



Dragonfly

DRAGONFLY IS NOT YET

an adult. He still lives underwater in the young, or nymph, stage. He feels the stream around him chill as the sun goes down. He takes one last bite of worm and leaves the stream for his winter home. He doesn't get out of the water—he goes underneath it.

Splosh. He settles into the warm mud at the bottom of the stream. It's a bubbly nest, warmed by the decaying plants in the streambed.

Breathing underwater is no problem. Dragonfly still has gills like a fish. He needs to stay wet until he changes into a full-grown dragonfly with wings.


Last spring, this dragonfly nymph was an egg. He hatched in the water and wriggled down to the bottom, feeling the stream's gentle current on his light body. Now he is bigger. He waits in the plants for his food to come close, then—*snap!*—his big jaws close over a worm. Sometimes he catches tadpoles and even small fish. Dragonfly is always hungry, and the stream has a constant flow of food. But he needs to be ready to hide, too, because bigger fish would love to have him for lunch.

He won't have to worry during winter, though. He'll stay curled up in the mud.

Not many animals go hunting in the winter. And the mud isn't likely to freeze. This is a time of rest.

In spring, Dragonfly will dig out and start eating again. This year he might be ready to change into a full-grown dragonfly. Then he'll become the amazing flying machine that can zoom, dive, and spin in midair.

But if he changes into an adult, he won't live through another winter. Before summer is over, he'll find a mate. She'll lay eggs, and from those eggs will come the next generation of dragonflies.



Dragonfly Nymph