

The Damselflies & Dragonflies of Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve



Emperor Dragonfly by Mark Carmody



Damselflies and Dragonflies of Cuskinny Marsh Nature Reserve.

Introduction

Up to the 24th May 2020 four of the 11 species of damselfly and six of the 21 species of dragonfly in Ireland have been record at the reserve. This is a very good variety for a place with relatively little standing fresh water. We did create a freshwater pond on the reserve in the 1990s and this has helped increase the damselfly and dragonfly population which now includes records of the Emperor Dragonfly, a species only first recorded in Ireland in the year 2000. It had been spreading north across Europe in response to climate change.

Dragonflies (order Odonata, meaning 'toothed jaw') are divided into two distinct sub-orders, the Zygoptera (meaning equal wings) or damselflies and the Anisoptera (meaning 'unequal wings') or dragonflies. Irish damselflies usually hold their wings along the body whereas dragonflies always hold them out at right angles to the body. Damselflies are usually smaller than dragonflies.

Damselflies and Dragonflies are expert insect hunters and can be very territorial, chasing off others that enter. They usually perch on a suitable spot and with excellent eyesight fly out at speed to chase and catch their unsuspecting prey. Some will catch insects resting on vegetation.

Most species we see on the reserve are resident but some might be migrants from continental Europe. Eggs of both damselflies and dragonflies are usually laid directly into freshwater. The larval stage of the damselfly and dragonfly is spent underwater. It is as efficient a hunter as the adult, mainly using ambush tactics to catch its prey. For most damselflies it takes one year to reach the point when the larva climbs out of the water, usually up the stem of a reed or other vegetation and transforms in to the flying adult. Some Damselflies and many Dragonflies can take two, three or more years to reach this stage. Adult damselflies in Ireland usually only live about two to three weeks and adult dragonflies about two months.

Identifying damselflies and dragonflies can be difficult and a pair of binoculars can be a big help in getting close-up views of the insect. In the identification section of this guide you will see the parts of the damselfly and dragonfly you need to look carefully at to have any chance of identifying them. The good thing is there are not many species so narrowing down your options does not take too long.

We hope you enjoy looking at the damselflies and dragonflies on the reserve and that this little identification guide will increase your appreciation for these beautiful insects.

Please report any sightings at the reserve to: info@cuskinnynaturereserve.com

We would like to thank Mark Carmody, Shay Connolly, and Michael John O'Mahony for generously supplying images.

