

Rubyspot Damselfs Return for Third Year...With Surprises!



A female American Rubyspot, Hetaerina americana, perches above a rainpool in a grassy meadow at the Biology Station.

As much as I enjoyed learning about, and chasing and photographing, dragonflies and damselflies last year, I'm enjoying it even more this year! Let's face it, these critters need water and we've had an overabundance of that so far this year (though someone seems to have found the spigot now). Two new species have been documented so far this year, bringing the County total to a harmonious 75 species.

In 2005, I reported on the discovery of a new damselfly, a Smoky Rubyspot, *Hetaerina titia*, at the Biology Station and the grief that it gave me while trying to get a photo of it perched on an overhead electrical line (see www.sbs.utexas.edu/philjs/stengl/LPNN/index.html for archives of old columns). In 2006, we had a bounty of these large damselflies, including a mating pair, from mid-July through mid-August.

So I was pretty disappointed when mid-July came and went and daily checks of the garden on the north side of the greenhouse, where they had massed last year, revealed no Rubyspots. Maybe, I thought, they just won't appear this year—stranger things have happened than the non-appearance of an in-

sect that, by rights, shouldn't have been here anyway (since they thrive near running water).

But nature had a surprise in store—on Saturday, July 28th, in between showers on a saunter out to the pond, I came upon a pair, a male and a female, of Rubyspots that had taken possession of a rainpool in a grassy meadow. Once I got close, though, it became apparent that these were not Smoky Rubyspots, but American Rubyspots, *H. americana*. What a pleasant surprise!

These were new to the Station and had only been reported new to the County, by fellow Smithvillian Alvin Cearley, last year. The puzzle was, again, what were they doing here? Not that I'm complaining, mind you, but the Rubyspots and their kissing cousins, the Jewelwings (which I've never seen away from J.D. Creek here at the Station) need running water to breed in.

Still, the mystery thickened when, last Thursday (August 2nd), I found a male Smoky Rubyspot, calmly perched on the Beautyberry in its usual spot, the garden on the north side of the Greenhouse. It's true. Wonders never cease...