

More beautiful than butterflies, more spectacular fliers than hummingbirds, and with intriguing behaviour as complex as mammals or birds, dragonflies and damselflies are the ultimate insects.

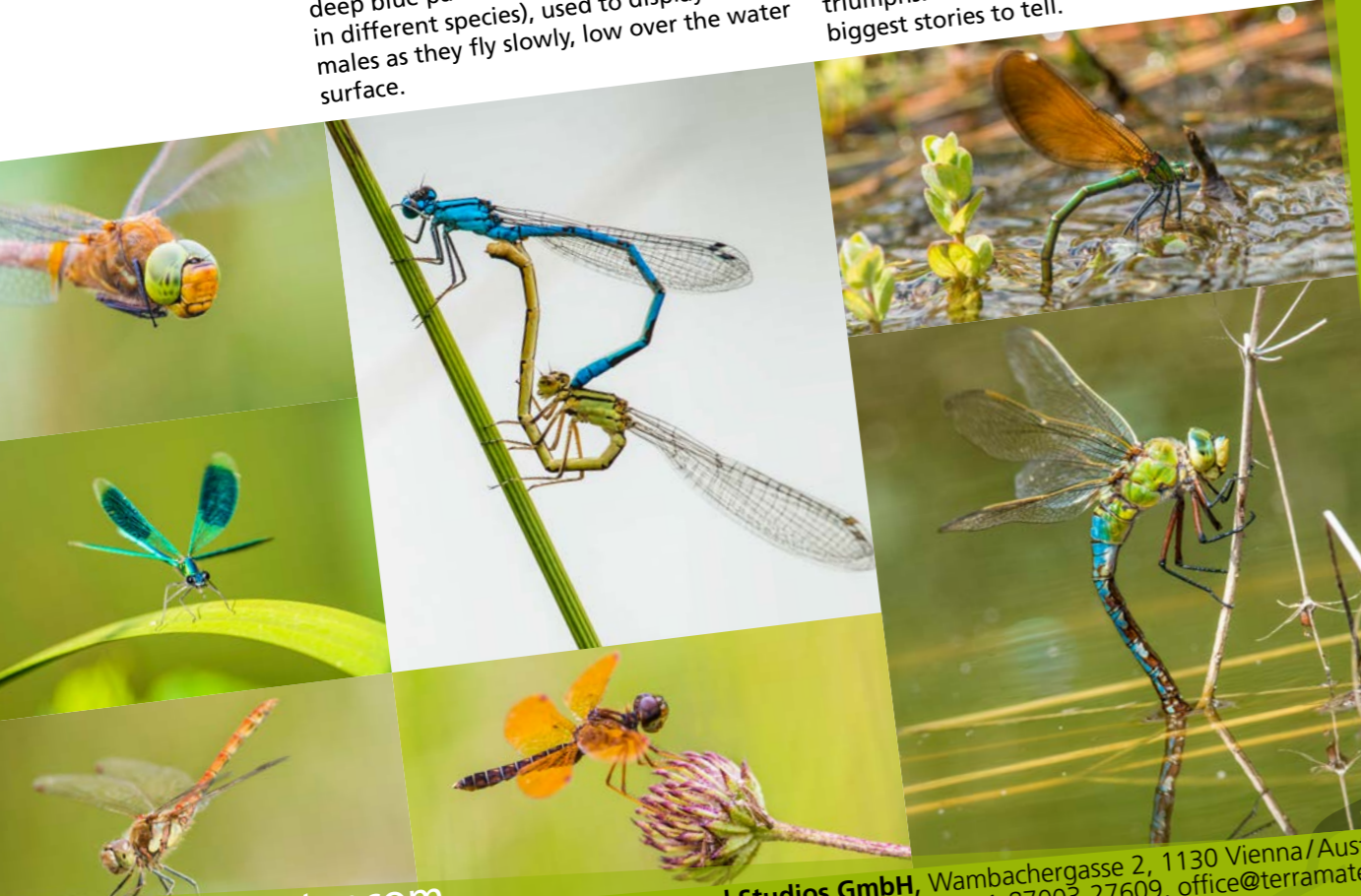
They've been flying around for hundreds of millions of years, crossing paths with dinosaurs before we mammals were even a twinkle in the eye of evolution, and are often described as "primitive"—which is simply wrong. Surviving on the planet for that long means being pretty special—and this film shows just how special they are.

Dragonflies live very complex lives and, as we film them in intimate detail, we find ourselves in a world of drama and intrigue, even meeting those with their own distinct personalities. In many species, males hold and defend territories, just like birds, sometimes even co-operating with each other. Some damselflies also defend their territories. Demoiselles are a beautiful species in which the males have deep blue patches on their wings (different in different species), used to display to rival males as they fly slowly, low over the water surface.

Dragonflies are masters of the air, and the latest high-speed camera technology reveals just how impressive they can be. They easily match hummingbird flight—flying backwards, sideways or vertically upwards, and are even better fliers than hummingbirds, because they have twice as many wings!

Dragonflies use their amazing aerial skill to catch insects on the wing—even the most agile flies can't escape. Just last year, scientists found that dragonflies predict their preys' movements with the same kinds of calculations used by advanced vertebrates, from a brain just a millimetre or so across. We meet scientists and engineers studying dragonfly flight and, understanding how they fly, building innovative robots to fly the same way.

The film follows the summer season as it unfolds and more and more dragons and damsels emerge on to the lake. It shows that even insects have distinct characters. We discover jealous rivals, adulterous relationships and gallant lovers—but beneath this miniature soap opera are sophisticated behaviours driven by natural selection. It shows off the colourful world of dragons and damsels in all its glory—a small world but one full of dangers and triumphs. Often the little things have the biggest stories to tell.



NATURE

4K DRAGONS & DAMSELS

1 x 50 min.

Written and directed by **Steve Nicholls**

4K, 5.1 and Stereo

Executive producers: **Susanne Lummer, Sabine Holzer**



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