

Researchers from Lund University have shown that damselflies learn how to choose the right mate when two species co-exist locally. The choice of mate is not only a matter of genetic and instinctive behaviour, as has often been assumed for such small and short-lived creatures.

"It is fascinating to see that even small insects can learn these things," says Professor Erik Svensson at the Department of Biology at Lund University.

Erik Svensson and his fellow researchers at Lund University have studied two co-existing species of damselfly (called "demoiselles," belonging to the genus *Calopteryx*). Damselflies belong to a group of insects called odonates, together with the more familiar dragonflies. The researchers have investigated the mechanisms by which females choose males with whom to mate. The main difference between the two species in terms of appearance is the amount of black on the males' wings. The females therefore have to keep an eye on the wing colour if they are to mate with males of their own species, i.e. the correct mates.

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