

British
Dragonfly
Society



40 Years
1983-2023



Dragonfly News **84**

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Published twice a year, in April and October, *Dragonfly News* covers all aspects of the British Dragonfly Society’s field recording, monitoring, research, conservation and social activities, as well as information from the wider dragonfly, natural history and conservation world. The emphasis is on dragonflies recorded in the UK.

The British Dragonfly Society aims to promote and encourage the study, conservation and understanding of dragonflies and their natural habitats, especially in the UK, and to raise public awareness of dragonflies.

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Cover Image:

White-legged Damselfly female captured by **Steve Hewitt**.
The winner of our 2023 photo competition.

A note from the Editor...



What a brilliant and busy summer it has been! I have thoroughly enjoyed my first dragonfly season at BDS and feel very privileged to have travelled the UK to explore our Hotspots and meet as many of the BDS recorders and volunteers as possible.

This summer we added two new Hotspots to our growing list of brilliant dragonfly sites: Panshanger Park and WWT London Wetland Centre; you can read more about the launches within this magazine. In celebration of 40 years of BDS we launched a photo competition which has received a huge number of amazing entries. With another successful #PondWatch and Dragonfly Week, and a jam-packed calendar of events we are so grateful to all of those who got involved this year!

But the celebrations aren’t over yet; if you haven’t already, make sure to get your ticket for our AGM in Nottingham on Saturday 18th November. We look forward to seeing you there!

Lauren Kennedy, Editor

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Chairman's Report



Tim Coleshaw

I must begin this report with a huge thank you to our outgoing Chair, Brian Walker. Brian has served on the Trustee Board for many years in the capacity of Chair, Acting Treasurer, Treasurer and staff line manager, often fulfilling many of these roles at the same time. I am pleased for Brian's sake that we have now been able to reduce his workload, but very relieved that he is continuing in the role of Treasurer where he ensures that the Society's finances are kept in excellent shape. I would also like to add my personal thanks to Lynn Curry who has now stepped down after many years of running BDS membership and before that, the BDS shop. Lynn's help has been invaluable in validating our membership data as we have transferred it to our new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and I am very pleased that she and her husband Henry remain active members of the Society.

As reported elsewhere in this magazine, 2023 marks our 40th birthday, an important milestone in our history and an exciting

time in the development of our Society. As you are aware, we launched our new strategy last year and since then have been working hard to reshape the Society to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The new CRM system will enable us to manage our membership and volunteer data in a much more efficient way, and creating a single staff team led by Sarah Miller has resulted in our staff working in a more cohesive way. Our four new trustees, who all come from 'non-dragonfly' backgrounds, have brought a greater breadth of experience and a much needed younger age dynamic to the trustee team and have come to the BDS bristling with new ideas for the future. Sadly though, we will be saying goodbye to Mike Lehane who is standing down as a trustee this autumn but leaves with our thanks and good wishes for the future.

Whilst we all get very excited by new species appearing in the south of England we must not lose sight of the fact that many of these new appearances are driven by climate change and whilst England may be benefitting from new species appearing and others extending their range, many of our northern species are suffering, and indeed face extinction if current trends continue. Our current partnership projects with Forestry and Land Scotland and Cairngorms National Park will make a big difference in improving habitat but we must not ignore the underlying issues resulting from climate change. Dragonflies present us

with a fantastic 'hook' to garner a greater interest in wildlife and through that a wider concern for the better protection of the natural environment which is going to be vital if we are to reverse the catastrophic collapse in biodiversity that is occurring across our planet. To help us consider how BDS can contribute to addressing these issues we have set up a project group to produce a new Communication Strategy for the Society. This group will look not only at how we increase interest in dragonflies across a wider sector of society but also consider how we influence landowners and politicians to better protect our precious wetland habitats and the wider natural world. It's going to be a big challenge but one to which we must rise!

I end my first report as Chair with another thank you, this time to all of you. As a small charity, the BDS is hugely dependent on the support we receive from our volunteers and supporters, whether it is by submitting your dragonfly records, the collation of records, helping at events, attending practical conservation tasks or donating to our appeals, every contribution helps us to run this great society. Thank you all and I hope to meet many of you at our upcoming 40th Birthday Members' Day in Nottingham, our first face to face meeting for over three years.

Changes to Membership



The BDS subscription fees have remained constant for over a decade. However, due to the increasing costs, adjustments are now necessary in order for us to continue championing dragonflies and to provide support for our conservation initiatives, including research, outreach, and educational projects.

Starting from April 1, 2024, the subscription rates will be as follows:

- Individual membership: £25
- Joint membership: £35
- Youth/student membership: £15
- Overseas membership: £30 in Europe, £35 for the rest of the world
- Benefactor membership: £50

The new youth/student membership option is open to individuals under 25.

If your payment is made through a Standing Order, kindly update the payment amount before the renewal date. For those using online banking, modifying the payment usually is simple to do online or via your banking app. If needed, you can obtain a form from the Membership Officer at membership@british-dragonflies.org.uk to facilitate this change

For inquiries regarding Business Supporter memberships or any other membership-related questions, please reach out to the Membership Officer.

From everyone at BDS we thank you for your continued support!

BDS thank you to Lynn Curry

Lynn took over the role of BDS Membership Secretary back in 2008 and continued in that role until April this year. To save you the sums, that's fifteen years of loyal service to the BDS. For much of that time, Lynn also looked after the BDS Shop. She made sure orders were fulfilled as quickly as possible and managed to tempt us all with the greetings cards, dragonfly jewellery and other items she found to stock our shop.

Pam Taylor caught up with Lynn and her husband Henry, himself a former BDS Secretary, at Cley Marshes in June to present Lynn with her leaving gift. "The weather was kind to us, but a little too cool for dragonflies, so we had to content ourselves with a walk around the reserve looking at birds instead. The whole BDS owes Lynn (and Henry) a huge debt, so we all hope she enjoys her well-earned retirement."



News From You

We love hearing from you! Here is a selection of some of our favourite communications from you:

We receive some amazing dragonfly snaps via email.

Below: Neil Malton emailed in a dew covered Four-spotted Chaser taken before 6am on a calm morning at Woodwalton Fen NNR.



Keep In Touch



British Dragonfly Society

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@britishdragonfly society

Below: Neil Galton took photos of a pair of Scarce Chasers mating in his garden. "Most of the time they stayed together on a stick protruding over our pond but they moved around several times when agitated by other dragons. They stayed in cop for about 20 minutes!"



Pondwatch 2023 - We received so many brilliant pond stories and photos for this year's Pondwatch! The below is from David Fielding @urbanponds101 as he enjoys some pond dipping with the family.



Leanne @LeanneReddock81 tagged us in this brilliant photo on Twitter - a smiling Common Darter!



Recent Colonists and Migrant News

Adrian Parr

The 2023 dragonfly season got off to an early start in Britain, with a likely Vagrant Emperor being spotted in Devon on 11 January. The remainder of the winter was then quiet on the migrant front, but early April saw the start of a much more substantial influx of Vagrant Emperor when confirmed or 'likely' individuals were reported from the Scilly Isles, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. Reports continued in this same general area of south-west England until at least the end of May, with maybe as many as forty sightings being made. Curiously, despite individuals being around for up to two months, very few records came from elsewhere in Britain; this was unexpected given the species' obvious mobility. During mid-May, oviposition was noted at Windmill Farm in Cornwall and near Soar in Devon, and it will be of considerable interest to see whether any offspring emerge later in the year.

May also saw the first reports of Red-veined Darter, with a sighting at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on the 5th followed by records from several other areas of southern England and occasionally elsewhere (e.g. Spurn, East Yorkshire, on the 16th, and Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, on the 28th). A period of good weather during mid-June then saw a significant arrival of Red-veined Darter. In the east, individuals

reached as far north as Seton, East Lothian, while in the west sightings came from as far north as the Isle of Man and Heysham, Lancashire. Inland, a record from near Newtown, Powys, on 14 June stood out as being of particular interest. With the passing of this spell of good weather, sightings then diminished noticeably, and high summer was a very quiet time for the species.

Of our other regular 'migrant' species, Southern Migrant Hawker has so far had a relatively uneventful season, but Lesser Emperor has continued its recent run of particularly good showings – though it seems that much of this now reflects the development of strong local breeding populations. Sightings in and around the Broads area of Norfolk have been very abundant this year, with a number of immature individuals being spotted. Some unexpected records do, however, show that long distance movement is still occurring, though internal dispersal may now also be complementing immigration. Perhaps the most exciting report was of an individual found dead at St Peter's Pool in the Orkney Islands on 10 July.

One of the highlights of spring/early summer must surely be the continuing spread of Norfolk Hawker. The new colonies at Chichester in West Suffolk, Radipole in Dorset, and Slapton Ley in Devon all appear to be doing well. Amazingly, after records there last year, the species was also seen again at Amberswood near Wigan in Lancashire. This rather implies that a new breeding colony must now also be present there. Multiple sightings along the coast of East Sussex and southern Kent likewise probably indicate new breeding sites as might, perhaps, an



Norfolk Hawker © Dave Smallshire

interesting series of records from Greylake RSPB Reserve in Somerset. Elsewhere, a number of unexpected 'one off' sightings were also made, as dispersal or immigration clearly continued apace. Individuals were thus seen at Lower Bruckland Ponds in Devon, Slimbridge in Gloucestershire, Far Ings in north Lincolnshire and Goole in East Yorkshire. But the really outstanding records were from quite far north in England, with singles being seen at Lazenby, Teesside, on 13 June and Foulshaw Moss, Cumbria, on 7 July. Dramatic things are clearly afoot with this species!

