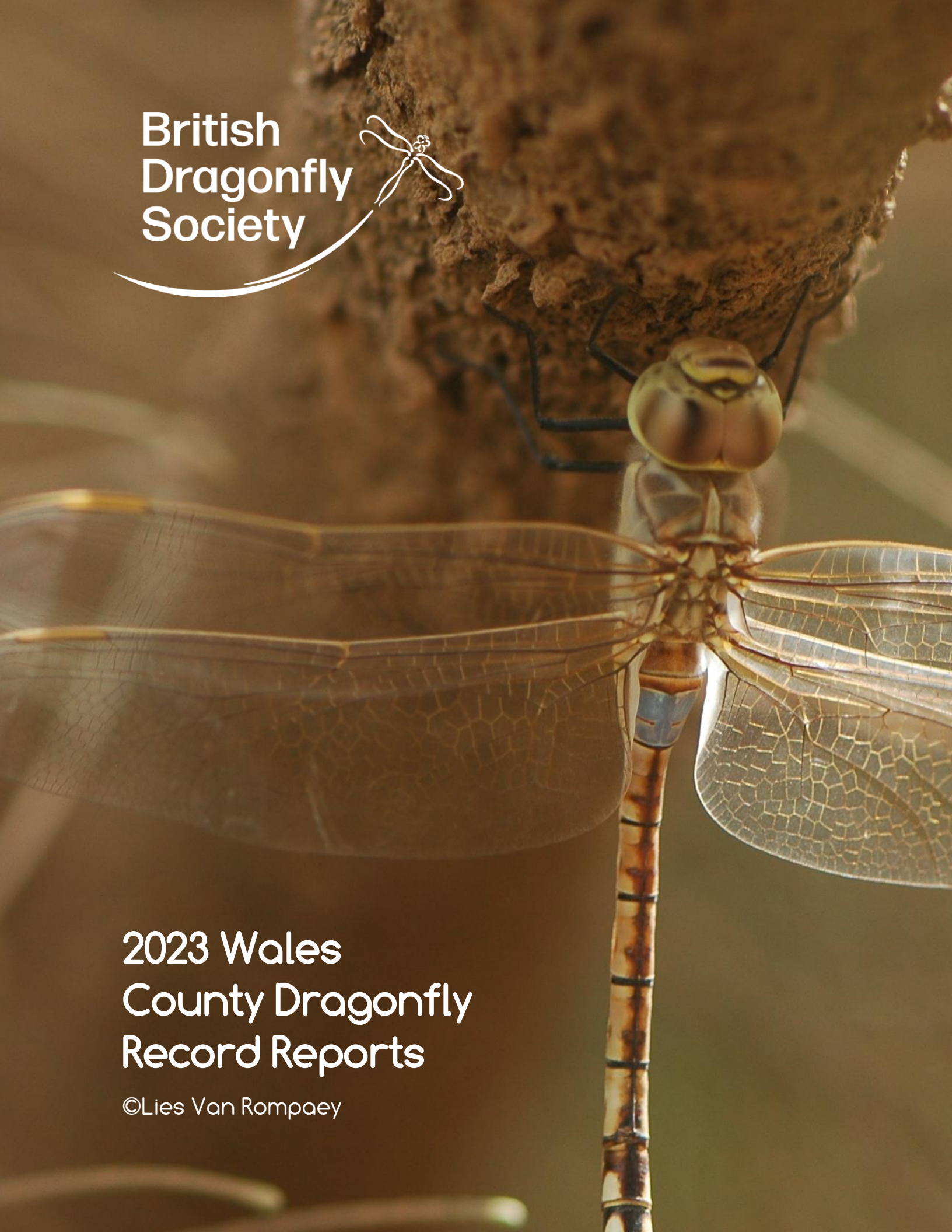


British  
Dragonfly  
Society



# 2023 Wales County Dragonfly Record Reports

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# Glamorgan VC41

## by Mike Powell

There were only two significant records for VC41 in 2023 in what was otherwise an average year. Recording effort was much reduced overall.

