

# 2021 England Country Dragonfly Recorder Reports



Male Norfolk Hawker © Andrew Wilkes

British  
Dragonfly  
Society



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Can be found on the BDS website under the 'About'

[www.british-dragonflies.org.uk](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk)



# Cornwall VC1-2 ~ by Dave Cooper

For Cornwall the season started early again in 2021 with my first sighting of a **Large Red Damselfly** female on 29 March.

On 5 April I was invited to give a presentation on Odonata via Zoom for the Ladock Wildlife Group, which I am told was well received.

Due to restrictions, I visited my local haunts alone in 2021 and by April things were beginning to stir, with some **Azure Damselflies** and **Common Blue Damselflies** appearing. During this time I was fortunate to be offered access to two more private sites with permission to take group field trips (when safe to do so). I did resume field trips on 24 July, taking a small number of people to the Beaver project in Ladock to continue the monitoring project from 2020. A further three surveys were carried out by the same group resulting in records for 17 species at the site; these surveys will be continued in 2022.

In Falmouth I was eager to find out whether the **Small Red Damselflies** and **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies** had returned for their sixth season on a nearby brownfield site I have been monitoring. They did return, although the numbers were down compared to previous years, especially the **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies**.

On 14 August I arranged another group field visit to Trelusback Reserve, which resulted in another successful trip with many species sightings. I was also informed of another private site in the Bissoe Valley, which I was welcomed to visit; this proved to be one of the season's highlights - I look forward to many more visits.

In the Bissoe Valley I found an unusual number of **Emerald Damselflies** especially around the pond areas; there have always been good numbers in the past, though mainly around the grassy areas. I was also pleased to see the return of a few **Beautiful Demoiselles** which had been absent for a couple of years here, and a couple of **Southern Migrant Hawkers** made it to the Valley also, adding to a collection of sightings for the county in 2020.

Unfortunately some other trips were not as successful and there seemed to be a drop in the Vagrant and Lesser Emperors sightings on the Lizard in 2021 despite many visits to search for them. However, a small number of **Red-veined Darters** were present.

Brenay Common, Bodmin Moor, has been a **Black Darter** stronghold in the past, however I recorded none there in 2021 (although an odd one was reported).

Again, despite numerous trips to the River Tamar (on the Cornish side) I had no sightings of **White-legged Damselflies**, although the **Banded Demoiselles** were thriving there in good numbers.

Many thanks to all who entered their sightings into iRecord.

I am now looking forward to the 2022 season.

# Devon VC3-4 ~ by Dave Smallshire

Many activities were again curbed by Covid during the dragonfly season. In addition, spring 2021 was one the worst I can recall, with a cold April and mostly cold and wet May. This no doubt badly affected dragonflies that emerged during this period. When warm weather did finally come, **Downy Emeralds** emerged: exuviae were found on 25 May at Little Bradley Ponds, followed by typically small numbers of adults in June at Bystock Pools, Stover Country Park, Ventiford Ponds and Little Bradley Ponds (including one record of egg-laying), with a first site record from Bovey Heath.

In the Bovey Basin, a **Hairy Dragonfly** exuvia was found at Rackerhayes (Kingsteignton) in May, and in June up to eight were seen at Stover Country Park and two each at East Golds clay pit, Gallows Cross SuDS (Sustainable drainage systems) ponds (Kingsteignton) and Ventiford Ponds. Elsewhere, there were records from Dawlish Warren (29 April), Grand Western Canal (a recently emerged teneral on 12 May and three in June) and Exminster Marshes (June).

A few **Red-eyed Damselflies** were seen at Little Bradley Ponds on 12 June, where small numbers have been a regular sighting in recent years, but substantial numbers occurred in June at the Grand Western Canal (130), Rackerhayes Ponds (500+), Stover Country Park (400+) and Ventiford Ponds (93 – a site record).

**Scarce Chasers** were reported, as usual, from the Exe-Clyst Marshes (Exminster Marshes, Darts Farm and Topsham) and the Grand Western Canal, where 40 were counted on 23 June. There are signs that this species might be breeding away from the areas in south-east Devon that have been well-established for over a decade, with records in North Devon from near Winkleigh (15 June) and Meeth Quarry DWT (Devon Wildlife Trust) Reserve (two males on 26 June and an overmature female on 20 July) and in South Devon from near Woodbury (15 June), the Otter-Tale Valleys at Taleford (5 June), Otterton (16 June) and near Cotley (26 June), Clennon Lakes (22 July) and at South Efford Marsh (24 July).

Small numbers of **Small Red Damselflies** were reported from Bystock Reserve as usual, but unusually up to four were reported at Aylesbeare Common. A record of one at Smallhanger in June suggests that the population there still hangs on, so does the population in the old settlement lagoons at Meeth DWT Reserve, where a healthy count of 25 was recorded on 25 July. Ten were found in poor weather (during our only Devon Group field meeting of the year, of course!) at Moortown Bottom on 1 August, while on Gidleigh Common seven were found near Walla Brook, confirming the presence of a small colony there.

On the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, peak transect counts of **Southern Damselfly** were 103 at Aylesbeare Common and 23 at Venn Ottery Common, but only two at Colaton Raleigh Common (although other totals there included 102 **Keeled Skimmers** and 35 **Small Red Damselflies**). The only report from Dartmoor was of the eight found in poor weather at Moortown Bottom on 1 August.

Surveys in July found 96 **Keeled Skimmers** at Bicton Common, 22 in a coastal acidic mire at Soar, and 72 in the Burrator catchment where there were up to seven **Common Hawkers** and 31 **Black Darters** in August. A few **Black Darters** were also recorded at Gidleigh Common on 1 August and a **Common Hawker** was photographed egg-laying at Emsworthy in September.



**Small Red-eyed Damselfly** counts in the Bovey Basin included 36 at Little Bradley Ponds, 311 at Rackerhayes (21 August), 100+ at Stover Country Park and 18 at Ventiford Ponds. The species was also recorded at Dawlish Warren, Drakes Reservoir in Plymouth (breeding activity noted) and at new sites at Bishopsteignton and Bolberry.

Single male **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies** were found at two small pools in clay waste during a survey of an operational site in the Bovey Basin, suggesting that a breeding population of this Red List species persists somewhere in the area. **White-legged Damselflies** were reported from the Taw above Barnstaple, the Torridge near Sheepwash, the Yeo south of Bideford and the Clyst at Clyst St Mary.

Single **Brown Hawkers** were seen at West Hill on 1 August and along the Grand Western Canal near Westleigh on 3 September.

The outstanding event of the year has to be a confirmed and long awaited first Devonshire record of **Southern Migrant Hawker**: a male photographed at Beer Head on 2 August. Other migrants included:

- up to three male **Red-veined Darters** at Soar in late June-early July.
- **Lesser Emperors** at Lower Bruckland Ponds on 21-22 July, Slapton Ley on 2 August and Meeth on 4 August.
- two young male **Ruddy Darters** at Stover Country Park on 4 August.
- a male **Banded Demoiselle** paused briefly at Ventiford Ponds in the Bovey Basin (where there are no previous confirmed records) on 29 August.
- **Vagrant Emperors** at Prawle Point (caught in a moth trap) on 9-10 September, Berry Head on 11 September and 30 October, Exminster Marshes in October, Dawlish Warren on 3 November and Lipson, Plymouth, on 13 November.

Finally, a plea to submit your records via iRecord, or via me in spreadsheet form. I am also looking for experienced surveyors to help with training a dozen 16 to 25-year-olds to monitor habitat changes at Stover Country Park that may result from an Heritage Lottery Funding bid; if you're willing to help or want to know more, please come along to a meeting there on 21 May. Site and contact details can be found at: [www.devon.gov.uk/stovercountrypark](http://www.devon.gov.uk/stovercountrypark)

## Devon BDS Group field meetings reports, 2021

Meeth DWT Reserve, Devon, 25 July 2021

After having to cancel the Stover 17 July meeting because my Covid app had 'pinged', it was a great pleasure to finally meet up with members in person again. It was especially good to catch up with Andy McGeeney, former BDS President who moved to North Devon not long before Covid struck. In typical fashion, the weather forecast deteriorated as the day approached, but in the event it wasn't as bad as we expected and a good range of species (15) was found. We couldn't find the old female Scarce Chaser that Pedro Landers had photographed the week before (and we didn't see the Lesser Emperor seen 10 days later!), but Golden-ringed Dragonflies gave us some lovely views. Most important in conservation terms, we found about 25 Small Red Damselflies in old lagoons at the fringe of the reserve, which is more than previous estimates here. Sadly, the formerly strong colony of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies was lost with the end of quarrying for ball clay as pumping ceased, runnels dried up and the pits filled with water. Compensation came, however, in the form of plenty of Wood White butterflies, a Willow Tit and, perhaps best of all, a Red-tipped Clearwing moth found by eagle-eyed Dave Turrell.

Gidleigh Common, Dartmoor, Devon, 1 August 2021

Eight of us negotiated the maze of narrow, bracken-fringed lanes to find Moortown Bottom, tucked away in a well-hidden part of Dartmoor. Again, the Devon weather wasn't predicted to be favourable, but thankfully the only shower came just at lunch time, when we had our cars for shelter. As the temperature rose a few degrees from 15C, a few of our main target, Southern Damselfly, were found, albeit not many. Other typical moorland denizens were also very scarce: Small Red Damselflies, Keeled Skimmer and Black Darter. For me, the highlight was watching a Golden-ringed Dragonfly 'pogoing': egg-laying right in front of us for several minutes. After lunch, most of us walked out over the Common to look at a valley mire where a single Small Red Damselfly (and Common Hawker and Black Darter) had been seen in 2019. We were able to confirm a small breeding population of SRD, but failed to see a Common Hawker. But the sun shone and there's not much to beat standing beside the babbling Walla Brook while Beautiful Demoiselles and Golden-ringed Dragonflies flutter and zoom by, respectively!



Male Southern Migrant Hawker at Beer Head

© Steve Waite



# Wiltshire VC7-8 ~ by Rosie Ray

The 2021 season started with the first sighting of a **Hairy Dragonfly** on 13 April at North Meadow, Cricklade SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), a previously unrecorded site. It was spotted by regular recorder Peter Phillip. This species has increased in the area with a 'hotspot' being Lower Moor Reserve in the Cotswold Water Park.

A new wetland site in the county, RSPB Franchises Lodge, was the first to record a **Large Red Damselfly** on the 4 May; **Hairy Dragonfly** was also recorded here on 4 June.

Early emergence of **Banded Demoiselle** was recorded on 9 May at Conigre Mead Reserve in Melksham.

I had a report of a **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** on 14 May from a couple visiting a site not previously covered. Although earlier than normal, and in a place not previously seen, it is a plausible sighting and this is a site to investigate further this season.

**Scarce Chasers** have a very firm foothold in the Devizes area now, as have **White-legged Damselflies**. Both species were regularly recorded by Lyndsay Trewren at Caen Hill Locks. **White-legged Damselflies** were also recorded at Wootton Rivers in the Savernake Forest, Marlborough, for the first time and Woodborough. Accompanying photographs confirmed.

A single **Hairy Dragonfly** was reported to the east of Swindon which, again, was plausible given the distance from known sites.

There have been unconfirmed reports of both **Willow Emerald Damselflies** and **Small Red-eyed Damselflies** in the north and south of the county. It would be fantastic to be able to confirm these but without photographs or when the recorder isn't using iRecord, I cannot verify the reports or assess the recorder's experience in order to make an informed decision.

However, I can confirm that a **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** was observed by an experienced recorder at Lower Moor Farm Reserve.

RSPB Franchises Lodge is earmarked for regular surveys in 2022. It's a new, large site with a lot of potential.

Good numbers of **Hawkers**, **Chasers** and **Skimmers** were recorded in 2021; the same was true for most Damselfly species with the exception of **Emerald Damselfly** – I received only one record.

The very last record was of a **Common Darter** on the 2 November.

My thanks to all who submitted records for Wiltshire in 2021.

