

Martin Dies, Jr. State Park

All About: Flying Insects

Many types of flying insects are found in the park. **Dragonflies** and **Damselflies** come in all different colors and are considered beautiful to many, but did you know they're very beneficial? They consume



Dragonfly

numerous pest insects, including mosquitoes. After being laid in the water, the eggs hatch into naiads, or aquatic nymphs, consuming large quantities of mosquito larvae. They live anywhere from 1 to 5 years in this stage before

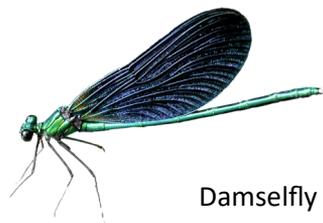
molting into adults, living only a few months.

Dragonflies hold their wings straight-out while damselflies will fold their wings back like a butterfly.

The **Crane Fly** is sometimes mistaken for a giant mosquito. These fragile flies have extremely long legs, and in their larval stage live among decomposing leaves, feeding primarily on organic matter. Adult crane flies do not eat, nor can they sting or bite. They are harmless.



Dragonfly nymph



Damselfly



Crane fly

Mayflies, also called dayflies, hold their 4 wings upright, and have 2 to 3 long, hair-like tails. Female mayflies lay their eggs in water, and newly hatched mayflies are called nymphs. These nymphs live from a few months to 2 years, feeding on aquatic plants and breathing through gills. When ready to molt, the nymph swims to the water's surface, sheds its skin, and takes flight. After shedding its skin once more that same afternoon, the mayfly is considered mature and will mate. They orient themselves according to the moon, so bright lights will attract a swarm. After mating the males die immediately. Females live long enough to lay their eggs. Mayflies lack mouthparts and are unable to eat or bite.



Mayfly

The **Lovebug** is a member of the march flies. Eggs are laid in grasses and weeds, hatching out, and living in a nymph stage for most of a year. During this stage they will eat pieces of decaying plant matter, redistributing nutrients to the ground. After molting in the spring or late summer, adult lovebugs mate and will remain coupled for up to several days. During this time they are beneficial pollinators, feeding on flower nectar. Females live 3 to 4 days, while the males live a little longer. If you find squished lovebugs on your car it's recommended to wash them off with a non-abrasive scrubber and soap that same day to reduce paint damage.



Lovebugs