



Bob Brind-Surch

Natures Photos



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Dragonflies Macro Workshop

Dragonflies and damselflies are amongst the most beautiful and spectacular of insects. They are also some of the most ancient creatures and, millions of years ago, included some of the largest flying invertebrates ever. They are those animated jewels that are a true sign of summer in the British countryside and make really interesting if not challenging subjects for photography.

Quite apart from their exquisite beauty these fascinating insects are true marvels of aerodynamic engineering. They can travel 10 meters in 1 second, fly backwards, change direction in mid-air and even hover for up to a minute. They also have excellent eyesight and can see through a full 360 degrees without moving their heads. They are also very small, especially the diminutive damselflies, and when approached close focusing and depth of field become real issues. All this makes them really difficult to photograph but well worth the effort.

To improve your chances of successfully photographing dragonflies it helps to understand something of their natural history, habits and behaviour. I am running this workshop jointly with the Dragonfly Project based at Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire. A member of staff and dragonfly expert from the project will be available all day to work with and advise us. I will provide individual tuition to help you to improve your technique and they will help us to find interesting subjects, learn more of the habits

and how to identify individual species.

They will also provide tips and advice on how to attract dragonflies to your own patch of countryside, how to work to conserve them and when and where to look for and photograph them.

This is a truly unique workshop and equipped with this information you should be in a perfect position to return home and continue this fascinating area of wildlife photography. You will also be more informed regarding how to help this threatened group of insects.



The workshop will last 5 to 6 hours, from 10:00 till around 4:30 with a 1 hour break for lunch during which you are more than welcome to continue taking photos if you wish. There is a National Trust café on site or you can bring your own packed lunch to eat in their picnic area. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival and during the day.



We will start the workshop with an introduction from the staff at the Dragonfly project including a briefing on what we are likely to see during the rest of the day. I will follow this with a brief practical session on how to approach photographing dragonflies before our first outdoor session. The centre has a number of areas which are 'managed' for dragonflies and this should make approaching and photographing them a little easier. None of these areas are very far from the centre so it will be possible to leave equipment there and return as necessary.

During the day the dragonfly project representative and I will circulate amongst delegates helping them with technique and identification. As required and dependant on the skill levels of the group I will organise ad hoc tuition sessions for individuals or small groups.

As well as outdoor sessions there will be an opportunity to photograph dragonfly larvae in a separate work area which we will have access to for the day.

Successful dragonfly and macro photography can require more specialist equipment but excellent images can be captured without investing in the very expensive lenses and cameras. Some more modern compact cameras actually make excellent tools for cost effective dragonfly photography. If however you want to try using a very specialist piece of equipment I have an arrangement with a lens hire firm who can provide certain equipment on very cost effective hire for the day. You will however find that a very effective tool for approaching and photographing dragonflies is a reasonably long telephoto lens and a cheap set of extension tubes. Shorter lenses, also with extension, tubes are great tools for photographing larvae.

If you require any specific advice please enquire when booking.

An electronic flash gun may prove useful for providing a little extra light or when attempting the holy grail of dragonfly photography - flight shots. Here they may assist in freezing fast movement or allow you to use a smaller aperture. A tripod isn't necessary but if you are taking a longer lens you might like to include one. We won't be walking far from the car so you can leave it there if it is not required.

I will attempt to have a laptop available during lunch so we can look through and discuss the results of our labours but please feel free to bring your own laptop if you require. Whilst the viewers on the back of cameras are great there is no substitute for a full size laptop screen.



This is a field of photography where weather conditions are very important. Dragonflies simply don't fly in wet weather. In the event of a poor weather forecast I will contact everyone the day before and if possible reschedule for a later date.

The Dragonfly Project is based at the National Trusts Wicken Fen site. Situated between Ely, Newmarket and Cambridge, in the small village of Wicken, the reserve is easily accessible by road and there is ample parking on site. The centre is well signposted from all the main roads with brown and white National Trust tourist signs. Further details and a map are available on the National Trusts website, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wickenfen/

There is ample car parking in the main National Trust car park (small charge for non-members) and toilet facilities both there and at the main centre.



Dragon flies are only at their best during a few months of the year and the centre is used for a number of courses and of awareness raising days so the number of sessions I can offer per year is very limited. The number of guests on each trip will also be limited to ensure everyone here gets plenty of opportunity to take photographs and receive individual tuition as required. This is an intensive workshop so bring plenty of memory cards and batteries and expect to take home lots of great images.

Bob Brind-Surch

All dates, prices and availability are advertised on my website, www.naturesphotos.co.uk, and other dates may be available if groups wanted to book them. Please contact me for further information.

The cost of the day includes all tuition, teas and coffees but not lunch. You can bring a picnic or buy a lunch at the National Trust café. A proportion of the fee you pay goes directly to the Dragonfly project.

The charge includes admittance to the National Trust reserve for non NT members. N.B. Non NT members will have to pay the £2.50 (Summer 2012) parking fee however.

To book places or for more information please contact:

Bob Brind-Surch on 01327 352505 or 07983 427202 (preferred)
or email info@naturesphotos.co.uk



THE DRAGONFLY PROJECT



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