# Dorset VC9 ~ by Andrew Brown

Greetings from Dorsetshire.

Firstly I would like to thank David Hepper for all his time and patience while helping me with verifying and downloading data from iRecord. It's been something I have not put much effort into, but Dorset is getting quite a few more records through iRecord now, through the various schemes involving the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) and Butterfly Conservation, and from individuals. At some point iRecord and Living Record data will be amalgamated and put into the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) atlas database through the Dorset Environmental Record Centre.

Personally, I have had a 'bumper' year, and managed to record 30 species. However, the award for 'most species seen in one year', alas, as always, belongs to Ian Ballam, a local birder who I believe is out most days and has brilliant eyes- he's a very good entomologist. In fact, if you haven't already, I would recommend any County Recorder to make friends with their local birders as they make remarkable Odonata spotters, and they tend to record their sightings!

So between iRecord and Living Record there was just over 2500 records for 2021, which is certainly a decline from previous years; this could be down to Covid, or people not being as active.

In total 34 species were recorded across the county, which is heartening, although rather worryingly the numbers of heathland specialists, such as **Black Darter** and **Common Hawker**, were very low, and this needs to be investigated. The high diversity recorded in Dorset is due mainly to the arrival of new migrant species spreading from Europe. This year saw a large influx of **Southern Migrant Hawkers**, mainly in West Dorset along the Jurassic Coast. Also, after being notified, I managed to see two males at Wick Fields, Christchurch, at the eastern edge of Dorset, so they are certainly here and very mobile. The **Norfolk Hawkers** at Radipole in Weymouth have spread to Bennett Water Gardens; it'll be interesting to see if and where they continue to spread.

## The Purbeck Dragonfly Project

As some of you know a new Super Reserve, the Purbeck Heath NNR has been created, which is a partnership of seven different landowners and covers over 3000 hectares (8000 acres). It stretches from Grange Heath in the west to Studland in the east, and from the Arne peninsula in the north to Norden in the south. It is now the largest area of lowland heath managed as a single nature reserve in England.

In the partners' own words: "This is a product of collaboration and determination to make a real difference to nature recovery. The Purbeck Heaths NNR partners are: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Forestry England, National Trust, Natural England, Rempstone Estate and the RSPB. By working together we aim to restore natural processes across the whole NNR, making it more resilient to climate change and other pressures."

The aim of the Purbeck Dragonfly Project is to attempt to map the whole site for its ponds, lakes and streams, and attempt regular monitoring across the site to gain an overall picture of how Odonata are faring, which will feed into future management plans.

For more information about the Dorset Dragonfly Group and the aims of our Project please look at our website [www.dorsetdragonflies.org.uk](http://www.dorsetdragonflies.org.uk)

If anyone would like to get involved please email me at [brown\\_a\\_r@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:brown_a_r@yahoo.co.uk)

If anyone has advice as to how to tackle large scale surveys of Odonata with limited resources please get in touch as we need all the help we can get!



Lily pads on pond at Littlesea

© Andrew Brown





Surveying at Arne Nature Reserve  
© Andrew Brown



Male Southern Migrant Hawker  
© Andrew Brown



# Isle of Wight VC10 ~ by Jim Baldwin

The wet spring, and perhaps the effects of the first lockdown in 2020 (when there was a large volume of garden records) resulted in fewer sightings in comparison in 2021 for VC10. A **Large Red Damselfly** at Bembridge Lagoons on 17 April was the first sighting of the year, nine days later than in 2020. The mild and generally dry autumn weather ensured that the flight season was extended with the final record of the year being a **Common Darter** on a footpath between Shalfleet and Hamstead on 17 November, the latest date for the county since 2012.

**Southern Emerald Damselfly** : Due to the wet spring, the breeding ponds near Yarmouth retained a higher water level than normal. This resulted in a continued presence of a male **Emperor Dragonfly** patrolling the ponds. It remains to be seen whether the habitat change will have a detrimental effect on Southern Emerald Damselfly breeding. Once again, Peter Hunt diligently watched the site but had to wait until 9 July for his first sighting of the year: a female . Only small numbers were subsequently seen with the last record on 14 August.

**Red-veined Darter**: There were only three reports from the private site at Atherfield. A male on 5 June was followed by an interesting record of two males and an immature on 16 July with the final sighting (a male) on 21 July.

**Downy Emerald**: There was an interesting coastal record of a male at Wheeler's Bay on 13 June, which was the first seen at this site since a male was recorded there on 24 July 2007 during a migration passage of Large White, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow butterflies.

# South Hampshire VC11~ by Phil Young

The 2021 season started, rather surprisingly, on the 27 February; as observed by Jason Claxton: “around midday, in full sun, I spotted a large brown Dragonfly hawking 3-4ft above flood water” at Nursling near Southampton. At this date the only likely candidate was a **Vagrant Emperor**.

In fact the real season in South Hampshire was slow to start, with only **Large Red Damselfly** and **Azure Damselfly** observed before the end of April; in 2020 eight species were seen before the beginning of May.

2021 has seen the first records of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** in South Hampshire. It was first observed on 6 September at both Swanwick Lakes and Titchfield Haven in the south of the county. Then, on the 15 September, it was photographed south of Ebblake in the Moors Valley by Michael Graham.

**Scarce Chaser** was rediscovered on Latchmore Brook in June, and seen again in July. This follows its discovery in nearby Pitts Wood Inclosure in 2020; previously, it was last seen in this area in 2011. The nearest recent records for **Scarce Chaser** were from Blashford Lakes in 2019. It will be interesting to see whether they are observed again at any of these locations in 2022. The Lower Test Valley remains a good place to see **Scarce Chaser**, for proof see Jason Claxton's photograph of a female at the end of the report.

**Southern Damselfly** were discovered at two new sites on the River Test. One was on the Lower Test towards Southampton and the other site was near the vice county border with North Hampshire. At the latter site a follow-up visit on a somewhat gusty day found 18 males among clumps of reeds and grass about 15-20 feet away from the river channel itself.

**White-legged Damselflies** were again observed in the New Forest, in the Dames Slough and Mill Lawn areas east of Burley. A suggestion that they may be spreading west along Mill Lawn Brook will be investigated on a Hants and Surrey Borders Group field meeting to Mill Lawn and Ober Water this summer.

Wildern LNR, near Southampton, continues to warrant the regular attention it has received over recent years. A total of 22 species have been recorded there over the last four years with 19 species seen in 2021. **Hairy Dragonfly**, **Emerald Damselfly**, **Banded Demoiselle** and **Four-spotted Chaser** all made repeat appearances in 2021. A **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** was photographed egg laying over a stream by Goodalls Pond and a fresh looking **Keeled Skimmer** was photographed in the same area of the reserve. The highlight of the season was a female **Red-veined Darter**, photographed by Terry Crow, which was observed between 16 -18 August in Wildern Moor.

Two **Red-veined Darters** were seen six days earlier on the western edge of the vice county at Moors Valley CP. A male **Lesser Emperor** was observed at Whiteley Pastures in July and **Southern Migrant Hawker** were observed in South Hampshire on four separate occasions during August and September.



Exbury Gardens in the New Forest became the sixth BDS designated Dragonfly Hotspot in England thanks to its new Dragonfly Pond learning zone which was officially opened on 17th July by naturalist and broadcaster Nick Baker.

Finally, it was noticed that 2021 produced new (VC11) latest observed flight dates for **Southern Damselfly**, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, **White-legged Damselfly**, **Scarce Chaser** and **Common Darter** – with five records of the latter in December.

In 2020 4742 records were entered, including 646 records from Garden Birdwatch. At the time of writing 3293 records have been entered for 2021, but Garden Birdwatch records have yet to be received. Thanks to everyone who submitted their records and photographs during the year.



Male Willow Emerald Damselfly

© Michael Graham



Red-veined Darter

© Terry Crow



Female Scarce Chaser

© Jason Claxton

# North Hampshire VC12~ by David Murdoch

For a Dragonfly, North Hampshire is chalk or cheese. The huge mass of Wessex chalk, intensively farmed and almost devoid of natural water, is one of the least dragonfly-friendly areas in the whole country, but the sands and clays of the north and east, with their mires, bogs and slow-flowing streams, are some of the very richest habitats with varied Odonate fauna.

With the cold spring and distinctly average summer, overall it seemed to be a quiet year for common species, with some highlights but no reports of rarer migrants.

**Southern Damselfly** has at last been found in the River Test and Itchen valleys in North Hampshire. It may well be present widely in the river catchments but the problem is the difficulty of access. We have plans for a major effort in the 2023 season to visit previously unsurveyed stretches of the valleys.

**Willow Emerald Damselfly** has, as expected, extended its range in the north-east of the county. More surprising was a single individual found in Andover in the north-west, an area that is well surveyed and on the Wessex chalk. Likewise a diligent Andover photographer found a single **Emerald Damselfly**, a rare species in chalk habitat.

**Hairy Dragonfly** is known (though rarely recorded) from the Basingstoke Canal in the north-east but almost never from the chalk. However, in 2021 it was found in two new sites in the upper Test valley. More of a surprise was a single male **Black Darter** in the Dever valley, 20 miles out of its range and away from its usual bog habitat. This site has previously turned up a **Small Red Damselfly**, again way out of its normal range. These individuals were presumably dispersing; it's good to know that some of the rarer dragonflies of the south-east are still trying to colonise new areas.



# Sussex VC13-14 ~ by Simon Linington

The obvious highlight of 2021 was the discovery of a small colony of **Norfolk Hawkers** on the Chichester Canal. Found by Andrew Wilkes on 8 June, numbers there had increased to seven or more during July. This was part of a broader arrival of the species into the county with other sightings from Amberley Wild Brooks, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) and Pevensey Levels, following just a single county record in 2019. Also notable was the marked range expansion of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** with reports from 49 1-km OS grid squares, up from just one site in 2016. The **Southern Migrant Hawker** also consolidated its range with reports from 15 1-km squares compared to just seven the previous year. Surprisingly, as in 2020, this species was seen in woodland soon after emergence. It was a good year for **Red-veined Darters** at West Rise Marsh with 34 noted on 13 June and ovipositing seen two days later. The **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** colony of 30+ individuals on Sompting Brooks found in 2020, appears to be in decline with a maximum of seven males and two mating pairs seen on 28 June 2021.

The first species noted on the wing this year were: **Large Red Damselfly** (11 April), **Broad-bodied Chaser** (24 April) and **Hairy Dragonfly** (28 April). By the end of May, 17 species were flying.

**Scarce Chaser** is spreading eastwards in Sussex, but the sighting of one at West Rise Marsh on 2 July was unexpected. As a consequence of added attention from the BDS survey, **White-legged Damselfly** was recorded in 80 1-km squares, up 24 from 2020. It seems to be thriving in Sussex and in some places is the commonest Odonate of dry habitat. In contrast, there are significant concerns about the status of the **Emerald Damselfly** in the county; observations over the next few years will be important.

The **Brilliant Emerald** had a satisfactory showing in 2021, mainly in the High Weald.

After the dry 2020 season our heathland specialists (**Small Red Damselfly**, **Keeled Skimmer** and **Black Darter**) remain a concern. However, after just one **Black Darter** report for the county in 2020, the species was found at Iping Common, Burton Mill, Old Lodge and RSPB Broadstone Warren. Although less well reported in 2021, interestingly, eight **Small Red-eyed Damselflies**, including two mating pairs, were recorded on a small garden pond in Barcombe on 29 July.

Rare species reported during 2021 comprised: a **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** on 10 August at Scotney Castle (Kent but East Sussex Vice County), a **Lesser Emperor** at Weir Wood Reservoir on 22 August and a **Vagrant Emperor** at the Knepp Estate on 17 November.

Final reports for this year were: **Southern Hawker** at Warnham Local Nature Reserve (11 November); **Willow Emerald Damselfly** at Woods Mill (12 November); **Migrant Hawker** at Rye Harbour (25 November) and **Common Darter** near Barcombe (2 December).