As far as our recent colonist damselflies are concerned, this year has seen a good number of records of Southern Emerald Damselfly from its strongholds in the greater Thames Estuary area, as well as from Sandwich Bay in Kent. This represents a significant recovery after the species' extremely poor showing during 2022, but at present there have still been no records from former breeding sites such as the one on the Isle of Wight, which might perhaps have now been lost. The range expansion of Small Red-eyed Damselfly continued, with sightings from Welshpool in Montgomeryshire during mid-July, while a Willow Emerald Damselfly was recorded from Severn Beach, Gloucestershire, on 26 June – this being the new most-westerly record for Britain. Further developments are awaited with interest.



Red-veined Darter © Trevor Wilis

First Dates for 2023 *Adrian Parr*

The latter part of the 2022/23 winter saw widely fluctuating temperatures, but in many areas much of February and the last two thirds of March averaged significantly above the 1961–90 mean. As a result, some good early season emergences were noted. The first Large Red Damselflies appeared in Cornwall on 27 March, and by 8 April emergences of this species had become widespread, with sightings as far north as Lancashire. The very first Banded Demoiselles also appeared around this time. Mixed weather later in April then saw many observers reporting a slow start to the main season, but favoured sites still did OK, and by the end of the month some 12 species had been noted on the wing. This figure is lower than in the last few years, but still above many values seen during the early 2000's. Emergences during May continued in this somewhat 'average' vein, but a dramatic warm spell during June then saw many late-emerging species appear well ahead of schedule. Willow Emerald Damselfly set a new earliest-ever record, while Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Migrant Hawker and Black Darter all produced good early sightings.

Details of all earliest dates currently to hand are given below. As a correction to the Last Dates for 2022 given in Dragonfly News 83, it should also be noted that the latest date for Beautiful Demoiselle was in fact 6 October, in Cornwall (D. Cooper).

SPECIES	FIRST DATE	PLACE	OBSERVER
Banded Demoiselle	09-Apr-23	Surrey	L. Giblin
Beautiful Demoiselle	20-Apr-23	Somerset	H. Taffs
Scarce Emerald Damselfly	23-May-23	Norfolk	S. Rowland
Emerald Damselfly	03-Jun-23	North Yorkshire	K. Gittens
Willow Emerald Damselfly	14-Jun-23	East Sussex	D. Barber
Azure Damselfly	28-Apr-23	Hampshire	P. Winter
Variable Damselfly	15-Apr-23	Somerset	Anon
Dainty Damselfly	16-May-23	Kent	A. Lipczynski
Red-eyed Damselfly	16-Apr-23	Northamptonshire	L. Lonsdale
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	12-Jun-23	Lancashire/Gloucestershire	P. Kinsella/Anon
Large Red Damselfly	27-Mar-23	Cornwall	D. Cooper
Common Blue Damselfly	23-Apr-23	Dorset	S. Levy
Blue-tailed Damselfly	23-Apr-23	Somerset	M. Hull
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	11-May-23	Cornwall	S. Jones
Small Red Damselfly	25-May-23	Dorset	M. Graham
White-legged Damselfly	13-May-23	Worcestershire	M. Schilling
Southern Migrant Hawker	13-Jun-23	Sussex	D. Boddingham
Southern Hawker	14-May-23	Norfolk	S. Rowland
Brown Hawker	09-Jun-23	Suffolk	W. Brame

Norfolk Hawker	17-May-23	Kent	A. Lipczynski
Common Hawker	03-Jun-23	Perthshire	D. McCulloch
Migrant Hawker	21-Jun-23	Cambridgeshire	M. Turton
Emperor Dragonfly	16-May-23	Unknown	D. Spurr
Lesser Emperor	20-May-23	Worcestershire	A. Warr
Hairy Dragonfly	22-Apr-23	East Sussex	C. Bateman
Common Clubtail	04-May-23	Oxfordshire	A. Dawson
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	18-May-23	Monmouth/Pembroke/Argyll	A. Gadd/A. Sims/R. Cruickshanks
Downy Emerald	28-Apr-23	East Sussex	F. Koppschall
Brilliant Emerald	28-May-23	Berkshire	S. Cham
White-faced Darter	03-May-23	Shropshire (Denbighshire)	M. Sokolowski
Broad-bodied Chaser	18-Apr-23	Lancashire	W. Walton
Scarce Chaser	07-May-23	Norfolk	M. Ward
Four-spotted Chaser	23-Apr-23	Dorset	B. Edge
Black-tailed Skimmer	10-May-23	Hertfordshire/Cheshire	L. Lambert/T. Gilbert
Keeled Skimmer	17-May-23	Cornwall	C. Moore
Black Darter	10-Jun-23	Shropshire (Denbighshire)	J. Shields
Ruddy Darter	29-May-23	Norfolk	J. Baxter
Common Darter	18-May-23	Gloucestershire	V. Savery

Send us your records

Want your sighting to count? All you need to do is submit your records and you could be featured in our first or last dates!

Send us your records

You can submit a single dragonfly record or a list of dragonfly records to the national recording scheme via iRecord [<https://irecord.org.uk>]

Migrant Dragonflies Project

Want to keep up with the latest migrant and rare species sightings? Join the Migrant Dragonfly Facebook group.

Adopt a Site

We are looking for enthusiast dragonfly recorders to carry out Complete List surveys at sites of their choice. Recorders are encouraged to adopt their local wetland site, visiting it three times from May-September every year; the data generated from these surveys is very valuable when tracking species trends as well as identifying sites with a high species diversity or priority species, which need to be protected. If you need help selecting a site, contact your County Dragonfly Recorder for help.

For full details and help with identification visit our website.

Autumn 2023



Dragonfly Hotspots 2023

Panshanger Park

Panshanger Park is 1,000 acres of countryside situated between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is working with the park's owners, Tarmac, to manage the park for both people and wildlife.

There are 19 different species of dragonflies and damselflies that can be found at Panshanger Park, making it one of the best spots in the county to see them. This summer Panshanger Park was designated a Dragonfly Hotspot and in celebration, Tarmac created a new dragonfly trail. This route runs along the Rifle Butts wildflower meadow, with a viewing area over the River Mimram, and then round to the Kings Lake and Riverside Lake. The newly surfaced path leading from the car park greatly improves accessibility for visitors, and the new interpretation boards along the route give an insight into the amazing lives of the dragonflies and damselfies.

The Hotspot was launched on 7th July with the official opening of the new dragonfly trail. BDS Chair Tim Coleshaw did the honours of cutting the ribbon and unveiling the new interpretation boards. We were joined by the brilliant teams at Tarmac and Wildlife Trust as well as local councillors, BDS staff, trustees and CDRs. DCG's Steve Brooks spoke on the day "Panshanger Park is a great place to get up close and look at dragonflies in all their glory. The varied habitats at Panshanger support many different species in large numbers, and you never know what may turn up next." We were also joined by one of Panshanger's newer visitors, the Norfolk Hawker! Alan Everard, Tarmac's head of strategic planning (south region), said: "It's great to be celebrating being named as a new dragonfly hotspot by the British Dragonfly Society. I would like to thank our supporters and partners who have worked with us and helped with this. I've had the opportunity to experience the park's dragonfly trail and hope that visitors to the park will enjoy spotting the different species and exploring the trail too."

The celebrations continued on 29th July with a public event to celebrate dragonflies and the wildlife of the park with stalls, crafts and activities. With representatives from the local bat group, local badger group, Friends of Panshanger Park, Hertfordshire Natural History Society, and Hertfordshire Beekeepers - the day had a wonderful festival feel. With guided walks led by Steve Brooks and CDR Roy Woodward, participants saw hundreds of Common Blue Damselflies dancing over the lake as well as Willow Emerald Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Ruddy Darter, Brown Hawker and much more, with a total of 12 species seen. To complement the event a dragonfly trail quiz sheet was created to encourage younger visitors to explore the park and spot dragonflies all through the summer.



Tim Coleshaw and local councillors cutting the ribbon



Willow Emerald Damselfly © Brian Walker



BDS Stand © Brian Walker

Dragonfly Hotspots 2023

WWT London Wetland Centre

London Wetland Centre is comprised of a mosaic of wetland habitats just a stone's throw from central London. The reserve is home to a rich diversity of insect life, with 26 species of dragonfly and damselfly! Working with Penny Smallshire, Adam Salmon, and the brilliant team on site we were delighted to designate the site a Dragonfly Hotspot.

Launching on Sunday 9th July, over 40 people gathered to see the new interpretation unveiled by Dave Smallshire - "I watched keenly as the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust created the London Wetland Centre and have been amazed as it matured into a fantastic haunt for water birds and other wildlife. That it has become such an important site for dragonflies within the City limits makes it even more special, and I hope that recognition as a Dragonfly Hotspot will help many people to learn about and enjoy these wonderful insects." We were joined by BDS staff, trustees and CDRs and the guided walks were very well attended by both people and dragonflies!

