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Ruttger's Bass Lake Trail

by LeAnn Plinske, *Minnesota Master Naturalist*

Creatures are flying. What an opportunity to take a closer look at many of the smaller denizens that inhabit the environs of Ruttger's Bass Lake Trail and ponds.

There are an incredible number of dragonflies and damselflies flying in the area. Remember when you learned in science class about the biological classification system? Dragonflies and Damselflies are within the class Insecta (insects) and within the order Odonata, which means "toothed" or "toothed ones" referring to their raptorial jaws.

If you are fascinated by all 'dragons and damsels', scour your field guides to help identify species. In the Darner family: Common Green and Canada Darners.

In the family of Skimmers: Four-spotted, Twelve-spotted and Widow.

Chalk-fronted Corporal, Dot-tailed Whiteface, and Racket-tailed Emerald are each medium-sized dragonflies with distinctive markings.

One unfortunate Dot-tailed Whiteface dragonfly was snared by a Cob-web spider, so named because its web is not a uniform orb of connected lines, but rather random and unevenly spaced like a cob web in a barn.

Damselflies are smaller than dragonflies, and often more difficult to identify, but around Bass Lake are the Swamp Spreadwing, and many American Bluets such as the Marsh and Hagen's Bluets.

In the 'field' (pun-intended) of wildflowers that are blooming, look for the Ox-eye Daisies, a perennial in the Aster family. Each 'flower' is an interesting composite of many flowers: each white petal is a separate flower, while the center yellow portion is many individual disk flowers.

Blooming in and around the lake and ponds are Common Milkweed—the Monarchs and other pollinators are going to love that! Also look for Blue Flag Iris, White Water Lily, Wild Roses, and Virginia Waterleaf, all native perennials.