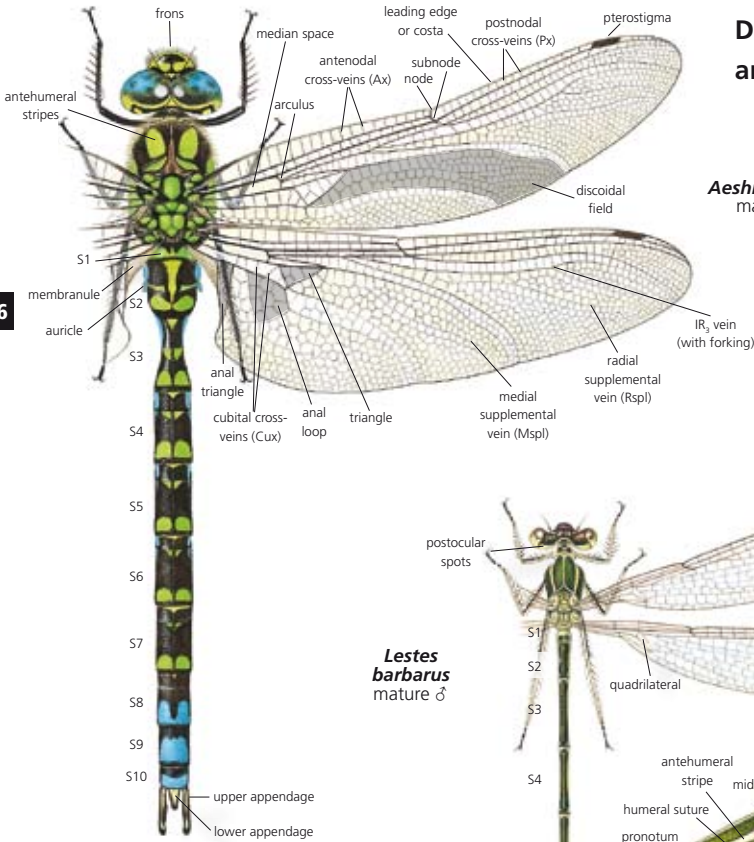
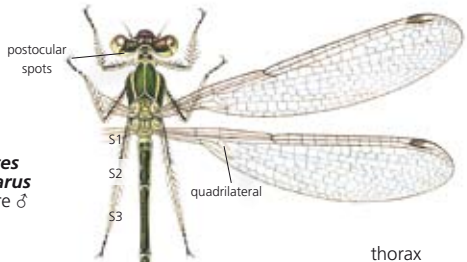