The two records in question are:

1 October 2023, **Vagrant Emperor** at Fall Bay, Gower, recorded and photographed by Gwyn Thomas.

14 October 2023, **Vagrant Emperor** at Dinas Powys, recorded and photographed by Hilary May.



Dead Vagrant Emperor found near garden pond by Hilary May.



Vagrant Emperor found at high tide mark by Gwyn Thomas



# Monmouthshire VC35

## by Steve Preddy

The great work everyone put in last year recording dragonflies across the county meant that the atlas maps we put online just last year were already looking quite out of date. Generating new maps is quite a labour-intensive process, but it's been worth it and new maps for all 33 species are now [online at the British Dragonfly Society website](#); they give a much better indication of where each species is found. At the end of this report are the before and after maps combining all records of all species, which shows just how much progress was made last year. We have six years left to go in our atlas project, so there's plenty of time to make these maps even more complete.

If anyone would like some suggestions for targeted recording to do this coming season, here are some thoughts. . .

We still have a lot to discover about our riverine species, as the discoveries of [Common Clubtail](#) at Govilon and Skenfrith last year showed. From the middle of May onwards this species will be emerging on the Wye and the Monnow it would be good to know if it is still present in all the areas it has been recorded in historically. The Govilon sighting hints at the possibility of a population on the Usk too. There are many stretches of the Usk which have not been visited for dragonfly recording, so it could easily be there undetected. While surveying for this species, there's the opportunity to fill in gaps on the map for [Banded Demoiselle](#) and [Beautiful Demoiselle](#), [White-legged Damselfly](#), and also [Red-eyed Damselfly](#) which has been recorded in localised areas on the Wye. There are lots of stretches of faster-flowing rivers in the county which haven't been visited and where [Beautiful Demoiselle](#) and [Golden-ringed Dragonfly](#) are likely to occur.

On our upland moorland sites, we have good populations of [Black Darter](#), [Common Hawker](#), [Keeled Skimmer](#) and [Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly](#), and a variety of other species. However, there are historical sites for these species which have not been visited recently, so searches away from the regularly-visited sites would be very worthwhile.

Our small population of [Brown Hawker](#) is slowly expanding and searches for this species in the north-west could locate more new sites.

Our knowledge of the distribution of dragonflies on the Levels is improving, but there are still gaps where no-one has recorded dragonflies recently. Some of these areas may be genuinely dragonfly-free zones; the Levels are not uniformly species-rich as intensive agriculture has wiped out dragonfly populations in many places, but there are still areas that are under-explored. Mysteries to solve include: is [Ruddy Darter](#) really absent from the western Levels, is [Black-tailed Skimmer](#) really missing from the east, and is the apparent decline in [Large Red Damselfly](#) real? There are many areas to be re-surveyed for [Hairy Dragonfly](#), and the inconspicuous [Variable Damselfly](#) is very likely to occur at more sites than those we currently know about.

Finally, there are many areas of the county without any dragonfly records at all, or with only old records. If anyone would like a map of their part of the county showing rivers and ponds which we don't have records from, please get in touch (Steve.Preddy@me.com, 07989 870 508)

and I can send you one. Localised species such as [Four-spotted Chaser](#) and [Emerald Damselfly](#) are likely to be more common in the county than our current records indicate and visits to unexplored sites are a good way to find these species and more.

The British Dragonfly Society has made some funds available to enable a Recorder Support Scheme to be set up. The funds will be used to help with travel costs for visits to under-recorded parts of the county. Anyone wishing to make use of the scheme will need to commit to visiting at least five unrecorded sites (but don't worry, we have a long list of these to choose from, and they cover most parts of the county). If this is something which interests you, please get in touch.

After our first two **Southern Migrant Hawkers**, at Llandegfedd reservoir and Goldcliff nature reserve in 2019, it is perhaps surprising that none were seen in the subsequent three years. However, last summer saw our third and fourth records, both from the Gwent Levels. In August, Phil James found one at Goldcliff and Tom Chinnick found one at Uskmouth. The Goldcliff individual was particularly interesting as it was a female of the blue morph, which had not previously been recorded in Britain (one of Phil's photos is included below). More details on these two dragonflies, and other rare visitors back as far as 1995, can be found on the [Rarities section of the website](#).

