

Entry:

Nevada State Insect Contest

Our class has selected *Argia vivida*, the Vivid Dancer Damselfly, as our submission to the Nevada State Insect Contest. It is a small (about 1.5 inches in length) flying insect and belongs to the family Coenagrionidae of the order Odonata.¹ It was first classified by Hermann August Hagen in 1865, the year after Nevada statehood.² Hagen later became the first professor of entomology at an American university, Harvard.³

We first voted for *Argia vivida* because of its colors. The adult male is a rich blue with clear wings that appear silver when rapidly beating in sunlight. Silver and blue are Nevada's state colors. This color scheme is sometimes repeated during mating. While most females are tan or tan and grey, some are colored a silver grey.⁴ After mating, the male and female fly in tandem (he protecting her from other males⁵) to a spot where she can deposit her eggs on vegetation just below the water line.

Next we learned the Vivid Dancer Damselfly is abundant in all four regions of our state. Its habitat is the springs and ponds of Nevada.⁶ We thought it was important that the state insect not have a limited range or be endangered. It should represent and prosper throughout the entire state.

It was when we discovered *Argia vivida* is helpful to humans that we believed we had made a great choice. The Vivid Dancer Damselfly preys upon mosquitoes, flies, aphids and other pests.⁷ It isn't just pretty. It serves Nevadans by contributing to our economy and quality of life.

Forty-one states have chosen 55 state insects and/or state butterflies. These are represented by twenty-four butterflies, seventeen bees, seven lady bugs and two dragonflies on that list, but not one damselfly.⁸ The selection of the Vivid Dancer would reinforce Nevada's status as unique among the states.

It is for these reasons we nominate *Argia vivida*, the Vivid Dancer Damselfly, as Nevada's state insect.

¹ Idaho Museum of Nat. History, <http://imnh.isu.edu/digitalatlas/bio/insects/drgnfly/coenfam/arvi/arvifr.htm>

² ITIS, http://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=102139

³ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_August_Hagen

⁴ Monterey Odonata, <http://montereybay.com/creagrus/VividDancer.html>

⁵ Living Landscapes, <http://www.livinglandscapes.bs.ca/cbasin/endangered/vivid.htm>

⁶ Damselflies of the Southwest, <http://southwestdragonflies.net/damsels/swzygoptera.html>

⁷ Idaho Museum of Nat. History, <http://imnh.isu.edu/digitalatlas/bio/insects/drgnfly/coenfam/arvi/arvifr.htm>

⁸ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_insects