

Identifying Dragonflies

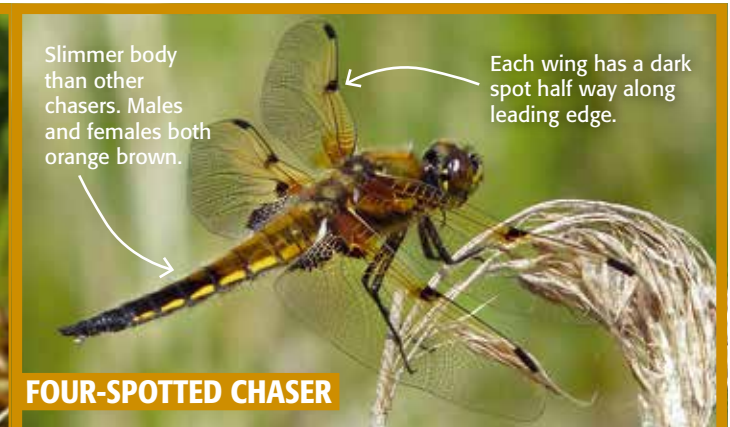
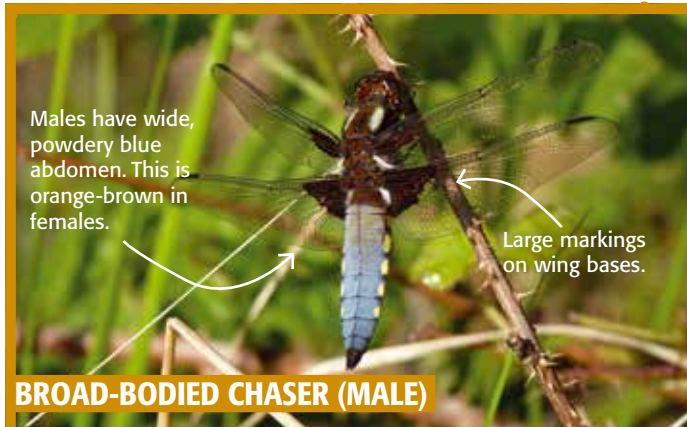
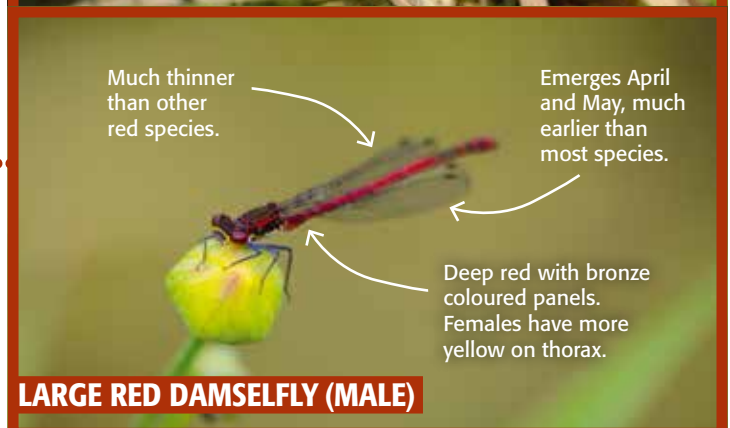
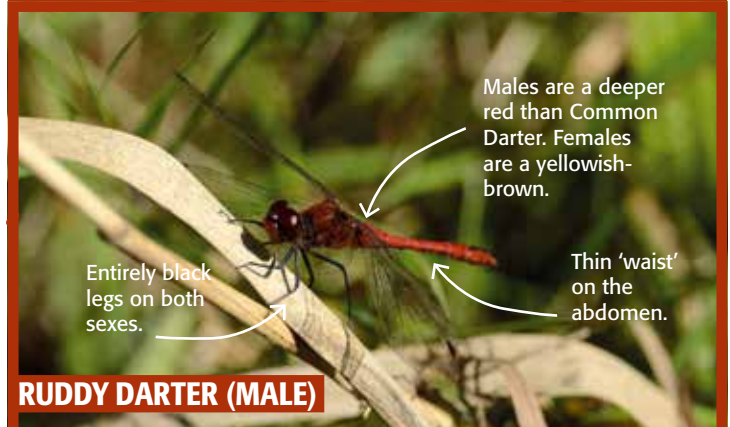
Of the 40 species found in the UK, several can be found in gardens, some as visitors and others as breeders. It is not only gardens with ponds which can be visited by dragonflies and damselflies, several species, notably Migrant Hawker, can be seen quite far from water, although gardens with water will likely see a greater range of species.

