

The Dragonflies of Strensall and Foxglove Covert



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Acknowledgments Freshwater Habitats Trust would like to thank Defence Estates, Forestry England and Natural England who provided support and permitted access to these sites during the Flagship Ponds project. Their management of Strensall Common and Foxglove Covert has consistently sought to minimise impacts on the dragonfly populations and other freshwater wildlife of these sites and where possible to enhance them for biodiversity. We must also thank Ken Crick, a dragonfly recorder at Bramshill SSSI in Hampshire, who first developed the concept of a Flagship Ponds Dragonfly booklet, and whose notes on species identification we have used for this publication.

Cover/back cover images: Keith Gittens, Paul Ashton, Chris Abbott, Bob Crick.

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Forward

Strensall and Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve are Freshwater Habitats Trust Flagship Pond Sites. Part of a network of the very best of Britain's ponds; sites of exceptional importance for freshwater wildlife and some of our finest freshwater habitats. The Flagship sites can be a single special pond, or more commonly group of ponds, selected because they support rich, often irreplaceable, communities and species at risk of extinction. They represent some of the least impacted, most diverse pond habitats remaining in the country.

Many of our nation's most beautiful and biodiverse waterbodies have degraded irrevocably, and it's critically important that the remaining sites are well protected and well managed. In 2015, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Freshwater Habitats Trust launched the Flagship Ponds project, working with land managers and community groups to ensure that the most critical pond sites in Britain were protected for the long term.

This book has been published with the aim of enabling people visiting these, immensely important Flagship Pond Sites in North Yorkshire, to identify the dragonflies and damselflies they encounter - by reference to a simple text and photographs. It should also inform those visiting the site of the location of the majority of freshwater habitats.

Please help to protect Strensall and Foxglove Covert for dragonflies and damselflies and other wildlife by following these three simple rules:

1. Ensure your footwear is cleaned and disinfected before visiting this protected area;
2. Enjoy the network of ponds from a safe distance remaining on established tracks and paths and avoid entering the water;
3. Always keep your dog's under control and out of the water (and on a lead between March 1st and August 31st during the bird nesting season).

Following these simple instructions will prevent disturbance to wildlife and reduce the spread of non-native invasive plants and wildlife diseases.

More information on the Flagship Pond project, access restrictions to these sites, and data on the damselflies of Strensall and Foxglove Covert can be found here:

freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/flagship



Southern Hawker



Emperor Dragonfly



Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Strensall

Close to the City of York, in North Yorkshire, Strensall is a 579 hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is one of only two extensive areas of open heathland remaining in the Vale of York and represents 1% of the national habitat resource. In recognition of this importance, the site is notified as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The heathland is dominated by iconic species; Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* are common on wetter ground, whilst Ling Heather *Calluna vulgaris* predominates on the drier areas. The site also consists of a mosaic of other habitats including acid grassland, woodland, and a network of wetlands including mires, ditches, ponds and winter wet trackway pools. These smaller ponds and pools are some of the most ecologically interesting habitats on the site, supporting national rarities like Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*, Pond Mud Snail *Omphiscola glabra*, Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris* and Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*. Increasingly scarce species such as Lesser Water-Plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*, Slender Sedge *Carex lasiocarpa*, Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, and Common Toad *Bufo bufo* can also be found on the site.

The majority of the site, which is known as Strensall Military Training Area, is owned and managed by the Ministry of Defence, and its purchase by the War Office in 1884 has almost certainly ensured its survival and protected it from ploughing and conifer plantations. The period of military occupation has also helped to create many of the ponds, including several excavated in recent years for conservation purposes. Some of the oldest however, probably originated as peat cuttings and clay pits, creating more permanent ponds alongside the many winter wet pools which are a natural feature of heathland habitats.

As well as supporting an array of rare and threatened species, the site also supports a rich assemblage of Odonata including eleven dragonfly and eight damselfly species.

The most accessible pond is located close to the car park off Lords Moor Lane. This sheltered pond is well worth a visit as many of the more common dragonfly species can be seen. Early in the season Large Red Damselfly *Pyrthosoma nymphula* and Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* are notable. Later on, all three darter species can be seen, while Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea* males patrol the margins and Emerald Damselflies *Lestes sponsa* perch amongst the rushes. In total thirteen species are regularly recorded.

One of the oldest and largest ponds on the site, Kidney Pond, has been in existence since at least the 1890's. Currently, only around 5% of the original pond area is visible as a crescent shaped area of open water, whilst the majority of the basin is now occupied by possibly the best and most extensive example of floating fen habitat in lowland England. A variety of Dragonfly species including Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*, Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis* and Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* can be found around the pond.

World's End, to the East of Strensall Military Training Area, is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and is considered to be one of the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in the City of York. Managed by Forestry England, the 42 hectare site consists of a mosaic of





Keith Gittens

Strensall Dragonflies:

Damselflies

- Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
- Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*
- Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*
- Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*
- Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*
- Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*
- Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*
- Small Red-eye Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum*

Dragonflies

- Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*
- Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*
- Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*
- Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*
- Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*
- Four-Spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*
- Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*
- Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*
- Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*
- Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*
- Black Darter *Sympetrum danae*

fen meadow, wet grassland, heathland and pond and ditch habitats. It is particularly well known for dragonflies. In 1985, the area which now includes the ponds, was planted with Corsican Pine. The pines were felled between 2003 and 2005, and as part of the heathland restoration project, the ponds were dug to increase the diversity of habitats available on the site and to link with the nearby ponds on Strensall MTA. As well as the five common species of damselfly, both Red eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas* and Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* breed here, making this one of the most northerly breeding sites in the UK for these species.

