

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ishnura elegans*

A common species in the British Isles and found throughout the Outer Hebrides. Males are dark with a distinctive blue band on the tail (segment 8). This is also present in females but they have a more varied range of body colours.



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Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula*

A distinctive red and black damselfly and one of the three most widespread species in the islands. It is often the first to emerge in the spring and is equally at home in slow moving streams, loch edges, marshes, peat bogs and even brackish water.



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Larvae and Exuviae

The first year or two years of the life of a dragonfly or a damselfly is spent underwater as an egg or a nymph (larva). When the larvae are ready to change into the adult form they leave the water and crawl on to a suitable twig or stem. This is a vulnerable time as they leave the larval skin and wait for the body and wings to harden.



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The empty larval skins (exuviae) like the larvae are distinctive and can be used to identify the species (*Field Guide to the larvae and exuviae of British Dragonflies* by Steve Cham). Finding and recording the larvae of dragonflies is a useful way to record their distribution and breeding sites.

Watching dragonflies is fascinating and although identifying common species is perhaps not as exciting as finding a new species for the islands, it's just as important.

For more information, or to submit your records, please visit the Outer Hebrides Biological Recording website: www.ohbr.org.uk



Outer Hebrides Biological Recording

Dragons and Damsels of the Outer Hebrides

There are over 50 species of dragonflies and damselflies recorded in the British Isles, however the number of species decreases towards the north of Scotland.

Ten species have been recorded in the Outer Hebrides; seven are common and widely distributed, the emerald damselfly is scarce and the other two are rare visitors. This short guide is designed to give those new to recording and visitors to the islands a list of the species known to occur here.



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Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*

This large and powerful dragonfly with a wingspan of around 95 mm is unmistakable. Males have small blue spots on each segment of the abdomen and appears quite dark. Females are brown and similar to the male but the spots are yellow, or occasionally green or blue.

With a preference for moorland habitats with acidic pools it is very common throughout the islands. The first adults usually appear in late July and often feed high up and far away from water.

Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*

This metallic green damselfly rests with its wings at 45°, unlike other damselflies which close the wings along the body. It is rarely recorded in the islands but an increase in records since 2005 suggests that it may be more widespread.

A species to look out for.



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Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*

A very common and widely distributed species. The females are either a very pale blue or dull green or yellow in contrast to the bright blue of the adult males.



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Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

Most of the common darters seen in the islands are of a particularly dark form which is sometimes referred to as a highland darter, *Sympetrum nigrescens*; although it is not now recognised as a separate species.



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Male



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Female

Rare Visitors

The golden-ringed dragonfly, *Cordulegaster boltonii* is a stunning dragonfly, the female is the longest British species (84 mm). A rare visitor to the islands, it has been recorded on four occasions.

The vagrant emperor, *Anax ephippiger* is a very rare migrant from Sub-saharan Africa and the Middle East and has only been recorded once in the islands.

Black Darter *Sympetrum danae*

Mature black males with their distinct and noticeable 'waist', are relatively easy to identify. The immature males and females are more difficult, but if they stay still long enough have a diagnostic combination of black legs with a black triangle on the thorax.



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Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

The four spots on the wings on each side of the body, are very distinctive. It is the only chaser dragonfly present and its distinctive shape makes it is easy to identify.



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