Llandegfedd reservoir is the largest single still water body in the county, but we have comparatively few dragonfly records from the site. The site's potential is indicated by the fact that it was where [our first Southern Migrant Hawker](#) was found by Gavin Vella in 2019. However, only nine species have been recorded there during our atlas period so far (**Common Blue Damselfly**, **Blue-tailed Damselfly**, **Large Red Damselfly**, **Southern Hawker** and **Migrant Hawker**, **Emperor** and **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**, **Black-tailed Skimmer** and **Common Darter**), although four other species have been recorded there in the past (**Azure Damselfly**, **Emerald Damselfly**, **Banded Demoiselle** and **Broad-bodied Chaser**). If anyone would like to visit the reservoir this year to survey it more thoroughly for dragonflies, I'd be keen to hear from you.

Our first breeding records of **Lesser Emperor**, were taken at Wentwood reservoir with Lucy Arnold-Matthews and Ollie Jenkins-Boobyer in 2023. I've now written [an article](#) on this, which is illustrated with the excellent photo below taken the same day by Lee Gregory. This is a species which is expanding its range and is very likely to be found at further sites (previous records are from Ynys-y-Fro reservoirs and Lamby Lake, so your best chance of finding one is to search one of the county's larger waterbodies ... an incentive for anyone considering taking a look at Llandegfedd perhaps?)

The ongoing colonisation of the county by [Small Red-eyed Damselfly](#) took more leaps forward in 2023. The map provided below shows the sites where it has now occurred. It is now more common and widespread than **Red-eyed Damselfly** and is no longer confined to the south and east of the county, with new sites being found in the uplands around Blaenavon and Brynmawr, and at many new sites in between. This is not a species which needs particularly large or high-quality water bodies; it occurs at small farm ponds, and at Ponthir reservoir, for example, so it is very likely that there are many more sites waiting to be discovered. One other piece of information which emerged this year is that **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** was recorded by David Gibbs at Newport Docks in 2015 as part of ecological survey work on some ponds there (the ponds no longer exist, as the land has been developed). Previously, it had

been thought that Tara Okon's discovery of this species at Newport Wetlands in 2017 represented our first, so that now becomes our second record.

In researching sites to visit for dragonfly recording as part of the county atlas project, it became apparent that there is no comprehensive list of ponds and lakes in Monmouthshire. So, as a parallel project, we've started to compile one. Ordnance Survey maps and Google Earth are good sources of information about the locations of ponds and lakes in the county, and this has yielded a list of over 800 possible candidates so far. Once a site has been visited, it is added to the inventory with some basic details (the location, the size, the date the waterbody was confirmed to still exist and so on). An initial inventory will be issued once it contains a good number of sites, hopefully at some point later this year, and then it will be periodically updated with further sites as more are visited.

One of the pieces of information included in the species accounts on the website is the first known record of each species from the county, but I thought it would also be of interest to list them together in one place. If you know of an earlier record of any of these species, please let me know.

English name	Scientific name	Date	Location	Observer
Hairy Dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	An unspecified date in 1929	Marshfield, on the western Gwent Levels	F. Norton
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	An unspecified date in 1949	The Newport area	J. L. Jones
Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	An unspecified date in 1949	The Newport area	J. L. Jones
Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	An unspecified date in 1961	Devauden, near Chepstow	P. C. Webb
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrhosoma nymphula</i>	An unspecified date in 1961	Pen-ffordd-goch Pond (Keeper's Pond) on the Bloreng	D. Griffiths
Common Hawker	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	An unspecified date in 1961	Pen-ffordd-goch Pond (Keeper's Pond) on the Bloreng	D. Griffiths
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	An unspecified date in 1965	Magor Marsh	K. Hallet
Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	An unspecified date in 1966	Magor	P. C. Webb
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	An unspecified date in 1966	Magor	P. C. Webb

Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	An unspecified date in 1967	The Monmouthshire and Brecon canal near Sebastopol	Derek Bolton
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	10 June 1968	The Usk Valley	G. A. N. Horton
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	9 July 1968	The River Wye near Llandogo	W. A. Seaby
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	27 June 1971	Shirenewton, near Chepstow	P. C. Webb
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	An unspecified date in August 1973	Whitson on the eastern Gwent Levels	P. M. Wade
Common Clubtail	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	18 May 1975	The River Wye at Bigsweir	John Paul
White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	24 June 1975	The River Wye at Bigsweir	John Paul
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	30 July 1978	Whitson on the eastern Gwent Levels	D. A. Rodway
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	14 May 1979	Piercefield Park, in the Wye Valley near Chepstow	Ian Bolt
Variable Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	29 July 1981	The Wentlooge level near St Brides	Colin and Ian McLean
Black Darter	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	An unspecified date between 1975 and 1981	The Blorengge	Bill Keen
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	25 May 1983	Keeper's pond on the Blorengge	Bill Keen
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	29 July 1983	Cwm-Tysswg, south of Tredegar	A. D. Fox
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	18 July 1984	St Mellons	P. Jones
Yellow-winged Darter	<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i>	13 August 1995	Magor Marsh	John Martin, Mike Powell and Clive Hurford