Foxglove Covert

Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve is owned and managed by the Ministry of Defence and covers 40 hectares of moorland at the edge of Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire. In April 2001 the area was declared a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCl), the first Local Nature Reserve in Richmondshire, and the first on Ministry of Defence land in the UK. The overall management of the site is the responsibility of the Foxglove Covert Management Group which is made up of representatives of the Richmondshire District Council, MoD and Natural England.

The Friends of Foxglove Covert, a voluntary group started in August 2004, carry out much of the management work on the reserve, helping to maintain the wildlife habitats and operate the Field Centre.

The reserve has a remarkable mix of habitats including semi-natural woodland, willow and alder carr, coniferous woodland, heathland, flower-rich grassland, wet meadow, streams and ponds, with the most diverse and important habitat for freshwater biodiversity comprising a complex of ponds known as The Wetland. The complex includes a number of old shallow pools of very high quality, some of which dry out naturally every year, and a suite of connected ponds created in 2009, which are fed by water abstracted from a spring.

The reserves wildlife rich ponds support several of Britain's most endangered freshwater animals, including Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, Water



Keith Gittens



Foxglove Covert

Foxglove Covert Dragonflies:

Vole *Arvicola amphibious* and a small unassuming Pond Mud Snail *Omphiscola glabra*, which is a specialist of high quality ponds and an indicator of ancient wetland habitats. Delicate rare plants like Pillwort *Pilularia glabulifera* and Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris* can also be found.

The reserves nature trails will take you past many of the ponds giving opportunity to see the variety of dragonfly and damselfly species that can also be found in the spring and summer months. A total of fifteen species have been recorded from this fantastic reserve including the impressive black and yellow Golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*, the females of which are the longest dragonfly in the UK. The more abundant species include Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*, Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* and Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*.

Damselflies

Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*

Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*

Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*

Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*

Dragonflies

Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*

Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*

Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*

Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*

Golden-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*

Four-Spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*

Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*

Black Darter *Sympetrum danae*

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Dragonflies and damselflies zipping around a pond, lake or river are the essence of warm sunny summer days. Their often brightly coloured bodies flash by, leaving the watcher slightly mystified as to what they have just seen and where it has gone. They are the helicopters of the insect world, highly maneuverable

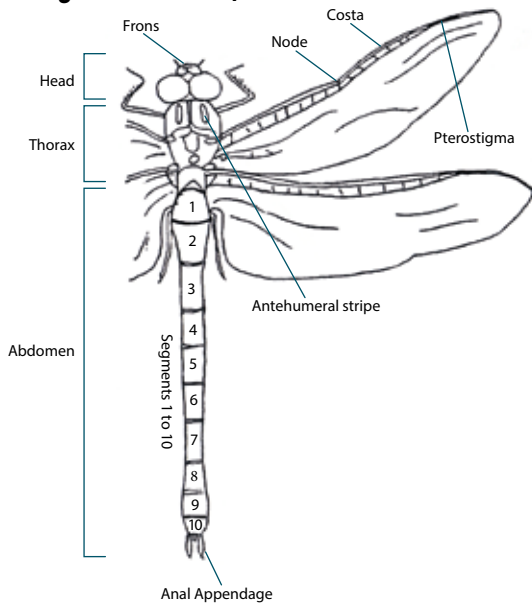
changing direction in the blink of an eye, even flying backward.

All dragonflies and damselflies belong to the order Odonata, an ancient group of insects that have been around for some 250 million years. The order is split in to two sub-orders, Anisoptera, the dragonflies, and Zygoptera the damselflies.

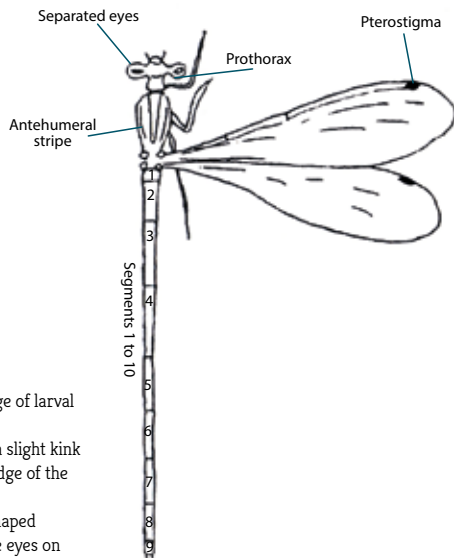
Dragonflies are robust fast flying insects whose wings, when at rest, are held at 90 degrees to the body. The front pair of wings are a different shape to the hind wings. They have large compound eyes which encompass a high percentage of the head.

Damselflies are generally much smaller insects with slim bodies, weaker flight and all four wings of similar size and shape. Their eyes are well separated to either side of a more rectangular head. Wings are folded along the abdomen when at rest.

