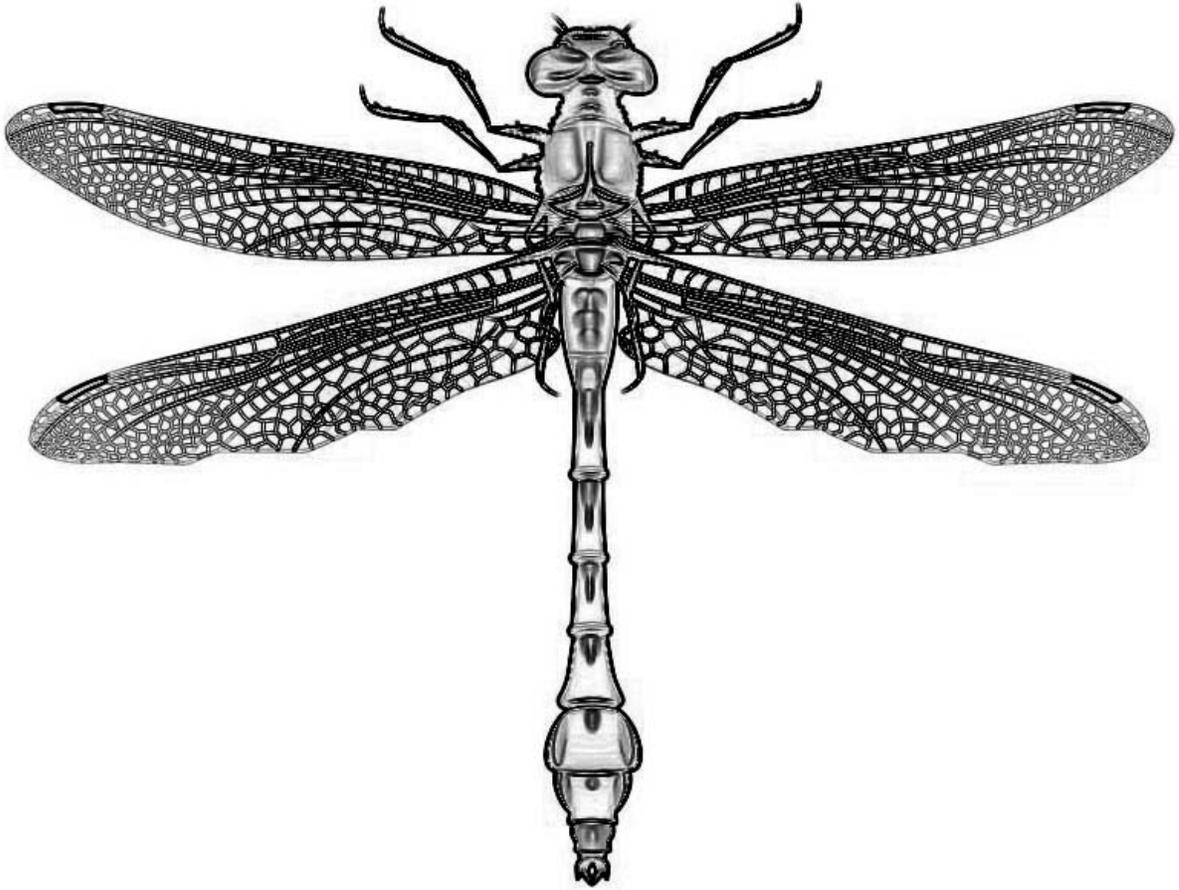


Image from:

The Common Clubtail Dragonfly

https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/vector-realistic-gomphus-vulgatissimus-dragonfly-close-up-top-view-isolated-white-background_11058550.htm#query=dragonfly&position=1&from_view=keyword&track=sph

28 June 2023