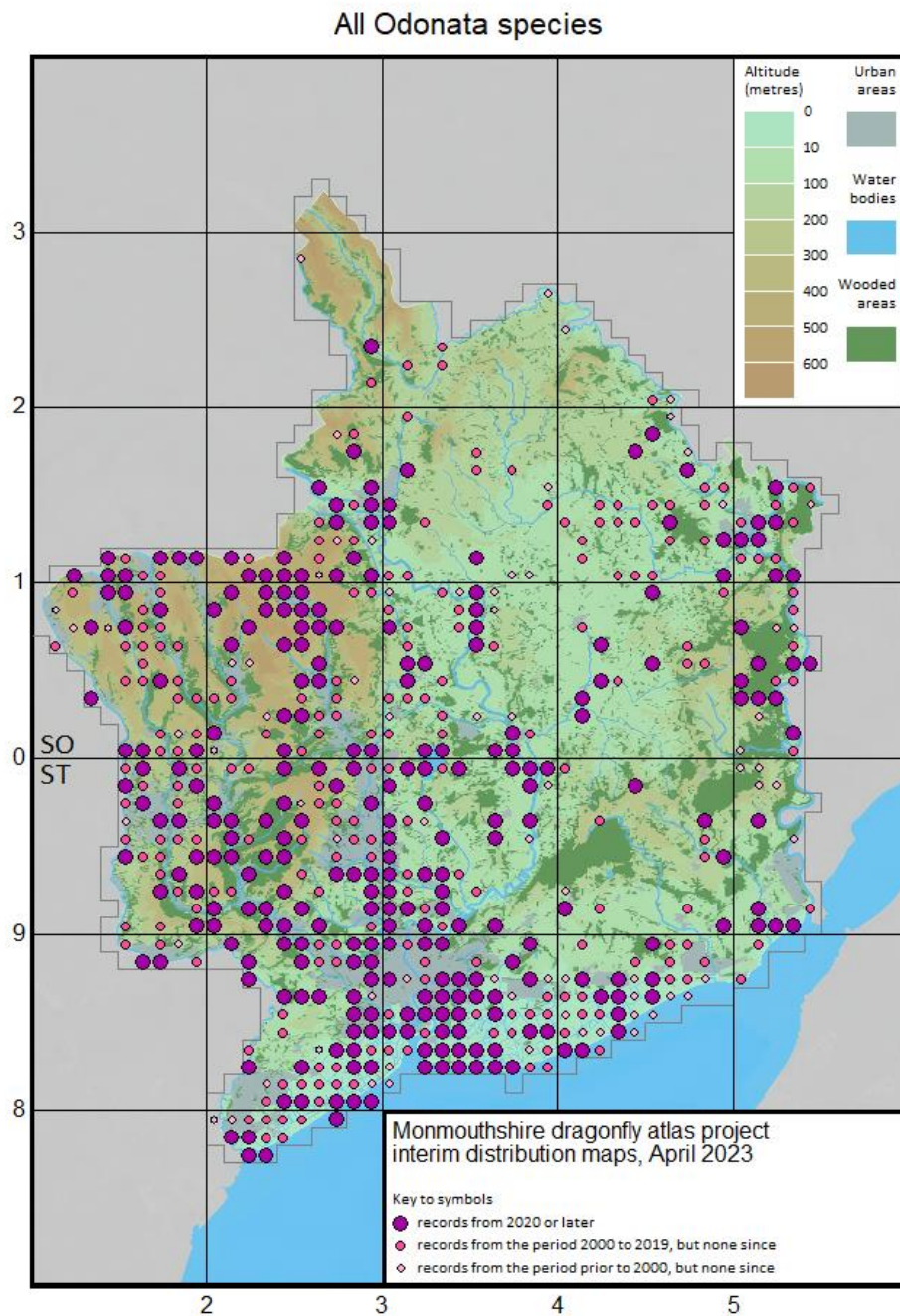


Brown Hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	16 August 1995	Waun-y-Pound	Mike Powell
Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	25 July 1996	The British, northwest of Pontypool	Steve Williams
Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	17 July 2000	Goldcliff lagoons	Adam Rowlands
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>	4 August 2006	Lamby Lake	Andy Karran
Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	11 August 2007	Coity Tips, Blaenavon	Steve Williams
Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>	25 October 2013	Morden Road, Newport	Keith Cox
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	15 July 2015	Newport Docks	David Gibbs
Southern Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna affinis</i>	13 August 2019	Llandegfedd reservoir	Gavin Vella

The sharp-eyed among you will notice one species missing from the table above: **Small Red Damselfly** (*Ceragrion tenellum*). As part of an investigation into the status of this species UK-wide, all historical Monmouthshire records are being reviewed, and so far, we haven't yet found any evidence that this species has been reliably recorded in the county. At present, it's still included in our county list ... but perhaps not for much longer.

