

# DARNERS



Darners are large dragonflies that comprise the family Aeshnidae that contains about 40 families, only a few of which have a presence in the Mojave Desert. Like dragonflies in general, they prefer wet environments (marshes, streams, ponds, etc.), thus explaining their sparcity in the desert. Only one species, the Green Darner, is commonly seen in the region's wetlands areas.

Most males have dark blue/green bodies with distinctive blue patches, while females prefer shades of green or yellow. Both have long, slender abdomens; large, hemispherical eyes that meet at the top of the head; and are voracious predators of flying insects. However the most conspicuous feature of darners is their lack of stripes on the thorax.

Unlike other dragonflies, such as skimmers, they spend most of their time on the wing, seldom settling to perch. Even mating is performed in flight!

# Family AESCHNIDAE (Darners)

## Green Darner (*Anax junius*)



HBVP; Henderson, NV



Kaibab Lake; Williams, AZ



Overton Wildlife Mangement Area; Overton, NV



Overton WMA; Overton, NV



Overton WMA; Overton, NV

### Measurements:

Average: Length: 3" Wing Span: 4"

### Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large size; **unmarked green thorax**; transparent, colorless wings; eyes reddish brown above, green below; yellowish face; dark stigmas; target-like mark on upper face; (m) blue abdomen (f) brown abdomen

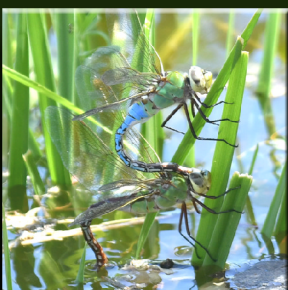
### Notes:

common; found around wetlands (ponds, swamps, etc.) throughout NA (less common in west); perches vertically or obliquely; aka **Snake Doctor**; singular eggs laid in slit of submerged plant stems; naiads emerge in early spring/late summer; among the largest of dragonflies; adult diet consists of flying insects

**Mojave presence:** resident; spring - summer

### Comments:

Apparently July is the season of love for darners, as displayed by these loving couples at the **Overton Wildlife Management Area** in 2020. The male clasps his mate by her neck as they fly about their business (right), then they land to allow her to deposit her eggs on vegetation below the water line (left).



# Family **AESCHNIDAE** (Darners)

## Blue-Eyed Darner (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*)



HBVP; Henderson, NV



HBVP; Henderson, NV



Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve; NV



### Measurements:

Average: Length: 2.5" Wing Span: 4"

### Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large size; transparent, colorless wings; (m) brown thorax with **blue stripes**; brown abdomen with blue markings; **blue eyes**; **blue face**; dark blue stigmas; (andromorph f) similar to male, but duller; amber stigmas; (heteromorph f) yellow-green replaces male's blue (stripes, markings, eyes, face); amber stigmas

### Notes:

common; found around wetlands (ponds, swamps, etc.) throughout w NA from TX west to the Pacific coast, and British Colombia south to MEX; singular eggs laid on vegetation near water, then relocated to calm water after fertilization; adult diet consists of flying insects; naiads feed on aquatic insects, tadpoles, small fish, etc.

**Mojave presence:** resident; spring - fall

### Comments:

September at the **Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve** is a great place to see a variety of dragonflies, including these Blue-Eyeds in 2022 engaged in a "wheel" of love, the mating posture typical of Odonata. The females here display the andromorphic blue form.