Many thanks to the more than 350 observers that submitted sightings during the year, during which the Sussex Dragonfly Group launched a new website ([www.sussexdragonflies.org.uk](http://www.sussexdragonflies.org.uk)) containing a sightings page, distribution maps and phenology data updated from the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre database.





Male Red-veined Darter at West Rise Marsh, 15 June 2021  
© Simon Linington



Male Southern Migrant Hawker at Beachy Head, 2 September 2021  
© Simon Linington



# Kent VC15-16 ~ by Marc Heath

Despite the ongoing pandemic, observers were able to get out a little more this year to enjoy Kent's Odonata, and it seems some species had a good season.

The first **Large Red Damselfly** was reported on 18 April, followed shortly afterwards by **Variable Damselfly** at Stodmarsh on the 1 May and **Downy Emerald** on the 20 May at Chatham.

**Scarce Chasers** appeared at Westbere from 22 May, where their peak count was 12, followed by **Norfolk Hawkers** from 31 May, whose peak count in the Stour Valley was 37 during late June.

The first **Southern Migrant Hawker** appeared at Cliffe on the 16 June, where numbers were once again encouraging.

At least one **Norfolk Hawker** was seen at Dungeness on the 26 June, a new species here, while two **Beautiful Demoiselle** were seen at a new site near Oare on 1 July.

The first **Dainty Damselfly** sighting was of two individuals at Sandwich on 31 May. They had another excellent year at Sandwich Bay where they peaked at over 400 individuals on 11 June; this was probably an underestimate too. They were also reported at two other sites on the north Kent coast in mid-June, which is promising. Visiting and surveying suitable habitat in North Kent from late May in 2022 could uncover other small colonies of this Damselfly.

Two **Southern Emerald Damselfly** were reported from Cooling Castle on 23 June, while the first **Willow Emerald Damselfly** was seen on 28 June at the Royal Military Canal.

At Sandwich 27 **Red-veined Darters** were counted during June and two **Lesser Emperors** observed egg-laying.

Early July records included 63 **Scarce Emerald Damselflies** and seven **Southern Emerald Damselflies** at Sandwich Bay, the latter species peaking at 12 individuals in late July.

12 **Southern Migrant Hawker** were seen at Nethergong on 18 July, with both mating and egg-laying activity observed at this inland site.

Late July produced a count of at least 40 **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** at Sandwich Bay.

Early August produced a count of seven **Keeled Skimmer** at Hothfield Common while four **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** were seen in west Kent around the middle of the month.

**Willow Emerald Damselflies** were seen in good numbers at Nethergong during September with others noted around the county with increasing regularity.

With continued mild weather in late summer, the odd **Southern Migrant Hawker** was still being seen on the 18 September with two noted at Worth, Sandwich while one or two **Vagrant Emperors** were at Sandwich Bay on 9 October. At least one female **Vagrant Emperor** was sent at Dungeness on a few occasions during early November.

Despite the restrictions that were put on everyone in 2021, there were some excellent sightings and I'm sure everyone is looking forward to getting out more again next year to enjoy Kent's Odonata.

For more information on Kent's dragonflies and latest sightings, please visit my website: [www.marcheathwildlifephotography.zenfolio.com](http://www.marcheathwildlifephotography.zenfolio.com)





Dainty Damselflies copulating

© Marc Heath



Male Dainty Damselfly

© Marc Heath



Male Golden-ringed Dragonfly

© Marc Heath





Female Southern Emerald Damselfly

© Marc Heath



Male Southern Migrant Hawker  
© Marc Heath



Male Southern Migrant Hawker  
© Marc Heath

# Surrey VC17 ~ by Linda Pryke

A total of 30 species were recorded in Surrey in 2021: 18 Dragonflies and 12 Damselflies. Thanks to everyone who submitted their records during 2021. (Older records always welcome and can be submitted at any time - there's no limit as to how far back your sightings can be!).

**Norfolk Hawkers** appear settled in at WWT Wetlands Centre at Barnes, with records of at least two individuals by Dave and Penny Smallshire, and M. Honey in June and July 2021, continuing the run of sightings started in 2018.

Tices' Meadow on the Surrey-Hampshire border remains the best place in Surrey to see **Scarce Chaser**, and **Lesser Emperor** was seen ovipositing there in June.

Records for **Willow Emerald** continue a steady increase, spread across the county making it the 7th most recorded species of the year. Caroline Woodleys' photo (Virginia Water, 4 Sept 2021) shows this charismatic species at its best.

Somewhat less common on our corner of Britain, and generally found at southern and western county margins, is the **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**; there were fewer records than usual (10) in 2021 after a run of good years. Hopefully this is a blip, but worth keeping an eye-on. Francis Kelly photograph of a male was taken during a field trip (HSBG) on the Surrey-Sussex Border in July.

The new Zero Carbon Centre in central Guildford has kindly given us space for a small dragonfly display which we're hoping to update as the season progresses. If you fancy a stroll, The River Wey Navigation long-distance path passes close by, and will take you out of the city towards Shalford and St Catherine's Lock a couple of miles to the South. Public transport links are good to get you back into town if necessary. A little further afield, Riverside Nature Reserve has a variety of habitats covering 30 hectares, and we're looking forward to a group (HSBG) visit there in late August.

If you'd like some like-minded company, the Hampshire and Surrey Borders Group maintains a newsletter via email (contact David Hepper, [webmaster@british-dragonflies.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@british-dragonflies.org.uk)), and an excellent programme of group field meetings are listed on the BDS events page.

I'm also hoping to organise some short, informal walkabouts this year at various local spots including at Wimbledon, Epsom and along the River Wandle. I'd bring ID books, info and even an iPad with iRecord installed, so you can give it a try if you're just starting out. Details will be posted on the events page; you can also contact me, [linda@pryke.net](mailto:linda@pryke.net), if you'd like to be updated by email, or have a particular place you'd like to explore.





Willow Emerald Damselflies copulating

© C. Woodley





Male Golden-ringed Dragonfly

© F.Kelly

# Hertfordshire VC20 ~ by Roy Woodward

During the last ten years several new Odonata species have reached Hertfordshire, or have regained a foothold after previously not having been recorded in the county for several decades. With a new addition in 2021, 37 species have now been found in the county, with 33 of these recorded at least once during the last ten years.

The first Hertfordshire record of **Norfolk Hawker** came from Amwell in 2015. Three years later they spread to a number of nearby sites, and in 2021 there seems to have been a further expansion with records from as far south in the Lea Valley as Waltham Cross, the Stort Valley, and Hilfield Park Reservoir. Records of **Scarce Chaser** also came from new sites in the Lea Valley, along the Hertfordshire/Essex border, and there is now a potential for this species to turn up anywhere in the county, although they remain low in number at most of the sites where they have been found.

**Willow Emerald Damselflies**, first recorded in the county in 2014, continue to do well and are now likely to be present in any suitable habitat; the species may be under recorded due to its unobtrusive nature. **Scarce Emerald Damselflies**, on the other hand, show no sign of any real expansion since their 2015 rediscovery in the county, and have apparently been lost from some sites as a result of pollution or habitat changes.

A third emerald damselfly species became the latest addition to the Hertfordshire list; a female **Southern Emerald Damselfly** was found, and photographed, in the observer's St Albans garden on 21 July.

**Beautiful Demoiselles**, which have been creeping into south-east Hertfordshire from a population just over the Middlesex border, were also reported from sites near St Albans and Tring, so this is another species to keep an eye out for.

## A new Hertfordshire Dragonfly Atlas survey.

With so much change observed in the Dragonfly and Damselfly species of Hertfordshire since the 2000-2005 survey (that preceded the 2008 publication of the first county dragonfly atlas), the Hertfordshire Natural History Society will be organising a new six year survey to run from 2022-2027. The intention will be to map the current distribution of all species in the county, including the more common species, not just the scarce species and new arrivals, and to also collect as much additional data as possible.

Everyone can help with the survey by submitting as many records as possible via iRecord. As usual, the four basic pieces of information required will be 'What' (species), 'When' (date recorded), 'Where' (preferably a six digit grid reference) and 'Who' (the observers name). Any record of breeding evidence will be especially valuable, particularly confirmed breeding (emergence seen or exuviae found). Initially records from all sites will be equally valuable, although later in the survey period I will be looking for volunteers who may be able to cover tetrads, or 1 kilometre squares, that remain under-recorded.

Further information, will be available on the H.N.H.S. website as the survey progresses.

<https://hnhs.org/>





Female Southern Emerald Damselfly

© F.Kelly

# Middlesex VC21 ~ by Linda Pryke

2021 was another awkward year as Coronavirus affected travel plans for many, and in the south-east the weather was quite changeable with a damper, cooler summer than usual. However, the opportunity to get out and about into the wider landscape was a delight after the stringent lockdowns of 2020.

Thanks go to the 117 recorders who submitted sighting of 9 Damselfly and 13 Dragonfly species for Middlesex 2021.

I hope to organise some relaxed, informal site visits during the summer, the details will be on the BDS website events page in due course. Also, if you would like bit of company out and about, help with identification or other assistance please do get in touch at [linda@pryke.net](mailto:linda@pryke.net)

As in 2020, the first sighting of the year was a **Large Red Damselfly** (21 April). D. Howden brought the season to a close with his **Common Darter** sighting in Perivale Wood, 17 October.

Good news! Following Ellie Colver's comment in Dragonfly News 79 that we may have lost our **Common Emerald Damselflies**, Neil Anderson got in touch with his sightings from Hanwell (6 August 2020), and we hope that they'll continue to thrive there.

We also welcomed a new species to the county list (albeit a matter of inches from the borders of our neighbouring counties); a single male **Scarce Chaser** was observed, followed by a copulating pair, by the River Lea in Tottenham on 19 July.

Alexandra Palace Park scored double points with the county's only **Red-veined Darter** record for 2021, a new species for the site, recorded by G. Rawcliffe (3 June). Other species present there in 2021 included **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Broad-bodied Chaser**, **Black-tailed Skimmer** and **Large Red Damselfly**.

In other news, the Natural History Museum are making major changes to the layout of their wildlife garden with works affecting the pond due to start in the autumn. Material from the pond will be translocated to holding tanks and replaced once extension and relining is completed.

Boston Manor Park, Brentford has seen major work over the winter by contractors and volunteers, including de-silting of the lake, management and enhancements of the parkland to encourage wildlife, and the creation and planting-up of scrapes. This should be of great benefit to invertebrates, Odonata in particular, and we look forward to seeing how the site develops over time.

# Berkshire VC22 ~ by Des Sussex

As of 20 Jan 2022, over 3500 records have been received for Vice County (VC) 22 from many regular and new recorders. It was another excellent year with 32 species in the VC: 15 Damselflies and 17 Dragonflies.

The notes below are largely restricted to sites within the modern county boundary of Berkshire. Sites in the north-western parts of VC22 in modern Oxfordshire have been covered in Stephen Burch's report for VC23.

It was another great year for **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** records, with 23 records from four sites. A number of people were able to find the species for the first time. It was seen again at a number of the ponds in Buckler's Forest, Crowthorne, and there were further records from Fifty Acre Piece and Burnt Common in the Mortimer area, as well as a record of two at BBOWT's (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust) Decoy Heath.

Some good survey effort for **Variable Damselfly** was fruitful and the species was found at new locations close to the known Cookham and Burghfield colonies. 26 records was a good return and some of the records were of decent numbers – well over 50 were counted on some productive visits to Widbrook Common. Thanks to those who take the time to diligently sort through the Azures and Common Blues to help monitor this local rarity.

12 records of **Brilliant Emerald** was a fairly good return for 2021. It was seen at four of the regular sites in Swinley Forest, as well as at Englemere Pond and Crowthorne Woods. Records from further west at Decoy Heath and Hundred Acre Piece (I think a new species for that site) were another reminder to be vigilant for this species which is probably under-recorded.

