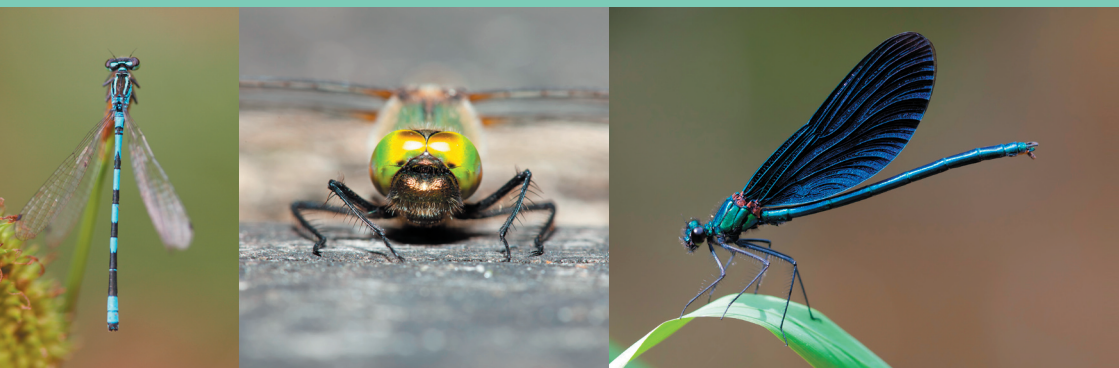


# The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Scotland

An introduction to dragonflies in Scotland



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
**Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

**HDH Wills**  
CHARITABLE TRUST





Beautiful Demoiselle  
May - late  
August



Keeled Skimmer  
June - August



Azure Hawker  
Late May - July



Downy Emerald  
Late May - July



Emperor  
May - August



Four-spotted Chaser  
May - August



Banded Demoiselle  
Late May - late August



Common Blue Damselfly  
June - mid September



Common Hawker  
July - October



Northern Damselfly  
May - August



Variable Damselfly  
May - early August





Emerald Damselfly  
June - September



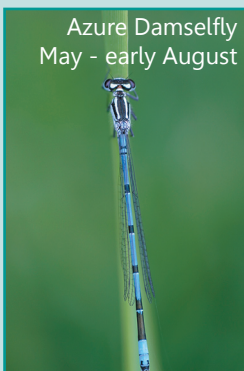
Common Darter  
July - September



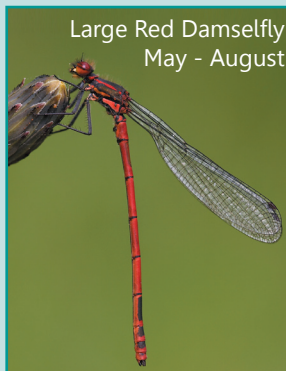
White-faced Darter  
May - July



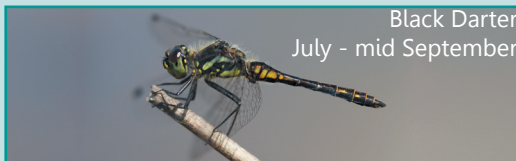
Hairy Dragonfly  
Late May - June



Azure Damselfly  
May - early August



Large Red Damselfly  
May - August



Black Darter  
July - mid September



Southern Hawker  
July - September



Blue-tailed Damselfly  
May - September



Golden-ringed  
Dragonfly  
June - September



Northern Emerald  
Early June -  
August





Brilliant Emerald  
May - August



## Types of Dragonflies and Damselflies

Dragonflies and damselflies are members of the Order of insects called Odonata. The photographs and descriptions are of males as these are encountered more often. Females and immatures have different colours and markings. The photographs are not to scale so use the size guides below to confirm body length.

 = Size guide line, this shows the longest and shortest body length of the species within the group.

 = The species in the photograph is rare.

**Damselflies** – these are smaller and thinner than dragonflies with weak flight. They generally hold their wings together when they are resting and their eyes do not touch.

**Demoiselles (Beautiful Demoiselle and Banded Demoiselle)** Large damselflies with metallic green or blue bodies and dark wings, which are wholly dark in the Beautiful and have a dark band in Banded Demoiselles (females in both species have wholly green or bronze wings).

