

Common Dragonflies & Damselflies

A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife

Dragonflies and damselflies make up the insect order Odonata. Dragonflies are generally larger and rest with their wings spread. Damselflies usually rest with their wings closed. Both are fearsome aerial predators, able to catch prey on the wing. Both groups start life in water where their larvae normally spend 1-3 years feeding and growing before climbing up vegetation to transform into the spectacular adults. They have an ancient evolutionary lineage, being some of the first creatures to develop flight. *When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.*



Large Red Damselfly – *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

ID: Red and black, with black legs. First species to appear in the year.

Where: Ponds, lakes, rivers, canals. Apr-August.

Similar: None likely.



Common Darter – *Sympetrum striolatum*

ID: Male is red/orange with a 'non-waisted' abdomen. Females are yellow/brown. Wings often held forward.

Where: Perches on fences & wires. Active to Oct/Nov.

Similar: Ruddy Darter males have a 'waisted' abdomen.



Common Blue Damselfly – *Enallagma cyathigerum*

ID: Males blue/black. Females typically brown. Both have broad stripes on the thorax (arrowed). May – Aug.

Where: Ponds, pools, canals. Sheltered hedgerows.

Similar: [Azure Damselfly](#) (thin stripes on thorax).



Blue-tailed Damselfly – *Ischnura elegans*

ID: Males black with blue tip. Females all dark abdomen, thorax brown, lilac, pink.

Where: Ponds, pools, canals.

Similar: [Red-eyed Damselfly](#) (red eyes)

Become a citizen scientist! If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at www.naturespot.org.uk and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page.

Other Leicestershire dragonflies and damselflies to check out:

[Ruddy Darter](#), [Four-spotted Chaser](#), [Red-eyed Damselfly](#), [Emerald Damselfly](#), [Azure Damselfly](#)



Brown Hawker – *Aeshna grandis*

ID: Large. Brown body + brown-tinted wings. Jun-Oct.

Where: Most large water bodies, slow rivers.

Similar: None (it is the only species with brown wings).



Migrant Hawker – *Aeshna mixta*

ID: Medium. Brown/black with blue spots – dark in flight. Yellow 'golf T' at top of the abdomen. July-Nov.

Where: Well vegetated water bodies. Hunts away from water – eg. along woodland/hedge edges.

Similar: Common Hawker (rare & lacks the golf T).



Emperor Dragonfly – *Anax imperator*

ID: Large. Light blue abdomen + apple green thorax. Female has a greener abdomen. Jun-Aug.

Where: Large water bodies with lots of vegetation.

Similar: None.



Southern Hawker – *Aeshna cyanea*

ID: Large. Black with green + blue spots. Large yellow 'headlight' spots on the thorax (arrowed). July-Oct.

Where: Smaller water bodies. Garden ponds.

Similar: None have the yellow thoracic spots.



Broad-bodied Chaser – *Libellula depressa*

ID: Female - yellow, male - powder blue. May-Aug.

Where: Shallow, still ponds. Likes 'new' garden ponds.

Similar: Four-spotted Chaser (has a spot on each wing)



Banded Demoiselle – *Calopteryx splendens*

ID: Male (shown) – blue with dark wing band. Female metallic green without the wing band.

Where: Slow streams, rivers, canals. May-Sept.

Similar: [Beautiful Demoiselle](#) (male has all dark wings)

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