With 11 species spotted throughout the day, attendees were treated to up-close views of an ovipositing female Emperor Dragonfly and Small Red-eyed Damselfly, as well as a Lesser Emperor and this year's hot topic, the Norfolk Hawker! On the day Dave Smallshire was interviewed for WWT's podcast Waterlands. You can listen to season 2 episode 1 featuring Dave at London Wetland Centre via the QR code.

Adam Salmon, Reserve Manager "WWT London Wetland Centre is delighted to be named a Dragonfly Hotspot. Since we opened in 2000 we have worked hard to manage and maintain the reserve habitat to increase biodiversity and we are really pleased with the range of dragonfly species now present here. I hope that with the creation of the Hotspot more visitors will be encouraged to come and enjoy watching the dragonflies and damselflies on the reserve, and also learn about what they can do to help with wetland conservation."



Dave Smallshire unveiling the interpretation board



Guided walk - watching an Emperor



Small Red-eyed Damselfly © Brian Walker



Norfolk Hawker © Brian Walker

Global Birdfair 2023

by Pam Taylor

The original Birdfair, brainchild of Tim Appleton and others, ran for over 30 years at Rutland Water. It sadly ceased for various reasons after an online version of the event had to be held in 2020 due to the pandemic. Undaunted, Tim Appleton launched Global Birdfair in 2022 at the nearby Rutland Showground. BDS was at that 2022 event, but I was not, so this year was my first experience of the new site.

I have to say I was pleasantly surprised by the new venue, and it seemed to stand up better than the previous one to prevailing conditions. Birdfair in the past was famed for its mud, and the weather this year certainly tested us. We had sunshine, heavy showers, strong winds, thunder and hail, but we survived them all, although a few stands in other marquees did flood slightly.

Over the three-day event, our BDS Birdfair team chatted to almost 1,500 people, with several more stopping briefly to view the stand. BDS Ambassador Joel Ashton from Wild your Garden and our BDS Youth Ambassador Green Fingered George both popped in to say hello, as did BDS President and TV Presenter, Mike Dilger.

Birdfair is a great place to reconnect with some of our visiting County Recorders, as well as other BDS members. We even signed up a few new supporters and gave advice on pond design and attracting dragonflies to your garden to many more. It helped, of course, to have our own barrel pond on the stand, as well as live larvae to help us explain dragonfly life cycles.

The changing fortunes of our dragonfly species during the 40-year history of the BDS was covered by a well-attended lecture on the last afternoon. Overall it was fantastic to see so many people enthused by dragonflies. It was particularly rewarding to meet a number of incredibly keen young people, eager to know as much as they could find out about dragonflies and all kinds of different wetland wildlife.

Birdfair raises funds every year for overseas projects. The 2022 event allowed a donation of €100,000 to be made to help revive a Spanish wetland, while the 2023 event was raising money for a project in Equador. Global Birdfair 2024 will be held from 12th to 14th July, so mark it in your diaries now and we'll look forward to seeing you there!



The team with Mike Dilger



Ellie Colver talking with visitors



Ellie Colver and Jess Slight at the stand

White-legged Damselfly Investigation

by Eleanor Colver

Over 780 people contributed records to the White-legged Damselfly Investigation, helping us gain a better understanding of this overlooked species.

The White-legged Damselfly (*Platynemesis pennipes*) is a fascinating little insect. At a glance, it may look similar to the more common Azure Damselflies (*Coenagrion puella*) and Common Blue Damselflies (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). However, it can easily be differentiated by its pale colouration and its fine paired abdominal markings; it also has distinctive pale wing spots (pterostigmata) and striped thorax. Immature White-legged Damselflies are creamy coloured with a brownish tinge to the thorax and eyes, and reduced markings. Females are pale yellow-green while males are pale blue with striking blue eyes that are rather googly in appearance! The males also have wide pale tibiae (a section of the leg) which they display to females they wish to attract and competing males they wish to ward off. Males remain attached to the females while they egg-lay, inserting their eggs into the underside of floating leaves and underwater into the soft stems of emergent plants. These egg-laying couples can sometimes be encountered in large numbers and their larvae take on average two years to develop.



Male White-legged Damselfly © Novofotoo

Concerns were raised for this charismatic Damselfly in 2017; over a quarter (27%) of monads (1km OS grid squares) where White-legged Damselflies had previously been recorded had not produced sightings in the previous 20 years. These monads covered some areas that were previously considered strongholds for the species, such as the catchment of the River Wey and Mole in Surrey, the River Roding in Essex, and River Severn and its tributaries around Worcestershire. At the time it was unclear whether this was a result of the species disappearing from these historic breeding sites, or whether this species was simply going unrecorded. To answer this question the White-legged Damselfly Investigation project was launched to boost awareness of the species among recorders and encourage more members of the public to keep an eye out for this Damselfly.



Female White-legged Damselfly © Jean-Raphaël Guillaumin

Over a five year period (2018-2022) 3487 White-legged Damselfly records were submitted to the BDS. Of the records that had habitat noted, 31% of sightings were in terrestrial habitats, mostly grassland. Of the wetland habitat sightings, 63% were from "flowing water" habitats including rivers, streams, and canals. There was a significant number of sightings from "Still water" habitats and these were predominantly related to ponds (43%) and lakes (28%). Immature adult White-legged Damselflies are known to disperse away from their wetlands of origin until they are ready to breed, hence the

large proportion of sightings not recorded near water. The species' British population is typically associated with waterways, or sections of waterways, that are unshaded, slow-flowing and support lush emergent and floating vegetation. However, they have increasingly been associated with still-water habitats that offer similar conditions and the results of the project support this view.

The records collected during the White-legged Damselfly Investigation, up to 2020, contributed to the State of Dragonflies 2021 analysis which looked at changes in occupancy (number of 1km monads occupied each year) over a 50-year period from 1970. The analysis reported that the species had, overall, increased in occupancy within Britain over this time. Within the White-legged Damselfly project dataset, the species was reported from 1081 monads; 50% of which had no previous records. At a hectad level (10km x 10km OS grid squares) the species was recorded in 296, 14% of which had no previous records. These were predominantly located on the east and western margins of its known range, in East Anglia, along the Welsh border and in South West England. Most records from new monads were related to waterways with known populations or



Example of breeding habitat: RSPB Fen Drayton, Cambridgeshire. © Steve W

close neighbouring populations. For example along the Kennet and Avon Canal, the species was reported for the first time east of Devizes; the species was also seen for the first time on the Stroudwater Canal and at new sites along the River Brue, its tributaries and neighbouring wetlands around Glastonbury. However, the species was also recorded for the first time at some more isolated sites, including Hatfield Forest in Essex which contains a large lake, the large ponds at Marks Hall Estate also in Essex, the pools of Rookery Waters Fisheries in Huntingdonshire, and on the River

Usk at Abergavenny.

The database of records compiled during the White-legged Damselfly Investigation confirmed the continued presence along many of the species' historic waterways and sites. However, the results from some historic breeding areas produced sparse records; this could be a result of low recording effort in these areas, suitable habitat being inaccessible to recorders, or the species no longer being present. Examples include the River Roding between Loughton and Chipping Ongar in Essex; most records for this area are over 20 years old and the project only produced records for two out of the 15 monads with historic records. The wetlands southeast of Chichester in West Sussex, as well as the Gran Union Canal and its neighbouring wetlands between Staines-upon-Thames and Rickmansworth, didn't produce any records during the project period and all historic records are more than 20 years old.

It should be recognised that assessing White-legged Damselfly distribution via monad presence/absence surveys has its limitations due to this species' tendency to disperse from its natal sites. This means that just because White-legged Damselflies were recorded in a monad doesn't mean the species is breeding there. These records do allow us to identify



Example of breeding habitat: River Stour between Dedham and Flatford Mill in Essex. © Smudge9

general areas where the species might be in decline, which can then be investigated further by more detailed survey activities looking for evidence of breeding.

The identification of cases of localised White-legged Damselfly extinction could help in identifying wetland systems that are in ecological decline. White-legged Damselflies are generally associated with unpolluted waters with rich macrophyte communities and bankside vegetation. Decline in water quality, and invasive management such as the re-profiling of waterways and their banksides, are two potential causes of local extinction. These threats can significantly impact a range of other aquatic wildlife, including the rarer and much more elusive Dragonfly, the Common Clubtail, whose range overlaps with the White-legged Damselfly on a number of waterways, including the River Severn and the River Wye. Luckily the White-legged Damselflies' natural predisposition to disperse after emergence provides it with a natural resilience to local extinction events, allowing them to travel across water catchments and colonise other nearby suitable sites and repopulate sites once the habitat has recovered.