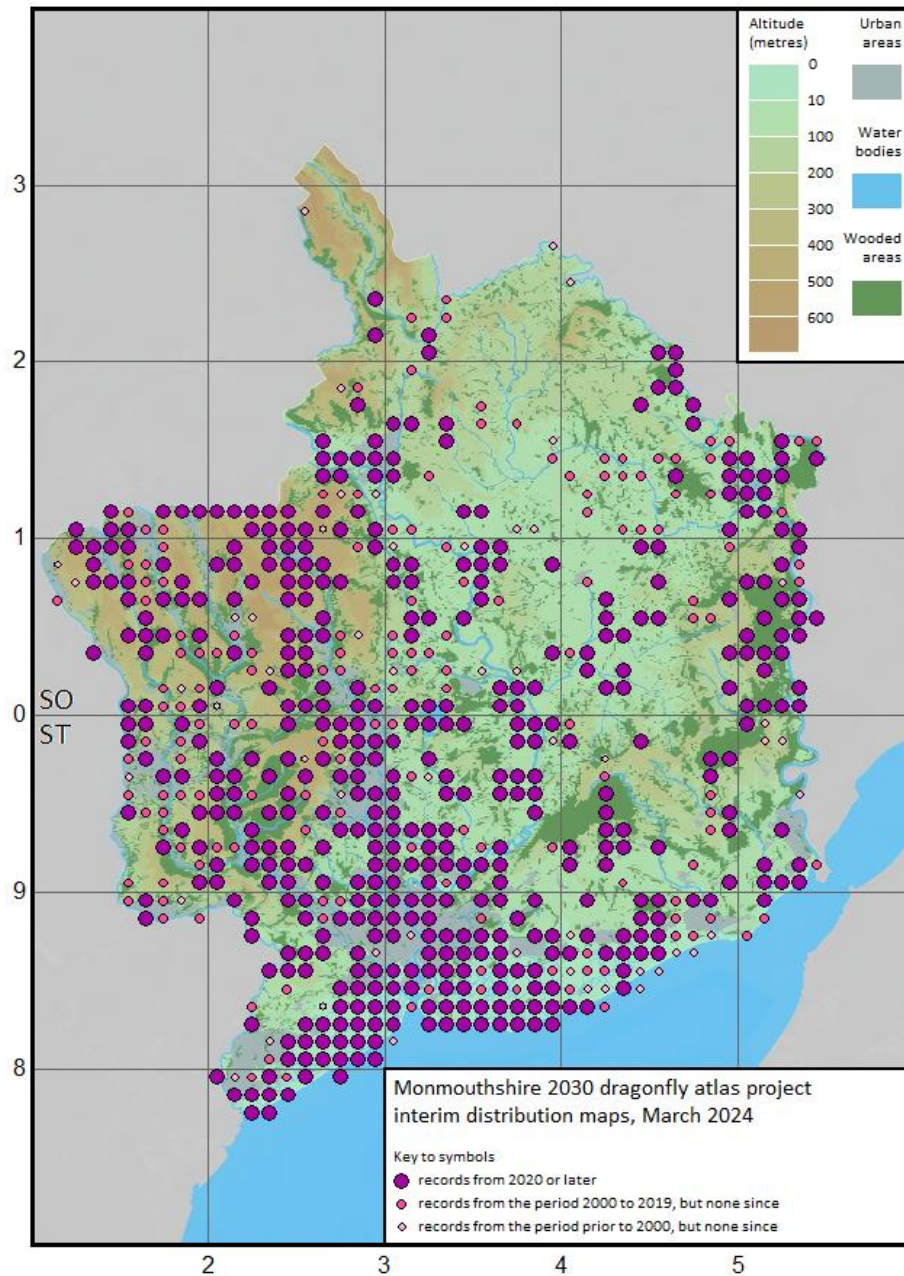
I'm happy to receive your records via any method which suits you; it's better to receive a record than not to receive it. The iRecord system is my preferred method. If you'd like to use iRecord, please go to <https://irecord.org.uk/> and create an account. I'm more than happy to show you how to use it over a video conference, or in person if you live somewhere within easy reach.

Best wishes for the coming season.



Map of Monmouthshire Dragonfly records up to April 2023.

# All Odonata species



Map of Monmouthshire Dragonfly records up to March 2024.



