

# Dragonfly Facts!

**Dragonflies are excellent predators both in the water as larvae and in the air as adults.**

As larvae they hunt for a range of aquatic invertebrates and once their prey is located they can use a secret weapon. Their unique modified mouthparts, commonly known as the mask, is a hinged jaw-like structure folded under the head. The larva can shoot this apparatus forward in an instant, seize its prey with the hooks on each side of the mask, and draw it back to the mouth to be devoured.



Emperor larva © Dave Smallshire

Black Darter female © Iain Leach



Dragonflies have two large compound eyes, each with up to 30,000 lenses - providing almost 360 degree vision! Using these amazing eyes they are able to hunt prey, avoid predators, find and defend territory and find a mate.

Dragonflies can fly at up to 36km per hour (23 miles per hour) and damselflies about 10km per hour (6 miles per hour). But dragonflies have more than just speed, they are agile. They can hover like a helicopter, glide, fly backwards, and turn on the spot. This is made possible by the structure of their wings; each wing can operate separately and the complex system of veins and corrugations provides strength and flexibility.



Southern Migrant Hawker © Dave Smallshire