



Dragonflies and Damselflies

There are four ponds in Eglinton Country Park which provide habitat for Dragonflies and Damselflies: the **Car Park Pond** and the **Fish Pond** are located in the central area of the park. The **Belvedere Pond** in the roundel field is probably best known for bird life, and the **Settling Pond** by Sourlie are both further afield. They all attract several species at different times of the year, and are used for breeding by some species. The larvae of these fascinating insects live in the freshwater ponds, feeding on other aquatic creatures before climbing out of the water and emerging as air breathing flying adults.

In June the **Large Red Damselfly** appears and is easily spotted flying around the vegetated pond margin. It is soon joined by the **Azure Damselfly** and the **Blue-tailed Damselfly**. The intense fluorescent blue of the azure species is very noticeable, and in a hot July day clusters of mating pairs can be found. The male holds the female tightly while she lays eggs in waterside plants. Recently another blue species, the **Common Blue Damselfly**, has been recorded at the Belvedere Pond.

Damselflies are generally told apart from the larger dragonflies by the way in which the wings are held at rest. The damsel folds its wing back parallel with its body, whilst dragonflies hold their wing out ready for a quick take off.

However, this rule does not hold good for another damselfly which appears in August. The **Emerald Damselfly** often partially folds its wings – neither fully shut or fully open, and this helps to identify this species.

July and August also bring the first Dragonflies. The **Four-spotted Chaser** perches openly on plants to defend its territory and chase damselflies away, often returning to exactly the same spot. The **Common Darter** occurs at this time too. Males are a distinctive red colour and the females brownish green.

The largest Dragonfly found at Eglinton is the **Common Hawker**. These fantastic insects appear in late July, August and September. They restlessly patrol around the margins of the ponds, and are also found far away from water in sunny woodland rides.

Dragonflies and Damselflies contribute to the colour and form of Eglinton Country Park, and enrich the pondside experience with their flashing movement and fascinating life cycle. For further information about Dragonflies and Damselflies, including help with identification, visit the British Dragonfly Association at their excellent website:

www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

