

A RARE DRAGONFLY AT GREGG LAKE

Paul Bedell

Paul Bedell and his wife Susan, who live in Richmond, Virginia, recently visited her father, Antrim's Richard Winslow. Both are professional musicians with the Richmond Symphony, and Paul is an expert birder and naturalist.

My family has always greatly enjoyed our summer visits to Antrim. The weather in Virginia at this time of year is hot and humid, and it's a relief to come north for a while. As a dedicated naturalist, I also enjoy seeing birds and insects such as dragonflies of more northern affinities that I don't see at home. One of the local spots I always go to is Gregg Lake, especially the northwestern end with all the lily pads, and the marshy area across the road.

I especially like dragonflies, the insect order Odonata. These are aquatic insects, breeding in New Hampshire's abundant lakes, rivers, and marshes. They prey exclusively on other flying insects, and reduce the population of deerflies, mosquitoes, and other flying insect pests. The Odonata can be divided into two easily recognized groups, the damselflies and the dragonflies. Generally speaking, dragonflies are large, stout, strong-flying insects that perch with their wings held out to the side like an airplane. Damselflies are small and delicate, hold their wings folded above their body, and also tend to stay low in vegetation. Dragonflies and damselflies



The damselfly New England Bluet at Gregg Lake.

have attracted enough attention that several excellent regional field guides are now available such as *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Massachusetts* by Blair Nikula, *Damselflies of the Northeast* by Ed Lam, and *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East* by Dennis Paulson.

This last July 9th I was headed towards Gregg Lake when I noticed a swarm of several dozen dragonflies flying around the dam spillway at White Birch Point.

I stopped to have a look and saw that they were the large and common Prince Baskettail, but mixed in with these large dragonflies were a few small and unfamiliar ones. Occasionally one would stop and perch and I got some photographs that I sent to my friend Pamela Hunt who works for New Hampshire Audubon and was the coordinator of the New Hampshire Dragonfly Survey (NHDS). It turns out that this species is the Mantled Baskettail, and—found at your very own Gregg Lake—is the first confirmed record for New Hampshire! The NHDS ran for five years from 2007-2011 covering the entire state with many participants, and never recorded a Mantled Baskettail. The survey did record 162 species of dragonflies and damselflies for New Hampshire, of which 134 were found in Hillsborough County. The results can be found at <http://www.nh Audubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/NHDS-final-report.pdf>

My passion as a naturalist has led me to many wonderful places around our country and abroad, but I most appreciate the discoveries I can make close to home, or even on visits to relatives! Gregg Lake and the Antrim area is such a place for me. *



A dragonfly (Dot-tailed Whiteface) at Gregg Lake.