

New Forest Dragonflies

Naturetrek Tour Report

16th July 2025



Southern Damselfly



Blue Emperor



Golden-ringed Dragonfly



White-legged Damselfly

Report & images compiled by Martin Pitt

Martin Pitt (Leader), plus four Naturetrek clients on a day trip



The group at Crockford Stream

Summary

Naturetrek's day trip in search of Dragonflies of the New Forest took in a range of the subtly different habitats that maximized the number of dragonflies to be found at this time of year. From the fast-running clear streams beloved of the red-listed Southern Damselflies and Golden-ringed Dragonflies, the slow-moving water needed by White-legged Damselflies, to the still waters of water-lily fringed pools loved by Blue Emperors and Red-eyed Damselflies, we covered three different areas of the New Forest during the day. The change in distribution of some species was illustrated by finding Small Red-eyed Damselfly for the first time, a species that has been spreading steadily westward across the county. After such a dry Spring and Summer, it was not surprising that some of the waters were at very low levels

Overall, we found 17 species of Dragonflies and most were seen at close range and in good numbers. Of course, we did not ignore the other specialties that make this National Park their home. The heaths were alive with butterflies, especially Grayling, birds included the iconic Dartford Warbler and some of the special plants, including Coral Necklace, Marsh St John's Wort and both of the local species of Sundew.

Day 1

Wednesday 16th July

After the heat of the previous weeks, it was a relief that the day began warm, bright and still. The first stop is focused up a heathland bog and stream which is a well-known site for the endangered Southern Damselfly. The walk down immediately gave us views of the typical supporting cast of Graylings, Silver-studded Blues and a family of Stonechats. We stopped at the grassland to check on two of the special plants of the heaths and both Chamomile and Coral Necklace were easily found.

Before arriving at the streamside, we spotted the first Keeled Skimmer of the morning; these were immatures, or 'teneral' that typically hang around the gorse and heather until they are mature enough to claim a territory. At the stream side itself, it soon became clear that there was plenty of activity around the bog myrtle that lines the gravel bedded stream. Golden-ringed Dragonflies patrolled their sections of the stream, mature male Keeled Skimmers were busy on the stream edges and the streamside bushes were alive with mating pairs of both Small Red Damselflies and Southern Damselflies. We slowly wandered the stream edge picking up a few other species including Beautiful Demoiselles but although numbers of dragonflies were high the diversity was relatively low.

We moved to another area of Beaulieu Heath and here the lily-fringed pools gave us a new habitat, and with it a different mix of species. The pools were patrolled by Blue Emperor and Common Blue Damselflies were common. A bit more effort in search the lily pads and other emergent vegetation gave us views of the Red-eyed Damselflies. At lunch, we continued to search the pools where the willows sit on the banks and found the expected Emerald Damselflies, Four spotted Chasers and after careful searching Small Red Damselflies which are a recent colonist to the area.

After lunch, we headed westwards to another site along a river system and focused on the one species that actually prefers the sluggish shady water found here. The White-legged Damselfly is relatively scarce in the New Forest as a whole, however it is readily found around the native Yellow Water lilies that are plentiful here. Large Red Damselflies joined them and were new for the day. Elsewhere activity was low but we had views of other forest inhabitants including Roe Deer