Red species

There are three red species which could be expected to use gardens, two dragonflies and a damselfly. Common Darter and Large Red Damselfly are our most frequently recorded garden species. Darters are small dragonflies and will bask happily on paths and bare earth. Males are red while the females are yellow. The damselfly is a similar length to the darters but much thinner. It can often be seen sunning itself on leaves.

The chasers

The chasers are medium-sized dragonflies which spend a lot of time perched conspicuously on vegetation, the males hounding each other for territory and females. Attention paid to the shape of the abdomen, its colour and the markings of the wings will help to identify them.

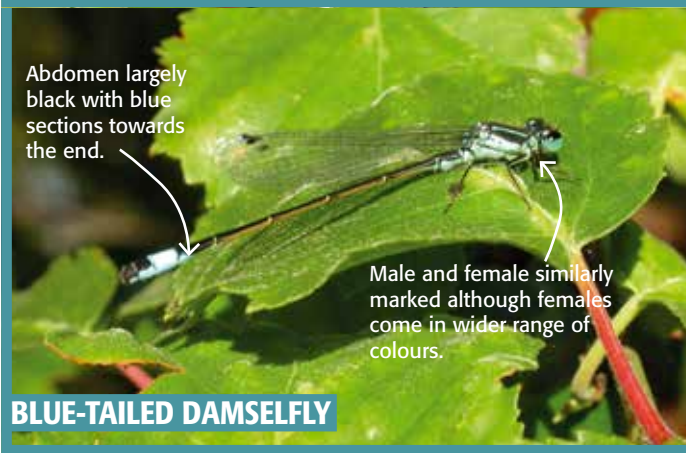
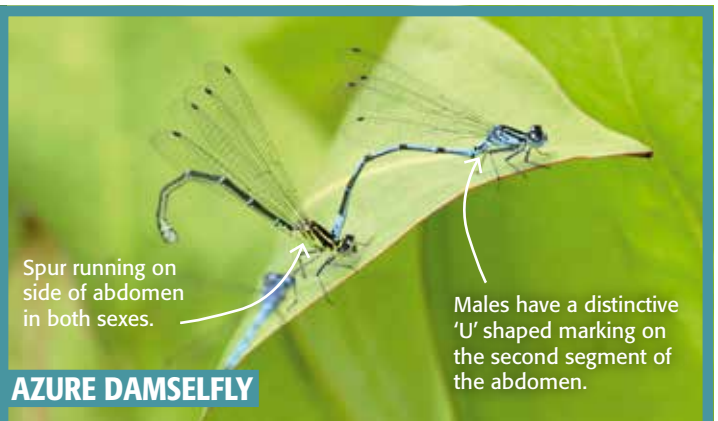
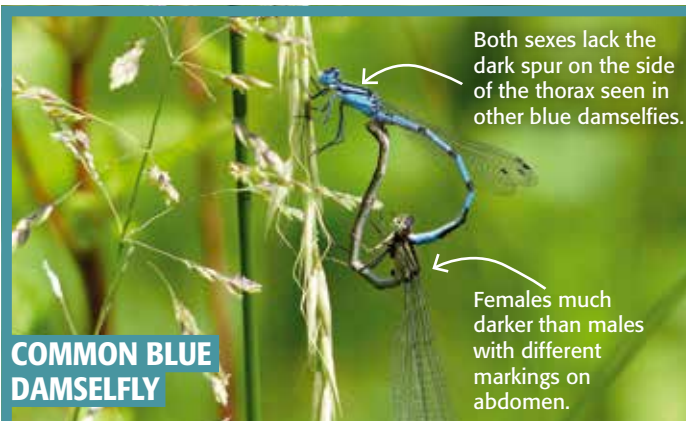
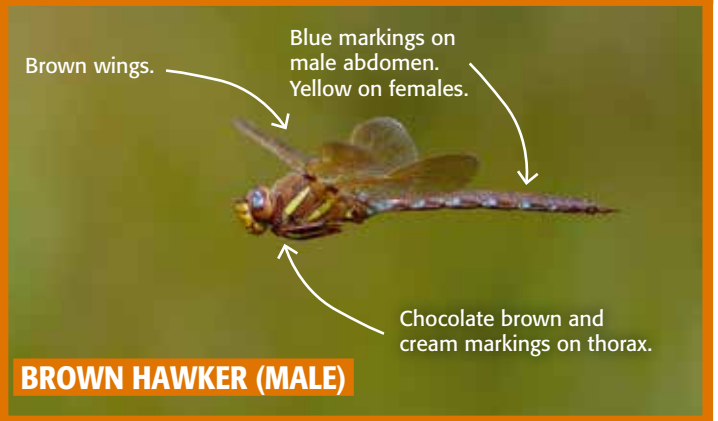
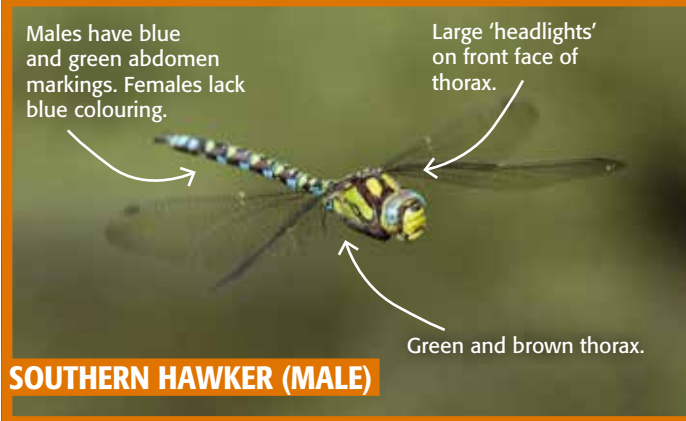
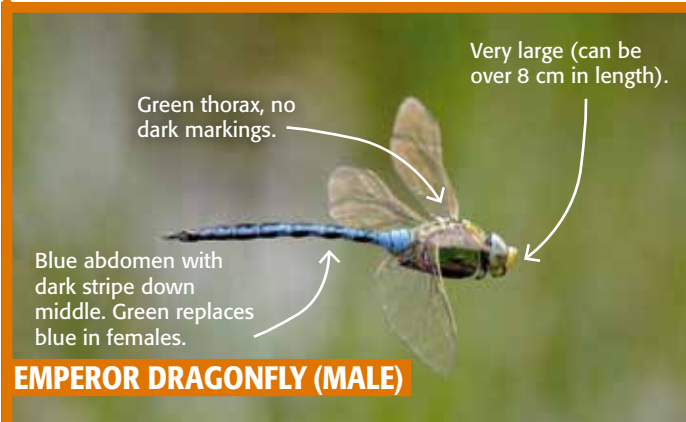


AZURE DAMSELFLY: FLICKR/NUJMEG66. BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLY/Common Darter: DAWN BALMER. BROAD-BODIED CHASER/LARGE RED: ROB JIAQUES

Large dragonflies

The larger species (over 7 cm) are more likely to be seen on the wing and more difficult to get close to. For this reason we will focus on the features most easily seen in flight. Binoculars will help getting a look at the finer details.

BROWN HAWKER: PAUL RITCHIE/FLICKR, COMMON BLUE DAMSELFLY/FOUR SPOTTED CHASER/MIGRANT HAWKER/RUDDY DARTER/EMPEROR DRAGONFLY: MOSS TAYLOR, SOUTHERN HAWKER: LIZ CUTTING



Thin and blue

The blue damselflies will often be seen flitting amongst low vegetation. They are particularly noticeable when mating, making a lopsided heart shape and can be quite approachable at this time. Females are often darker in colour than males.

MORE HELP?: While we've covered as many of the common species as possible, you may be fortunate to see some of the more unusual species in your garden. We are happy to answer any of your queries by post, email, Twitter or Facebook.