

Dragonflies and Damselflies

on the
Northmoor Trust Estate



Ruddy darter

Their bright colours and strong flight make these large insects a beautiful sight to anyone near water on a bright sunny day. Over 20 species can be seen on the Northmoor Trust Estate and most of these also breed here.

What is the difference between Dragonflies and Damselflies?

It's easiest to tell the difference when Damselflies and Dragonflies are resting.



Damselflies tend to be smaller and can fold their wings over their body when at rest.

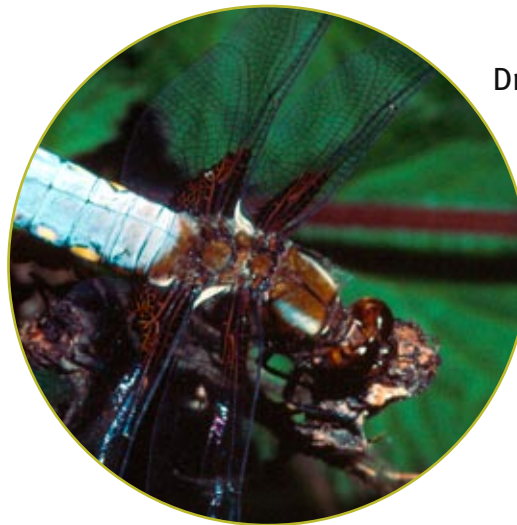


Dragonflies are more robust and their wings remain spread when resting.



Southern hawk

Dragonflies and Damselflies are very ancient animals. They were present on earth long before the dinosaurs even appeared. Although much smaller today, they have changed little in their general appearance.



Broad-bodied chaser

Dragonflies and Damselflies are carnivorous: they hunt and eat other insects. But don't worry, all species are completely harmless to humans and cannot sting or bite.

Why is the Northmoor Trust Estate important for Damselflies and Dragonflies?

There are many reasons why our estate is special for Damselflies and Dragonflies:

- The waterproof clay soils mean that many ponds occur in the area.
- A wide variety of habitats allow many different species to survive.
- The adjacent River Thames is home to two rare species, the **white-legged damselfly** and the **club-tailed dragonfly**

Watching Damselflies and Dragonflies

The mating season for Damselflies and Dragonflies is throughout the summer.

- Eggs are laid in water and soon hatch into larvae which hide among silt and vegetation ambushing any small animal that strays too close. It takes several years for the larvae to mature.
- When fully grown, the larva climbs its way up a plant stem until it is well out of the water.
- The adult then slowly emerges from the larval casing.
- Once the wings are fully expanded the newly emerged adult enjoys its new freedom and flies away.



Banded demoiselle

- Once adult, life is tough for Damselflies and Dragonflies. They live for just a few weeks, just long enough to breed, before they die.



Club-tailed dragonfly freshly emerging from its larval casing

On a warm sunny day in July it may be possible to see a dozen or more different species on the Northmoor Trust Estate. Some Dragonflies and Damselflies appear either earlier or later in the year, so several visits may be needed to see them all.

In May, the **club-tailed dragonfly**, with its yellow/green and black body and club-shaped tail, is one of the earliest to appear but long gone before the July peak. The adult then slowly emerges from the larval casing (see picture above).

In contrast, the **migrant hawker** isn't seen until late summer in September.

Different species also fly in different places. The **club-tailed dragonfly** and the **banded demoiselle** are often seen near the river bank. Smaller, weakly flying damselflies, such as the **common blue**, rarely venture far from their breeding ponds.

Larger dragonflies, such as the **brown hawker**, use their powerful flight to 'hawk' up and down woodland rides searching for insect prey.



Brown hawker

Keep an eye on the website at www.northmoortrust.co.uk for dates of our popular '**Damsels and Dragons**' event during the summer. You will also find details of our "Adopt a wildlife" scheme. Here you can buy that alternative present for a friend or loved one and support the important conservation work taking place on the Northmoor Trust estate.



Visit Project Timescape to find out more about local wildlife and landscapes.

www.projecttimescape.co.uk