

Nature In Action! ©

by Dan Pemble, Kissimmee, Florida

Like many of my neighbors residing in the Kissimmee, Florida Kissimmee Bay Country Club (KBCC) subdivision, every day I am treated to some of nature's true spectacles! Undoubtedly we have all seen plenty of Florida Sandhill Cranes, Ducks, Ibis, Herons, Storks, Owls, Hawks, Eagles, Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Turkeys, Kites, an extensive variety of many other birds, and of course alligators, turtles, and fish. Among other possible sightings of nature's delights, some residents have even seen deer, fox, pigs, armadillos, raccoons, and a variety of other nocturnal creatures!? From my patio vantage point looking out onto the KBCC 11th fairway, I am constantly amazed by the ever-changing presentations of what nature has to offer to keep things in check.

Throughout the wetlands and mostly-tropical environment we have in Florida, there is no shortage of the pesky and highly-irritating mosquito! Certainly without our screened-in pool and lanai areas in the back of our homes, we could not be out there – particularly at night – without being constantly “harassed” and/or bitten by swarms of mosquitos, gnats and a plentiful supply of other insects.



Just when we thought that we were being permanently overwhelmed and “invaded” by numerous pesky insects and there was no escape, there is a most-welcome development! Enter the dragon fly.



Dragonflies are completely harmless to humans but are major predators that seasonally appear in large numbers and are seen to be darting in all directions while gorging themselves on mosquitoes and other small insects like flies, gnats, bees, ants, wasps, and, very rarely, butterflies. They are usually found around marshes, lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands because their larvae, known as "nymphs", are aquatic. About 5,900 different species of dragonflies are known in the world today! I consider the sight of large numbers of swarming dragonflies around my house to be an extremely-positive sight, considering that they are eating many insects that would other-wise be eating us!

Though dragonflies are predators, they themselves are subject to being preyed upon by birds, lizards, frogs, spiders, fish, water bugs, and even other large dragonflies.

As I have observed, shortly after swarms of dragon flies have appeared and have eliminated countless trillions and trillions of undesirable insects from our environment, they find themselves caught up in Mother Nature's forever-revolving "circle of life". Hundreds, if not thousands of swarming, darting, and diving swallows seemingly appear out of nowhere and begin in-flight feasting on the dragonflies until they are virtually (and visually) mostly eliminated! The swallows then move on to other more fertile hunting grounds. Such is nature's fascinating way of keeping everything in check and year-after-year this spectacle that I have just described is repeated over and over again!

