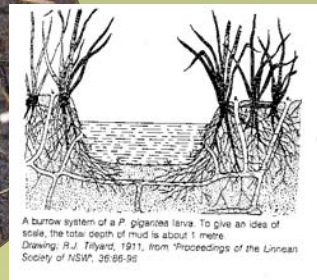


The life cycle of the Giant Dragonfly



1 Giant Dragonfly males stake out their mating territory around potential breeding sites and defend them aggressively. Coupling can take place both while flying or while perched. Photo: Chris Ireland

2 Immediately after mating the females insert their eggs into suitable egg laying sites within the swamp. A single female may lay more than 130 eggs per egg laying session. Photo: Ian Baird

3 Once hatched the larvae burrow into the moist mud of the swamp, excavating branching burrows which extend deep (up to 1m) into the swamp. They are as comfortable on land as they roam the swamp floor at night searching for food. Photo: Ian Baird

4 The larvae are slow growing and live in their burrows for at least 10 years before emergence (late October till January) when they ascend nearby swamp vegetation in preparation to shed their larval skins. Photo: Chris Ireland

5 Lasting only three months, the adult dragonfly stage is the shortest phase of the lifecycle, during which time they mate, lay eggs and then die. To sustain their reproductive endeavours they hunt by hovering over the swamp or in adjacent bushland and then darting down to take flying insects on the wing. Photo: Ian Baird