Damselflies

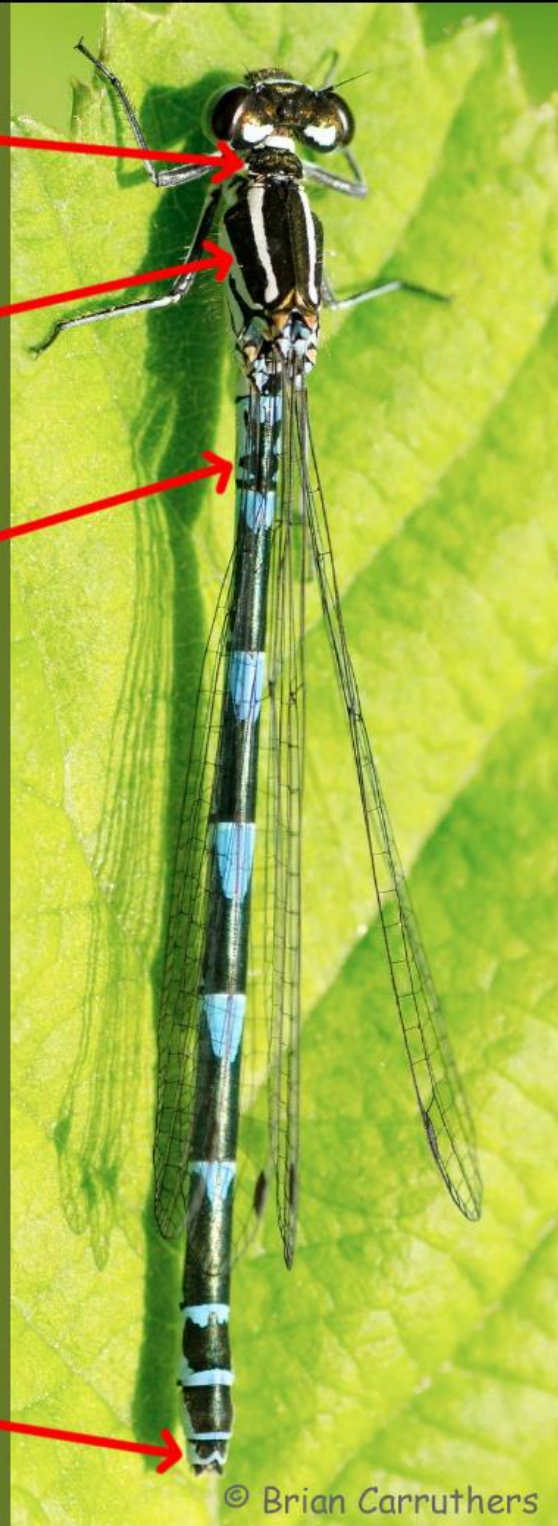
Damselfly Identification Features

Pronotum pattern

Thorax pattern

*Abdomen
Segment 1 and 2
Pattern*

*Anal Segment
pattern*



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Red Damselflies

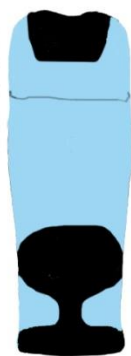


Can be seen any time from mid- April to mid-August of August.

Blue Damselflies

Cuskinny Blue Damselflies Abdominal Segments 1 and 2 Pattern

Note: patterns can vary



Common Blue



Azure



Variable

Common Blue Damselfly



Common Blue Damselfly



Can be seen any time from the beginning of May to the end of September.

Azure Damselfly



Can be seen any time from the beginning of May to the end of August.