Dragonflies - Anisoptera



Damselflies - Zygoptera



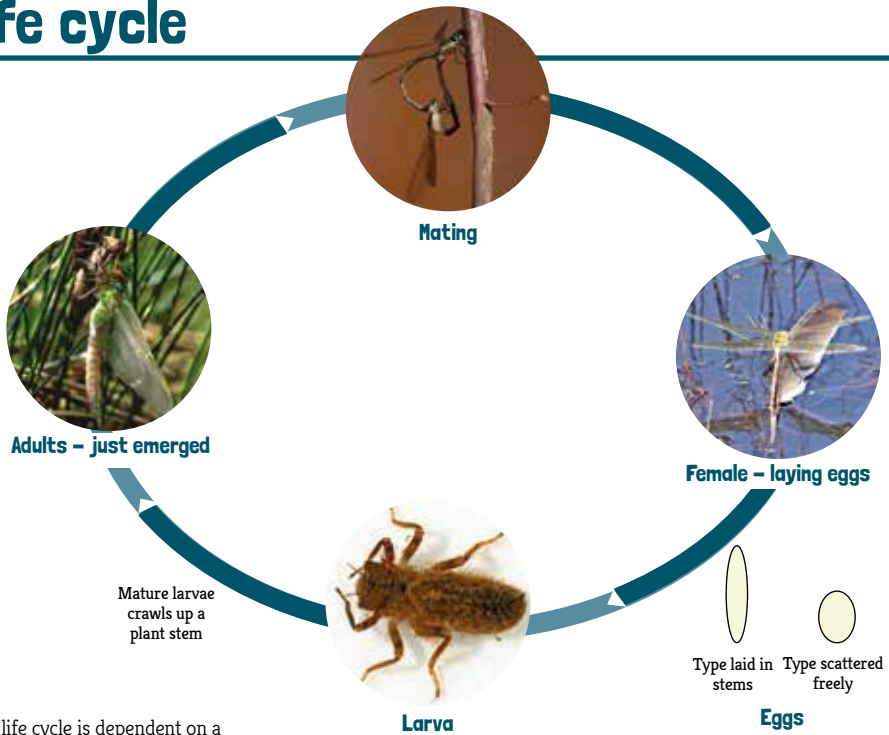
Glossary

Abdominal Segments: The abdomen consists of 10 segments often with distinctive markings.
Anal Appendages: Often called claspers, these appendages protrude from the end of the abdomen and vary in shape. Males use these appendages to clasp the female during mating.

Antehumeral Stripes: Coloured stripes often present on the front of the thorax which can vary in length and width.
Costa: The leading edge of the wing which can vary in colour.
Exuvia: A shed larval exoskeleton.
Frons: The face of the insect.

Instar: The stage of larval development
Node: Point of a slight kink in the leading edge of the forewing.
Prothorax: A shaped plate behind the eyes on damselflies.
Pterostigma: A coloured segment on the leading edge of the wing towards the tip.
Teneral: An immature adult.

Life cycle



The life cycle is dependent on a supply of fresh water in which the larvae live until ready to emerge as an adult insect. A strong population of these insects at a water body is a good indicator that their environment is clean and healthy.

Once mated the females, depending on species, use one of two methods of oviposition. They may lay their eggs freely, usually over open water but sometimes round the margins, or place eggs individually in to plant material. This may be submerged, floating or above the water line.

Eggs may hatch within a few weeks or, in later species, often do not hatch until the following spring.

The speed of larval development is dependent on species and environmental conditions. Some take just a few months but it can take as long as five years.

Once the final instar is reached

metamorphosis takes place while the larva is still under water. It then emerges from the water often climbing a plant stem before splitting open the exoskeleton to allow the immature adult to emerge. Once the wings are fully opened and hardened the insect can take its maiden flight. Moving away from water the immature insect will look for warm sheltered spots with plenty of other flying insects to eat. On maturity only then will an adult look to return to water to breed.

Copulation is unique in Odonata, the males using their anal appendages to grab the females behind the head before coupling can take place. The coupled pair creating an outline in the shape of a heart. Once mated some species

egg-lay in tandem, the male retaining its grasp on the female, in other species the females egg-lay alone.

Tips on Observation

To aid observation of dragonflies and damselflies it is useful to carry a pair of close focusing binoculars. Identification of species can be made easier by the taking of digital photos which can then be blown up on a computer screen.

Teneral are often drab but change colour as they mature, the males in particular becoming brighter and developing in an array of different colours. Females and teneral can look very similar requiring care on identification. The dark often black patterning is consistent through the life of many species.

Calopteryx splendens

Banded Demoiselle

Only recorded at
STRENSALL



Paul Ashton

Top Tips

One of our largest damselflies, its fluttering flight is pronounced by the dark blotch on the wings of the male making it easy to recognise.

Male

Body metallic blue/green, iridescent with a dark blue-black "thumb print" of variable size on each wing.

Female

Metallic green tinged with bronze; wings pale green with white marks towards the tip of the wing's leading edge.

Habitat

Occasionally lives out a full life cycle in still water but more usually on slow flowing rivers and streams with muddy bottoms.

Distribution

Occurs on the nearby River Foss at Strensall, with occasional records of wandering individuals on the Common. No records for this species at Foxglove.

Flight Period Mid May to September.

Male

Length = 45mm.

Wing span = 61-65mm.