It was another good year for **Hairy Dragonfly** which was seen at numerous sites in mid and east Berkshire. The **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** is a local favourite for many of us and this year there was a reasonable batch of records (18) from the 'heathland' sites along the southern parts of the county, including Wildmoor and Wellington College, as well as further west at Decoy Heath and Greenham Common. Larvae can be quite easy to find in some of the streams and ditches in the area, for those wishing to try for some winter recording. There were also three records from atypical sites: one was photographed at Fobney on the south side of Reading, one was seen at Woosehill, and one was found emerging from a dried up stagnant ditch at Shepherd Meadows in Sandhurst.

A number of observers made efforts to find **Black Darter**, another of our local 'specials' which, I think, should really be added to the list of locally important species for Berkshire for the process of selecting priority sites. There were some good counts (in the range 21-100), including plenty of emergence and breeding activity at Fifty Acre Piece. They were also seen at Decoy Heath, Swinley Forest, Crowthorne Woods and Buckler's Forest.

There was a big increase in records of **Willow Emerald Damselfly**; observers report 45 records of the Damselflies and their egg laying scars, more than doubling last year's total. Sites included Maidenhead, Windsor Great Park, California CP, Thames Valley Business Park and Streatley.

There were three records of **Lesser Emperor**, all on separate dates, and all from the Mortimer area. That 'cluster' of records certainly merits some survey effort next year to see if we have a local breeding population.





Four-spotted Chaser at Swinley Mill Pond

© Alan Holmes



Black Darters copulating

© Chris Lamsdell





Female Golden-ringed Dragonfly at Wellington College Bog SSSI

© Kat Dahl







# Oxfordshire VC23 ~ by Stephen Burch

This report covers the full ceremonial county of Oxfordshire, including the Vale of White Horse which is part of VC22.

With the unfavourable spring weather, the season got off to a slow start with very few records in April. Overall, emergences seemed to be later and numbers appeared to be down compared with the exceptional dragonfly season of 2020. This trend was reflected in the daily counts of **Southern Hawker** exuviae, made by one dedicated observer, at a small, shady garden pond in Steeple Aston. This year the total emergences recorded was almost 30% down on the 2020 figure and the mean emergence date was 14 days later, even for this mid-season species.

Following their exceptional showing in 2021, records of **Common Clubtail** returned to more typical numbers, although there were still several records from its Goring stronghold as well as an unusual downstream sighting at Wargrave. There are normally very few reports upstream of Oxford but this year, remarkably, four were reported from the Appleton area, and one at Newbridge.

Only a small number of records of **Variable Damselfly** were received, all from the Barton Fields/Radley Lakes area, with a maximum count of 10+.

Following their discovery last year, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies** were again found at the stormwater pond on Longford Park, Banbury. An entirely new site was discovered well away from here in Didcot, at another stormwater pond.

Following their first records in 2020, **Southern Migrant Hawker** were again located on Otmoor with both immatures and adults recorded; however, numbers appeared to be down and sightings were few and far between.

Results from the BBOWT (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust) transect surveys showed that **Keeled Skimmer** is doing well at its Cothill reserves stronghold. It was also seen at the new sites of Sydlings Copse BBOWT and the Lye Valley, Oxford where breeding is suspected. **Southern Damselfly** was also found in good numbers at the Cothill reserves, especially at Parsonage Moor, where a remarkable 164 were counted (the highest total ever recorded at this site) during a single transect survey visit. Also at Parsonage Moor, the maximum sightings per visit of **Small Red Damselfly** increased (compared with 2020) to a value comparable with the numbers found between 2013 and 2017 (average of nine). For the first time ever in the county, singles were seen well away from these reserves, at Radley Lakes (about 6km from Cothill) and at a stormwater pond near Cholsey (about 20km away).

The more abundant **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** continued its spread into new sites, with the best this year being a stormwater pond at Grove, where the peak count was over 100. Fewer were found at Faringdon Folly Park Pond, which has previously been the best site in the county, probably due to the removal of many of the algal mats this species favours.

Following their arrival in 2020, **Willow Emerald Damselfly** were relocated at the same three sites, and were also noted at three new sites close to the River Thames in the south east of the county.

The last record of the year was of a **Common Darter** at Otmoor on 22 November. Over the year, 29 species were seen in Oxfordshire.

Further details can be found at [www.oxondragonflies.blogspot.com](http://www.oxondragonflies.blogspot.com)



Male Downy Emerald at Barton Fields  
© Stephen Burch



Female Willow Emerald Damselfly at Otmoor  
© Stephen Burch





Male Emerald Damselfly at Otmoor

© Stephen Burch

# Suffolk VC25-26 ~ by Adrian Parr

It was something of a mixed year for dragonfly recording in Suffolk during 2021. Records from some of the county's regular recorders were down a little, though the reasons for this will be varied, and Landguard Bird Observatory in fact had an eventful year. Pleasingly, a good number of records were received via iRecord from new and casual recorders, and in total 2823 sightings have currently been logged for 2021. West Suffolk remained rather more poorly recorded than East Suffolk, with 722 records against 2101.

The highlight of the year was probably the continuing spread of species that have only recently colonised the county. As well as being noted at now established sites, such as Redgrave and Lopham Fen, **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** was recorded for the first time at Landguard Bird Observatory on 15–19 July and 20–21 August. More spectacularly, **Southern Migrant Hawker** was reported from at least nine sites in the county between 23 June and 22 September. Some of these records likely refer to fresh immigrants, but the species is almost certainly now breeding at a number of sites, and exuviae were indeed discovered at Landguard on 5 July.

Although long established in the Waveney Valley and the Minsmere/Sizewell area, **Norfolk Hawker** continued its recent range expansion that is now also being increasingly seen at the national level. During 2021 records were received from pretty much all of the county's coastal and sub-coastal strip, with a few other sightings further inland, such as at Raydon Great Wood on 5 June. **Scarce Chaser** also further expanded its range in the county, with three being noted at a fishing lake near the River Deben at Melton on 3 July.

Of Britain's traditional migrant species, **Red-veined Darter** appeared in moderate numbers during June, with a male seen on the coast at Minsmere on 11 June, two males at Carlton Marshes on 12 June, 7+ at Sibton Lake on 16 June and one further inland at Darmsden on 26 June; three males were also present at Hollesley Marshes on 8 July. A female **Lesser Emperor** was seen at Landguard on 14 June, with the species also being reported from Loompit Lake on 26 June; the Loompit sighting means that **Lesser Emperor** has now been reported from that site in five of the last six years, so it is conceivable that a small breeding population is now present there. A **Vagrant Emperor** was seen at Lower Holbrook on 1 August and, as part of a moderate national influx, another individual was then seen and photographed at Raydon Great Wood on 16 September. Also of note, a male **Black Darter** was photographed on the coast at Benacre on 15 September; this was clearly a migrant since the species does not currently breed in the county.

Returning to the county's resident species, **White-legged Damselfly** was well recorded from the River Stour, including quite far upstream at Clare Country Park, where it has now been seen for the last three years. **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** had a relatively quiet season, though coastal records from Landguard during late August were of some note. Finally, Suffolk had the honour of hosting Britain's latest **Common Darter** of 2021, when one was photographed on 16 December.

# Norfolk VC27-28 ~ by Pam Taylor

The first **Large Red Damselfly** was reported on 29 March by Julie Stroud at Titchwell. This was a record early date for Norfolk; we've never had a sighting in March before. It was followed by further individuals seen at Roydon Common on 13 April and Sutton in the Broads on 17 April. However, much of April was characterised by lower than average daytime temperatures, overnight frosts and even a few snow flurries, so the dragonfly season here didn't really get started until the end of that month.

Several resident species had an exceptionally good year including **Norfolk Hawker**. The Broads remain its stronghold, but there were sightings once again on the north Norfolk coast at Cley, as well as Holkham and Weybourne Camp. At the latter an individual was observed flying in from the north, possibly from the sea, on 10 August. In west Norfolk the population at Thompson Water continues to expand and a growing number are recorded each year at Pensthorpe Natural Park, as well as other scattered sites.

**Southern Migrant Hawker** was present for a third season at both East Winch Common, and Redgrave and Lopham Fen. It also made repeat appearances at Winterton Dunes and Thompson Common, but only one male was recorded at the latter in early August. Elsewhere on the coast there were records from Weybourne, Holkham and Burnham Overy Dunes. Inland individuals were seen in Norwich on 1 and 4 August, with others in the Broads on 5 and 12 August. Finally, one was reported from Felbrigg Lake on 15 August.

By way of contrast, I received only one record, of a single individual, of **Common Hawker**. This species is rare in Norfolk, but it seems the fragile colony at Winterton Dunes still persists (just).

In August there was an influx of **Vagrant Emperors** and **Lesser Emperors** on the east coast between Waxham and Winterton with numerous sightings during the first half of that month. Approximately half a dozen **Lesser Emperors** were present with up to 15 **Vagrant Emperors**, including a pair. A single **Vagrant Emperor** was also seen near Cromer on 15 September. Away from the east coast, **Lesser Emperors** were seen at five other scattered locations during June to August, with most sightings coinciding with the main coastal influx. The established colony at the Trinity Broads, now in its eighth year, yielded records for two full months from mid-June, with up to three seen together and a pair noted in mid-July.

During June there were at least 15 reports of **Red-veined Darter**. All of these were from coastal sites between Kelling and Winterton. A freshwater pool at Kelling Quags is a known breeding site for the species and ovipositing behaviour was also observed in the dune pools at Winterton. In mid-July several **Red-veined Darters** were present on a lagoon at Holkham.

**Scarce Emerald Damselfly**, once confined to the Brecks in south-west Norfolk, managed to reach sites in most parts of the county except the Broads in 2021. The small colony near Wells on the north coast continues to survive and there were sightings at both Beeston and Overstrand to the east of there. At Beeston the two **Scarce Emerald Damselflies** were only detected because observers were searching for the female **Southern Emerald Damselfly** that had been found there on 19 August. **Southern Emerald Damselflies** were also seen at Winterton Dunes, where the species was first found in 2002. Two males and one female were present on 21 August, suggesting a small colony persists.

**Small Red Damselfly** is still present in Norfolk, but its long-term survival is in doubt. At its main site near Dereham the maximum count was just six males and two females on 17 July. At the recently discovered second site only two pairs were observed in 2021. **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies** fared rather better, with the main colony numbering over 150 adults in the second week of June. Both of these species have shown a slight decline in occupancy nationally.



From this account it should be clear that a good place to spot migrant species, and some of the county's rarities, is at Winterton Dunes. Here a number of pools have proved attractive to newly arrived species for many years, with some clinging on to breed. Not far inland there are several good sites in the Broads where a wide range of species can be found. Two of the best for ease of access are RSPB Strumpshaw Fen and Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad reserve.

In the south-west of the county Thompson Common and Thompson Water are both worth a visit. They are linked by the (Great Eastern) Pingo Trail which is just over seven miles long. Finally, the Roydon Common and Grimston Warren complex, not far from King's Lynn, is one of the county's best heathland sites and holds species such as **Keeled Skimmer** and **Black Darter**.



Male Keeled Skimmer

© Pam Taylor





Male Norfolk Hawker

© Pam Taylor



Male Red-veined Darter

© Pam Taylor



# Cambridgeshire VC29 and Huntingdonshire VC31 ~ by Val Perrin

For the vice counties of Cambridgeshire (VC 29) and Huntingdonshire (VC 31), which I treat together as the modern county of Cambridgeshire (including Peterborough), there were just under 1000 records in iRecord for 2021. The vast majority of these were for the very common dragonfly species from popular dragonfly sites that people like to visit, although we have had a wider coverage of the county previously.

The **Willow Emerald Damselfly** is now firmly established at many sites across the county, with 2021 sightings coming from the complex of lakes at Little Paxton and Fen Drayton RSPB, to new sites around the guided busway north of Cambridge, and from the newly-created water bodies that form part of the landscaping of the Cambridge University West Cambridge site. The Damselfly is breeding at Quy Water and at the nearby Anglesey Abbey National Trust. We even had a record from a garden pond in Old Weston and from the ponds at the Raptor Foundation near Woodhurst.