**Emerald Damselfly** A metallic green damselfly that typically rests with its wings held open.

**Large Red Damselfly** A medium-sized, red damselfly with black legs.

**Blue Damselflies (Common Blue Damselfly, Northern Damselfly, Azure Damselfly and Variable Damselfly)** The males of all of these are blue and black. Look at the stripes on their thorax and markings at the top of their abdomens to identify them using identification guides. The most regularly seen blue damselfly in Scotland is the Common Blue. The colours of the females vary.


**Blue-tailed Damselfly** These have blue near the tip of the abdomen. Males are blue and black; the colours of the females vary.



**Dragonflies** – These are more robust and are stronger fliers than damselflies. They hold their wings apart when they are resting and their eyes touch.

**Hawker and Hawker-like Dragonflies (Hairy Dragonfly, Azure Hawker, Common Hawker, Southern Hawker, Emperor and Golden-ringed Dragonfly)** These are medium to large dragonflies with powerful flight. Territorial males are often seen patrolling, generally below waist height. They hang vertically when perched.

The true Hawkers and the Hairy Dragonfly have paired blue, green or yellow spots down their abdomens. The Hairy Dragonfly appears early in the flight season and has a hairy thorax. The Common and Southern Hawkers are larger than the Hairy Dragonfly and Azure Hawker.

 The Emperor Dragonfly is a large dragonfly with a green thorax. The abdomen is blue (males) or green (females), with a distinctive broad black line along the top.

 The Golden-ringed Dragonfly is the longest British dragonfly; it has black and yellow markings and green eyes.

**Emerald Dragonflies (Downy Emerald, Brilliant Emerald and Northern Emerald)** These are medium-sized, metallic green dragonflies with green eyes. They can be distinguished by the yellow markings on their 'faces' and wings, but a close view is needed for this.

**Chasers and Skimmers (Four-spotted Chaser and Keeled Skimmer)** These are medium-sized blue or brownish dragonflies. The Four-spotted Chaser is yellow or brown and has additional dark spots on its wings; the male Keeled Skimmer has a powder blue abdomen, the female is yellow.

**Darters (White-faced Darter, Black Darter and Common Darter)** These are small dragonflies that often return to the same perch. The White-faced Darter is a small, red and black (mature male) or yellow and black (female or immature) dragonfly with a distinctive white 'face'. Black Darters are black and yellow, the male has more black on it. Common Darters are red (male) or yellow and black (females). Look at the colour of the legs, colour of the eyes and markings on the 'face' to confirm the identity.







## Habitats and Distribution of Scottish Species

**Beautiful Demoiselle** Running water. West coast Argyllshire, Mull and Ardnamurchan.

**Banded Demoiselle** Slower moving running water. This species has moved northwards in England and recently reached the far south of Scotland.

**Emerald Damselfly** Well vegetated standing water. Widespread.

**Large Red Damselfly** Standing or very slow moving water. Widespread.

**Northern Damselfly** Shallow, well vegetated lochans and pools. Cairngorms National Park, Perthshire and Aberdeenshire.

**Azure Damselfly** Small ponds and ditches. Moving north of a line drawn from Oban to Pitlochry to Deeside.

**Variable Damselfly** Well vegetated ditches, ponds and lochs. Scarce. Distribution scattered north of Oban as well as in Dumfries and Galloway.

**Common Blue Damselfly** Most wetlands. Widespread.

**Blue-tailed Damselfly** Most wetlands. Widespread.

**Hairy Dragonfly** Well vegetated lochs. Confined to the west, in Argyll from Oban southwards, also in the Dalbeattie area.

**Azure Hawker** Bog pool complexes, flies along woodland rides. Mainly in the northwest Highlands.

**Common Hawker** Acid bog pools and lochs. Widespread.

**Southern Hawker** Lochs, ditches, pools and garden ponds. Established populations in Argyll, the Great Glen and the Moray coastal plain and spreading into central Scotland from the south.

**Emperor Dragonfly** Lowland standing water including large well-vegetated ponds, garden ponds, lakes, flooded gravel pits, ditches and canals. A relatively rare and recent arrival.