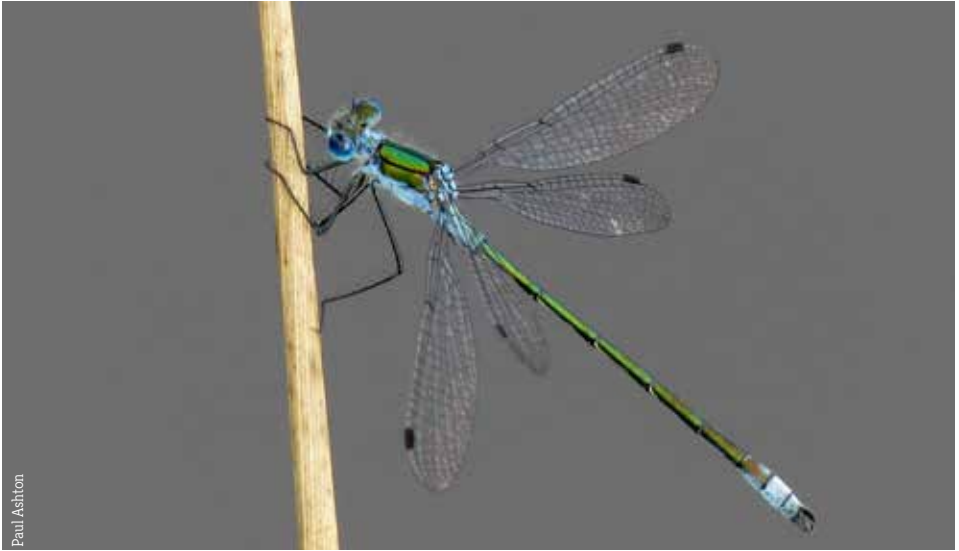
Female



Paul Ashton

Lestes sponsa

Emerald Damselfly



Paul Ashton

Male

Top Tips

When active you will usually find Emeralds perched among the upright stems of rushes with their wings partly open.

Male

Mainly metallic bronze green but with eyes, sides of the thorax, segment 1, 2, 8 and 9 all pastel blue.

Female

Metallic green, no blue markings, sides of the thorax and abdomen buff to straw coloured. Wings clear, distinguishing it from the female Demoiselle.

Habitat

On most of the sites water bodies, both ephemeral and permanent.

Distribution

Common across both sites, particularly where rushes of *Juncus* species grow.

Flight Period

Late June to Early September.

Length = 38mm.

Wing span = 40-46mm.

Female



Keith Gittens

Pyrrhosoma nymphula

Large Red Damselfly



Paul Ashton

Male

Length = 36mm.

Male wing span = 40mm.

Female wing span = 48mm.

Female



Paul Ashton

Top Tips

Usually the first species to emerge. Mostly from the end of April / early May but occasionally individuals are found in early April.

Male

Deep red abdomen with fine black banding at the segment boundaries. Segments 7 - 9 have bronze/black banding on the upper surface. The legs are black, as is the thorax which is clearly marked with two red stripes.

Female

Obviously larger than the male. The abdomen may be up to three times as thick. The amount of red and black on the abdomen varies, while most commonly around two thirds red to one third black, there are three darker forms varying from around 50% black to all black.

Habitat

Ditches, streams and still water bodies.

Distribution

Occurs across both sites in virtually all water bodies.

Flight Period

April to August.

Coenagrion puella

Azure Damselfly



Paul Ashton

Male

Length = 33mm.

Wing span = 41mm.

Female



Bob Crick

Top Tips

The first of our two blue damselflies, it prefers to keep close to the margins of ponds and lakes where there is plenty of vegetation.

Male

Bearing a "U" shaped mark on the second abdominal segment. Blue with black markings, segment 8 blue, segment 9 has another truncated "U" at its base. The thorax is marked with fine antehumeral stripes.

Female

Can be found in two colour forms, the abdominal background colour will be either blue or pale green. The upper abdominal markings are mainly black, segment 2 bearing a clipped thistle emblem and segment 8 a black square.

Habitat

On and around floating and marginal vegetation, rarely strays far from water.

Distribution

Common across both sites, most commonly where there is plenty of marginal vegetation.

Flight Period

Mid May to August.

Enallagma cyathigerum

Common Blue Damselfly



Paul Ashton

Male

Length = 32mm.

Wing span = 36-42mm.



Paul Ashton

Female

Top Tips

Our second blue damselfly prefers to spend much more time out over open water, where the females will egg lay in to submerged vegetation.

Male

The antehumeral strips are very broad. Abdominal segment 2 is marked with a mushroom shaped symbol. Towards the tip of the abdomen, segments 8 and 9 are all blue, like a bright blue barrel.

Female

Can be found in three colour forms, the abdominal background colour will be blue, straw or drab green. The upper abdominal markings are mainly black, each shaped like a bomb or rocket. Segment 8 bears a black triangle.

Habitat

Tends to have a preference for large bodies of water but not exclusively so.

Distribution

Common across both sites. Immature individuals can often be found far from water.

Flight Period

Mid May to mid October.

Ischnura elegans

Blue-tailed Damselfly

Top Tips Our smallest damselfly, the females have a number of different colour forms needing care with identification. Check for the bicoloured pterostigma.

