

Irish Damselfly

Description

Discovered only in 1981, this damselfly is present in Ireland but absent from Britain. Approximately 35 colonies are known from Northern Ireland, the majority in Counties Fermanagh and Tyrone.

The adults are slender insects, about 30mm in length. Males and females differ in appearance. The males are blue and black above with distinctive black markings on the second abdominal segment. The underside of the head and thorax is bright green on mature individuals. Females are mainly black with blue and green markings and much less distinctive and conspicuous than the males.



The Irish Damselfly has an annual life cycle. Most of it is spent as an aquatic larva. Adults are present in early summer (May to July) but each lives for just a few weeks. Females lay their eggs into the submerged stems of aquatic plants. These hatch in a few weeks and the larvae grow through a series of moults until they are fully grown in the spring of the following year. The larvae climb out of the water up a plant stem and the new adult emerges directly from the larval skin. Adults remain close to the pond for a few days as they mature, before returning to the water's edge to breed. Both larvae and adults are predatory, feeding on small invertebrates and insects.

Distribution

The species is found at scattered wetland sites in Northern Ireland, such as Montiaghs Moss in County Antrim and Lough Alaban in County Fermanagh.

Action

A number of the known colonies are covered by ASSI designation such as Montiaghs Moss.

Specialised habitat management is required on this site urgently if the small population of Irish Damselfly is to be saved.

Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=5609>

MLA Species Champion