**Golden-ringed Dragonfly** Burns, moorland and woodland rides. Widespread in upland areas.

**Downy Emerald** Patrols loch edges. Strathglass, Glen Affric, Oban and Loch Bran.

**Brilliant Emerald** Upland pools often sheltered with trees or overhanging heather banks. Patrols loch edges. Strathnairn, Strathglass and Argyll.

**Northern Emerald** Sphagnum (bog moss) pools and runnels, can be found in areas with little or no standing water. Scattered in upland areas, Highlands, Argyll and Cairngorms National Park.

**Four-spotted Chaser** Moorland bogs, ditches and ponds. Widespread.

**Keeled Skimmer** Pools and runnels with some water movement. Scattered sites on the west coast.

**White-faced Darter** Bog pools with floating and submerged bog moss. Found in the Highlands from Perthshire east to Deeside and up to Wester Ross.

**Black Darter** Well vegetated moorland pools and bogs. Widespread.

**Common Darter** Ponds, lochs and slow moving burns. Widespread.

The UK populations of species in green text are **only** found in Scotland.

## Recording

The British Dragonfly Society collects records of dragonflies. A record is a sighting of a dragonfly, dragonfly larva or larval skin (exuvia). The records inform the BDS about conservation priorities and important areas for dragonflies. They help us to assess and advise on the health of a wide range of wetland habitats. Records collected over time will also show how species are moving. These movements may be a result of climate or habitat change. So if you see a dragonfly, please let us know!



## What to Record

- Species
- Number of individuals
- Location or site name
- Grid reference
- Date
- Your name and contact details
- Breeding behaviour, if observed
- Take a photo if you can

## How to Submit Records

For more information visit: [www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/submitting-your-dragonfly-records](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/submitting-your-dragonfly-records)

1. Online via the BDS Activity on iRecord or the Dragonfly App
2. On a dragonfly recording card – available online or on request from the BDS
3. In an Excel spreadsheet

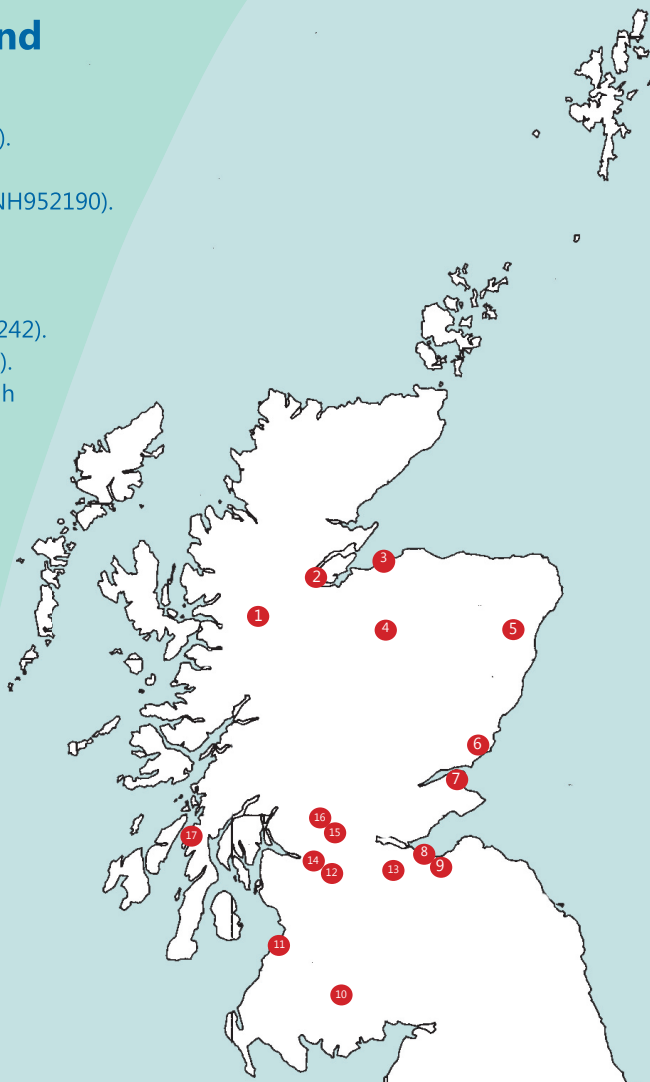
Send records to our Scottish recorder Pat Batty, ([dragonfly.batty@gmail.com](mailto:dragonfly.batty@gmail.com)) with small attachments only please