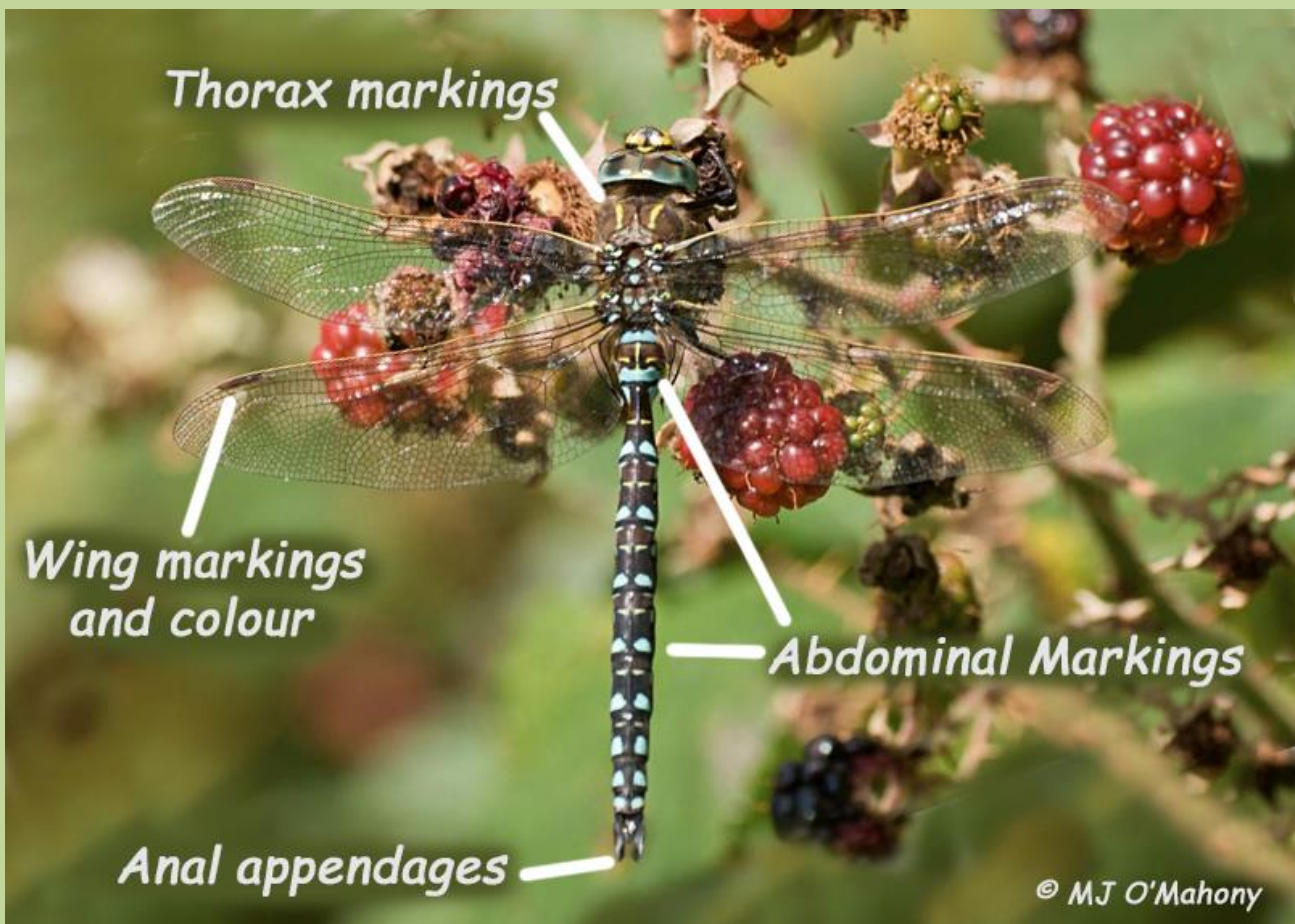
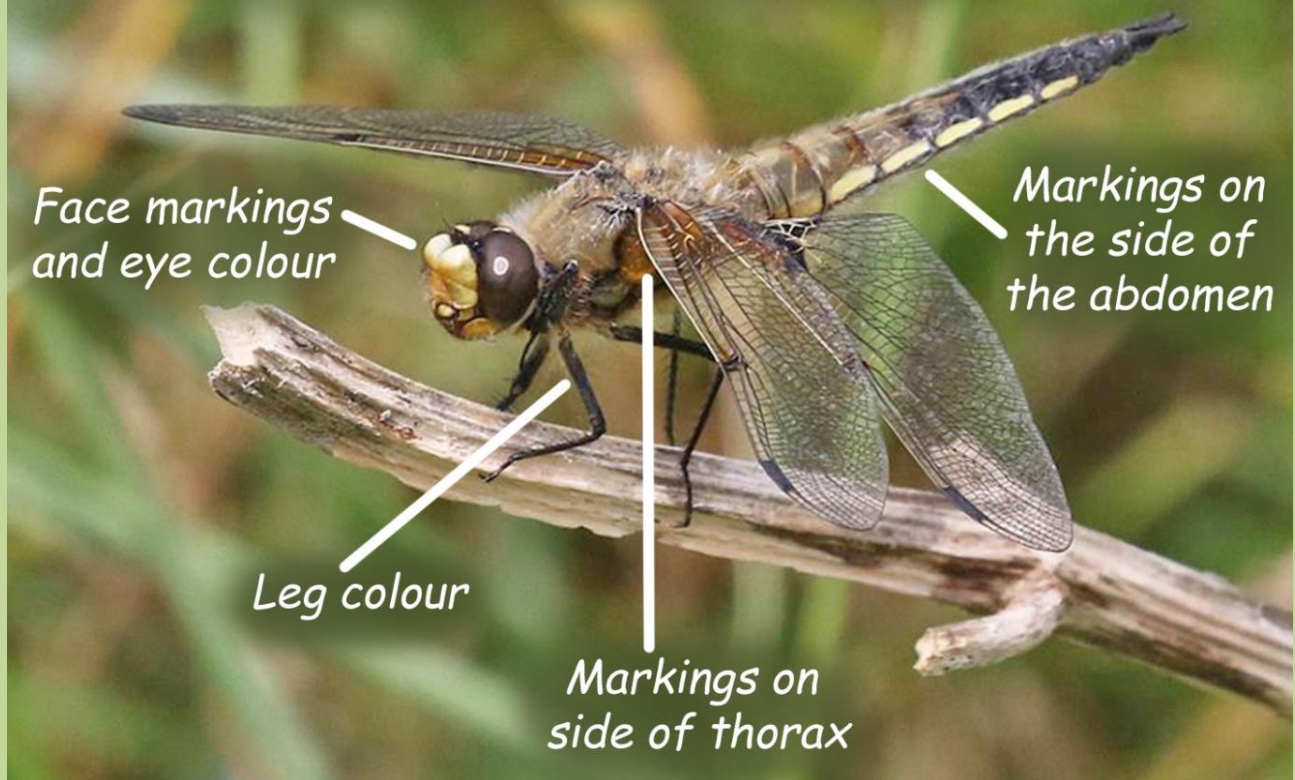
Variable Damselfly



Can be seen any time from the beginning of May until mid-August.

Dragonflies

Dragonfly Identification Features



Four-spot Chaser



Can be seen any time from the beginning of May until mid-August.

Common Hawker



Can be seen any time from mid-June to mid-September.

Hairy Hawker



Male

© *Mark Carmody*

Can be seen any time from the beginning of May until mid-July.

Common Darter



Male

Common Darter



Female

© Shay Connolly

Can be seen any time from mid-June to the end of October.

Black-tailed Skimmer



© Mark Carmody

Can be seen any time from the beginning of June until mid-August.

Emperor Dragonfly



© Mark Carmody

Can be seen any time from the beginning of June until the end of August.

THE END