

Eye-D — Blue Damselflies

For those of you who manage to join us for the occasional field trip on the Ouse and at Old Lodge you will be well-versed in separating Azure and Common Blue Damselflies (a.k.a the CBD!). For those of you who don't we thought we would give you a few tips and hints!

The only other blue damsel found in Sussex – the Variable Damselfly is the only other species likely to be confused with these two. The Variable Damselfly is considerably rarer however and so in the first instance it is best to learn how to separate the first two species.

One of the problems of being named “Common” as in the case of the Common Blue Damselfly is that the expectation is that the species will occur more frequently than its look-alikes. However with the Common and Azure damselflies this is not the case.

To begin with, bear in mind that it all comes down to preferences in habitat. Thus at a garden pond, expect to find Azure; and as the water-body becomes larger, then CBD will begin to appear. Variable is much more selective, requiring dense vegetation.

As with many other dragons and damsels it is easiest initially to concentrate on the males of the three species. Three separate areas help distinguish between them:

- 1) **The Thorax.** If the stripes are thick and fill more than half the thorax it is Common Blue, thin stripes indicate Azure or broken lines (exclamation marks), Variable.
- 2) **Abdomen, Segment 2, just behind the thorax.** If the mark is club-shaped then it is CBD, U-shaped it is Azure or wine-glass shaped it is Variable.
- 3) **Abdomen, Segments 8 & 9, at the ‘tail end’.** If they are totally blue then it is CBD. Homing in on segment 9 if there is a small amount of black on the segment it is Azure, or a large amount of black filling most of the segment it is Variable.



Above: Azure damsel, *C. puella* © H Matcham



Above: Variable damsel, *C. pulchellum* © G Jarvis