

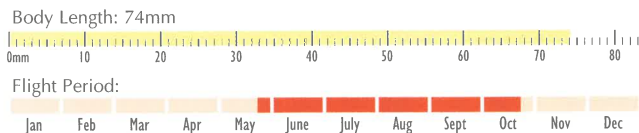
Common Hawker



A large, fast and powerful species found by moorland pools, peat diggings and slow burns.

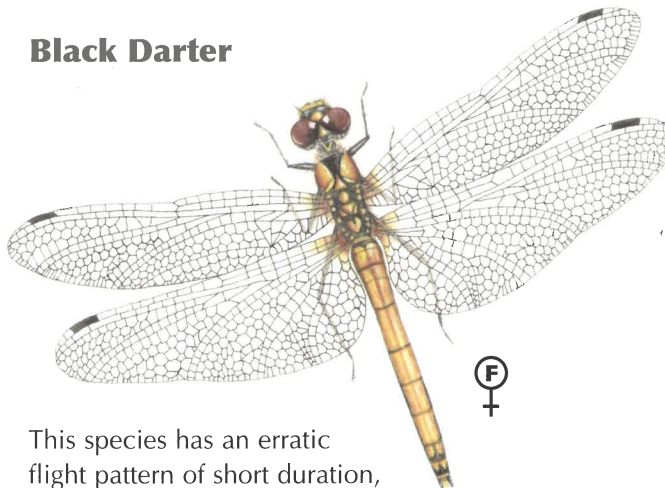


The male has blue and the female dull green spots on the abdomen, which may give a turquoise hue from a distance. Its breeding stronghold is on Hoy but it has been seen at one or two sites on the mainland in recent years.



Further reference:
Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland.
 Editor Steve Brooks, illustrated by Richard Lewington. Rotherwicl: British Wildlife Publishing 1997.

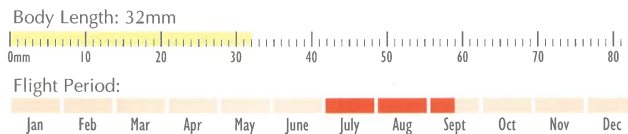
Black Darter



This species has an erratic flight pattern of short duration, with frequent perching amongst vegetation.



It is found on heathland, moorland and bogs by shallow, acidic pools with abundant emergent vegetation. The Black Darter breeds in Hoy, Stenness, Harray, Tankerness and South Ronaldsay.



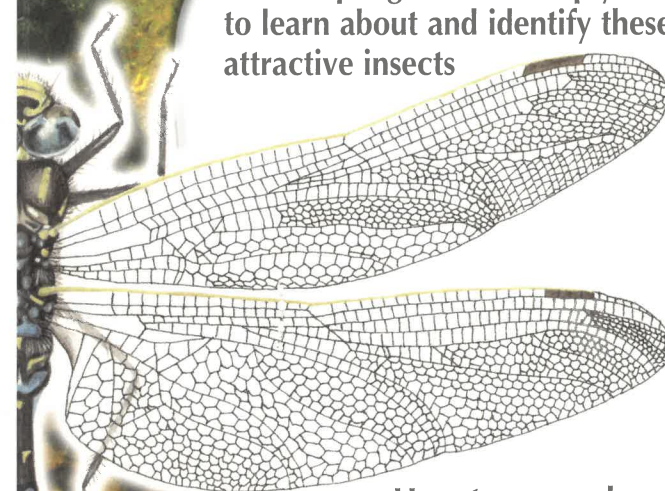
Credits: Illustrations © Tracy Hall 2005
 Text: Effy Everiss with advice from Keith Fairclough and Brian Ribbands

Design: K4 Graphics – info@k4graphics.com



An identification guide to The Dragonflies & Damselflies of Orkney

This simple guide will help you to learn about and identify these attractive insects



How to see and record dragonflies and damselflies

Look out for dragonflies and damselflies whenever you are near water and wetlands, especially on warm, calm and sunny days. If you have a pond in your garden it might attract damselflies. Take a notebook and pen out with you and record any sightings. It's useful to record the species, date and location (grid ref and/or place name) and activity eg; egg-laying, flying in tandem etc.

Then give this information to:
 The Orkney Biodiversity Records Centre,
 Orkney Library, Junction Rd, Kirkwall
Tel: (01856) 873166
 or the County Recorder: Keith Fairclough,
 c/o RSPB, 12-14 North End Rd, Stromness
Tel: (01856) 850176

Dragonflies and Damselflies

How they look

Dragonflies can be recognised by their large size, large eyes and two pairs of large wings, which have a dense network of veins and remain open at rest.

Damselflies are similar but delicate looking; the front and back wings are the same shape and are held closed over the abdomen when at rest.