You can find the full White-legged Damselfly Investigation report and result in the recording section of the BDS website or via the QR code:



White-legged Damselfly © Jan Vanaverbeke

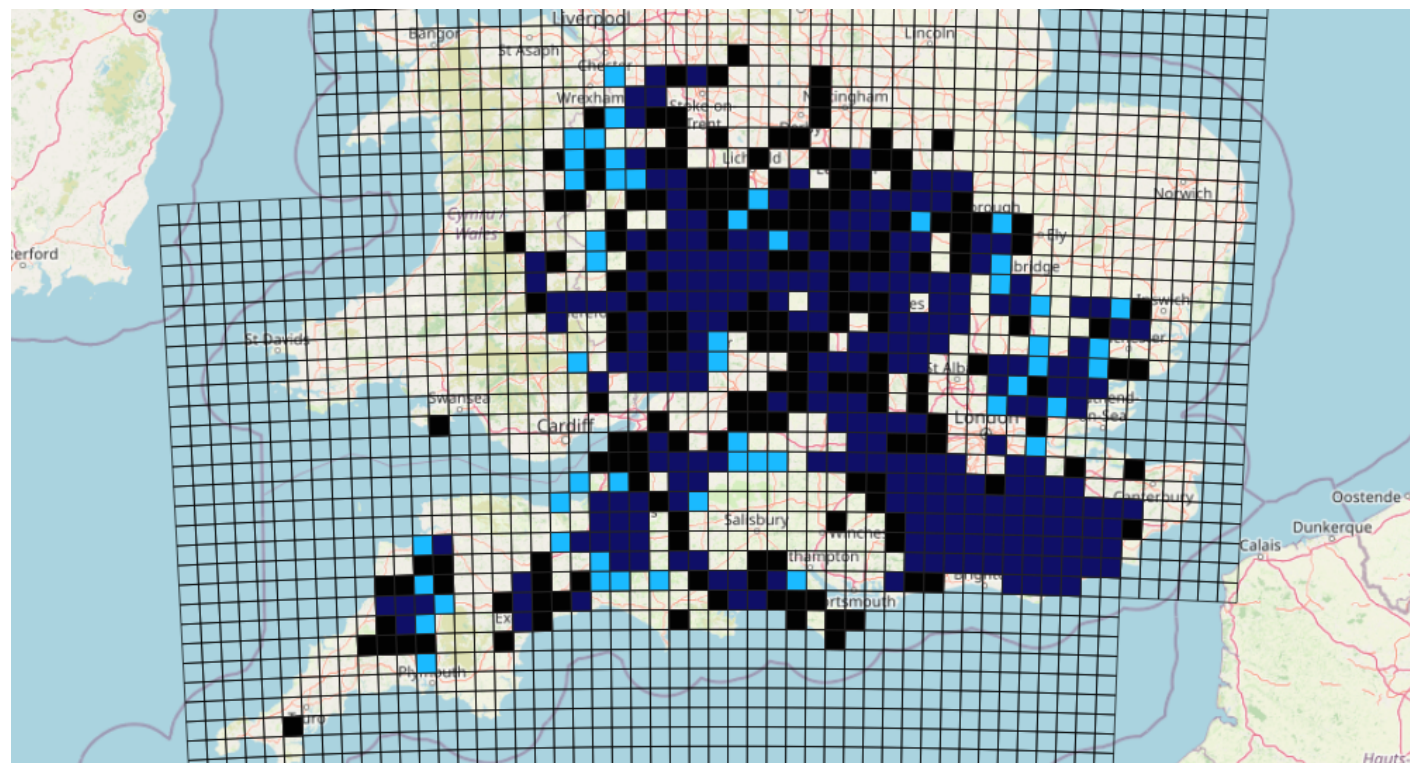


Fig. 1 Map of hectads (10km x 10km OS grid squares) with White-legged Damselfly records. Light blue: species was recorded for the first time during the project. Dark blue: species has historic records (pre 2018) and was recorded again during the project. Black: species has historic records and was not recorded during the project.

News from Scotland

by Daniele Muir

Fire at Corrimony Nature Reserve

In late May this year a number of horrendous wildfires took place across the Highlands, including at locations where some of our rarest dragonflies are found. Two of these areas were at Glen Cannich – where I have spent hours watching Northern Emerald Dragonflies emerging – and at one of our Key Sites for White-faced Darter, Corrimony Nature Reserve. Rare dragonflies at Corrimony include Azure Hawker and Northern Emerald as well as White-faced Darters, with all these species' habitats having been impacted by the fire. Rare birds present on the reserve and affected by the fires include Golden Eagle, Black Grouse and Crossbill. RSPB Corrimony have spent the past 25 years restoring the native woodland here, much of which has been burnt down. The RSPB is running an appeal to try to raise money to help restore the reserve – please see their website for details if you would like to help.

Kinloch Woodlands – a new Key Site for rare bog pool dragonflies

We are really pleased to be working with Kinloch Woodlands SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation), managers of a wonderful dragonfly site near Shildaig in Highland. In June, Daniele and new Area Co-ordinator Graham Rennie carried out training for local volunteers and staff members from the Woodland Trust and NTS (National Trust for Scotland), with the afternoon spent in the field at Kinloch.

A number of rare dragonflies were found including Keeled Skimmer and Northern Emerald on the wing, and numerous White-faced Darter larvae in one of the pools surveyed. Black Darter, Golden-ringed Dragonfly and various damselflies were also found.

The site consists of a number of boggy plateaux with networks of small pools. Like so many of the sites for our rare dragonflies, these shallow pools have been drying up with hot temperatures, so one of our priorities is to look at ways that we might be able to create new habitat or ensure that existing pools can be deepened through creating peat dams.



Keeled Skimmer © Graham Rennie

Training with FLS staff

Over the past few months, I have met Forestry and Land Scotland teams from the East and South areas to discuss site management and habitat creation for dragonflies. I met the East team near Banchory in June, starting with a presentation of rare dragonflies in the area and their habitat requirements. We then had a discussion on what could be achieved and headed out to a pond with new Northern Damselfly sightings in Fetteresso Forest, between Banchory and Stonehaven. This pond is quite a few miles from the nearest populations in Deeside, and the team is keen to link the populations by creating a network of ponds suitable for the Northern Damselfly after felling takes place in the forest.

I visited Dumfries and Galloway in early August to meet the team that covers the east of the South area and had a wonderful two days visiting the ponds that they have created over the past few years. As part of their biodiversity work, they have been putting in ponds to benefit a whole host of wildlife (including dragonflies!) wherever there are suitable sites, and they wanted advice on their management and guidance on what design is best for dragonflies. They have been doing a sterling job creating networks of ponds and riparian strips of wildflowers to ensure habitat and species connectivity. The highlight was to see an Emperor

Dragonfly zooming around Kenny's Pond which also had Common Hawker, Black Darter, Common Darter, Golden-ringed dragonflies and four species of damselfly.



FLS Kennys Pond



FLS Team

News from Western Scotland

by Pat Batty

FLS North West - Training was given to the Forest District environmental team in Glen Garry in June. There was great enthusiasm from the staff who enjoyed catching and viewing adult dragonflies and guddling for larvae, with a range of species seen despite the extremely dry weather. We visited Glen Luie pool, a well-established large White-faced Darter site, which has infilled in recent years. It was dry with only damp sphagnum remaining and no adults or larvae of White-faced Darter were seen and thus management of the site was discussed with its possible restoration. The highlight of the visit was Northern Emerald hunting in the nearby glade and an exuvia found at another site. Despite the runnels and many pools in the area being completely dry, we looked at how to manage these areas as well as how FLS could help dragonflies during routine operations including the possibility of creating pools in wet areas that were not economical for tree planting. Seeing a nesting Sea Eagle and a Common Scoter was an added bonus on the day!



Dry runnels site of Northern Emerald exuvia

South West - Advice was given to the Environmental and Operations Manager on the management of a site above Loch Awe where White-faced Darters, Brilliant and Northern Emerald are known to breed. We looked at areas to leave open during restocking and where it might be possible to create some small additional pools for White-faced Darter. We also visited the main White-faced Darter site and though some pools were drying the area was in good condition with adults, larvae and exuviae found. A small lochan also had White-faced Darter adding to the resilience of the site. Future management was discussed with the possibility of creating some additional pools in the next five years though access is not straightforward. Brilliant Emerald was seen on the nearby loch and Beautiful Demoiselle in the burn showing the diversity of the site. I am looking forward to training new staff next year.



White-faced Darter pools Loch Awe

Restoration work with John Muir Trust

by Rob Cochrane



Hello! My name is Rob, and I've recently started working for the John Muir Trust as the Conservation Officer at Nevis. I've been working on an exciting project focused on peatland restoration in a remote area of Glen Nevis which has yielded some exciting four-winged results!

The restoration work is mainly accomplished through the installation of 'leaky dams' and bunds made of porous, biodegradable coir into erosion features and ditches in a peat bog. These structures slow down the flow of water, creating new bog pools, and ultimately, help to raise the water table. By doing so, we can effectively reduce erosion and create optimal conditions for the recolonisation of bog plants, which, in turn, promotes the formation of prime habitats while aiding in carbon sequestration. To ensure the success of our restoration efforts, we are monitoring the progress of the project at the site. Our monitoring process involves observing various aspects, including the water table and vegetation growth. Additionally, we have chosen to monitor Odonata. These wetland specialists are good indicator species, so understanding which species are utilising the site will give us a good insight into the overall health of the ecosystem.

Recently, while scouting the site, we were overjoyed to discover a recently emerged Northern Emerald dragonfly. This particular species is quite rare, making the encounter particularly exciting! To our delight, the dragonfly perched on the vegetation, allowing us ample time to admire its beauty and capture some incredible photographs. I'd love to say it was our skill and determination that led to the discovery, but in reality, it was a chance encounter shortly before we left the site. It's still a true delight to have found such a beautiful specimen. It's also the first record of the Northern Emerald in the area, which is very exciting. We're left with a lot of hope of finding other rare species at the site next time we visit.