Male Dark body with blue near the tip of the abdomen (8th segment only). Top of the thorax is dark with fine blue stripes. Noticeable fine pale rings define each segment.

Female Mature females maybe very similar to the male, only longer overall and with a thicker abdomen. In some females the thorax may change to drab green or brown as they mature and the blue abdominal segment become obscured. Immature females' thorax may be coloured violet or red pink.

Habitat Tolerant of some low levels of pollution, will use running and standing water.

Distribution Found across both sites at any water body.

Flight Period Early May to Early September.



Male

Length = 31mm.

Wing span = 35mm.

Immature Female - violet form



Paul Ashton

Immature Female - red/pink form



Chris Abbott

Erythromma najas

Red-eyed Damselfly

Only recorded at
STRENSALL



Keith Gittens

Male

Length = 35mm.

Wing span = 38-48mm.

Female



Paul Ashton

Top Tips

A fairly robust damselfly, the males are usually observed holding territory on floating vegetation.

Male

A dark species with bright red eyes and a blue tip at the end of its abdomen, segments 9 and 10. The sides of the thorax are also blue.

Female

Dark, almost black from head to tail and with dull red eyes. The sides of the thorax and underside are pale green. There are partial antehumeral stripes on the thorax.

Habitat

Water bodies with slow or no flow; with floating vegetation such as water lilies and pondweed.

Distribution

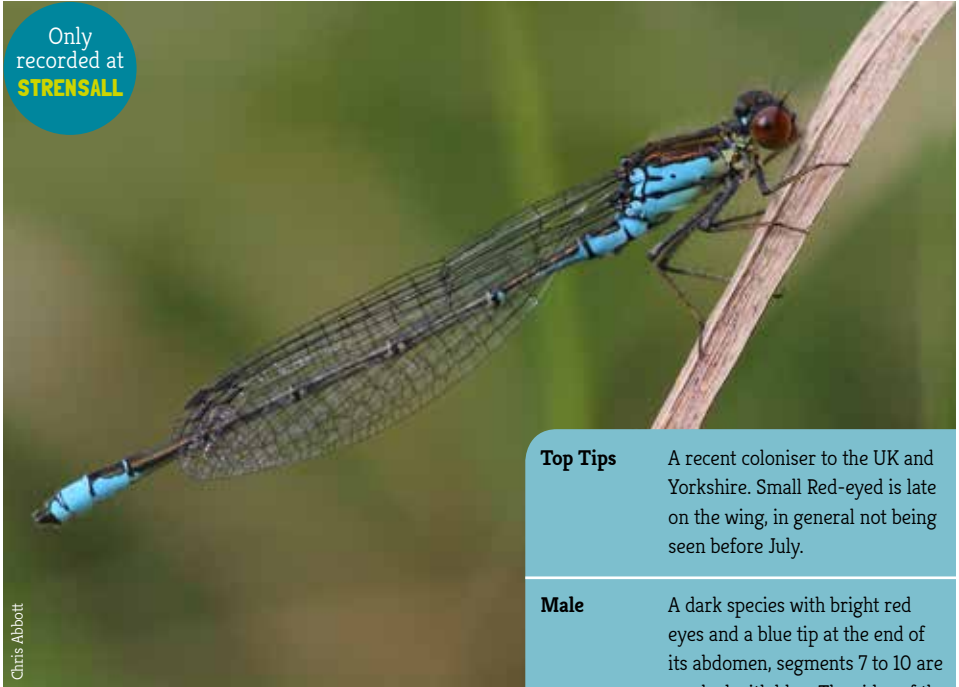
A recent coloniser of Strensall Common. To date only on the ponds at Worlds End.

Flight Period

Mid May to mid August.

Erythromma viridulum Small Red-eyed Damselfly

Only recorded at
STRENSALL



Chris Abbott

Male

Length = 30mm.

Wing span = 32-40mm.

Female



Paul Ashton

Top Tips

A recent coloniser to the UK and Yorkshire. Small Red-eyed is late on the wing, in general not being seen before July.

Male

A dark species with bright red eyes and a blue tip at the end of its abdomen, segments 7 to 10 are marked with blue. The sides of the thorax are also blue, the colour, less obviously extending onto abdominal segments 2 & 3.

Female

Dark, almost black, from head to tail and with dull eyes. The thorax upper surface usually carries complete, buff coloured, antehumeral stripes.

Habitat

Favours water bodies with floating vegetation such as water lilies, pondweed and algal mats.

Distribution

Only recently recorded at Strensall Common on the ponds at Worlds End, where evidence of breeding has been recorded.

