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Dragonflies: Magnificent Creatures Of Water, Air, And Land



Synopsis

A gorgeous tribute to the magic and mystique of dragonflies, with intimate photographs of their entire life cycle. Almost without our noticing, dragonflies dart through our world, flying, seeing, hunting, mating. Their lives are as mysterious as their gossamer wings are beautiful. In this book Pieter van Dokkum reveals many of the dragonfly's secrets, capturing the stages of this striking insect's life cycle in unprecedented close-up photographs. He documents scenes of dragonfly activity seldom witnessed and rarely photographed. The book begins on a moonlit summer night, when an alien-looking larva crawls out of the water and transforms into a fully formed dragonfly. In the following chapters we witness dew-covered dragonflies sparkling in the morning sun, then a pair of mating dragonflies moving through the air in a twelve-legged, eight-winged dance. In the final chapter, one generation dies as the next prepares to leave the water and begin its own winged journey. Each stage is documented through van Dokkum's inquisitive lens and accompanied by information on various species of dragonflies and damselflies, their metamorphosis, and their ecological importance as insect predators.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the few non-fiction books I've read this year. I usually stick to fiction for the escape from reality it provides, but I do like to indulge in some good non-fiction now and again, especially if it relates to a subject I am particularly passionate about. And dragonflies are indeed one of those passions... beautiful, splendid, awe-inspiring dragonflies!!! I have been an avid lover of dragonflies

for a long time. When I lived in the Boston area, I was surrounded by many more dragonflies than I have been since moving to California, probably due to the lack of ponds, marshes, and streams in the immediate vicinity of where I live now. And I do very much miss seeing them on a daily basis, precluding winter of course, like I used to. Dragonflies are often seen as a symbol of change, reflecting a profound understanding on the deeper meaning of life, due to their metamorphosis from nymph to adult, and the fact that their underwater nymph stage is very different from their adult life spent soaring through the air. There is plenty of other symbolism associated with the dragonfly, but more often than not, these symbols deal with self-actualization and strength, particularly the strength to make positive change in yourself. The site

<http://www.dragonfly-site.com/meaning-symbolize.html> describes a lot of the symbolism I've come to associate with dragonflies over the years. When I moved from Massachusetts to California, and made some major life changes in the process, I got a dragonfly tattoo on my ankle which spoke to me of these very same changes I was experiencing in my own life. But I digress...

This little coffee-table book is truly extraordinary! With absolutely stunning micro and macro photography author Pieter van Dokkum introduces you to one of the world's most amazing predators, the dragonfly. These winged warriors have been around for millions of years and are so well adapted to their environment that they have changed very little since they first took wing during the Carboniferous Period. Having honed his photography skills as an Astrophotographer while working his "day job" as Professor of Astronomy at Yale, Dokkum can often be found out tramping around a local state park photographing insects, especially dragonflies and mayflies. Starting with the dragonfly nymph stage Dokkum follows the life cycle of these amazing insects from birth through metamorphosis to reproduction and finally, death. "Dragonflies: Magnificent Creatures of Water, Air, and Land" was not meant to be a biology text-book or a field guide but it still provides the reader with some rather interesting "Nature Lore". Divided up into eight chapters, the pictures and brief essays share some of Dokkum's observations and knowledge for an intimate look at the Odonata order. I can't say enough good things about these beautiful pictures. The Portraits and anatomical studies are true works of art. The shots of dragonflies all frosted with the dew are breathtaking and the level of detail for the wings and eyes reveal the secrets of flight and vision. The book opens with what looks to be a woodcut by Nel Koen, recalling latter day images of Fairies and Wood Sprites. Look for a two page spread comparing a modern day dragonfly to a Cretaceous fossil, both done in black and white in amazing detail.

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