A lot of people have worked very hard to pull off this peatland restoration project, so it was really gratifying to share the news with my new colleagues as evidence that it was all worthwhile. We're really looking forward to getting back to the site for more monitoring soon! A special thanks is also due to the Nevis Landscape Partnership whose seasonal rangers joined us for this scouting visit and helped us find this specimen.



To find out more about the peatland restoration work visit the John Muir Trust website:
www.johnmuirtrust.org



Solway White-faced Darters forge ahead in 2023 by David Clarke

The first of the 2023 weekly monitoring meetings at Drumburgh Moss, on 11 May, produced an exciting discovery: significant emergence was occurring at the five pools adjacent to the designated introduction pool. No stock had been introduced into these, so local breeding was the only explanation. The counts soon mounted up and we continued to find exuviae until mid-June. A very late emerger was found on 22nd. The final total was 627 - compared to 124 in 2022 and 40 in 2021. (But of course, we don't know how many we missed!) The 2023 results from the pools not used for stock introductions accounted for 66% of the year's emergence - which was very rewarding. In these circumstances, the help of the volunteers who joined us for the monitoring sessions proved invaluable, enabling the laborious task of collecting exuviae to be carried out within three hours on each visit. Recording emergence, mating and egg-laying was part of this process. The same process was duplicated at the donor site to confirm its productivity.



The 2023 season was not noted for especially settled weather at the start. This resulted in nicely high water-levels in the pools in early May. The increasingly warm and settled period from 20 May, into late June, coincided well with the peak of emergence, maturation and breeding - near-perfect conditions for continued success of the new colony. If the population continues to develop as it is doing at present, the species may well appear in other parts of this 120-hectare site, and in time perhaps even spread naturally to other Solway moss-lands close by. The nearest of these, Glasson Moss NNR, lies to the NW and is separated from Drumburgh by about 1.5 km of farmland. It has a few pools that might attract this species.

Our introduction site at Drumburgh Moss NNR is close to sea level on the English Solway - a nature reserve of Cumbria Wildlife Trust. There is no previous history of White-faced Darters on any of the Solway Mosses, so introducing this species is an acknowledged experiment. The six pools being used for the project were excavated in deep peat deposits in 2012, with pools averaging about 50 m2 in area and 2 metres in depth. A small birchwood to the west acts as a windbreak and possible roosting site. Annual translocations of Sphagnum rich in hatchling larvae began in 2019. This was planned as a 5-year project, though the final stock translocation will be in 2024 - as no work had been possible in the 2020 lockdown year. The breeding pools are remote from the Reserve entrance and will not be promoted for general visiting until we are more confident about present trends and an access route has been established.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is already the custodian of a successful White-faced Darter re-introduction project - Foulshaw Moss, in south Cumbria. The Trust is keenly aware of its new-found responsibilities for this species - now with two of the six English sites. CWT staff Kevin Scott and Jack Dryden manage Drumburgh Moss and it has been good to share, with them and their volunteers, the evident excitement at this very special acquisition.



SPOTLIGHT ON

The Gower Peninsula Ellie Thomason

'The Gower' is a small, unassuming peninsula that sits just a short drive west of Swansea in South Wales and was the first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the UK due to its natural beauty and dramatic coastlines. Despite this, it is largely overlooked by the average holidaymaker and offers the more discerning traveller the opportunity to explore its diverse wildlife habitats at a more peaceful, gentle pace.

Over the course of the last year, I have had the pleasure of visiting the Gower through all the changing seasons during my time spent working with local resident and eminent potter Micki Schloessingk - whose Bridge Pottery is based on the northwest coast of the peninsula in the village of Cheriton. Stepping outside the pottery door leads you straight into ancient woodlands that follow the twisting turns of the Burry Pill which spills out onto the salt marshes of the Lougher Estuary where sheep and wild ponies roam. My favourite route involves a short hike up to Llanmadoc hill where the trees break out onto moorland thick with gorse and heather. Atop this hill sits the Iron Age fort, The Bulwark, and its location offers magical sweeping vistas south across Rhossili Bay to The Worms Head - a string of tiny limestone islets that hint at the dramatic cliffs that can be found on the Gower's southern coastal paths.

Parallel to the bay is Rhosili Down. The Down is lowland heath and home to an abundance of birds and insects including the rare black bog ant and Southern Damselflies. On a summer's day, Southern Damselflies can be seen darting around the seepages and runnels. These small watercourses have gravel bottoms with aquatic plants that move with the direction of flow which help support the Southern Damselfly, as well as add a diversity of

plants and wildlife to the commons.

At the hills end, the tumbling sand dune systems begin which helped Gower earn its AONB status and are considered to be some of the best in Britain - providing a home to many rare species of flora and fauna. Even in the height of summer and in fine weather I have enjoyed spending many an hour dandering along footpaths teeming with wildflowers, seeing hardly a soul. The Gower is rightly one of Wales' best-kept secrets.

By Ellie Thomason
www.elliethomason.com



Southern Damselflies top male and bottom female. © Dave Smallshire

Funding Appeal

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters we have been able to install interpretation boards at 4 of our Hotspot Sites in Scotland this summer. We are now seeking funding for interpretation at Devilla Forest, located a short distance to the east of Kincardine in Fife and owned and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. The forest is mainly Scots Pine, with a number of ponds and lochs throughout.

The top species at the site is the Four-spotted Chaser, which can be seen on the wing along the north edge of Bordie Loch throughout June and July.

Later in the summer Black Darters and Common Hawkers can be seen flying around the loch and adjoining heathland. The forest is also home to a large red squirrel population.

Our target is to raise £2000 to design and install interpretation boards and provide educational resources, ready for public events next spring. Please donate and help us to highlight the amazing life of the dragonflies at Devilla Forest with the people visiting.

To donate to our Appeal go online: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/product/donation/> or send a cheque payable to the British Dragonfly Society and marked 'Devilla' to: Jess Slight, BDS, PO Box 4918, NEWCASTLE, ST55 9JX

Please note: any donations received above our target will allow us to install boards at other Hotspot sites across the UK. Thank you.



© Daniele Muir



Left: Four-spotted Chaser © Pat Batty. Right: Black Darter © Iain Leach



Young Naturalist Section

Special edition: Stover Country Park

Dragonfly Hotspot Stover Country Park, Devon, has begun the delivery of the Restoring Stover Park Project. The park, owned by Devon County Council, contains 114 acres of woodland, lake and marsh, heathland, grassland and a substantial variety of wildlife.

In January 2023, Devon County Council was awarded a £2.1m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), as well as a further £1.5m in match funding, to deliver the project. It covers a wide range of activities including: the de-silting of Stover Lake, the creation of Serpentine Lake, new access routes on adjoining land and listed building conservation.

A part of the project involves dragonfly surveys and training young people to identify and monitor the species at Stover Park. 25 species have been recorded there, including Red List species such as Scarce Chaser and locally important species: Red-eyed Damselfly, Downy Emerald, and Ruddy Darter. Training is led by BDS Dave Smallshire (County Dragonfly Recorder) and a brilliant team of volunteer trainers (Sue, Maryanne, Steve and Margaret). The trainees are between 16-25 years old and receive a series of training sessions, ID resources, BDS membership and travel expenses. The trainees will help us monitor Stover's dragonflies before and after the lake dredging, providing incredibly valuable data over the coming three years.



Left: Scarce Chaser. Right: Red-eyed Damselfly. © Dave Smallshire

Meet the team working on the Restoring Stover Country Park Project

Eve Malster is the Community Engagement Ranger. She started in January 2021, in the Project's development stage. She will be delivering a programme of activities that engage more and a wider range of people in enjoying, learning about, and looking after the heritage and wildlife of Stover Park. Eve has a degree in the Arts and qualifications in Forest School, nature connection, adult education, crafts, and social

Image left to right: Eve, Chloe, and Emily



enterprise. She has experience leading community projects, parent and child groups, Forest School programmes and running a social enterprise focused on sustainable textiles. She has worked within a number of special needs settings and supported individuals at various stages of life and health. Eve's passion is to help people connect with the natural world, their own sense of self and with their communities.

Chloe Morgan started in March 2023 as the Project & Volunteer Administrator. She will be leading on project publicity, volunteer recruitment & support, project monitoring, and evaluation. Chloe has a degree in Ecology and joins the team after 11 years of working for Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust, delivering marine education to schools and the wider public, and volunteer management, and as a field studies instructor at PGL.

Emily Cannon started in March 2023 as the Project Officer. In addition to supporting Eve & Chloe in their roles, she will be co-ordinating the capital works aspect of the Project which will provide visitors and groups with improved facilities, resources, new footpath routes, opportunities to learn about Stover's wildlife & heritage via new interpretation, and physical environmental improvements by de-silting Stover SSSI Lake, and heritage conservation by carrying out repairs to the Gatehouse. Emily has a degree in Environmental Studies, & qualification in Youth & Community Work. She joins the team after working as the Community Engagement Officer at Dartmoor National Park Authority, and the Community & Learning Officer for South West Lakes at Burrator Reservoir (delivering a similar Heritage Lottery funded project).