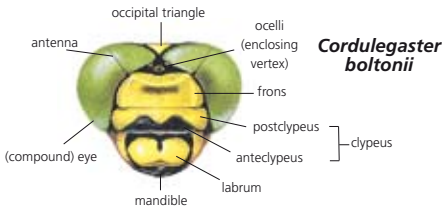
Dragonfly anatomy



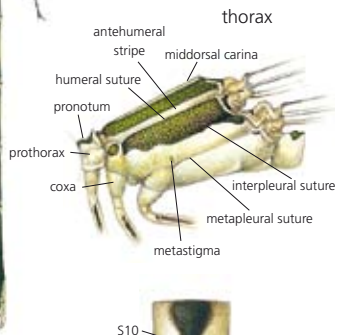
Aeshna cyanea
mature ♂



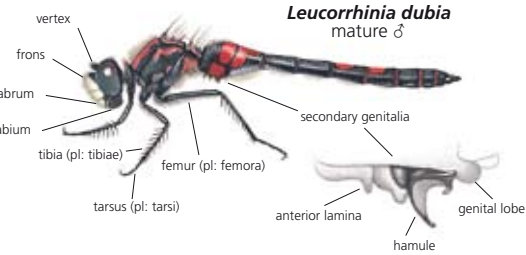
Lestes barbarus
mature ♂



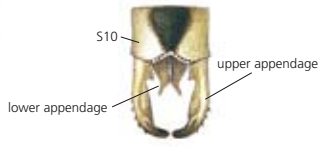
Cordulegaster boltonii



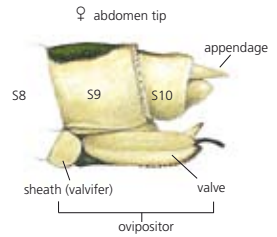
thorax



Leucorrhinia dubia
mature ♂



♂ abdomen tip



♀ abdomen tip

Anatomy and terminology

A little knowledge of how a dragonfly's body works may help the observer to understand its topography. Built as aerial, visually-inclined predators, dragonflies have large compound eyes to track their prey, powerful but flexible wings to give chase and strong, forward-directed legs to catch their prey. The male is equipped for the unique reproductive behaviour of Odonata (see: Dragonfly behaviour), with secondary genitalia on the underside of the abdomen base and claspers at its tip to hold the female. The female abdomen tip is either equipped with an ovipositor to insert eggs into plant tissues (Zygoptera and Aeshnidae) or a vulvar scale through which eggs are deposited into the water (all other Anisoptera).

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and synonyms

- Abdomen** Posterior portion of body, comprising ten segments and terminating in appendages.
- Accessory genitalia** See: secondary genitalia.
- Aestivation** Change in adult activity in order to survive summer, e.g. moving to cooler areas. Antonym: hibernation. See: siccation.
- Amber** Yellowish or orangey colour typically seen at wing base of many anisopterans.
- Anal loop** Distinct field of cells in the anisopteran hindwing base; its shape is determined by a vein that loops around the field, starting close to the posterior corner of the triangle and ending close to the wing base. See text on identifying Corduliidae (p. 30).
- Anal triangle** Triangular field of two or more cells next to membranule in hindwing base of many Anisoptera.
- Andromorph** Presence of colours typical of mature male in female. Synonym: androchrome, homeomorph, homeochrome. Antonym: heteromorph.
- Anisopteran** Pertaining to the suborder of true dragonflies (Anisoptera).
- Anteclypeus** See: clypeus.
- Antehumeral stripes** Pale stripes on the thorax in front of the humeral suture. See text on identifying Coenagrionidae (p. 25).
- Antenodal cross-veins** Cross-veins that lie along the anterior wing border between node and base. Abbreviation: Ax, antenodals. See text on identifying Anisoptera (p. 26) and Libellulidae (p. 31).
- Anterior** Lying at front, i.e. towards head. Antonym: posterior.
- Anterior lamina** Transverse structure of secondary genitalia that lies in front of hamules.
- Apex** Extreme tip. Antonym: base.
- Apical** At or towards the tip. Antonym: basal.
- Appendages** Extremities at the end of the abdomen. In male dragonflies there are upper and lower appendages, which are used to clasp the female on the head (Anisoptera) or the pronotum (Zygoptera) during mating and when in tandem. Synonym: Anal appendages.
- Appressed** Pressed against the body.
- Arculus** Thick, bracket-like cross-vein which lies centrally in wing near base. Two longitudinal veins branch off the arculus.
- Auricles** Ear-like structures on sides of S2 in males of some Anisoptera.
- Ax** See: antenodal cross-veins.
- Basal** At or towards the base. Antonym: apical.
- Bridge space** An elongate triangular space on the basal side of the subnode. See text on identifying Libellulidae (p. 31).
- Carina** Keel- or ridge-like structure on thorax or abdomen. Plural: carinae.
- Clypeus** Middle portion of face, between frons and labrum, consisting of a lower/anterior (anteclypeus) and an upper/posterior part (postclypeus).
- Coloration** Pattern of colours and markings.
- Converge** Coming together terminally. Antonym: diverge.
- Costa** Thick vein on leading edge of wing, running from base to tip.
- Coxa** Segment of leg that connects it to the thorax ('hip'). Plural: coxae.
- Cubital cross-veins** Cross-veins in the wing between the triangle and the wing base. Abbreviation: Cux. See text on identifying Corduliidae (p. 30).
- Cux** See: cubital cross-veins.
- Denticles** Minute black teeth covering parts of the body.
- Denticulate** Bearing denticles.
- Diapause** A state of suspended development that may occur at one or more stages in the life cycle and that typically constitutes an anticipatory response to conditions unfavourable for uninterrupted development.
- Discoidal cell** Conspicuous (group of) cells