

Eye – D Corner

White-Legged Damsels

Honing your identification skills is one of the great joys and challenges of wildlife observation. To attempt to determine a species of dragonfly or indeed any beast by just one feature places great demands on our skills. I personally apply a “Rule of 3”. If all three features are satisfied then you can be reasonably confident that a correct identification has been made.

In the case of the WLD *Platycnemis pennipes*, although it has white legs, other damsels such as Blue-tailed Damsel have pale legs which can be misleading.



White Legged Damselfly © Gordon Jarvis
Immature insect in unusual pink morph
(adults are pale blue)



Female Blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)
© Theresa Greenaway

In 90% of cases, you will be observing a male dragonfly, so these comments refer to males. For any Blue Damselfly, look at Segments 8 & 9 – if all/mostly blue then it will be Common Blue, Azure, Variable, Blue-tailed or even Red-eyed, but it won't be White-legged.

The three features to look out for on the White Legged damsel are:-

- A pale blue abdomen
- A unique inverted “V” on final three segments of abdomen
- Double ante-humeral stripes

Only then should you take note of the white legs. An additional tip is that the newly emerged insect of this species is also a unique pale colour, which is quite distinctive displaying both the inverted “V” and double ante-humeral stripes of the adult.