The first training session of the season! Left: Trainers looking for exuvia in the vegetation. Right: Comparing Damselfly exuvia.

Stover Dragonfly Monitoring Volunteers

With the first season of training and surveying now complete what did the trainees think of their dragonfly filled summer?

My experience of Stover's dragonfly training has been great; I have always liked these insects and this is a wonderful opportunity to get closer and learn more about them.

My favourite dragonfly fact is probably that they can fly backwards because it's a fun example of their incredible agility.

The best dragonfly encounter I've had at Stover so far was when I got to hold an Emperor Dragonfly in my hand.

I look forward to coming back again soon!

(Amy Hughes)

My favourite dragonfly fact is that a dragonfly nymph pulls water into its anus to facilitate gas exchange.

(Joe Rew Shaw)

The dragonfly training has been very interesting and informative. I look forward to the next two years. I enjoyed learning about how dragonflies have a flexible point on the wings (node) which allows a certain degree of bending, reducing the risk of damage. The best dragonfly species seen at Stover this summer was the Lesser Emperor.

(Samuel Gray)



Amy Hughes taking a closer look at an Emerald Damselfly



Adventures at Chartley Moss

Chartley Moss National Nature Reserve, Staffordshire is a site of Site of Special Scientific Interest, as well as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Ramsar Convention protected wetland site.

Jointly with Natural England walks were led this summer to highlight the rare quaking bog habitat and the endangered White-faced Darters that live there.

Tilly was among those who attended the guided walk this May:

"My name is Tilly. I am 13 years old and I love animals. I'm in year 8 at middle school and I am heading up to high school next year. I enjoy school, we have a range of clubs with things like sport, music, drama and nature. I enjoy my school's nature as we have a couple of wildlife areas including things such as planting new flowers, making bug homes etc. When I visited Chartley Moss, it was amazing! We visited the moss with a group of around 15 people, all of which were extremely friendly! We walked to the centre of the Moss, on the peat (which felt like walking on water!) and observed two bogs where the dragonflies were. The area is located in Chartley, however, is private property and not open to the public, making my visit a very special experience. We arrived at the Moss at about 12:30 when the sun was bright out and shining, making all of the dragonflies and butterflies very active. We saw all kinds of wildlife ranging from the Green Hairstreak butterfly, to the rare White-faced Darter dragonflies. Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to visit Chartley Moss."



© Claire Install



Guided walk images and White-faced Darter © Jess Slight



Field Notes

Norfolk Hawker reaches Cumbria!

On 7 July this year, a visitor to Foulshaw Moss in south Cumbria, Liz Weeks, took the photograph shown here of a male Norfolk Hawker. This was the first ever sighting in Cumbria, bringing the county dragonfly list to thirty recorded species.

The Norfolk Hawker has undergone a considerable range expansion in the past decade and is known over much of the south and most recently in parts of central and northern England. It now has populations in south Lancashire, from where it is presumed the Foulshaw dragonfly may have come - a travel distance of at least 70km. Whether it will ever become established in Cumbria will be something we will certainly be looking out for in future.

David Clarke
BDS Dragonfly Recorder for Cumbria



The perfect place to emerge!

Stan Maddams captured this photo at Langford lakes in Wiltshire. "There was lots of vegetation around the lake edge, mainly various grasses but this "stick", maybe the remains of a reed, was on its own just in the water. Initially I thought I was taking a picture of a recently emerged damselfly and it wasn't until I viewed the photo on the computer that I realised what I had assumed to be an ordinary perch turned out to be covered with a mass of exuviae!"

Going the distance!

Melinda sent us this photo with the emergence happening 20 metres from the pond! "This wasn't the only one. I found others on the terrace or garden table. We created this pond and wetland on our farm in Breckland last year as a view from our new build retirement house. The dragon and damselflies are now numerous."



If you photograph anything unusual or of interest please let our editor know:
lauren.kennedy@british-dragonflies.org.uk



Celebrating our birthday in style!

White-legged Damselfly © Steve Hewitt

To celebrate our 40th birthday we launched a photo competition and encouraged everyone to get involved! The competition ran from 12th July until 31st August.

We asked for photographs that really showcased dragonflies and damselflies in the UK, aiming for a 'natural' shot avoiding filtering and editing. We were overwhelmed with the response! We received **316 entries** and they were of such a high standard.

Initial judging was conducted by BDS staff and trustees, shortlisting to 12. The winner was then chosen by Mike Dilger, BDS President, ecologist, and wildlife reporter on the BBC television programme The One Show. Photographs were judged on composition, technical ability, originality and public appeal.

Our winner as chosen by Mike: *"What an utter pleasure it was to enjoy these sumptuous photos and an honour to pick the winner. The shortlisted are all brilliant, with fabulous portraits and amazing behaviours."*

My winner is Steve Hewitt's White-legged Damselfly. I love the pastel colours and the details of the damselfly are astonishing, like the hairs on the damsel's thorax! Plus the fern it has perched on seems to compliment the damselfly perfectly. My eyes are also drawn to the pterostigmata, which stand out from the uniform, yet beautifully rich background. What a shot and a deserved winner."

A huge congratulations to Steve winning £100 prize and the photo will feature as the cover of our 2024 calendar.

The following 11 images as chosen by the BDS team will accompany the winner in our calendar.

Congratulations to our shortlisted and overall winner! And a big thank you to everyone who sent in their photos; what a wonderful way to celebrate our birthday and British dragonflies!



Four-spotted and Broad-bodied Chasers © Francis Kelly



Golden-ringed Dragonfly © Lucien Harris



Four-spotted Chaser © Adrian Coleman



Southern Hawker © Tony Clarke



Red-veined Darter © Chris Lake



Banded Demoiselles © Jill Bewley



Emerald Damselfly © Cerys Bussey



Large Red Damselfly © Richard Knisely-Marpole



Norfolk Hawker © Kenneth Elsom



Emerald Damselfly © Louise Moon



Black Darter © Paul Rathbone

To appreciate the full size images, take a look at the photo competition webpage! You can purchase a calendar at our Annual Meeting on November 18th or via our website from November. All the money raised helps us to continue our work to champion dragonflies and conserve their wetland habitats!



Ruary Mackenzie Dodds and Kari de Koenigswarter; Celebrating 40 years of BDS

Kari and I knew nothing of the BDS until one Sunday afternoon in September 1986, when we paid a visit to Norman and Janet Moore's home in Swavesey, Cambridgeshire. It had been arranged by Kari's aunt Miriam, who knew we wanted to set up a Dragonfly Sanctuary on her land. Norman took me into the back kitchen, sat me at a red formica table, and asked me several serious questions about dragonflies and conservation. He had a piece of blue paper under his hand. I must have 'passed', because he pushed the paper across and asked me to read and sign it. It was an application for membership of the BDS! Only when that was done did he take us out and show us the pond he had specially created for dragonflies. I suppose you might call that our first 'instar' on our dragonfly/BDS journey.

The second 'instar' came on a wet Leeds morning, the 21st of November, 1987. The Annual Indoor Meeting of the BDS. Here was Norman again, and in the lunch break we found ourselves sharing sandwiches with Philip Corbet. I couldn't quite believe I was sitting chatting to two of the three authors of the Collins New Naturalist's legendary Dragonflies. Here too, were Jill and Ronnie Silsby (who travelled the world taking astonishing dragonfly photographs), Bill Wain (in a powerful yellow sweatshirt), and Colonel Evelyn Prendergast (who had created dragonfly ponds by exploding redundant heavy ammunition). And there was a lift back to the station with a chap called Brian Eversham, who was involved in the creation of a British dragonfly atlas! These were really interesting people!

The third 'instar' was the setting up of Ashton Water Dragonfly Sanctuary in 1990, the timber for its deer fence funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature. Its aim was to raise public awareness of dragonflies. It soon began to attract visitors and, notably, volunteers, among whom were existing – or soon to join! – BDS members, including Lynn and Henry Curry, Stuart Irons, Henry Stanier, Mick and Sue Parfitt, and Mick and Heather Twinn. Their



Ashton Water Dragonfly Sanctuary 1990



First Dragonfly Stand

subsequent significant contributions to the BDS are a matter of record, but we certainly had a lot of hard work, laughter and fun setting up and running the Sanctuary. All of us recall wet no-dragonflies-flying weekends, where we had to do a lot of talking instead!

At that time, the BDS's stated aims were the study and conservation of dragonflies, although in 1991, in our fourth 'instar', Kari (and her sister Berit from New York) and I prepared the publicity boards and, with Jill and Ronnie Silsby and Ray and Kay Thompson, set up and manned a stand for the BDS at the Sunday Times Wildlife and Conservation Exhibition at Olympia.

All the BDS member names mentioned above re-occur in our fifth 'instar', the creation of the National Dragonfly BioMuseum at Ashton Mill in Northamptonshire in 1995, a Registered Charity, opened by Chris Packham. As with the Sanctuary, driven forward by a terrific volunteer team, its aim was to raise public awareness of the importance, interest, beauty and plight of dragonflies.



