

BIODIVERSITY on your Farm

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

Species: Common Darter

Scientific Name: *Sympetrum striolatum*

Irish name: *Sciobaire Coiteann*

Group

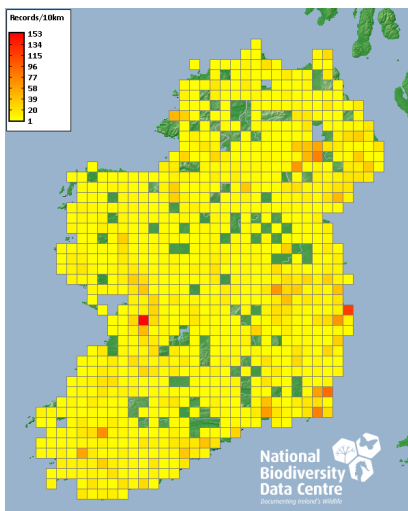
30 Dragonfly and Damselfly (Odonata) species occur in Ireland with an additional 3 species known only from historical records. There are 14 resident dragonfly species, 11 resident damselfly species and 5 vagrant species.

How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Common Darter was recorded on a number of the 40 farms.

Distribution

Common and widespread, absent from upland areas.



Source: The Common Darter records as viewed on Biodiversity July, 2023.



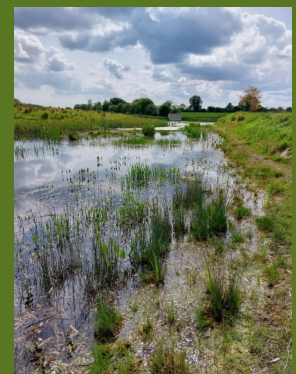
Common Darter (female). Note: Dark legs with pale strips.

Identification Tips

- Length 40 mm, a narrow bodied dragonfly.
- Mature males have orange-red un-waisted abdomen.
- Females and young males have a yellow-brown abdomen.
- Legs dark with pale strips along length.
- They hover around waterbodies, darting out to surprise its prey.
- Seen throughout summer and autumn.

Biodiversity Tip No. 19

Retain, maintain or create farm ponds and wet-land features.



Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Dragonfly and Damselfly Red List was published in 2011, by the national Parks and Wildlife Service [Ireland \(npws.ie\)](http://npws.ie).

It found that the Common Darter was not threatened with extinction from the island of Ireland. Based on the Red List it is 'Least Concern'.

Management Tips

Habitat for the Common Darter:

On the farm:

- Retain, maintain farm ponds and wetland features.
- Create new farm ponds, on suitable sites.
- Leave ditches open, not piped underground.
- Retain and maintain bogs.

Breeding sites:

- Create shallow pools or small lakes.

Maintain good water quality:

- Reduce pesticide use.
- Create buffer strips beside wetland areas.

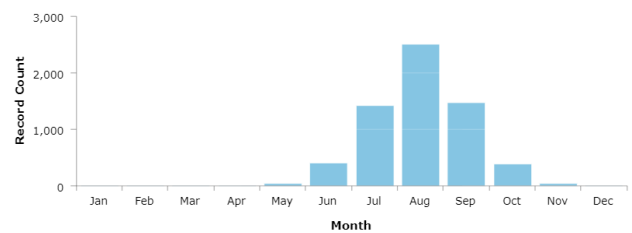


Common Darter (male).

When?

Seen throughout summer to autumn.

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Common Darter, image, accessed July 2023, [Common Darter \(Sympetrum striolatum\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie/Common-Darter-(Sympetrum-striolatum)-Detail-Biodiversity-Maps)

Where on the farm?

Found in wetlands, freshwater, ditches, heathland, grassland and gardens.

Value

- They are an important food source for other animals.
- They need both clean freshwater and terrestrial habitats (including farmland) to thrive, so they can tell us a lot about the overall health of our environment.
- They are an important food source for other animals.
- Adult dragonflies consume large numbers of biting insects such as mosquitoes, midges and other flies that can carry diseases such as Dengue Fever — a dangerous tropical disease.

Further Info

They are amongst the oldest, fastest and largest of our insects and were flying even before the dinosaurs were around!

They are insects in the order (group) Odonata—which means ‘toothed jaws’. Dragonflies and damselflies spend most of their lives underwater as larvae. The larvae of all Irish species develop in freshwater.

The Common Darter is a very common dragonfly, breeding in all sorts of waterbodies from ponds and ditches, to rivers and lakes.

As their name suggests, Common darters dart forward suddenly from a hovering position to catch their insect-prey. They then take their catch to a favoured perch to eat it.

Similar species

The Ruddy Darter, however in the Ruddy Darter the males are a deeper red, the abdomen is waisted and the legs are all black.

Affected by a change in climate?

The effects of climate change may mean some species may expand their range and some species may retreat their range.

Significant climate warming is likely to have had an over-riding effect on many of these changes.

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:
pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

Useful Links

A handy Dragonfly and Damselfly identification swatch can be purchased here, €5

[Dragonfly & Damselfly Swatch – National Biodiversity Data Centre \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016)

Find out about Dragonfly Ireland

[Dragonfly Ireland - National Biodiversity Data Centre \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016)

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your identification, you can submit your record.

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016>

or

- You could also download our free smart phone App for recording in the field

Smart phone App:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

Apple App:

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

The Farmland Pollinator Officer post is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta
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National Parks and Wildlife Service

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