Where they live

Dragonflies and damselflies breed in many types of aquatic habitat but can be found well away from their breeding grounds.

How they behave

Many are shy, making off when approached but some, such as the common hawkler, will get close to an observer. They are day-flying insects relying on their sight to catch prey and so have large compound eyes.

How they feed

They are good hunters, catching their prey on the wing with their legs and passing it to their mouth. Damselflies take small flies and midges but larger dragonflies will also take moths and butterflies, the wings being neatly snipped off before consumption.

The Life Cycle

Most dragonflies show some form of territorial behaviour. Males will attempt to chase off other male intruders but if a female enters the territory, he will display using his colourful abdomen. Males and females may fly 'in tandem' during mating and egg laying. Eggs can be laid by flicking the water with the tip of the abdomen to wash off a single egg; others lay eggs on plant tissue. The egg hatches into a larva which may remain in the aquatic larval stage for several years before climbing up a plant stem. The skin then splits and the adult emerges and remains at rest until it dries out and hardens. The larval cases may be found in the vegetation at the water's edge.

The colours of the newly emerged adult are drab. The full adult colouring appears gradually as the insect makes many flights and has taken several meals. Their life span is from 4-8 weeks depending on the species and the weather.

Blue-Tailed Damselfly

This damselfly is easily recognised by the blue segment near the tip of the abdomen. It prefers a well vegetated habitat and avoids flying over open water. Males interact with a bobbing flight facing one another, while mating can last for several hours. It breeds on Hoy, Mainland, South Ronaldsay, Sanday, Egilsay and Papa Stronsay.

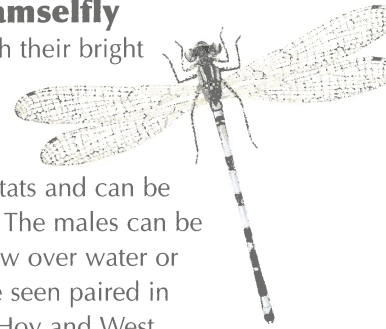


Flight Period:



Common Blue Damselfly

Males are distinctive with their bright blue abdomens, but the duller females are less obvious. They are found in a great variety of habitats and can be abundant in large lochs. The males can be spotted flying fast and low over water or male and female may be seen paired in tandem. They breed on Hoy and West Mainland.



Flight Period:



Large Red Damselfly

Usually the first species to emerge each year, this species is very distinctive due to its size and colour, with the female tending to be a duller red than the male. It's the most numerous Orkney damselfly and occurs in acidic areas in a variety of habitats. It breeds on Hoy, Mainland and Rousay.



Flight Period:



Four-Spotted Chaser



This species can fly for long distances and glides. It also has a fast, aggressive territorial flight and males repeatedly return to the same perch. Its breeding is restricted to a few pools in Hoy.

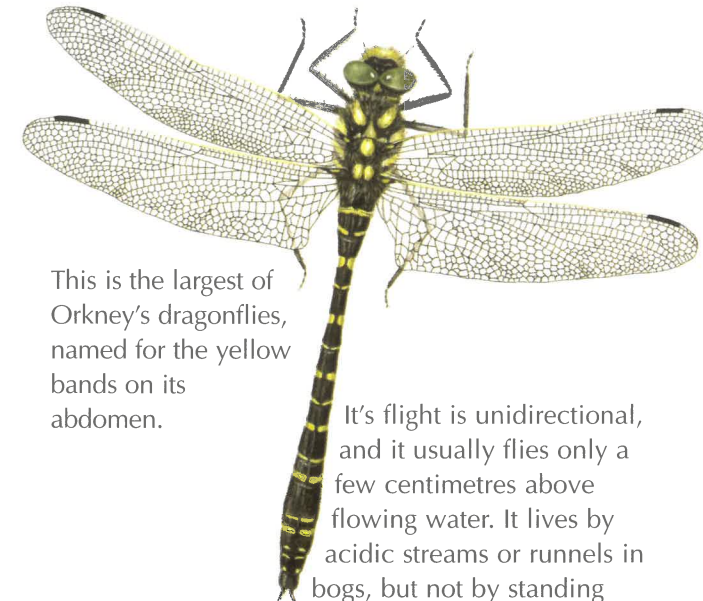
Body Length: 43mm



Flight Period:



Golden-Ringed Dragonfly



This is the largest of Orkney's dragonflies, named for the yellow bands on its abdomen.

Its flight is unidirectional, and it usually flies only a few centimetres above flowing water. It lives by acidic streams or runnels in bogs, but not by standing water. It breeds only on Hoy.

Body Length: 74mm



Flight Period:

