

Dragonfly Nymph

The nymph is the “teenage” form of the dragonfly, before it becomes an adult. It belongs to the order *Odonata*, which comes from the Greek word, *odous*, meaning tooth. Dragonfly nymphs can inflict a sharp bite with their teeth (mandibles) if held carelessly.

What they look like

Dragonfly Nymphs are short and chunky with wing pads and internal gills. Their six legs are all located near the head.

Where they live

Dragonfly Nymphs live on plants, among stones and leaf litter, or at the bottom of ponds or slow-flowing rivers.

What they eat

Dragonfly Nymphs are predators and feed mostly on other insects in the water. Sometimes, they can be cannibals and eat each other. Some of the larger species have been known to feed on small fish and tadpoles. They catch their food with a toothed lower lip (*labium*) that is usually folded under the head.

When a small insect comes near, the nymph will shoot out its lower lip to grab it, faster than most prey can react. The lip is then pulled back to the waiting mouth and feeding begins.

Pollution tolerance

Tolerant, rating 4

They are sensitive to habitat disturbance.

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Pollution tolerance	Very sensitive	Sensitive	Tolerant	Very tolerant
Size	18 - 49 mm long			

What’s interesting about the Dragonfly Nymph?

- It breathes by sucking water into its abdomen to move water over its internal gills. Once it has absorbed enough oxygen, the nymph squeezes the water out rapidly and this helps propel them forwards in the water.
- Much of a dragonfly’s life is spent in the larval stage where it moults six to 15 times. The nymph crawls out of the water and moults one last time, emerging as an adult with functional wings. Dragonflies and damselflies do not go through a pupal stage to become an adult.

Where they fit in

Phylum Arthropoda > **Class** Insecta > **Order** Odonata > **Sub Order** Epiproctophora (formerly Anisoptera) > **Family** (30 Australian families): Aeshnidae; Gomphidae; Austropetaliidae; Petaluridae; Corduliidae; Libellulidae.

