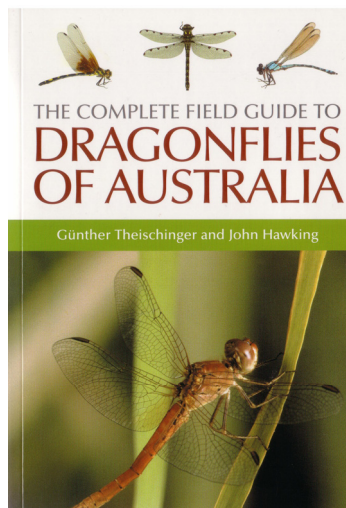


The Complete Field Guide to Dragonflies of Australia by *Gunther Theischinger and John Hawking*, CSIRO Publishing, 2006, paperback, 366 pages.

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This field guide is a must have for anyone with an interest in identifying Australia's dragonflies. It covers 324 species found in Australia comprising 12 families of damselflies and 18 families of dragonflies. The field guide is divided into three sections. The first section is the introduction, which provides a brief overview of the Australian dragonfly fauna, life-cycle, ecology, habitats and conservation (pp. 1-10). The second and largest section is the species guide (pp. 11-299).

For each species there is a full-colour image of the adult, a distribution map and a species account giving descriptions of adults and larvae, habitat notes and information on extra-limital distribution where appropriate. Line drawings and photos of larvae of many species are also given. The format of the species guide is similar to that of many good field guides with the descriptions and distribution maps provided on the left hand pages and the photographs of the species on the facing pages, with 2-3 species per opening.



The third and final section contains the keys to adults and larvae and an illustrated glossary (pp. 300-342). At the end of the book there are brief notes on studying dragonflies (under the headings of observing, photography, collecting, rearing, preservation and dragonfly societies), a checklist of all species, references and further reading, and indexes to both scientific and common names. All this is packed into a solid yet compact 366 page paperback book in an A5 format.

There is much to like about this book in terms of design and layout with attractive photos often of the animals in natural settings. Even the images of preserved specimens are appealing. Unusually, the keys to identify the species from adults or larvae are placed after the species guide rather than the other way around, which is more traditional. This ordering reflects the guide's primary focus on using the images and accompanying descriptive notes and diagrams to identify the species rather than using the keys. Indeed the authors state that dragonfly identification can be done in the field using the field guide after gaining some experience, allowing the dragonflies to be released. I have not tried this with a live dragonfly and imagine this would be quite challenging. It would have been helpful if instructions were provided on how to handle live dragonflies while observing

their various features without causing damage. I did use the key to identify several curated Tasmanian damselflies and dragonflies and did so without too much difficulty. Like any key on a group of species you need to spend a little time understanding the terminology and diagrams and becoming familiar with the taxa.

One of the helpful features of the keys is the location of diagrams right next to the couplets to help make a decision. The keys allow identification to family level and then you are directed to keys for families that allow identification to genera and some species, from which you must then go to the species guide to complete the identification. The keys would have benefited from having page numbers next to the family, genera or species name to direct you straight to the next appropriate section without having to flip through pages or refer to the contents. Little information on ecology or features of interest is provided for each dragonfly species, which may disappoint some naturalists. However such notes would have greatly increased the size of the book and for most species this basic information remains to be collected – a challenge for all naturalists, now that that this field guide has been published, is to go out and learn more about dragonflies.

In summary my criticisms are minor and I can highly recommend this book. From a Tasmanian perspective it is the only book available to identify the 29 Tasmanian species including five endemic species. A previous black and white field guide *Tasmanian Odonata* written by Piers Allbrook in 1979 is out of print and largely out of date.

Despite our modest number of dragonflies we have several species of considerable scientific interest and in recent years the State has been visited by several international scientists studying the phylogeny of the world's dragonfly fauna. The Ancient Greenling *Hemiphysalis mirabilis* is as its name indicates an ancient species having characteristics of damselflies recorded from the Permian period. It is a rare species found only in Victoria and recently in northeast Tasmania. The Tasmanian Redspot *Archipetalia auriculata*, the only member of its family, and the Tasmanian Spotwing *Synthemiptera gomphomacromioides*, the only member of its genus (and has the longest scientific name for a dragonfly in Australia), are both Tasmanian endemics and are thought to be relicts of early dragonfly evolution that occurred in Antarctica.

A Systematic List of the Marine Molluscs of Tasmania by Simon J. Grove, Ron C. Kershaw, Brian J. Smith & Elizabeth Turner, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Occasional Paper No. 8 (2006), 120 pages.

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Surprisingly it has been nearly fifty years since a full listing of Tasmania's marine mollusc fauna was produced, Kershaw's 1955 list and Macpherson's 1958 revision of May's *Illustrated Index of Tasmanian Shells* (1923) being the most recent contributions of