

Eye – D Corner

Scarce Chaser

(Libellula fulva)



**Female Scarce Chaser
on the Cuckmere 2008**
© John Luck

When identifying Scarce Chasers it's probably best to concentrate on the male of the species, as this is the insect you will see most frequently, although female and immature Scarce Chasers are unmistakable with their orange abdomens and dark, jagged line running down its entire length.

So let's look at the male Scarce Chaser. It is a medium-sized dragonfly and has a blue abdomen with a black tip. These are general identification features allowing us to place this species in the Chaser/Skimmer group of the Libellulid family.



**Male Scarce Chaser on
the Cuckmere 2008**
© John Luck

Scarce chaser continued

That's all very well but there are usually other species with which each species can be confused. In this case the confusion species are the Four-spotted Chaser, the Broad-bodied Chaser and the Black-tailed Skimmer.

We can rule out Four-spotted Chaser, which is brown and Keeled Skimmer, which though blue, does not have black tip. This leaves us with the need to rule out the Broad-bodied Chaser and Black-tailed Skimmer. I will retain the Broad-bodied Chaser in this comparison even though there are several features which will quickly set it apart – broad body, yellow spots along the side of the abdomen and minimal black tip.

**Male Scarce Chaser
With abdomen
Markings © John
Luck**



For me, the main points of eye-identifying features are as follows:

- Eyes: grey-blue in Scarce Chasers; brown in Broad-bodied Chaser; green in Black-tailed Skimmer;
- Thorax: black in Scarce Chaser without an ante-humeral stripe; brown with light blue ante-humeral stripe in BBC; brown without an ante-humeral stripe in BTS;
- Base of wings: a small dark triangular patch in Scarce Chaser; a large triangular patch in BBC; no patch whatsoever in BTS.

Other pointers to consider are:

- Chasers will nearly always perch on vegetation whereas Skimmers will perch on the ground;
- The BTS has a yellow costa (leading edge of wing);
- Mating removes the blue pruinescence from Segment 5 of our species and its consequent unique marking.

So there you have it. This species is rapidly expanding across Sussex being present now on four of our rivers – the traditional site of Arun has been joined by the Adur, Cuckmere and Ouse. It's over to you now to find further new populations on the remaining rivers in our county.