Even though the ubiquitous **Azure Damselfly** can be confused with the rarer **Variable Damselfly** by the uninitiated, there are sites in the county where **Variable Damselfly** have been recorded flying in good numbers. Examples of such places are at Little Paxton Pits near St Neots, at Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve, and in parts of Fen Drayton lakes. But the Damselfly can also be found in short stretches of river bank along the Great Ouse, at Sutton Gault on the Ouse Washes and at Earith barrier bank. Many of these records came from experienced observers and were accompanied by good photographs, making verification much easier.

A much less common Damselfly is the **White-legged Damselfly**, which is very sparsely distributed in Cambridgeshire. I saw the species in small numbers at Cambourne lakes, west of Cambridge, otherwise there were only three other sites returning a record of this species: the River Great Ouse at Over, Swavesey drain and Godmanchester. More intensive surveys of sites where the species has occurred previously need to be implemented in the future. Another Damselfly that is now of concern, in keeping with the findings of the State of Dragonflies report last year, is **Emerald Damselfly**. I only received four records of the species in 2021 and my impression is that it is much less frequent now than in former years.

Apart from the well-known colony at Little Paxton, and the more recently colonised drain at Fen Drayton lakes, the **Norfolk Hawker** was again reported from Wicken Fen, while a record came from a new site at Sutton Gault last summer.

There are several new housing and business park sites springing up, particularly near Cambridge, and as part of the landscaping design, developers are incorporating some sizeable lakes within these. One good example is at Northstowe, a few miles north of Cambridge, and the water bodies here turned up 17 species just last summer (thanks to the repeated observations of a local recorder). Among the more common species these have included: **Black-tailed Skimmer**, **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Broad-bodied Chaser**, **Emerald Damselfly** and **Variable Damselfly**.





Male Variable Damselfly

© Val Perrin



Male White-legged Damselfly

© Val Perrin



# Bedfordshire VC30 ~ by Rory Morrissey

It was a mixed year for Bedfordshire Odonata. Sightings, overall, were down and for several species very low. This may have been due to poor weather discouraging observers from going out and, perhaps, reducing the adult Odonate population.

**Beautiful Demoiselles** were, surprisingly, seen in two new locations on the same day (23 June) after apparently being absent from the county in 2020. We are hopeful that it will become established as a breeding resident species in the not-too-distant future.

**Norfolk Hawkers** were seen ovipositing near the River Great Ouse close to St Neots but no exuviae have yet been found there. **Variable Damselflies** were seen at two locations in 2021, but we are still looking for breeding evidence.

**Keeled Skimmers** were again seen at Sundon Quarry with evidence of breeding there. **Downy Emeralds** were present at Sandhouse Lane NR but were more elusive than usual and only adults were seen.

The **Willow Emerald Damselfly** continues to expand into new habitats although vandalism at Stanford Lake, one of the best sites last year, may have reduced the population there. **Emerald Damselfly** numbers have been reducing steadily and only 21 sightings were recorded this year,

The number of breeding species confirmed in VC30 still stands at 23.

# Gloucestershire VC33-34 ~ by Richard Mundy

The summer of 2021 was characterised by people 'staycationing' in the British countryside and generally spending lots of time in parks and other green spaces, as well as in their gardens. In Gloucestershire, a lot of these people took photos of the dragonflies they encountered and submitted their records via iRecord or iNaturalist; records were received from 200 different people which was great to see.

There were several interesting records of less common resident species of dragonfly in 2021.

At least four different **Southern Migrant Hawkers**, including the first record of a female, were seen at the now regular site near Gloucester during July and August. 2021 was the fourth consecutive year the species has been recorded there, indicating that this is now a well-established, if probably small and therefore vulnerable, breeding population.

The first **Keeled Skimmer** since 2019, a male, was photographed at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Woorgreens reserve in the Forest of Dean in July. This is the sixth record (different individuals) seen in this part of the forest since 2016 which would seem to indicate that there is a breeding site in the vicinity but its location, if indeed it exists, remains a mystery!

It was a good year for **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** in the Forest of Dean with records from around the periphery at Wollaston, Highnam and Brockweir as well as at more usual locations in the heart of the forest in June, July and August. A wanderer was also recorded to the east of the Severn at Standish near Stonehouse in July.

Small numbers of other relatively scarce Dragonflies were recorded at their usual sites in the county: **Hairy Dragonflies** at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Coombe Hill Meadows reserve and along the Severn to the west of Gloucester in late May and early June; **Downy Emeralds** at Woorgreens from late May and throughout June; and **Scarce Chasers** on the Severn and Avon upstream of Tewkesbury, on the Bristol Avon and at Frampton on Severn between early June and early August.

There was an excellent series of records of more than 20 **Common Clubtails** from the River Wye in the second half of June, along Gloucestershire's border with Gwent and Herefordshire; these were seen from kayaks. Also in June, a rare photograph of a pair in tandem was taken at a garden in Ruardean in the Forest of Dean, about a mile from the river.

Relatively few records of Damselflies were received this year; however, **White-legged Damselflies** were recorded from May to August and the records included several at urban locations in both Gloucester and Bristol. There appears to be a small breeding population along the Bristol Avon in the eastern part of the city.



# Worcestershire VC37 ~ by Mike Averill

1954 records for 26 species have been received so far for 2021, from 126 recorders.

A species that is reported as declining nationally, the **Emerald Damselfly**, has been recorded less in recent years in Worcestershire - is this a result of climate change or should we be more on the lookout for this cryptic Damselfly.? Perhaps being vigilant for the first **Willow Emerald Damselfly** in Worcestershire will pick up more *Lestes* records in general. Another species that is declining nationally, the **Black Darter**, is rarely seen in Worcestershire anyway, but there was one record this year from near Crossway Green. The site isn't classic **Black Darter** habitat so will probably have been just a one-off.

An occasional species in VC37, the **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**, was found emerging from the River Severn at Bewdley which is not normal habitat; it was probably flushed out of the Dowles Brook where it is more likely to be found. The **White-legged Damselfly** is a fairly familiar sight in the county but there definitely seems to be a trend of finding them on fishing pools and it would be good to hear from anyone finding the species on pools that do not have any fish.

After last year's first county record of the **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, several visits were paid to Feckenham in the summer of 2021 but none were found and the site was noticeably drier. Fortunately, to keep the species in our minds, one was seen briefly at Ryall Court gravel pit on 30 August by Andy Warr, a typical sort of location for this species, being recently worked gravel pits.

**Common Clubtail** emergence rates from the River Severn at Bewdley this year were a little above average, which is good to hear in these times of concern over the quality of our main rivers. Following a bumper year of **Lesser Emperor** records in 2020, this year we had fewer records and all six were at Ripple gravel pits between 9 June and 23 August. We didn't quite get proof of breeding but a very early appearance of one at Ripple, on 9 June, suggests it was home bred. Interestingly, a blue male was spotted by Andy Warr; initially looking like our regular Emperor, close examination of photos showed it was a male **Lesser Emperor** with an all blue abdomen.

Perhaps the most exciting news of 2021 was the first proof of breeding for **Hairy Dragonfly** at Ripple. From 17 May to 10 June 2021, it was seen six times at Ripple with pairing recorded and the all-important finding of an exuvia. At Croome Park males were seen patrolling at the bottom end of the river and also at the lake. Croome Park has proven that it is a superb place for dragonflies and another species that has made it its home is the **Scarce Chaser**. Although this is normally a river species, the so called river at Croome (a total Capability Brown construct) is an ideal habitat; on 30 May 15 exuviae were readily found and several freshly emerged individuals were seen. A non-river site that it has been breeding at for 10 years now, although in low numbers, is Hilditch Pool, Hartlebury, which is 40 miles north of the main River Avon colony.



# Warwickshire VC38 ~ by Mick Schilling

This is my first Annual Report as CDR for Warwickshire, having taken over from Peter Reeve who is stepping back after many years in the role. I hope I can do justice to the faith he has put in me.

I hope in time, to be resuming much of Peter's work in the VC as he managed the website well and provided regular email updates.

The increases in **Scarce Chaser** continue, with good numbers to be found along the Avon, now stretching as far upstream as Barford. They are present every year now, having previously shown a stronger presence every second year.

**Willow Emerald** sightings continue, with reports this year from Packwood House and the river Dene, near Charlecote. One to keep an eye out for in the autumn!

**Common Clubtail** are still absent after having been recorded near Marlcliff a few years back. Bear in mind their preference for mass emergence over a short period means it's easy to miss, so please keep looking if you're in the area in mid to late May.



# Staffordshire VC39 ~ by Dave Jackson

The first **Willow Emerald Damselfly** record for the county was received in 2021; a single individual was seen at a pool within the old vice county 39 boundary at Smestow Valley, Wolverhampton.

A second county site for **Scarce-Blue tailed Damselflies** was found at Cannock Chase.

**Black Darters** were seen in small numbers at two locations.

**Banded Demoiselles** were reported from a handful of new sites.

**Small Red-eyed Damselflies** reached Doxey Marshes Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Reserve in 2021. However, they also appear to have gone from the pools at Enville, after high water during the previous two winters left the blanket weed hanging dried-up in the Willows along the edges of the pools.

Up to ten **Keeled Skimmers** were present on their bog pool at Cannock Chase.

# Shropshire VC40 ~ by Sue Rees Evans

The start of the flight season presented a mixed picture with **Large Red Damselfly** recorded on 15 April – a full week later than the earliest ever Shropshire record. **Four-spotted Chaser** was then seen on April 22 just three days later than the earliest Shropshire sighting (from 2019). **White-faced Darter** was also reasonably early, with records from 25 April, but not beating Stephen Barlow's earliest record (and the earliest national record) of 21 April in 2020. **Blue-tailed Damselfly** was first recorded on 26 April – the only other April record for this species was made years ago on 7 April in 1980. **Variable Damselfly** was also recorded on 26 April and this did constitute an earliest record for Shropshire.

At the other end of the flight season the prolonged mild weather resulted in records being broken almost daily! The latest ever Shropshire sightings of **Common Hawker** and **Black Darter** were made on 14 November and 22 November respectively. The last hoorah (!) went to two **Common Darters** seen on 25 November by Stephen Barlow at Whixall Moss. These represent the latest ever record of a Shropshire resident species.

In total 27 species were recorded comprising 16 Dragonfly and 11 Damselfly species. Amongst the records were some unusual and interesting sightings of our upland species. **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** was bizarrely found firstly in a living room and then in two separate conservatories – all some distance from usual locations! **Common Hawker** was also recorded unexpectedly in Shrewsbury and then Craven Arms. Excitingly **Black Darter** was recorded in two new locations at Prees Heath and Steel Heath.

The Shropshire Dragonflies flight season blog had some fabulous photographs illustrating the activities on the wing during 2021 and is definitely worth a look from mid April onwards. Full details of the summary above and much more will also appear in the Shropshire Dragonflies Newsletter published soon on the Shropshire Dragonflies Website :

<http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk>

Many thanks to all of you who sent in records & photographs during 2021 and I look forward to hearing all about your sightings in the long sunny summer days of 2022!

# Lincolnshire VC53-54 ~ by Nick Tribe

A **Vagrant Emperor** was seen at RSPB Frampton Marsh on 30 July. This species was recorded in Lincolnshire for the first time as recently as 2019.

An immature female **Southern Migrant Hawker** was photographed in Southrey Wood on 15 July by Adam Turner. Another was seen at RSPB Frampton Marsh on 5 September. This was the third year in succession that this species has been recorded in Lincolnshire.

**Norfolk Hawkers** were seen at Baston Fen again in 2021, between 9 July (Adam Turner) and the 15 July; at least two males and one female were seen. An examination of 48 hawker exuviae from the site was made by Trish Thompson and Richard Chadd. All the exuviae were **Brown Hawkers**; therefore, proof that the Norfolk Hawkers is a breeding species in the county remains elusive.

A teneral **Red-veined Darter** was photographed at Stallingborough, north-east Lincolnshire, on 11 June by Dave Wright.

Records of dragonflies wandering from their breeding areas included: a **Black Darter** at Flixborough on 11 October, found by Brian Hedley, and a male **Common Hawker** was seen at Alkborough Flats on 20 September, found by Africa Gomez.