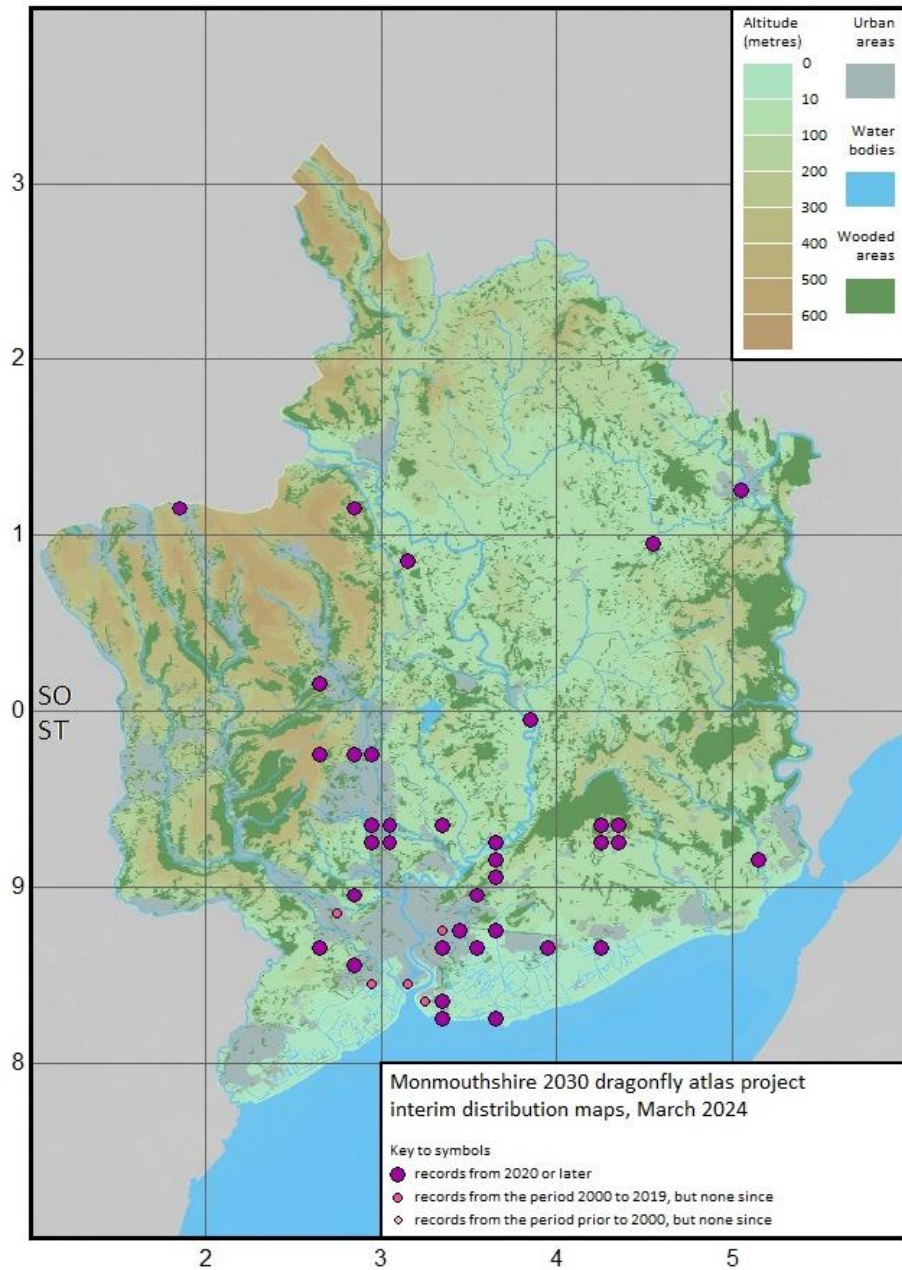


Female (blue colour morph) Southern Migrant Hawker at Goldcliff by Phil James.



Male Lesser Emperor at Wentwood by Lee Gregory.

# Small Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma viridulum*)



Map of Monmouthshire Small Red-eyed Damselfly records up to March 2024



# Breconshire VC42

## by Keith Noble

Although nearly sixty people submitted records this year, a good number for this county, just three of them supplied more than half of the 330 total. More than a hundred records were from one site, the Dragonfly Hotspot of Llangorse Lake, and nearly all of these came from the County Recorder. Llangorse also held a greater diversity than any other site with 19 species. Richard Knight carefully noted 12 species around The Cwm, Llanwrthwl, and Mike Tompkinson supplied first dates for fourteen species at Sarnau pools north of Brecon. In all, 25 species were seen including the first occurrence here of **Norfolk Hawker**.

In March the Community Centre in Llangorse was full for a talk on Hotspot Dragonflies and Butterflies by the respective County Recorders. Work also started on the restoration of a large pond in the village school's wildlife area.

**Large Red Damselflies** appeared at Sarnau on 29 April, and **Variable Damselflies** at Llangorse on 2 May, followed by thousands on 14th. Several other species emerged mid-April; many people noted **Banded Demoiselles** and **Beautiful Demoiselles** on the Usk and Wye, and their tributaries, and **Broad-bodied Chasers** at various sites. **Red-eyed Damselflies** at Llangorse totalled 24 on 28 May, a good increase since the first individual was seen here in 2017.