BioMuseum Microscope in action

Inside (yes, finally we were under cover!) were interpretation boards, exhibits, live larvae, and our 'Larva-Feeding Show', using a TV-microscope link. Outside, we benefitted from both still and moving water dragonfly habitats into which we built observation platforms. We also ran Dragonfly Courses, Talks and Walks. We did of course promote BDS membership! In the meantime, the BDS leadership remained committed essentially to the study and conservation of dragonflies, but nevertheless provided some financial – and very considerable moral – support to this raising-awareness project, and by far the majority of the Biomuseum's volunteers were – or became – BDS members.

The sixth 'instar' took place on August the 20th, 1998. We set up a dragonfly stand at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water. We'd previously set up a stand at the East of England Show in July, 1993, so we based it on what we'd done there. It was of course a gamble to promote dragonflies to birders, but mindful of Norman Moore's dictum that 'Dragonflies are the birdwatchers' insect', we took a risk. It was a success, and the BDS joined us there a couple of years later. As most of you know, the BDS stand at the Bird Fair remains an important, useful and happy event in the BDS calendar.

When the changing requirements of the Ashton site's landlord precipitated our sad departure at the end of 2001, (by which time we had operated for seven years and attracted 22,000 visitors), we formed The Dragonfly Project, our seventh 'instar', and headed first for Woodwalton Fen, where, during our 2002 season of Courses and Dragonfly Safaris, we realized it was too isolated for our task of raising public awareness, and luckily were welcomed by the National Trust, to work in their Wren Building at Wicken Fen.

Which was our eighth 'instar'. Amazingly the Project team held together during these upheavals and, gathering new recruits at Wicken, we ran successful Courses, Larva-Feeding Shows, and Dragonfly Safaris for the next five years, 2003-2008.

Our ninth 'instar' took place on July 26th 2009, after the BDS had formally incorporated 'raising public awareness' as one of its key aims. It initiated a period of continued



Building an observation platform



Project Stand at Birdfair with Chris Packham

successful BDS work based at the dedicated cottage at Wicken fen. Full details of that period have already appeared in Dragonfly News.

Our tenth 'instar' has been the setting up of the Exbury Gardens BDS Dragonfly Hotspot Pond in Hampshire and its BDS Opening with Nick Baker on the 17th of July, 2021. It's wonderful that, after everything, we have been able to realise what we dreamed of, back at Ashton Water Dragonfly Sanctuary, namely an ideal habitat, with visitor-visible margins, two observation pontoons, comprehensive interpretation material, (thank you Steve Cham and Richard Lewington!) a shelter in which to give talks, and small team of loyal volunteers.

Apart from sporadic support for the wonderful BDS team up here in Scotland, the eleventh – and current – 'instar' on Kari's and my dragonfly journey is far removed from Britain. We are working to raise awareness of dragonflies in New Zealand. Whereas, nowadays, any natural history programme on British television almost invariably has a dragonfly sequence, and any related magazine will have at least one dragonfly image, the situation as regards dragonflies in New Zealand is as things were here in the '80s. We are giving public talks, we've done a radio programme (one, so far!), and are working with government departments, and the Greater Wellington Regional Council to promote greater awareness of



The Wren Building at Wicken Fen

dragonflies. We are using the results of our night-filming of a burrow dwelling flying-fossil dragonfly *Uropetala carovei*, the Bush Giant, (as shown at two BDS meetings) as a publicity tool. There is a very long way to go, and no BDS! But we have to start somewhere! So this then is our eleventh 'instar', and we don't know what will happen next. An 'emergence', perhaps??!

In the meantime, it's truly heartening to see the BDS going from strength to strength, creating such huge interest, and really getting the Society right up the agenda! Long live the BDS!



Kari at work in New Zealand

To Bulgaria and beyond

by Dave Smallshire

The 'Our History' BDS webpage notes that in July 2004, the BDS started 'venturing abroad on group trips.' This began with an offer to the BDS of a reconnaissance tour of Bulgaria with Nikolai Dilchev, Director of a wildlife tour company called Pandion-D, and Dr Milen Marinov, who in 1999 had discovered a new dragonfly species (Bulgarian Emerald) during systematic surveys of the country as part of his PhD study. Andy McGeeney and I jumped at the chance to visit this little-known part of Europe and during 14-24 July 2003 we were given a whistle-stop tour of central, southern and eastern locations. These took in a series of well-established birding sites and produced a wonderful array of dragonflies and other wildlife. Nikolai was rather taken aback at how slowly we progressed around the sites, reflecting how much longer it took to find, watch and photograph dragonflies than it did for birds! During and after the tour, we fashioned a suitable itinerary that could be run for BDS members in 2004. I advertised the trip in the autumn magazine and gave a talk at our Annual Meeting in November. Through the good services of the late Tim Beynon and Nigel Jones, we were able to organise the trip under the banner of 'Quest for Nature', a not-for-profit branch of Ornitholidays. The tour was based at four hotels in the south-western third of the country and ran from 1 to 10 July, thereby giving a chance to see over 50 dragonfly species and much more besides. With all the available places taken, 17 members



The BDS group in Bulgaria during the first dragonfly tour in 2004 at Koprivstitsa monument.

embarked on the ancient coach that collected us at Sofia Airport. (As an aside, I sat down next to a Sue Capey, who became Sue Smallshire exactly two years later to the day – Bulgaria has a very special place in my heart!). Suffice it to say that the trip was an outstanding success, despite being too late to see Bulgarian Emerald. The profits from this and subsequent tours were donated to help raise awareness of dragonflies in the country – at the time, Bulgarians didn't even have a properly recognised name for dragonflies! Last year, I retired from tour-leading and made my final 'Bulgaria's Dragonflies' tour for Naturetrek.

It was a typically great trip, with highlights that included catching a Bulgarian Emerald, finding an exuvia of the spectacular Bladetail (which finally proved that it was breeding in the south-west of the country) and seeing a Blue-eyed Goldenring, the 62nd addition on my Bulgarian list.

In parallel with the Bulgaria tours, I went on to organise trips to Sri Lanka with Karen Conniff and to South Africa with Warwick Tarboton, before setting up dragonfly-focussed tours for Naturetrek to Bulgaria, two locations in France and south-west Turkey. Further afield, I partnered Dennis Paulson, Phil Benstead and Tom Kompier in wonderful tours to Costa Rica, Panama, Malaysia and Brazil, with group members coming from various European countries and the USA, as well as the BDS.

Subsequently, Phil Benstead has run a series of exciting trips under his company Odonatours, while

Naturetrek and a few other ecotour companies also offer dragonfly-focussed tours to various countries. The locations for my tours were very carefully selected using important criteria: a 'user-friendly' co-leader who knew the country and its species; a realistic itinerary taking in great dragonfly sites; and a good field guide to help us identify what we found. The last took some time in preparation and final versions appeared subsequently, having benefitted from our observations. Sometimes, Sue and I made reconnaissance visits to test the logistics. Confession: I'm really a birder at heart, so I always keep my eyes peeled for anything of interest. Inevitably, we end up trying to check out anything that moves ... and some things that don't! To give you some idea of our schedule, days in South Africa typically ran from before dawn until well after dark; siestas were out of the question, because dragonflies are active then. Our wildlife checklist ran to 28 pages and it was a test of some endurance to see it through to the end at the evening log call. Photography has always been a passion of mine and increasingly of other dragonfly tour participants, especially as digital cameras have become better and more accessible. On the 2003 reconnaissance tour, I



This little pool in south-west Turkey proved to be a new site for the Magnificent Emperor, Europe's largest dragonfly.



used a video camera to record Milen describing critical ID features: a crash course in identifying dozens of species new to me. Maybe only half of the participants of the 2004 Bulgaria trip took photos of the dragonflies, whereas now almost everyone does. It soon became clear that participants should follow a code of practice when their cameras with different focal lengths homed in on some unsuspecting dragonfly: those that needed to be closest went in last, to avoid scaring off the target.

Images are a great aid to identification and enable a reference collection to be taken home in the way that specimens might have been collected and prepared in another age. Curating a collection of digital images requires about the same amount of time and diligence as an insect collection! A substantial proportion of my 90,000+ edited digital images are dragonflies. I have my screen saver set to display random images – without any contextual information, they can be quite a challenge to the memory.

In the same way that the production of Britain's Dragonflies was a natural progression from the many weekend dragonfly courses that Andy Swash and I led for the Field Studies Council, my experiences leading tours in Europe and elsewhere gave me the background and images to produce Europe's Dragonflies. My passion has always been to experience wildlife and then to share it with others, with added value. Producing excellent field guides with simple text and the best images has been a big part of that.

So if you're keen on dragonflies and feel like broadening your horizons, a good first step could be to visit France or better still (though I'm biased) Bulgaria.



Blue-winged Helicopter hanging in the Costa Rican rainforest: the world's longest species and truly spectacular in flight



Bladetail is the largest and most spectacular Gomphid in Europe, always a prize to see in Bulgaria



Join us for our Annual Meeting and AGM! Saturday 18th November

Join us for our Annual Meeting and celebrate 40 years of the British Dragonfly Society. The day is open to anyone with an interest in Dragonflies and wetland conservation, so please do invite friends and family.

This event is free but donations are welcome which help us cover the cost of the event. Registration is essential; book your ticket by visiting the events page of our website or using the following QR code.