**Willow Emerald Damselfly** continues to colonise new areas of Lincolnshire; it was seen at Whisby Nature Park on 5 September by Peter Calvert, who found no fewer than 14 adults.



# Leicestershire with Rutland VC55

~ by Ian Merrill

From a Vice County (VC) 55 perspective, 2021 can only be described as 'The Year of the **Willow Emerald Damselfly**'. There were other exciting discoveries within the Counties, but all were undoubtedly overshadowed by the phenomenal westward spread of this pioneering newcomer, whose range now spans the entire length and breadth of our recording area.

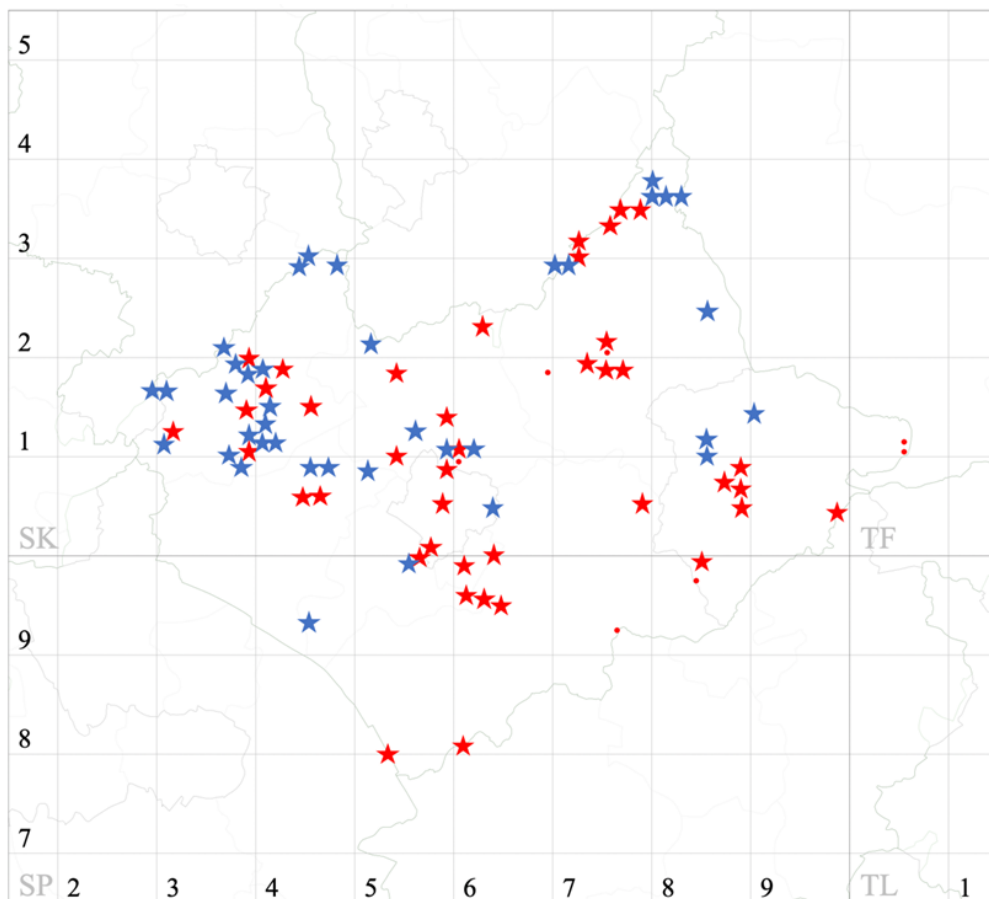
To put this event into context, at the end of 2020 the **Willow Emerald Damselfly** was known from just six sites in the whole of VC 55, all to the east of Leicester City. By the close of the 2021 recording season it had been proven to be present at no less than 90 sites (based on 1km grid square coverage). This feat of colonisation represents an incredible 1500% increase in its recorded range within a single season! The species has now been recorded as far west as the Derbyshire border in SP21, north to the Grantham Canal and Trent Valley on the Nottinghamshire border, and south to Avon Valley on the Northamptonshire border.

At this point it is worth stressing that the data used to corroborate the 'proven to be present in the 2021 season' statement also includes winter sightings of ovipositing scar evidence gathered until the time of writing this article. This brings a slightly different perspective to my annual Odonata report, which historically would have only encompassed data from the flight season.

From my experience, the winter months are undoubtedly the prime time to confirm the presence of the **Willow Emerald Damselfly** at a site, as scars on bare branches are infinitely easier to spot than motionless green insects concealed amongst green leaves! The atlas map on the next page illustrates the split between summer and winter recording, demonstrating the value of this technique, and I would encourage all recorders to set aside some winter recording time to explore potential new sites. Finding a wonderful set of spiralling ovipositing scars at a new site, on a fresh winter's day, really can be as rewarding as spotting an adult on the wing in warm sunshine!

Aside from green Damselflies, other VC 55 activity included the completion of plotting the range of **Scarce Chaser** on the River Welland, on a 1km grid square occupancy basis. The study established a patchy distribution based on the availability of suitable broad and slow-flowing stretches of river (see atlas map below). The discovery of our first relatively strong colony of **Beautiful Demoiselles** was another major cause for celebration; they were located on a small tributary of the River Soar. The reporting of another record from, apparently, good habitat close to Great Glen may mean that this species has made another major leap to the north in VC 55.

Lastly and perhaps most excitingly of all, was the sighting of our second ever **Keeled Skimmer** on 19 August, at Croft Nature Reserve; the previous record was also of a male in July 2013. Interestingly, there are several recent records in adjoining counties, especially to the west, demonstrating that wanderers may not be as unique an occurrence as we had originally thought.

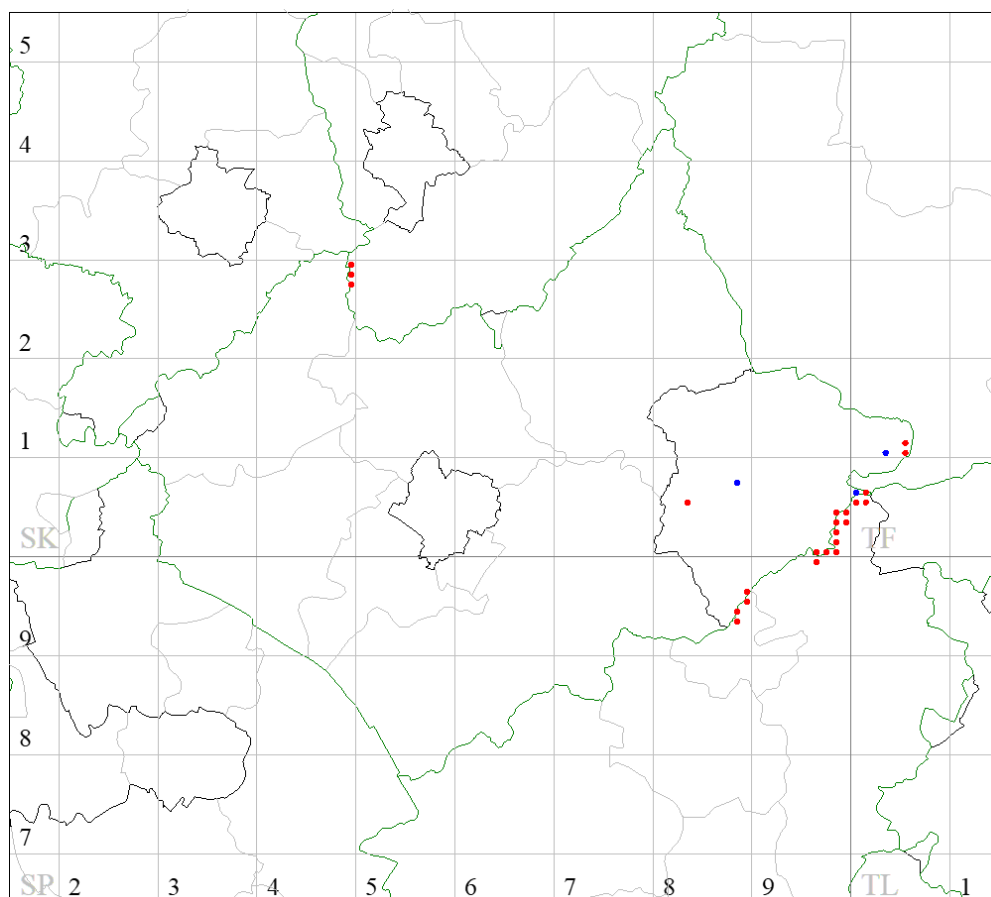


#### Key

- Records from 2019-20
- ★ Records from summer 2021
- ★ Records from winter 2021/22

Willow Emerald Damselfly  
Distribution in VC 55

© Ian Merrill



- Records from 2000-2014
- Records from 2015 to 2021

Scarce Chaser Distribution in  
VC 55

© Ian Merrill



Beautiful Demoiselle, male, Ullesthorpe, Leicestershire. June 2021  
© Ian Merrill





Beautiful Demoiselle, female, Ullesthorpe, Leicestershire. June 2021  
© Ian Merrill





Keeled Skimmer, male, Croft Quarry Nature Trail, Leicestershire. August 2021

© Adey Baker

# Nottinghamshire VC56 ~ by Chris Bradbury

The year saw 22 species recorded and another, **Scarce Chaser**, presumed present in larval form.

Including **Common Hawker**, there appears to be 22 species currently breeding in the county.

Some of the highlights from 2021 were as follows:

**Willow Emerald Damselfly**, consolidating its new range after its arrival into the county in 2020 with a stronghold at Wilford Claypits and multiple sightings along the Grantham Canal.

There have been multiple records of **Variable Damselfly** over the past three years; mainly on Trent gravel pits from Netherfield to Wilford, with a stronghold at Holme Pierrepont, Skylarks reserve. Also, there was a single sight record from Ruddington in 2021.

**Common Hawker** is normally a scarce, non-breeding visitor to the county, but there was a surprising record of an ovipositing female in 2021, photographed at Kirkby in Ashfield.

**Black Darter** was formerly a scarce breeder in the county; a single male photographed in 2021 at Kirkby in Ashfield, at the same ex-mine site as the Common Hawker.

**Scarce Chaser** was not recorded in 2021, but the colony present since 2016 on the River Soar appears to produce flying adults on even-numbered years. This could change in the future with the arrival of new colonists or if there are exceptional weather conditions during the flight period. They are worth looking for this year in the area north of Kegworth Marine, from the footpath which is accessed through the wall near the Leicestershire road sign. Walk about ten minutes to the overhead power lines. Please don't trespass on the Nottinghamshire side of the river; they may be seen both sides of the river using binoculars or a big telephoto lens.





Male Variable Damselfly

© Andrew Lee

# Derbyshire VC57 ~ by Chris Bradbury

2021 was a rather steady year for Derbyshire Odonata with 22 species recorded and all breeding. These were the usual long-term resident species, plus a couple of noteworthy ones, as follows.

**Willow Emerald Damselfly** was new for the county in 2021 with records from Pleasley Pit, Carr Vale, Renishaw Park, Codnor Castle and Forbes Hole, all in September. All but the Carr Vale sighting were photographed, providing solid documentation of the arrival. As it was seen in copulation and ovipositing, it becomes a new breeding species for the county, the 22nd current breeder. These are worth looking out for this year as they are likely to spread quickly and consolidate their range. Also, the ovipositing scars on thin branches overhanging water may be found in winter with a little patience and skill.

**Hairy Dragonfly** was recorded for the fourth year as it continues to spread and colonise Derbyshire. Single sightings came from Markham Vale Seymour reserve, Willington Wetlands, Bennerley Marsh, Stensons Lock, Forbes Hole, Arkwright Pit, and West Park Fox Covert with photo.



Male Hairy Dragonfly at West Park Fox Cover

© Marion Bryce





Willow Emerald Damselflies copulating at Renishaw Park

© Mike Averill



# Cheshire and Wirral VC58 ~ by John Roberts

**Downy Emerald:** The numbers of annual records in recent years have rarely made it into double figures. However, 2021 saw a big jump to 25 records which itself is a 'record' for this century. Although this most probably reflects recorder effort as opposed to greater numbers of individuals, last year's records (dates, numbers and locations) have provided the strong impression that it has been very under-recorded in the past.

