



NORTH
EAST
SCOTLAND
Biodiversity
Partnership



Northern Damselfly

(*Coenagrion hastulatum*)

A Quick Guide

1. What to Look For

Adults (June–July):

- Weak flight close to water, often perched on vegetation
- Length: 31 mm
- Face and eyes are bright green on the back of the thorax
- Coenagrion spur (label 1 on image).

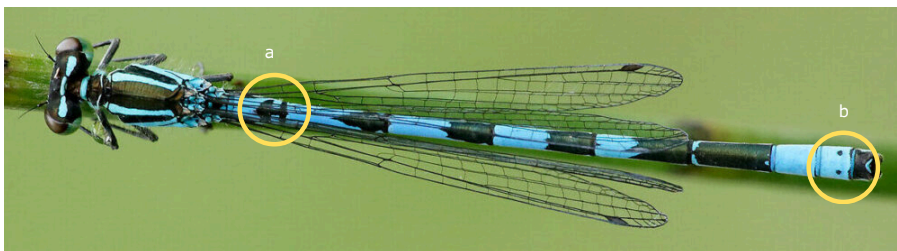
Males

- a. blue and black. "spades" symbol at top of abdomen (varies).
- b. Segments 8 and 9 (near the bottom of the abdomen) are completely blue apart from 2 small black spots.

Females

distinctly green from the side but mostly black from above.

Male



Female



Larvae (Year-round):

- Caudal lamella long and narrow with distinct, dark nodal constriction and dark nodal lines
- Antennae with 6 segments
- Found underwater among plants



Photos by Christophe Brochard taken from the British Dragonfly Society

2. Where to Find Them

- In the UK they are only found in North East Scotland. Along the Dee, Spey and parts of Angus
- Shallow ponds, lochans and bog pools
- Areas with sedges, rushes, and aquatic plants



Map of Northern Damselfly distribution from NESBRE website

3. When to Look

- June–July: Adults flying
- Spring to autumn: Larvae underwater
- Year-round: Habitat condition checks

Emergence

Emergence begins in May. Larvae climb out of water up to 8cm above the water on sedges, bogbean, water horsetail and heather. The adult emerges from the larval skin, leaving behind the shed skin called an exuvia. The process can take several hours, and it can take a few days for an adult to achieve mature colouration.

Life Cycle

Adults

Weak flyers, found close to water. Damselflies live for just a few weeks as adults.

Mating

Takes place in the 'wheel' formation. Mating pairs perch on stems about 15cm above the water.

Egg-laying

Oviposition is completed in tandem, the pairs sometimes submerging in the process.

Larva

The larva lives underwater for 2 years, clinging to the underside of vegetation in fairly open water.

4. Why It Matters

The Northern Damselfly is a rare species with a limited range. Recording sightings helps protect populations, monitor habitat change, and guide conservation work. Threats include Climate Change, ditch installation and drainage, peat cutting and forestation of the uplands.

5. How You Can Help

- Submit your sightings to [NESBReC](#)
 - Learn how to survey for them: [Northern Damselfly Survey - British Dragonfly Society](#)
- Create ponds, especially if you are in a rural area near where they are already located
- Spread the word! Let people know how important North East Scotland is for this species

6. Good Habitat Checklist

- Shallow water margins
- Plenty of emergent vegetation
- Open, unshaded areas
- Clean water

7. Get Involved

Get outside, explore your local ponds and lochans, and help us protect Northern Damselfly.

www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk

8. Similar Species

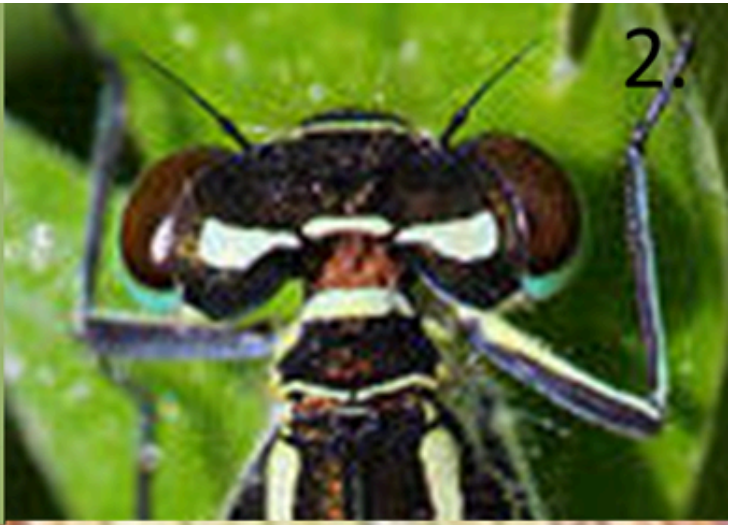
Only two other species of blue/green and black damselflies share their range with the Northern Damselfly

Common Blue Damselfly

- No coenagrion spur.
- Thicker antehumeral stripes on the thorax instead of thin.
- Male: button shaped marking instead of a spade shaped marking.

Azure Damselfly

- Rarely in Northern Damselfly range.
- Male: 'U' shaped marking instead of a spade shaped marking.
- Females: some have blue markings. Pronotum is tri-lobed instead of having a blunt point.



1. Male Northern Damselfly (by Iain Leach). 2. Female Northern Damselfly (by Erland Refling Nielson). 3. Male Common Blue Damselfly (by Gareth William Tonks) 4. Female Common Blue Damselfly (by Dave Smallshire)