

Red dragonfly

Regno: fauna

Invertebrates

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Red dragonfly - *Sympetrum sanguineum*

Dragonfly belonging to the sub-order Anisoptera, body length ranging between 35 and 40 mm. Like all the Odonata in this sub-order, it has an enormous abdomen.

At rest, it carries its wings horizontal to the body axis (the hind wings are broader at the base than the front pair); eyes contiguous; powerful flight.

The male has a fiery red abdomen and red forehead; the female has a yellow abdomen and inconspicuous ovipositor (egg-layer). Legs completely black, unlike the similar species *S. vulgatum*.

Like the latter, it is very common and frequents all types of habitats with stagnant water. The adults can be seen from June to mid-October.

Males often rest on perches near bogs or ponds, only taking flight to catch their prey. Mating takes place in their typical "tandem" position. The male clasps the female by her neck with his two tiny abdominal appendages, she then bends her body so that the tip of her abdomen reaches the genital openings of her partner, situated in the first abdominal segments.

The female lays her eggs, usually near the banks of a pond or canal, with the male still attached.

The nymphs are quite small and stubby (max. 18mm); they do not have external gills, but have a complex system of tracheal gills inside their intestinal cavity.

Generally, they live in the mud on the bottom of the pond or canal or among underwater vegetation. Here they lie in ambush for their prey which they catch by suddenly thrusting out their mask, a prehensile structure modified from the lower lip.

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