# Places to see dragonflies and damselflies in Scotland

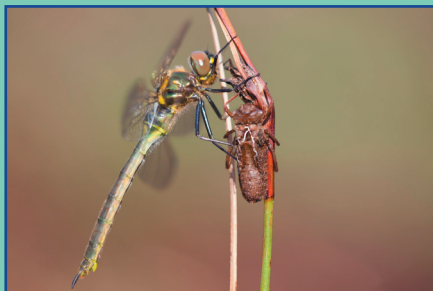
1. Glen Affric, Cannich (NH284284).
2. Monadh Mor, Inverness (NH579526).
3. Culbin Forest, Nairn (NH997615).
4. Abernethy Forest, Boat of Garten (NH952190).
5. Castle Fraser, Inverurie (NJ725125).
6. Crombie Country Park, Carnoustie (NO528401).
7. Tentsmuir Forest, Leuchars (NO498242).
8. Union Canal, Edinburgh (NT245728).
9. Vogrie Country Park, near Edinburgh (NT375632).
10. Knowetop Lochs, New Galloway (NX706786).
11. Culzean Country Park, Maybole (NS232103).
12. Hogganfield Loch, Glasgow (NS639672).
13. Tailend Moss, Bathgate (NT005678).
14. Loch Ardsinning, Strathblane (NS564779).
15. Flanders Moss, Stirling (NS647978).
16. David Marshall Lodge, Aberfoyle (NN520014).
17. Knapdale walks, Argyll (NR738854).

Find out more about these places and events near you at [www.british-dragonflies.org.uk](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk)



## Did you know?

Dragonflies and damselflies spend most of their lives underwater as larvae. They live as larvae for between 4 months and 5 years but only live as flying adults for an average of 2-3 weeks! When it is ready to emerge, the larva will climb out of the water and the adult dragonfly will emerge from its larval skin (called exuvia). The adult will then become bigger and the wings will unfurl as it pumps its wings and body up with fluid. The adult will wait as its body and wings harden before it is able to fly.





## The British Dragonfly Society

The British Dragonfly Society (BDS) promotes and encourages the study and conservation of dragonflies and their natural habitats. In the past 60 years Britain has lost two species of dragonfly and almost a third of the remainder are threatened. The BDS works to stop and reverse these trends. To find out more about dragonflies, our current projects and how to join the BDS.

**[www.british-dragonflies.org.uk](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk)**

Recommended field guides:

- Cham, S. et al (2014) Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.
- Smallshire, D. and Swash, A. (2010) Britain's Dragonflies, A field guide to the damselflies and dragonflies of Britain and Ireland. 2nd Edition. WILDGuides.  
This is also available as an iPhone app.
- Brooks, S. (2007) Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland, Printer Trento, Italy.

This leaflet has been produced in collaboration with Scottish Natural Heritage. Design and text by the British Dragonfly Society.

photo credits (front-back, left-right, top-bottom): Beautiful Dmeoiselle, Christophe Brochard; Downy Emerald, Christophe Brochard; Northern Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Banded Demoiselle, Christophe Brochard; Keeled Skimmer, Christophe Brochard; Azure Hawker, Christophe Brochard; Downy Emerald, Christophe Brochard; Emperor, David Kitching; Four-spotted Chaser, Christophe Brochard; Banded Demoiselle, Christophe Brochard; Common Blue Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Common Hawker, David Kitching; Northern Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Variable Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Emerald Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Black Darter, Christophe Brochard; Common Darter, David Kitching; Southern Hawker, David Kitching; White-faced Darter, Tim Coleshaw; Blue-tailed Damselfly, Davie Mitchell; Hairy Dragonfly, Christophe Brochard; Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Christophe Brochard; Azure Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Large Red Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Northern Emerlad, Christophe Brochard; Brilliant Emerald, Christophe Brochard; Azure Damselfly, Christophe Brochard; Four-spotted Chaser, Christophe Brochard; Mountain pool at Balmacara, Barbara Macritchie; Dragonfly Surveying, Jonathan Willet; Pool at Insh Marshes, Genevieve Dalley.



The BDS is a registered charity. Charity number 1168300

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