The species' range appears to be greater than first thought. A record on 19 May by a local recorder involved a sighting at a private location (Oakmere) with no previous records according to the NBN Atlas. Six individuals were observed in flight, plus one teneral on a tree. These records have added a very valuable piece of data towards hopefully extending the spatial distribution of this species in Cheshire.

Last year was also noteworthy in that it was recorded from 19/05/2021 to 26/07/2021, an almost 10 weeks' flight period. This latest record date is more than 2 weeks later than the previously recorded latest sighting back in 2015.

The map below shows records of **Downy Emerald** in VC58 from 2000-2021 (yellow pins) with the Oakmere location shown with a red pin (source NBN Atlas).



**Golden-ringed Dragonfly:** In the last 30 or so years, only three verified records in Cheshire & Wirral have been logged in iRecord. However, on 15 July one was photographed at the RSPB's Burton Mere Wetlands which is the first record for the species on the Wirral.

**Southern Migrant Hawker:** The very first sighting in Cheshire & Wirral was recorded on the 25 August. The record was at Hilbre Island and the specimen was seen on the 25th and 26th. The local recorder was convinced that there were possibly two individuals but it was, understandably, difficult to see both at the same time.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly  
© Elliott Wilson



Southern Migrant Hawker  
© Chris Williams

# Yorkshire, South-east VC61 ~ by Martin Roberts

At 895, the total number of records received in 2021 was 20% down on 2020.

The season got off to a slow start as the first **Large Red Damselfly** was not reported until 22 April and the first **Hairy Dragonfly** on 11 May. However, by the end of May we had five species of Damselfly and three species of Dragonfly on the wing.

In last year's report I commented that **Large Red Damselfly** is rarely recorded in the Hull area. At that time only eight records of **Large Red Damselfly** had been received from the whole of the VC in 2020, only one of which came from Hull. Late arrivals subsequently increased the number of records of the species for the VC to 20, but with still just the one record from Hull. **Large Red Damselfly** records for 2019 had totalled 17 for the VC but none from Hull. Consequently, I made a special appeal for records and in 2021 a total of 18 records were received for the VC, but again not one from Hull city or the immediate surrounding area. This is puzzling as the Hull city area is assiduously recorded by at least two prolific dragonfly recorders. Please make a special effort to look out for this species whenever you are out and about in south-east Yorkshire.

**Willow Emerald Damselfly** was first recorded in the VC in 2019 at two sites near Hull. This increased to six sites in 2020 and to 14 sites in 2021. Prior to 2021 all the sites could be considered broadly coastal, but three of this year's new sites were more inland and are clearly part of a wider movement into two other Yorkshire VCs.

A single female **Southern Migrant Hawker** was recorded in the Heligoland trap at Spurn Bird Observatory on 10 August.

**Red-veined Darter** was recorded at two sites near Flamborough and Filey between mid-June and late July.

The final dragonfly sightings of the year were of **Migrant Hawker** on 11 November and Common **Darter** on 20 November.

Many thanks to all those who sent in records during this challenging year.



# Yorkshire, North-east VC62 and North-west VC65 ~ by Keith Gittens

While overall the number of dragonfly records were down in 2021 compared to 2020, there were some notable finds.

**Willow Emerald**, whose most northerly outpost had been in the Scarborough area, showed signs of expansion heading inland across to the Vale of York. The population at Wykeham Lakes near Scarborough continues to establish with further evidence of breeding.

The Wykeham Lakes site added two new species to its list in 2021 with single records of **Broad-bodied Chaser** and, more surprisingly, **Norfolk Hawker**. This brings the species list to 21 making it one of the top sites in North-east Yorkshire. On the down side there was only one record of **Hairy Dragonfly**, an emergent female, from a different part of the complex. So, while there is evidence of breeding, we will have to wait and see if **Hairy Dragonfly** establishes itself as a regular breeder

Over in the very far west a new species was recorded in VC65 with sightings of **Keeled Skimmer** in a small area of the VC, which actually falls outside the modern county of North Yorkshire into Cumbria. The chance find by ecologist Dr Stuart Sharp was followed up by a visit from the Cumbria CDR, David Clarke, who found larvae in an area of seepage.

In line with the State of Dragonflies Report 2021, my area NBN records for **Common Hawker** show signs of a decline over the last few years. One to keep an eye on in the future.

Records from the Pennine area of North-west Yorkshire remain at a very low level so anyone visiting the area please keep a look out. There are discoveries to be made as you can see from the find of **Keeled Skimmer**.

Nosterfield Nature Reserve, run by the Lower Ure Conservation Trust, has an ambitious programme of habitat creation at some of the worked-out gravel pits that make up part of the reserve. By developing a wetland plant nursery, they have been able to grow from locally sourced seed many species of plants that have become rare. As part of the project, I have been able to record Odonata in the newly created wetlands and already there can be seen an increase in numbers and diversity.

It was great to be able to resume conservation work days at Yorkshire Water's Boltby Reservoir in November and with a further workday in February 2022 we are now making a big impact on scrub encroachment, benefitting all flora and fauna at the site.

Yorkshire Dragonfly Group had a stand at the Ryedale Ecofair in September and there was opportunity to promote the State of Dragonflies report on local radio (BBC Radio York). As a result of the broadcast, we had visitors to the stand who had come along specially to tell us about their dragonfly sightings!

Many thanks to all those who contributed records or volunteered.





Keeled Skimmer habitat at western edge

© David Clarke



Norfolk Hawker at Wykeham

© Stephen Beaver

# Yorkshire, South-west VC63 ~ by Alistair McLean

2021 saw a slow start to the flight season, due to an unusually cool and wet May. But the flight period overall appears to have continued for much longer than normal, with some dragonfly species still being in flight in late November.

The stand out records from the year were two sightings of the **Willow Emerald**: one from the drainage system of Goole Moors in September (Peter Hinks) and a second from Old Moor RSPB reserve in October (David Pritchard). Both these sites are very well monitored, which may suggest that the species may also be found in other less well recorded parts of the VC. Always worth checking the little green jobs!

Another interesting record from Old Moor is a potential breeding sighting of the **Hairy Dragonfly**. This was found in mid-May, also by David Pritchard, but is awaiting verification from an exuvia specialist, but the early date is highly suggestive! The species was recorded there in 2020, but if confirmed, the exuvia will show it to be established. This is significant, as the **Hairy Dragonfly** population has been in a holding pattern at Potteric Carr and Thorne for nearly 20 years, but has, since 2018, begun venturing further into the area from both the North and South.



# Yorkshire, Mid-west VC64 ~ by Simon Joseph

It has been a strong year for recording with 771 records submitted. This exceeds previous years, but this may be because I have left the report writing as late as possible to ensure all records are included.

21 species were recorded in 2021. The flight period was typical for the VC, starting, as usual, with **Large Red Damselflies** on 25 April (a little later than Southern counties) and ending on 4 November with **Migrant Hawkers**. Four other species were also still flying into October.

Two rarities with seen in 2021; the 21 September was a red letter day in VC64 with a rare confirmed sighting of a **Vagrant Emperor**, a single individual, with reliable photographic evidence. There was also an unconfirmed report nearby that was possibly the same individual. The long-awaited arrival of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** occurred on 8 October with a single female seen ovipositing at Staveley Nature Reserve. This species has been spreading steadily for several years and was expected to arrive in the VC.

The most commonly recorded species were **Common Darter** (85 records), **Common Blue Damselfly** (71 records), **Azure Damselfly** (63 records) and **Large Red Damselfly** (52 records).

Many thanks to the volunteers and bird watching groups at the nature reserves in my patch and for the support and recording of the Yorkshire Dragonfly Group.

## Species list and flight times for 2021

Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* 63, 22/05/21-28/08/21  
Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens* 40, 19/05/21-05/09/21  
Black Darter *Sympetrum danae* 35, 19/07/21-26/09/21  
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* 29, 03/06/21-28/08/21  
Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* 52, 12/05/21-16/09/21  
Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa* 37, 02/06/21-10/08/21  
Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis* 43, 23/06/21-11/09/21  
Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum* 71, 19/5/21 – 18/09/21  
Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* 85, 9/6/21 – 25/10/21  
Common Hawker *Aeshna juncae* 42, 02/07/2021-26/09/21  
Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* 26, 19/06/21-05/09/21  
Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator* 33, 09/06/21-28/08/21  
Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* 35, 03/06/21-36/07/21  
Golden-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii* 15, 15/06/21-11/08/21  
Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula* 54 25/04/21-28/08/21

Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta* 35, 17/07/21-04/11/21

Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas* 12, 02/06/21-28/07/21

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* 19, 04/07/21-04/10/21

Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* 42, 13/07/21-10/10/21

Vagrant Emperor *Anax ephippiger* – 1 record with photo 21/09/21, plus 1 not confirmed nearby assumed to be same individual

Willow Emerald Damselfly *Chalcolestes viridis* Staveley Nature also 08/10/21 Reserve lone female seen over several days and seen ovipositing

# County Durham VC66 ~ by Michael Coates

The BDS work in conjunction with the Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) to actively survey the region between the River Tees and the Tyne. 70% of the recorded sightings came from this organised approach to surveying, and as a result, over 2315 records were submitted. This was a big increase over 2020, when there were 1257 recorded sightings. It is assumed that the increase was a combination of less time in lockdown and a renewed enthusiasm for nature by a few key individuals. While that is very positive, the number of recorders dropped in 2021, and it was clear that were it not for a few very active individuals, both the quantity and the geographic breadth of sightings would have been considerably lower.

Over the years, 24 species have been spotted in the VC, and of those, 21 appear to be established or regular migrants. In 2021, despite the lockdown, 19 species were spotted, which was a great achievement, although 20 species were recorded in 2020. It is unlikely that this is the result of species decline as such, just that some of the rarer species need an element of luck and broad geographic surveying for them to be observed. The reduction in people recording sightings probably meant some species were simply not spotted, as opposed to not being present.

The season started in the traditional final week of April, with the first **Large Red Damselfly** being seen at Bowes Valley Nature Reserve on 24 April, followed by one sighting per week until mid-May when the **Large Red Damselflies** seemed to emerge in good numbers across the region. There were 183 sightings throughout the season until 31 August. **Blue-tailed Damselflies** and **Azure Damselflies** appeared in May; surprisingly, on 13 May a **Broad-bodied Chaser** was spotted at Port Clarence Landfill site, just before the region's first **Common Blue Damselfly** of the year was recorded on 15 May .

Once again, we missed out on **Beautiful Demoiselles** who are often tantalisingly close to our borders but don't stray across the River Tees or Tyne. Luckily though, the River Wear provides ideal habitat for the **Banded Demoiselle**, and they were spotted on 61 occasions, at a variety of locations, between 31 May and 5 August, a short season.

Two species that were in short supply in 2020 were the **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** and the **Brown Hawker**. 2021 saw them return in good numbers and there were 27 and 74 sightings respectively. The **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** appears to prefer the high moorland areas to the west of our region, and as this is often remote and difficult to access; the increase in sightings in 2021 could simply be the result of rare visits from recorders as opposed to a population increase.

The Durham WT headquarters are at Rainton Meadows, between Sunderland and Durham, and once again proved to be a dragonfly hotspot, with 15 (down from 16 in 2020) species seen there, often in very large numbers. There were 351 records from Rainton, and the creation of a new wetland area there should mean that it continues to grow as the ideal place to go and see Odonata. Sadly, we did not see a **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** at Rainton this year, but at nearby Brasside Pond they were in amongst hundreds of other Damselflies, ovipositing and coupling on the floating weed close to the bank, making them easy to see once you had distinguished



them. Having seen them laying eggs, it is hoped they will become residents.

No **Lesser Emperor** sightings were made in 2021, but there was an abundance of sightings (60 in total) of its larger cousin, the **Emperor Dragonfly**, which were seen across the region and in particular, at Rainton Meadows, Oakenshaw NR and RSPB Salthome.

