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Watch female dragonflies wrestle away unwanted males in mid-air

By [Joshua Rapp Learn](#) | Aug. 6, 2021 , 5:35 PM

When it comes to avoiding sexually aggressive males, some female dragonflies play dead. Others, according to a new study, wrestle the males away in midair.

The work concerns blue-eyed darners (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*), a colorful dragonfly found widely across North America. When males of this species want to mate, they try to seize the female's head with a special anal appendage. If she consents, the female folds her long abdomen back toward him and the pair flies together in a heart-shaped wheel formation.

But if she isn't in the mood, [the female starts to tussle](#), researchers report in *Ecology*. She shakes her head to try to free it from the male, while twisting around to stop him from putting his sex organs next to hers. She'll even fly backward to confound his efforts. Sometimes, the female will hold tight onto something like a reed to avoid the mating flight altogether, as can be seen in the video above.

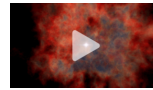
If none of this works, the female dragonfly will sabotage the flight, dive-bombing into the water to shake off and momentarily stall the male, who needs several seconds to take off again from the surface.

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