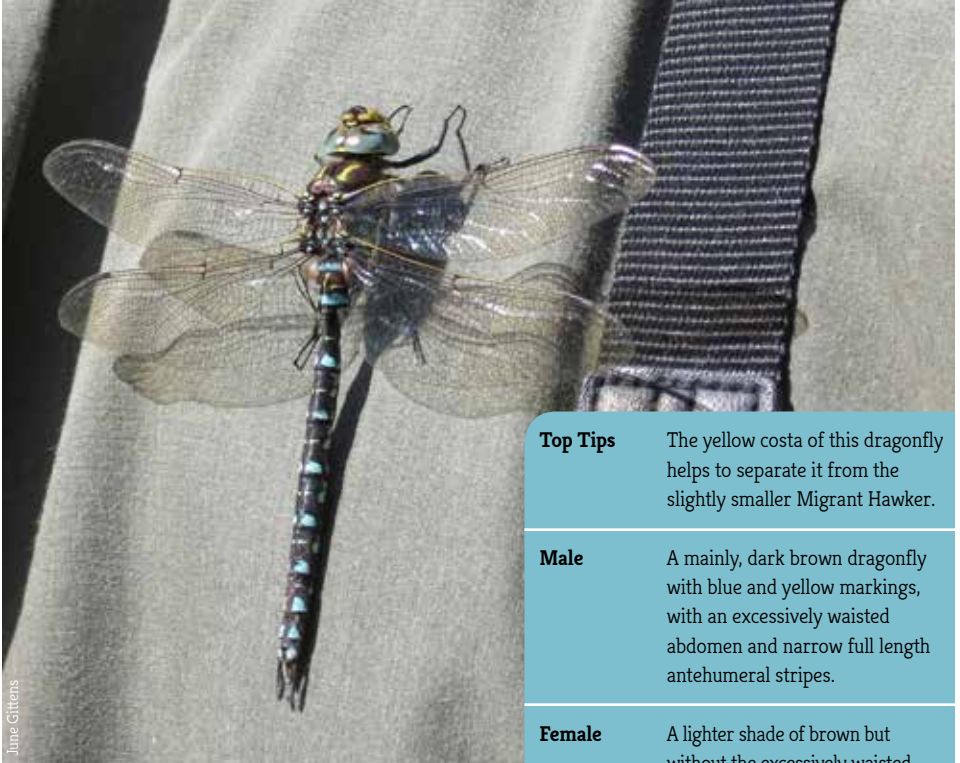
Flight Period July to September.

Aeshna juncea

Common Hawker

Length = 74mm.

Wing span = 95mm.



June Gitters

Male

Female



Chris Abbott

Top Tips

The yellow costa of this dragonfly helps to separate it from the slightly smaller Migrant Hawker.

Male

A mainly, dark brown dragonfly with blue and yellow markings, with an excessively waisted abdomen and narrow full length antehumeral stripes.

Female

A lighter shade of brown but without the excessively waisted abdomen of the male. The abdominal spots may be yellow, green or blue. The antehumeral stripes may be considerably shorter than those of the male.

Habitat

Prefers acid to neutral waters from heathland pools to larger lakes.

Distribution

Common across both sites.

Flight Period

Mid June to the end of September.

Aeshna mixta

Migrant Hawker

Length = 63mm.

Wing span = 87mm.

Top Tips

The late summer hawker; often gregarious when feeding away from water. Slightly smaller than other hawkers.

Male

A Medium sized dragonfly with steel blue eyes and short antehumeral stripes. In flight the abdomen appears to be predominantly blue. At rest a yellow triangle outlined in black and punctuating the large blue band, can be seen on the second segment of the abdomen.

Female

Brown with yellow markings throughout. Has the same short antehumeral stripes and the triangle on segment two is more nail like. The two anal appendages are notably long.

Habitat

Favours ponds containing tall marginal vegetation such as Common Reed, Bulrush or Flag Iris.

Distribution

At Strensall most frequently recorded at Worlds End. Currently no known records for Foxglove although the lake should be suitable habitat.

Flight Period

Late July to the end of October.



Keith Gittens

Male

Female



Keith Gittens

Aeshna cyanea

Southern Hawker

Length = 70mm.

Wing span = 100mm.



Keith Gittens

Male



Keith Gittens

Female

Top Tips

The hawker dragonfly with which you are most likely to have a close encounter as they feed along woodland rides and hedgerows.

Male

Brown, green and blue but the large yellow/green antehumeral stripes are the most obvious diagnostic feature. The green sometimes blue dots along the abdomen merge into solid blue banding on segments 9 & 10.

Female

All brown with yellow markings that mature to green with the exception of the triangle on the second abdominal segment that remains yellow. The build of female's abdomen is significantly more bulky.

Habitat

Prefers more sheltered ponds often with shaded margins.

Distribution

At Strensall, mostly recorded on Kidney Pond and the wooded pond near Galtres Road Car Park. At Foxglove, Voley Pond is a favoured spot but also on The Scrapes and Main Lake.

Flight Period

Late June to Early September.

Aeshna grandis

Brown Hawker

Length = 73mm.

Wing span = 102mm.



Keith Gittens

Top Tips This unmistakable large brown dragonfly has a relaxed gliding flight as it patrols on warm summer days.

Male Glowing ochre wings & blue highlights in the eyes, stand out against a dark brown body. Males set up temporary territories patrolled at about head height, usually over water.

Female A more robust version of the male, with abdominal yellow flank markings, in contrast to the blue of the male and often a yellow cast to the eye.

Habitat Has a preference for ponds and lakes with well vegetated margins. Females will often egg lay in to rotting wood as well as other plant debris.

Distribution At Strensall most frequently recorded at Worlds End and Kidney Pond. Occasional records for Foxglove but not thought to be breeding.

Flight Period Mid June to mid October.

