

Parasites – bloodsuckers and egg-eaters:

Many dragonflies get covered with tiny, reddish, **blood-sucking mites**, usually in mid-late summer on the underside of their abdomens. It's unclear how much this affects the infested dragonfly, if at all, although it certainly looks uncomfortable and if nothing else, must add some weight.

Dragonflies can also be parasitized by a tiny insect, in fact the smallest known insect in the world – **Fairy Wasps**. These tiny wasps, barely visible to the naked eye, actually dive underwater and use their wings and legs to swim in pursuit of dragonfly eggs. They can spend *several days underwater* as they hunt for eggs. Once they find one, they lay their eggs inside the unfortunate dragonfly egg, where their tiny wasp grubs hatch and feed. They then emerge underwater as adults from the defunct dragonfly egg, and swim to the surface to fly away. Leave it to dragonflies, truly amazing insects, to have equally amazing parasites!

Parasites

