

Britain's Dragonflies – Review by Tim Beynon

In Dragonfly News 46, Autumn 2004, I had the pleasure of reviewing the first edition of this innovative guide. I concluded then with "Should you buy it? – YES. Do I take it to show to my field trip participants? – YES. (And I bring it home to read again and again)". I have to repeat those comments.

Too many "revised" editions contain little revision at all. Not this one. It could almost be a wholly new book. It has 40 more pages; up-to-date distribution maps; many new photographs; and splendid revised ID charts.

The introductory chapters on Biology, Habitat, how to ID, and the ID charts occur as before but with extra information including ageing, and new photographs. Charts on breeding habitats, key sites where to find scarce and localized species, are all rewritten or entirely new.

The summary ID charts are as good if not better than they were in ed.1. M and F characters appear on the same double page spread (except for some of the Damsels). They are extremely good, and taken as a whole better than any other ID section in other books. The Darter section has been expanded to include heads and faces, often critical.

For each species' double page spread the right hand page is much as in the first edition with merged photographs of males, females, immatures, colour variants, etc. However, now these are often separated into individual blocks which makes for more clarity. This method of illustration was pioneered by Rob Still in ed.1, and he is also responsible for the overall design and all the drawings. The left hand page contains the text, headed by the BDS approved vernacular name followed by the European vernacular and sometimes the 'Irish' vernacular, (essentially American. Oh Lord! – save me from the dreadful "Bluet"), where relevant. Here is Adult ID; Eggs and Larva; Behaviour; Breeding Habitat; Population and Conservation. Also a distribution map; where to look; observation tips (v.v.g.); and look-alikes

All 56 recorded species have such a double page, as have 7 potential vagrants who could soon be on a pond near you! The completely new introduction to the Vagrants, potential Vagrants and former breeding species includes a W. European map showing probable/possible origins. [Where did that delectable sprite, the Dainty Damsely *C.scitulum* appear from, this year in Kent, after an absence of 57 years?].

The section on identifying larvae and exuviae is superb too. New photos and new colour diagrams make this the icing on the cake. As good as I've seen.

The final sections are on Watching and Photographing, the BDS, Recording and Monitoring schemes, Legislation, Protection, further reading, and useful addresses

For those of you who have ed.1, the obvious difference is that was hard-backed, this is soft-backed within a waterproof plastic cover – really pocket-friendly. In the unlikely event of my being on "Desert Island Discs" my choice of a personal book would be this. Not much use in a tropical place with an entirely different fauna – but it is a lovely book. (I'd use the Bible and Shakespeare provided by DID, to prop up the legs of my hacked together table).

I really like my Lewingtons (both Brooks and Dijkstra) and my Powell, but this has to be THE BEST. Even if you already have ed.1, you MUST get ed.2, and enjoy, and enjoy, and enjoy....