Male



Keith Gittens

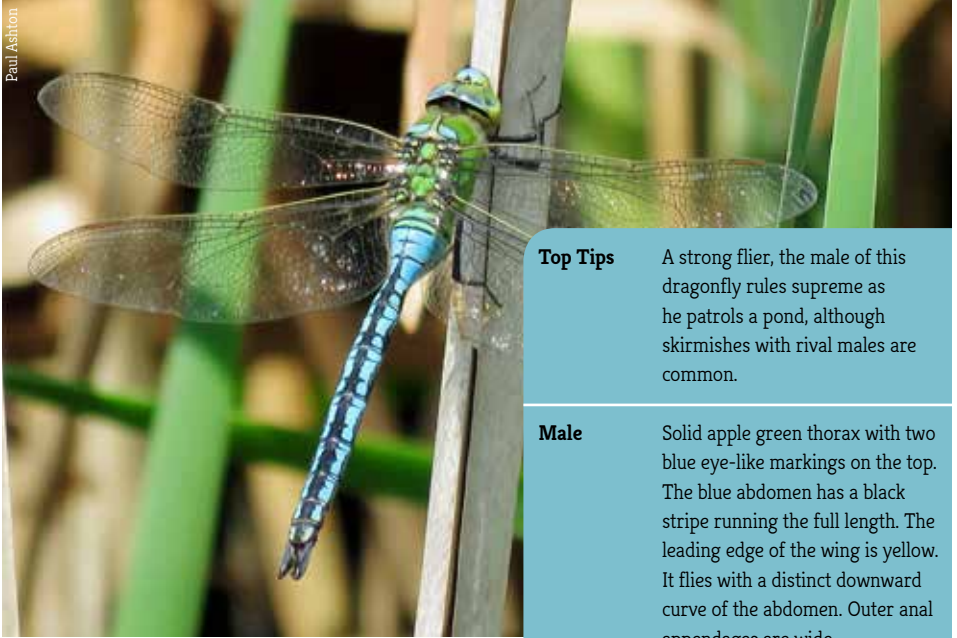
Female

Anax imperator

Emperor Dragonfly

Length = 78mm.

Wing span = 107mm.



Male

Top Tips

A strong flier, the male of this dragonfly rules supreme as he patrols a pond, although skirmishes with rival males are common.

Male

Solid apple green thorax with two blue eye-like markings on the top. The blue abdomen has a black stripe running the full length. The leading edge of the wing is yellow. It flies with a distinct downward curve of the abdomen. Outer anal appendages are wide.

Female

Apple green thorax and abdomen with a wide black stripe running its full length. Anal appendages are long and fine. Older females may develop a blue abdomen.

Habitat

A pioneer species which is not too fussy about habitat, but some vegetation, particularly submerged plants, is necessary.

Distribution

Highly dispersive, this species can be found just about anywhere. Regularly recorded at both sites but more so in hot summers.

Flight Period Early June to end of August.



Female

Paul Ashton

Cordulegaster boltonii

Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Length = 74-85mm.

Wing span = 80-100mm.

Only recorded at
**FOXGLOVE
COVERT**

Top Tips

A striking dragonfly and one of the largest British species. The females have a unique in-flight egg-laying technique allowing them to push eggs in to the fine gravel of stream beds.

Male

Pale yellow face, tear shaped green eyes that just meet to make a point contact. The thorax and abdomen are black with yellow stripes / bands. The end of the abdomen is swollen giving a clubbed appearance.

Female

Similar to the male only longer and more robust, with a very prominent egg laying tube which is clearly visible in the photo.

Habitat

Found on small gravel bottomed streams that have slow to moderate flow rates and which are over hung with grasses and ferns.

Distribution

Recorded along the rides at Foxglove. Small streams flowing off the moor are suitable breeding habitat.

Flight Period

Early June to the end of August.



Paul Ashton

Male

Female



Paul Ashton

Libellula quadrimaculata

Four-spotted Chaser

Length = 43mm.

Wing span = 76mm.



Keith Gittens

Male

Top Tips

While drab in colouration this dragonfly can cause much excitement as it can be abundant on ponds, resulting in many clashes between males.

Male

Easily identified by the dark brown appearance and distinctive wing spots. The abdomen is tapered to the rear with yellow marks on the flanks of each segment. The anal appendages turn outwards.

Female

Only close inspection of the anal appendages will separate the sexes. The anal appendages are separate tending towards one another the further they get from the abdomen.

Habitat

Can occur on almost any water body. Likes taller marginal vegetation on which to perch.

Distribution

Widespread at both sites.

Flight Period

Mid May to mid August

Female



Keith Gittens

Libellula depressa

Broad-bodied Chaser

Length = 44mm.

Wing span = 76mm.



Chris Abbott

Male

Top Tips

Often uses a prominent perch on which to bask, returning to the same perch in between flying sorties.

Male

There are rich dark brown wing patches adjacent to the thorax. The brown thorax bears two white antehumeral stripes, these white marks are repeated at each wing junction. The abdomen is flat, broad and pale blue with yellow marks on the flanks of each segment.

Female

The abdomen appears more swollen and is olive brown with yellow spots. Otherwise markings are similar to the male.

Habitat

Often found on smaller ponds but not exclusively. Can be an early coloniser of new ponds.

Distribution

On Strensall; most regularly recorded on Horse Pasture Pond. At Foxglove noted at the recently created wader scrape.

