

Dragonfly Nymph (Order Odonata)

An Insect (6 legs) with no pupal stage (incomplete metamorphosis).

Size: Up to 50mm

Carnivore – Can feed on animals larger than themselves e.g. newt/frog tadpoles and small fish by shooting out hooked ‘mask’ and then devouring trapped prey with mandibles. Mask shot out by rapid increase in blood pressure.

Breathes by extracting dissolved O_2 from water through rectal gills, drawing water in through anus. This water can be shot out of gut rapidly, giving it jet propulsion to escape predators or catch prey.

Nymphs may stay in water for up to 2 years or more, depending on temperature and food availability. As nymphs grow they shed their exoskeleton 10 to 12 times. They then climb vegetation under the cover of darkness to emerge into an adult.

