



Dragonflies

of Stover Country Park

Introduction

Stover Country Park was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1984 because of its rare dragonfly species, invertebrates and overwintering wildfowl. It also became a Local Nature Reserve in 2001.

Out of the 31 species of dragonfly recorded in Devon, 24 have been recorded here since 1974 with 19 species known to be breeding.

Rare species include the migrant hawkler, red-eyed damselfly, downy emerald dragonfly, hairy dragonfly and scarce blue-tailed damselfly (no records of the latter since 1980s).

Large areas of freshwater and marsh make this site a haven for these colourful insects.

Four-spotted Chaser



During the summer months nymphs emerge from their watery home and crawl up the stems of aquatic plants into the air. Here they start to split their skin down the back and the adult dragonfly gradually pulls free leaving the dry empty nymphal skin behind on the plant. If you look carefully you can sometimes see these skins still hanging on.

The adults are pale with crumpled wings but gradually they pump



Board walks and lake-side walks give you good opportunities to see dragonflies and damselflies if you visit in the summer.

Interesting Facts

The best time to visit is during the summer months when the adult dragonflies are on the wing. You can watch them hunting, defending territory, and basking in the sunshine on tall waterside vegetation and branches.

Dragonflies and damselflies are primitive insects that have been in existence for over 300 million years (before the dinosaurs), and still rely on water for breeding.

Their eggs are laid in the water or inserted into the stems of water plants. Nymphs hatch out and live in the water for 1 to 4 years where they are predators of other aquatic creatures. The larger hawkler dragonfly nymphs can tackle a small fish or a tadpole when they are fully grown.

Species List

Dragonflies:	Damselflies:
common darter	beautiful demoiselle
black darter	banded demoiselle
ruddy darter	large red
black-tailed skimmer	red-eyed
keeled skimmer	emerald
emperor	azure
hairy	blue-tailed
common hawkler	common blue
migrant hawkler	
southern hawkler	
broad-bodied chaser*	
four-spotted chaser	
downy emerald	
golden-ringed	

* cover photo by Sue Searle



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Supported by

Habitat Management for Dragonflies and Damselflies

At Stover management is carried out every year for the benefit of dragonflies. Pond clearance, dredging, pollution control and new scrapes are ongoing as part of the winter programme of wetland management.

Plenty of plants growing in the water ensure there is somewhere for the dragonfly nymphs to crawl up when they are ready to emerge as adults.

Submerged vegetation is also favoured by dragonfly nymphs as a refuge from predatory fish that live in the ponds and lake.

Good water quality and an absence of fish are ideal for dragonfly breeding and the northern marsh and some smaller ponds are the most important sites. These areas also need to be kept from becoming shaded, so trees are removed from time to time.

Records and Sightings

We hope you have enjoyed your visit. Please let us know if you see anything unusual by calling in at the Visitor Centre.

The Visitor Centre has more information about the wildlife on site.

Where to look for Dragonflies and Damselflies

Heathland and Firebreak

During the summer months many females can be found basking on the heath.

Look for:
 broad-bodied chaser
 black-tailed and keeled skimmer
 common darter
 hairy dragonfly



Common Darter

Meadow Ponds

Look for:
 four-spotted chaser
 broad-bodied chaser
 hairy dragonfly
 common darter
 large red damselfly
 common blue damselfly
 azure damselfly



Emerald Damselfly

Heathland Pond

Created in autumn 2003.
 Look for:
 broad-bodied chaser
 four-spotted chaser



Hairy Dragonfly

Dipping Pond & Northern Marsh

A popular spot for viewing dragonflies and damselflies with close views of many species.

Look for:
 broad-bodied chaser
 four-spotted chaser
 common darter
 emperor dragonfly
 emerald & azure damselfly
 southern & migrant hawkers.
 Occasionally downy emerald dragonfly and black darter.



Emperor Dragonfly Egg-Laying



Azure Damselfly

Ventiford Brook

Look for:
 beautiful demoiselle

Restored Pond (2002)

Look for:
 four-spotted chaser, emerald damselfly

Southern Marsh

Look for:
 hairy dragonfly
 ruddy darter
 common hawkers
 migrant hawkers

Stover Lake

Look for:
 downy emerald dragonfly
 emperor dragonfly
 hairy dragonfly
 red-eyed damselfly



Beautiful Demoiselle (male below female above)



Large Red Damselfly



Golden-ringed Dragonfly

