

DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

wildlife
in the city



Animal Facts

ALL ABOUT DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

Dragonflies are some of our most beautiful and fascinating insects, as well as some of our largest. With their long, slender bodies and powerful wings, they are capable of performing amazing aerial manoeuvres. Dragonflies have large eyes, with excellent colour vision to spot prey. They are most often found around water bodies, resting on reeds or darting just above the surface.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Dragonflies are winged insects, with a long, thin body, a large head and two pairs of broad, transparent wings. The eyes of a dragonfly are very large and take up most of their head. When at rest, dragonflies usually hold their wings out from their body at right angles.



Sean Browne



James Clay

Dragonflies and damselflies both belong to the insect group Odonata which means “toothed jaw”. The name “dragonfly” is often used to describe both groups. Damselflies are generally smaller, and have a rectangular head with large eyes on each side. They also tend to hold their wings parallel to their body when resting, instead of at right angles.

WHEN & WHERE TO SEE

Dragonflies are usually found around water, from ponds and ditches to large lakes and rivers; almost any body of water can attract dragonflies. Why not visit a wetland nature reserve near you, and take a walk by the water to see if you can spot any?



UK dragonflies are usually only visible in the spring and summer months (some species of dragonfly will fly well into the autumn in a good year - especially the migrant hawker which is fairly common in Nottinghamshire), as they spend the colder months underwater as larvae or eggs.

In Britain, dragonflies are best looked for on warm sunny days, when temperatures are high enough for them to be active. Mid-afternoons are often most productive, as the dragonflies are most active during the warmest part of the day. In the morning dragonflies can often be found perched on reeds and grass stalks at the water's edge.



i DID YOU KNOW?



Dragonflies actually spend most of their lives underwater in their larval form, which looks very different from the flying adult form. When spring or summer arrive, the dragonfly larvae emerge from the water and moult, with the adult form seeming to burst out of the larval form, leaving behind a hollow shell of skin. The adult may then only live for a few weeks or even days.



Modern dragonflies appeared around 200 million years ago. Their ancestors, which lived around 300 million years ago, were much larger, with wingspans of up to a metre.



There are 42 species of dragonfly resident in the UK, but some species can only be found in certain regions. Typically, more species are found in the south of the country. In recent years many more species have been found in the UK probably as a result of the warming climate. 22 species are regularly recorded breeding in Nottinghamshire.

About Wildlife in the City

Wildlife in the City is a project promoting local urban wildlife across Nottingham City. Wildlife in the City is a partnership between Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Nottingham City Council, aiming to offer more opportunities for people to get involved in wildlife and their local green spaces. Wildlife in the City is funded by Natural England through Access to Nature, as part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme.