**Black Darters** are typically only recorded at one stronghold, Greencroft NR, and while they are firmly established there, they were also seen at 10 other sites in the north of the region in 2021. It is not clear if this is a spread in population or if there were more visits to sites in that part of VC 66 during this particular year.

The **Black-tailed Skimmer** was also more abundant in 2021, with 72 sightings. This is impressive as they are often found stationary on gravel or rough ground and, due to their colouring, are very well camouflaged. They were spotted at 17 sites, with the bulk at Rainton Meadows and Oakenshaw NR; the latter is fast becoming a hotspot in our region, especially if you want to see large numbers of the common species.

Autumn brought the **Migrant Hawkers** and there were 141 sightings across the region, mainly in the northeast of VC66.

Sites to visits in 2022, if you want to spot a wide variety of species are: Rainton Meadows, Brasside Pond, Low Barns, Twizell Woods, Oakenshaw NR, RSPB Salthome, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (Washington), Daisy Hill LNR and Boldon Business Park Lake. To see all the best sites, [use this link to view a Google Map](#) that includes directions, parking information and a little detail on what you might see. In 2021, four BDS/DWT guided walks were run and it is hoped, now that restrictions have eased, that far more will go ahead in 2022. These will be on the [Durham Wildlife Trusts events page](#) and will be circulated by the BDS. My thanks as always to those who submit sightings and keep me on my toes.



Black Darter  
© Mal Wilkinson



Southern Hawker at Kibblesworth Brickworks  
© Christopher Bill

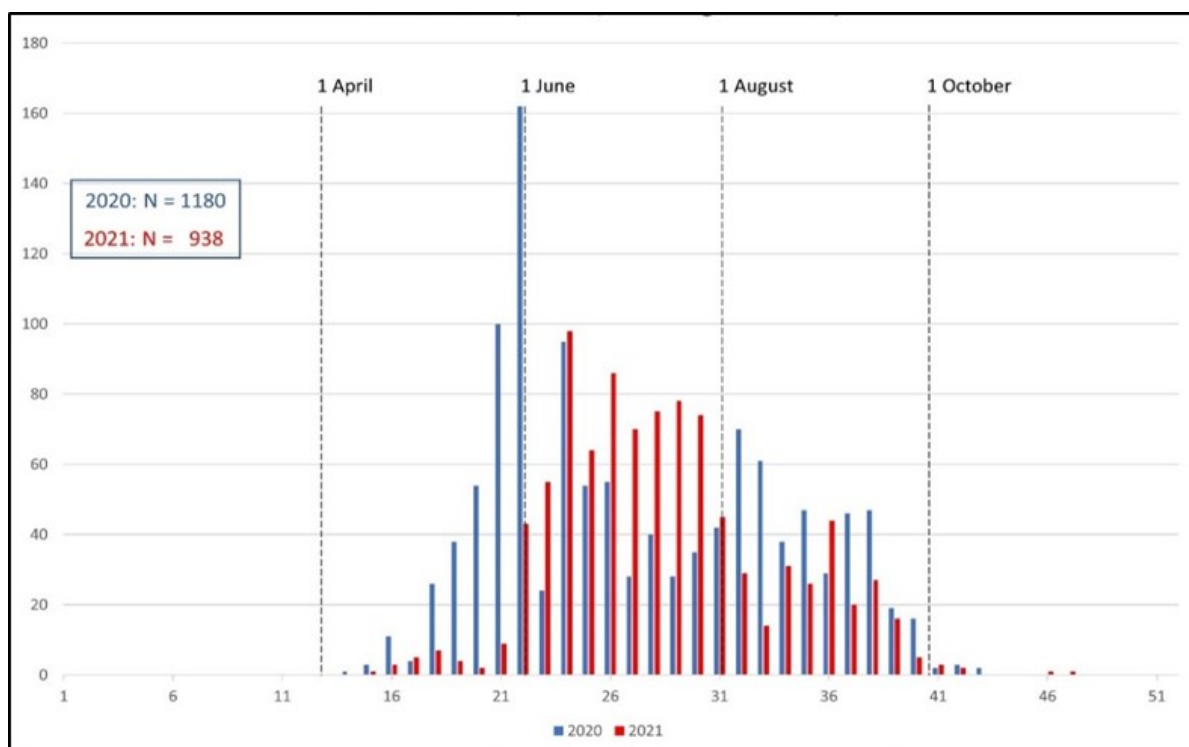
# Westmorland with Furness VC69 and Cumberland VC70 ~ by David Clarke

The whole 2021 flight season, with the exception of May, was notably dry all the way through to late September. In fact, it was one of the driest summers on record where I live in the Eden valley, in the north of the county. July was very warm nationally, but this was particularly felt in north-west England and western Scotland.

The pattern of records tells its own story as you will see on the graph below. The emergence of early-flying species in 2021 was delayed by about a month, compared to 2020, as a result of the cold April. The warm mid-season period yielded more records compared to 2020 but the end of the season was much quieter in 2021.

There were no definite migrant records, though the sighting of a red-bodied dragonfly in Swindale in the eastern Lake District at the end of March was a 'possible'. However, it could not be linked to any wider regional movements of migrants at the time of the sighting, was not photographed, and so could not be identified.

The overall number of records received was very similar to 2020; some records are still due, from both years. The number of recorders was similar in the two years, though in parts of our county tourism has an impact and may cause some variability in recording effort. iRecord contributed 67% of the interim total of all records received, amongst which iNaturalist records have been included for the first time. The latter made up some 15% of the online data total (as of 31 January 2022), boosting the overall proportion of records received online. Records received direct by Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, Carlisle, are not included since they will not be available until later in the year.



Cumbria records by week 2020 (blue) & 2021 (red) - interim



**Blue-tailed Damselfly** is one of the five widespread Damselfly species of static waters. Despite its widely cited environmental tolerances it was the least recorded out of the five in 2021 with only 38 records. **Azure Damselfly** was next but had twice that number. Only one locality (moderately upland at 300m) produced counts as high as category D abundance (21-100).

There were no records for the vulnerable **Variable Damselfly**, which is only known from a single site in the county. A Red List status update is urgently needed in 2022.

**Banded Demoiselle** continued its recent trend of appearing at sites far from its known breeding colonies; usually these records are of single males. Perhaps the most extreme example was from Mardale Head car park (NY4610) on 23 August, many kilometres from a known site and in unsuitable habitat. Two were noted on the Swindale Beck (NY51) in July, again well upstream of possible breeding habitat. A record came from a new area on the River Mite in Eskdale (NY 10) near more suitable breeding habitat. **Beautiful Demoiselle**, on the other hand, has shown little sign of range expansion, although a male seen by two observers near Brampton (NY56), on 15/17 June, was an unexplained occurrence as there are no known breeding sites anywhere in the vicinity. A single male has been noted elsewhere in this general area twice before, in 2015 and 2017.

**Common Hawkers** were well-recorded despite the fact there are some indications of decline nationally. An adult at Geltsdale (NY55) on 19 November was a notably late record.

There were a few Solway records for **Migrant Hawkers** in 2021. A count of at least 30 at RSPB Hodbarrow (SD17) on 19 September was unusually high for a Cumbria site and could imply local breeding. A report from Middlebarrow Quarry (SD47) on 3 August, on the southern border of the county, referred to it being 'newly hatched'. The last-mentioned site is especially close to Leighton Moss (north Lancashire) which is a regular breeding site. The species was also present at Foulshaw Moss (SD48) in September and evidently attempting to breed.

A single **Brown Hawker** was spotted on 14 July at a pool on the north side of Carlisle, a surprising find. The nearest Cumbria populations are some 75 km away in the Morecambe Bay area; some east of the Pennines may be as close. It was the fifth warmest July on record, which affected much of the UK, and may have been the catalyst for the occurrence. This is only the third record in the past decade of this species so far north in the area.

**Downy Emerald** was recorded for a third successive year at Foulshaw Moss at the main pool, as well as from some long-established Lake District haunts.

**Broad-bodied Chaser** continues to become more widespread in the county. Records have exceeded those for **Emperor Dragonfly** (though these include multiple records at some sites) and, so far, the species has a certain 'novelty value' amongst recorders. It was certainly the most photographed species of the year. A detailed account, with a map, will appear in the journal, *Lakeland Naturalist*, vol 10.1 (spring 2022). A pdf version will be available.



Male Broad-bodied Chaser © Adam Moan

**Black-tailed Skimmer** records are mainly coastal and the species is still showing little sign of expansion within the county. Species presence was noted at the Duddon estuary sites of Sandscale Haws and RSPB Hodbarrow (SD17) 1/2 July, with up to six males at the latter site. Six were seen at the Fell End nature reserve (SD47), one at nearby Arnside Knott in early July, and two were recorded at Foulshaw Moss on 7 July.

**Keeled Skimmer** records from the Mardale valley head continued in 2021, with presence recorded at 400 metres at Mardale Waters, and in Riggindale (NY41). There were following sightings of adults at a roadside in Garsdale and larvae were found, in some abundance, in a flush at Sool Rigg (SD69), the first breeding record for VC65 (a very small part of which falls within Cumbria). This area appears to have a lot of suitable breeding habitat for **Keeled Skimmer** in at least two more tetrads.



Keeled Skimmer habitat

**Ruddy Darter** was confirmed to be present at the single known breeding site on the south Solway plain (NY25). There was a report that the species is possibly present at a site in the Eden valley, which will be followed up in 2022. The scarcity of the species in the county no doubt accounts for the few identification confusion issues that continue to arise, especially with the widespread **Common Darter** late in the season.

**White-faced Darter** populations were helped by good weather in their flight period in June. Emergence at the Carlisle site had barely started until June. A count of exuviae there, though only partial, yielded over 2000 skins. It was pleasing to record some emergence at the Drumburgh Moss (NY25) introduction site on the Solway. Here, over 30 individuals emerged, all of which derived from larvae that had completed their life cycle at the site. The re-introduced Foulshaw Moss population again showed every sign of health, including breeding at pools around the boardwalk (see photo). Once again, at least one individual reached the adjacent Meathop Moss (where there are no suitable pools). A brief overview of the project's results appears on p. 12 of Dragonfly News 80.



# Isle of Man VC71 ~ by Pete Hadfield

Another late start to our dragonfly season in 2021; the first record was one **Large Red Damselfly** on the 2 May at Laxey, and then this was the only record until the 15 May.

Surveys on the POA gravel pits had mixed results again: **Emperor** numbers were down, as were records for **Common Blue Damselfly** and **Blue-tailed Damselfly**. There have been no sightings of the **Lesser Emperors** from 2020-2021. In positive news, **Brown Hawker** numbers were up to four with ovipositing witnessed on three separate ponds; in addition, **Migrant Hawker** numbers are increasing year on year (up to 20+ on 24 September).

**Migrant Hawker** numbers were up in most areas where they are found, with an excellent count of 17, including sightings of copulation, at Ballanette in September (this is up from four in 2020).

There were a few interesting **Emperor** sightings in June and July including the first record at Ballanette since 2009 and one over a brackish coastal rock pool at Scarlett.

Interestingly, even though **Common Blue Damselfly** is possibly the most numerous of the Odonata on the island, it is rare on the Calf of Man- on the 27 June they had their fourth confirmed record. **Blue-tailed Damselflies** are common on the Calf like the main island so the absence of **Common Blue Damselflies** is a strange one.

Worryingly, there was possible evidence of what might be contributing to the national reduction in moorland species (as mentioned in the State of Dragonflies report). A moorland pool near South Barrule, which previously held **Common Hawker**, **Black Darter** and **Emerald Damselfly** completely dried out for the first time and no Odonata were seen. In addition, several plantation pools' water levels were also found to be dangerously low.

Last sighting of the year was a **Common Hawker** at Laxey on 24 October. This was the latest record of a Common Hawker by 16 days.



Emperor Dragonfly ovipositing  
© Pete Hadfield





Brown Hawker ovipositing  
© Pete Hadfield