



Kestrel Haven Logs More Than 2000 Volunteer Hours on Finger Lakes NF

Volunteers donate time on odonate identification - damselflies and dragonflies on FLNF.



Identifying dragonflies requires a skilled eye.

Kestrel Haven Aviation Migration Observatory is a 60-acre hemlock wetland and wildlife sanctuary, run by Sue and John Gregoire. It lies a few miles south of the Finger Lakes National Forest, but to the Gregoires, the Finger Lakes National Forest is simply another parcel of land to be surveyed and explored as they document the unique forms of winged life in the Finger Lakes Region.

Kestrel Haven, as it is known locally, is the only full-time, non-profit avian research banding station in New York State. As of January 2007, more than 70,000 birds of 136 different species have been banded since the sanctuary was established. It's quite a busy place, and yet the Gregoires still manage to find time to volunteer their time in other

areas and in other places.

This past year, the Gregoires have volunteered over 300 hours identifying odonates (damselflies and dragonflies) occurring the Finger Lakes National Forest. They provide a list of 64 different species on their website. The Gregoires have generously provided much of their data, in the form of species lists organized by pond and GPS locations, to the Forest for use in management decisions that may have an effect of the life cycle of these insect

species.

Their ongoing volunteer field project, a pond-by-pond inventory that began in 2001, is the result of work done primarily by Sue and John Gregoire themselves, as well as Fred Sibley. One of the enjoyable and rewarding aspects of their work is finding those long forgotten and overgrown ponds and identifying the odonates that occur there. Their work has found that each pond needs to be inventoried numerous times throughout the year as different species utilize habitats at different times of the year.

So how do they identify all these different species?

They capture live adults, using nets, identify and record information and then release them, photographing all unusual specimens. At times, species can be identified on the wing, but the Gregoires also perform the difficult and tedious task of collecting shed exuviae for identification and confirmation in their lab. The Gregoires have spent at least 2000 hours surveying, identifying and cataloging odonates on the FLNF, over the last five years!

As with any field work, the Gregoires feel that bugs, heat, leeches, etc., tend to be the most bothersome, but feel all that is part of the enjoyment as well. Spending that much time on the forest, the Gregoires have also done a considerable amount of other service work benefiting the FLNF.

They have cleaned up discarded bottles, put out smoldering campfires, and generally been additional set of eyes on the ground, by sharing information and reporting any activities they feel may be illegal.

For more information contact Kari Lusk at 607-546-4470