On 17 June we held a Hotspot event at Llangorse Lakeside with staff and volunteers from the BDS, the Brecon Beacons National Park, Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and Biodiversity Information Service. Families enjoyed pond-dipping, wildlife-spotting and other activities, but the best dragonfly sighting came next day. Radnorshire Recorder, Bob Dennison returned with a group to look for species that are unknown or rare in his county. They were successful with **Hairy Dragonfly** and **Variable Damselfly**, and then came the great surprise - close views of a **Norfolk Hawker**. This dragonfly's home range has grown considerably in recent years and a few have wandered north and west, but a sighting in mid-Wales was totally unexpected.

BBC Countryfile came to the Brecon Beacons, now to be known as Bannau Brycheiniog, in August. They spent two days filming the Dragonfly Recorder at Llangorse, including a boat trip around the fringes of the Lake. This was edited down to an attractive few minutes for the programme with the addition of some of my own photos.

In the hills, some pools shrank or went dry during the summer. **Common Hawker**, **Black Darter** and **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** were poorly recorded, but a good number of casual records of **Golden-ringed Dragonflies** came from walkers and birders. The only **Black-tailed Skimmers** were at Llangorse, **Keeled Skimmers** were seen at The Cwm and for the first time at Sarnau where a **Common Darter** record closed the season on 10 November.

# Radnorshire VC43

## by Bob Dennison

Forty people contributed to the 2023 dragonfly recording effort which resulted in 455 verified records, including a healthy number of exuviae records, as well as a new species on the Radnorshire list. Between us, we managed to see, photograph and film 24 species - comprising 14 Dragonfly and 10 Damselfly species.

The flight season's first record was **Large Red Damselfly** on 15 April and the 2023 season ended on 7 November with a male **Common Darter**. The season was slow to get going, but then seemed to take off very rapidly. By the end of April, **Large Red Damselfly** was the only species seen on the wing but by the end of May, the number of species recorded had risen to 14.

Over the course of the season, all of the expected Radnorshire species had been recorded at least once, with the exception of **Migrant Hawker** – surprisingly, not recorded in Radnorshire since 2018. A single exuvia found on a muddy bank of the Wye near Hay represented the first and only Radnorshire record of **Common Clubtail** from the last five years. Other species that only just made it onto the species list were **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** (two records), **Keeled Skimmer** (two records) and **Ruddy Darter** (one record).

Apart from those exceptions, numbers of 2023 sightings per species were generally comparable with those of 2022 or better, but the healthier numbers may relate - at least in part - to increased recorder activity.

One of the early season highlights was the discovery of **Red-eyed Damselfly** at the large pond at Abbey Cwm Hir, close to the historic abbey ruins. On an afternoon in late May, there was a fantastic amount of Dragonfly and Damselfly activity and in a short time I recorded eight species- all but one of which were familiar Radnorshire species; when I checked over the lily pads with my binoculars, I noticed several Damselflies with red eyes. Flying so early in the season, they were confirmed as **Red-eyed Damselflies**. In a wider context, this species is already well established in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Montgomeryshire - particularly on the Montgomery Canal. It was first recorded at Llangorse Lake in 2017 and the increasing numbers of sightings since then indicate that there is a growing population there. So, were the Abbey Cwm Hir 'red-eyes' already established - or had I simply overlooked them in the past?

The next notable event took place in the very north of Radnorshire in mid-June following a hot dry spell. Martyn Moore had stopped to check out a shallow pool which had recently refilled following heavy rain. He noticed and photographed a bright-red coloured darter species which he later identified as a **Red-veined Darter** - only the second record for Radnorshire; the species has not recorded here since 2009. In a national context, it's apparent that we're witnessing major change – not only in terms of recent and ongoing additions to the

UK species list, but also expansions northwards and westwards of recent and established species. Our recent local sightings for **Red-eyed Damselfly** and the **Red-veined Darter** are consistent with this scenario.

Year on year changes in Odonata national distribution maps show a similar story of expansion for other species that we should also expect to turn up, and perhaps become established, here in Radnorshire. The **Willow Emerald Damselfly** is edging ever westwards towards Wales and the **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** is also now being recorded in Wales, both north and south of Radnorshire.

## County Dragonfly Recorder Contact Details

Local Group Details Can be found on the BDS website under the 'About' drop down menu.

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

