



Dragonflies

During the Carboniferous period, 300 million years ago when the earth's atmosphere was rich in oxygen, insects reached their largest size. Giant dragonfly-like creatures existed with wingspans of up to 28 inches. The oldest dragonfly fossil, dating back 280 million years ago has a wingspan of 8 inches while the largest Odonate today from Central and South America is a damselfly with a wingspan of 7.1 inches.

The largest dragonflies we see in the UK flying around our ponds and rivers have a wingspan closer to four inches. Like their ancestors they rely on freshwater to breed. Their aquatic larvae, called naiads (nymphs) are carnivorous as are the adult insects which reach maturity in a period of between one to five years. Masters of flight, reflected in their names.. darters, skimmers, chasers and hawkers these charismatic creatures, whilst falling prey to other critters such as frogs, spiders, birds and bats also have a taste for each other. I recently photographed a Lessor Emperor predated a Migrant Hawker on Winterton Dunes in Norfolk.

The British Dragonfly Society reports that seventeen UK species have increased in occupancy since the seventies. The number of wetland habitats, water quality and climate warming all having an impact. Since the nineties six new species of dragonflies and damselflies have arrived in the UK.



Hairy Dragonfly



Southern Hawker



Brown Hawker



Norfolk Hawker



Moorland Hawker



Migrant Hawker



Southern Migrant Hawker



Azure Hawker
No image yet



Emperor



Golden-ringed Dragonfly



Downy Emerald



Brilliant Emerald

Northern Emerald
No Image yet



Common Clubtail



Broad-bodied Chaser



Four-spotted Chaser



Scarce Chaser



Black-tailed Skimmer



Keeled Skimmer



Common Darter



Ruddy Darter



Black Darter

White-faced Darter
No image yet

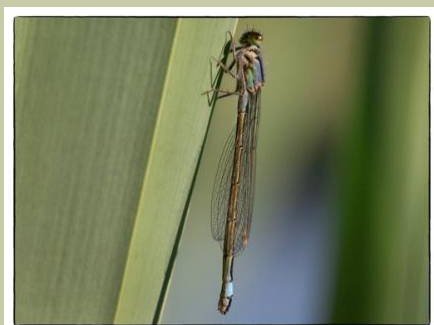
Damselflies



Southern



Azure



Blue-tailed



Scarce blue-tailed



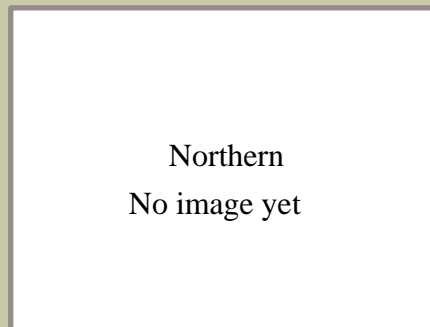
Variable



Common Blue



Dainty



Northern
No image yet



White-legged



Red-eyed



Small Red-eyed



Small Red



Large Red



Emerald



Scarce Emerald



Southern Emerald



Willow Emerald



Banded Demoiselle



Beautiful Demoiselle