

**Paul-Michael Brunelle**  
**(7 November 1952 – 18**  
**January 2020)**

**P**aul Michael Brunelle, 67, Atlantic Canadian odonatologist and notable graphic designer, passed away unexpectedly at his cabin-cum-laboratory in rural Middle New Cornwall, Nova Scotia, on 18 January 2020.

Paul was born 7 November 1952 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He graduated from Dartmouth High School in the then city of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, since absorbed into the Halifax Regional Municipality. A talented artist, Paul attended the Nova Scotia

College of Art and Design (since 2003 NSCAD University) at a period when NSCAD was recognized internationally as “the best art school in North America”. Graduating, with a Bachelor of Design in Communication Design in 1976, he founded Graphic Design Associates (GDA) in Halifax, with partner Dereck Day. A variety of significant regional and national design projects followed, including the Nova Scotia Health card featuring Kejimikujik National Park and a series of fishing fly stamps for Canada Post. From 1992 to 1994, Paul served as President of the Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC), an organization of design professionals in media and design-related fields and Canada’s national certification body for graphic and communication design. In 1999 Paul was awarded designation as a fellow of GDC, a mark of his accomplishments and influence on the design profession in Canada. A first-rate natural history illustrator, Paul was also a member of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, a North American organization concerned with communicating and clarifying scientific ideas visually.

The late 1980s to early 1990s was a time of tumultuous change in Paul’s life. His only child, Michael, was born (1991), and Paul, then in his late thirties, abandoned a successful commercial career in graphic design to pursue life as a free-lance Odonatologist. Ultimately, this proved to be a financially precarious move. So much so, that in the decades that followed it left Paul lurching from debt (much of the time) to occasional plenty (when project or contract money was available). Nonetheless, Paul managed to pay the rent on a small apartment in Halifax (until he moved out of the city in 2017), supported a more-than-modest smoking habit with his own rolled, loose leaf tobacco cigarettes, and when times were especially tight, subsisted on a staple of beans and rice.

Throughout his life, Paul had a passion for natural history and the outdoors, and like so many notable natural historians through the ages, was self-taught. This led him to devote the latter half of his life to the study of the dragonflies and damselflies of the northeast, at the time relatively poorly known. In the 90 years prior to 1990, only about 4700 records of Odonata had accumulated for the entire Acadian region (Maine and Maritime Canada), with these collected mainly incidental to other studies undertaken largely by professional entomologists. In Canada



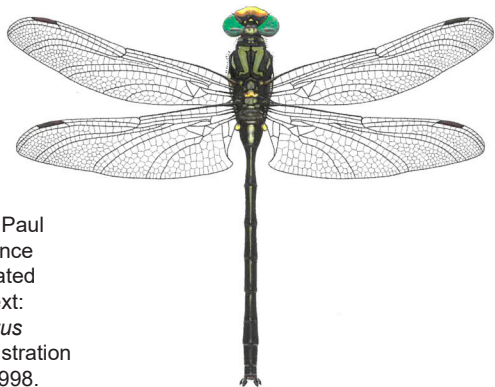
Paul Brunelle and his customized “Odemobile” jeep on the search for Odonata in the Jacquet River Gorge Protected Natural Area in August 2010, during a New Brunswick Museum-organized biodiversity survey.

this included, most notably, Edmund M. Walker of the University of Toronto and founder of the Royal Ontario Museum invertebrate collections. In 1993, Paul established the Atlantic Dragonfly Inventory Program (ADIP), an unfunded, volunteer survey to which interested persons were encouraged to submit specimens and data to given standards. From 1999 to 2003, Paul was contracted by the State of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to help coordinate (with Wildlife Biologist Dr Philip deMaynadier) the Maine Damselfly and Dragonfly Survey (MDDS) for the same purpose. At the time of Paul's death, as result of his own efforts, his oversight of organized surveys (undertaken largely by amateurs), and his enthusiastic encouragement of anyone who could hold an insect net, he had meticulously databased in excess of 67,000 records of odonates from Maine and the Maritimes. During the course of his entomological career, Paul produced about 80 journal papers, consulting and species status reports, and newsletter contributions dealing with odonates. This included, with Paul Catling and the Royal British Columbia Museum's Robert Cannings (one of Paul's early mentors), an annotated checklist of the Odonata of Canada.

Throughout the early 1990s and until his death, Paul's interest in damselflies and dragonflies never flagged and became his primary vocation. Funded by a number of agencies, his insect survey work took him to some of the most remote bogs, streams and marshes of the Maritimes and the northeastern USA, usually alone, and often at risk of sinking into a quagmire. An early highlight was his 1995 discovery of a new species of dragonfly, the broad-tailed shadowdragon (*Neurocordulia michaeli*), which he described in the scientific literature and named for his son in 2000. A dusk-flying species, Paul discovered larvae in the Canoose, a cool, clear, rocky stream in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. The find was significant (it had been nearly half a century since anyone had discovered a new shadowdragon in North America) and led to dragonfly specialists from across the continent making the trek to southeastern New Brunswick when the 1996 annual meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas was held in St. Stephen, New Brunswick to mark the discovery. The same year Paul was awarded the Entomological Society of Canada's Norman Criddle Award, which recognizes the contributions of an outstanding non-professional entomologist to entomology in Canada.

A fuller tribute to Paul's life, with a full bibliography of his publications and other writings, will appear in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

Donald F. McAlpine  
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While a fine natural history illustrator, Paul also understood the scientific importance of carefully recording the data associated with each of his illustrations. Image text: *Gomphus* [=Phanogomphus] *descriptus* Banks, 1896. Mature male, 250%, Illustration by Paul-Michael Brunelle, February 1998. Dennis Stream at Highway 1, St. Stephen, Charlotte Co., New Brunswick, Canada, June 23rd, 1995. P.M. Brunelle.

*Gomphus descriptus* Banks 1896  
Mature male, 250%, illustration by Paul-Michael Brunelle, February 1998  
Dennis Stream at Highway 1, St. Stephen, Charlotte County, New Brunswick, Canada, June 23rd, 1995, P.M. Brunelle