

Common Green Darner

Anax junius



Dragonflies haven't changed much over the last 300 million years. Today they are one of the most easily recognized of all insects. The common green darner is the largest, most abundant and widespread dragonfly species in North America.

Northern Pineywoods

Common Green Darner

Anax junius



APPEARANCE

Length: 3 inches (7.6cm)

Wingspan: 4.5 inches (11.4cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Green head and thorax
- Abdomen is yellow and brown on females; long, slender and bluish on males
- Large compound eyes
- Strong jaws
- Spiny legs
- Wings clear with yellowish tint toward tips and strongly veined with net-like pattern

LIFE HISTORY

Range: North America, the West Indies and South America

Diet: Larvae eat fish eggs, tadpoles and other small aquatic animals. Adults eat wasps, butterflies, mosquitoes and other flying insects (including other dragonflies).

Predators: Larvae are eaten by fish, turtles, frogs and wading birds. Adults are eaten by birds, fish and frogs.

Sexual maturity: Two to three months after emerging as adult dragonflies

Eggs: Laid one at a time in aquatic vegetation

Incubation: The eggs hatch in the spring.

Young: During the larval stages, generally lasting two to three years, the *nymphs* (aquatic larvae) pass through 11 to 12 larval stages before metamorphosing into dragonflies. Once they emerge as adults, they immediately begin the cycle again.

Life span: A few years in larval form, only four to seven weeks as adults

HABITAT

Common green darners prefer permanent and temporary ponds, lakes, bays, estuaries and slow-moving streams and *riparian areas* (land adjacent to a body of water).

BEHAVIOR

During the reproductive stage, the common green darner seeks fresh water ponds. Males return first, then females who have already developed a batch of eggs. If the female is receptive, mating begins. They often mate in flight. Immediately after mating, common green darner females lay their eggs, one at a time, in tiny slits in submerged aquatic plants. Males work hard to protect their territories. Some have been clocked chasing intruders away at 35 miles per hour. Common green darners are one of the few dragonflies that migrate in the spring and fall. Scientists believe that they migrate with seasonal warm fronts.

NOW YOU KNOW!

- Most of a dragonfly's brain is dedicated to processing and responding to what they see. Their complex eyes provide nearly 360-degree vision.
- Dragonflies can hover like a helicopter.
- They can exchange oxygen through specially adapted anal chambers.

COMMON GREEN DARNERS AND PEOPLE

Common green darners are called "mosquito hawks" because they eat mosquitoes, providing an important service to humans. As an animal that lives in both freshwater and *terrestrial* (land) habitats, having healthy green darner populations indicates a balanced and healthy ecosystem.