Flight Period May to early August.

Female



Keith Gittens

Orthetrum cancellatum

Black-tailed Skimmer

Only recorded at STRENSALL



Paul Ashton

Male

Length = 42mm.

Wing span = 60mm.

Female



Paul Ashton

Top Tips

This species has a distinctive low skimming flight over the water and prefers to perch on bare ground and stones.

Male

An all brown thorax, pastel blue abdomen tipped with black. Freshly matured males have yellow scallop marks on both sides of each abdominal segment; these disappear over time. The wings are clear with a black pterostigma.

Female

Females & immature males have a yellow abdomen with longitudinal black bands. The ageing female darkens to a steel grey with a hint of blue.

Habitat

Has a strong preference for sites with bare open margins of soil, stones and short vegetation.

Distribution

Limited distribution at Strensall where it has been most frequently recorded at Pillwort Pond. No known records from Foxglove.

Flight Period

Mid May to mid August.

Sympetrum striolatum

Common Darter



Chris Abbott

Male

Top Tips

One of our most abundant dragonflies often lingering late in to autumn. Will readily bask on you during cooler conditions.

Male

The abdominal colour is variable from orange to red. The legs are black with a yellow stripe on the outer sides. The thorax is brown with yellow patches on the flanks. The wings are clear with barely a hint of yellow at the point of contact with the thorax.

Length = 37mm.

Wing span = 57mm.

Female

Has the same brown thorax with yellow patches on the flanks. The abdomen is straw coloured with black darts on the flank of each segment. Antehumeral stripes may or may not be present.

Habitat

Occurs on many ponds and lakes, also slow flowing rivers and canals.

Distribution

Widespread across both sites.

Flight Period

Mid June to end of October.

Female



Chris Abbott

Sympetrum sanguineum

Ruddy Darter

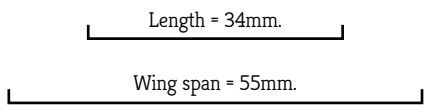


Chris Abbott

Top Tips The brighter red colouration and all black legs separate the males of this species from the slightly larger Common Darter.

Male All brown hairy thorax, with a waisted and club shaped, blood red abdomen. The wings are clear with some yellowing at the roots, the legs are black and the area in front of the eyes is red. There are no yellow patches on the flanks of the thorax.

Male



Female A yellow dragonfly with black legs. The flanks of the thorax are all yellow interrupted only by a fine black line.

Habitat Prefers shallow ponds, often with well vegetated margins in to which the females will egg lay.

Distribution At Strensall, widespread across the common. Occurs at Foxglove but in lower numbers.

Flight Period Late June to end of October.

Female



Bob Crick

Sympetrum danae

Black Darter



Paul Ashton

Top Tips The all black males of this small dragonfly can often be difficult to spot as they hover over dark peaty pools.

Male

Male A small black dragonfly with a waisted abdomen. Yellow markings on the thorax and abdomen when immature.

Length = 32mm.

Wing span = 47mm.

Female A small straw yellow dragonfly with black legs and a black triangle on the top of the thorax. There are small ochraceous patches on the wing's at the junction with the thorax.

Female

Habitat A strong preference for acid peaty pools found on heathland and moorland.

Distribution Common across Strensall. Records at Foxglove are limited and mainly from the wetland.

Flight Period Late June to end of October.



Paul Ashton

Authors note

Keith Gittens

With a family background of over 100 years in horticulture, Keith grew up in an environment of plants and flowers and at home developed an interest in birds. Continuing on that tradition by following his own career in horticulture meant the long working hours gave little opportunity for bird watching. A move from the North-West to North Yorkshire and a change in career path gave him the opportunity to spend time 'out in the field.' He quickly became involved with volunteering for the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at Ashberry Pasture and Garbutt Wood, both within the North York Moors National Park. Here he developed ID skills on a variety of flora and fauna but became particularly attracted to the Dragonflies seen around nearby Lake Gormire. He soon started to travel further afield to see Dragonflies and became a member of the British Dragonfly Society and the Yorkshire Dragonfly Group. As his experience grew, he became County Dragonfly Recorder for the vice-counties of NE and NW Yorkshire. He is currently chair of the Yorkshire Dragonfly Group and Ryedale Natural History Society.

Anne Carter

Anne has a longstanding interest in freshwater habitats following a childhood spent hanging around ponds in a pair of wellies searching for frogs, newts and toads. She originally trained and worked as a Commercial Interior Designer before her love of all things nature urged her towards a career change. After working as a Voluntary Officer with The Conservation Volunteers she completed a degree in Countryside Management and subsequently embarked on a career in Nature Conservation. She joined the team at Freshwater Habitats Trust in 2015 as the Northern Project Officer, and after helping Keith deliver training courses for FHT, developed a keen interest in Dragonflies. She is a member of the British Dragonfly Society and the Yorkshire Dragonfly Group, and alongside Keith, helps to lead Dragonfly walks on Strensall Military Training Area and World's End.

Freshwater Habitats Trust is one of the UK's principle research and conservation charities for the protection and recovery of our most endangered freshwater habitats and species.

We work in partnership to develop and deliver practical advice to help people manage and create new clean water habitats for wildlife.



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