The day will be hosted at the Brackenhurst Campus, Nottingham Trent University.

Refreshments (tea and coffee) will be provided although lunch is not provided, please bring your own lunch or lunch is available to purchase at an on-site café.

With a brilliant line up of speakers you will hear about the work of the society as well as current research and exciting dragonfly news from the UK and further afield. It is also a chance for us to come together to network and celebrate 40 years of the BDS!



Speakers and talks include:

- Mike Dilger – BDS President, ecologist, and wildlife reporter.
- Celebrating 40 Years of BDS – Tim Coleshaw, Chair of Trustees
- BDS Conservation work – hear from our staff about conservation partnership work
- Recording for Local Wildlife Site criteria - Dave Goddard
- Dragonflies of Panshanger Park – designated as a Dragonfly Hotspot this year, Panshanger is home to 19 species of dragonfly and carefully managed by Tarmac and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Dragonfly Research from UCL: The Dogfighting Tactics of Dragonflies – Sam Fabian (Postdoctoral Research Associate)
- Dragons Down Under; exploring the colourful species of Australia - John Curd



Give the Gift of Dragonfly Conservation

Are you looking for a unique present for a friend or relative? Did you know you can buy a BDS membership as a gift? For as little as £25.00 you can purchase an annual gift membership: a thoughtful present for a budding entomologist, dragonfly lover or all-round naturalist.

We really appreciate the support from every single member and it helps us to continue our work to conserve dragonflies and the habitat they need.

Take a look at our website to find out more:

www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/membership



© Iain Leach

Leave a lasting legacy

It is thanks to legacy income that we were able to employ a fundraiser six years ago, and that in turn has led to significant funding that has allowed us to grow our staff team. With the continued impact of climate change our dragonflies and damselflies are at increasing risk and, with precious wetlands drying up, our work is more important than ever. We have so many ambitious and exciting ideas for future projects, and legacy income provides us with the additional funds to grow and develop our projects.

Please consider leaving something to British Dragonfly Society when you write or update your will. We are so grateful for your continued support.

You may like to include the following wording when creating your legacy:

"I give the sum of £..... to British Dragonfly Society (Registered Charity No. 1168300), Ashcroft, Brington Road, Old Weston, Huntingdon, PE28 5LP for its general purposes."

A Gift in Memory

Celebrating and commemorating the life of your loved one with a gift in their memory is a fitting tribute that helps to support our work for Dragonflies and Damselflies. We're always incredibly touched and grateful to receive donations large or small, which will have a lasting impact for generations to come.



Checklist of the Damselflies & Dragonflies of Britain & Ireland
Last Revision: 11/8/20. The sequence and nomenclature follow Schorr and Paulson, July 2013:
<http://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/slater-museum/biodiversity-resources/dragonflies/world-odonata-list>

Table 1. Category A: resident and/or regular migrant species recorded since 2000
This category comprises species with well-established breeding populations and migrant species that have been recorded regularly since 2000, the latter often attempting to establish temporary breeding populations.

ZYGOPTERA	Damselflies	ANISOPTERA (cont'd)	Dragonflies (cont'd)
Lestidae <i>Chalcolestes viridis</i> <i>Lestes barbarus</i> <i>Lestes dryas</i> <i>Lestes sponsa</i> Calopterygidae <i>Calopteryx splendens</i> <i>Calopteryx virgo</i> Platycnemididae <i>Platycnemis pennipes</i> Coenagrionidae <i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i> <i>Coenagrion hastulatum</i> <i>Coenagrion lunulatum</i> <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i> <i>Coenagrion puella</i> <i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i> <i>Coenagrion scitulum</i> <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i> <i>Erythromma najas</i> <i>Erythromma viridulum</i> <i>Ischnura elegans</i> <i>Ischnura pumilio</i> <i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Emerald Damselflies Willow Emerald Damselfly Southern Emerald Damselfly Scarce Emerald Damselfly Emerald Damselfly Banded Demoiselle Beautiful Demoiselle White-legged Damselfly Small Red Damselfly Northern Damselfly Irish Damselfly Southern Damselfly Azure Damselfly Variable Damselfly Dainty Damselfly Common Blue Damselfly Red-eyed Damselfly Small Red-eyed Damselfly Blue-tailed Damselfly Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly Large Red Damselfly	ANISOPTERA (cont'd) <i>Anax ephippiger</i> <i>Anax imperator</i> <i>Anax parthenope</i> <i>Brachytron pratense</i> Gomphidae <i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i> Cordulegasteridae <i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i> Corduliidae <i>Cordulia aenea</i> <i>Somatochlora arctica</i> <i>Somatochlora metallica</i> Libellulidae <i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i> <i>Libellula depressa</i> <i>Libellula fulva</i> <i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i> <i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i> <i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i> <i>Sympetrum danae</i> <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i> <i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i> <i>Sympetrum striolatum</i> *	Dragonflies (cont'd) Vagrant Emperor Emperor Dragonfly Lesser Emperor Hairy Dragonfly Common Clubtail Golden-ringed Dragonfly Emeralds Downy Emerald Northern Emerald Brilliant Emerald Darters, Chasers, Skimmers White-faced Darter Broad-bodied Chaser Scarce Chaser Four-spotted Chaser Black-tailed Skimmer Keeled Skimmer Black Darter Red-veined Darter Ruddy Darter Common Darter

* - includes dark specimens in the north-west, formerly treated as a separate species *Sympetrum nigrescens* **Highland Darter**

Table 2. Category B: vagrant species
Since 1998 records of these species have been assessed by the Odonata Rarities Committee.

ZYGOPTERA	Damselflies	ANISOPTERA (cont'd)	Dragonflies (cont'd)
Lestidae <i>Sympecma fusca</i> ANISOPTERA Aeshnidae <i>Anax junius</i> Gomphidae <i>Stylurus flavipes</i> Corduliidae <i>Somatochlora flavomaculata</i>	Emerald Damselflies Winter Damselfly Dragonflies Hawkers Green Darner River (Yellow-legged) Clubtail Yellow-spotted Emerald	Libellulidae <i>Leucorrhinia pectoralis</i> <i>Crocothemis erythraea</i> † <i>Pantala flavescens</i> <i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i> ** <i>Sympetrum pedemontanum</i> <i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>	Darters, Chasers, Skimmers Large White-faced Darter Scarlet Darter Wandering Glider Yellow-winged Darter Banded Darter Vagrant Darter

** - has bred. † - has bred in the Channel Islands.

Table 3. Category C: former breeding species now locally extinct in the UK
Any further records of these species will be assessed by the Odonata Rarities Committee.

ZYGOPTERA	Damselflies	ANISOPTERA	Dragonflies
Coenagrionidae <i>Coenagrion armatum</i>	Norfolk Damselfly	Family uncertain <i>Oxygastra curtisii</i>	Emeralds Orange-spotted Emerald

Table 4. Category D: species recorded only in the Channel Islands

ANISOPTERA	Dragonflies
<i>Orthetrum brunneum</i> <i>Sympetrum meridionale</i>	Southern Skimmer Southern Darter

Table 5. Category E: exotic species introduced accidentally
These records have come principally from aquatic nurseries (Parr, 2000).

ZYGOPTERA	Damselflies	ANISOPTERA	Dragonflies
<i>Argia fumipennis</i> <i>Ceriagrion</i> <i>cerinorubellum</i> <i>Enallagma signatum</i> <i>Ischnura posita</i> <i>Ischnura senegalensis</i>	Variable Dancer Painted Waxtail Orange Bluet Fragile Forktail Marsh Bluetail	<i>Anax gibbosulus</i> <i>Anax guttatus</i> <i>Crocothemis servilia</i> <i>Erythemis simplicicollis</i> <i>Rhodothermis rufa</i> <i>Tramea transmarina euryale</i> <i>Urothemis bisignata</i>	Green Emperor Lesser Green Emperor Oriental Scarlet Eastern Pondhawk Spine-legged Redbolt Ocean Glider

Guidelines for Contributors

All material should be sent to the Editor at the email address on the inside front cover. If in doubt, please contact the Editor to discuss potential contributions and to advise on presentation and format. By contributing to **Dragonfly News** you give permission for the work to be used in other ways with the same attribution including reproduction on the BDS website. All contributions on any aspect of the British and Irish dragonfly fauna are welcome for consideration at any time. Contributions on continental European and other species are also considered for inclusion. Contributions by naturalists based in Britain or Ireland travelling overseas are also welcome.

Articles requesting information or providing news of forthcoming events are welcome. The editor is happy to receive material by email, preferably in MS WORD (DOC file extension) or txt format. Typed material requiring rekeying is less welcome (unless very short!) but will still be considered. The Editor reserves the right to make changes without prior reference to the author, but will endeavor to contact the author if a lot of editing is required. Please provide contact details with anything you send and note the copy deadlines printed on inside front cover if you want something to appear in a particular issue. Photographs should be high quality jpg format with the quality setting at its highest, please do not embed in a document as this compromises quality. Please use a file sharing service such as drop box or 'Wetransfer' to send large files. Thank you.

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New in – our enamel pin badges!

Species include; Banded Demoiselle, Broad-bodied Chaser, Four-spotted Chaser and Emperor Dragonfly.



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You can purchase a Field Guide to the larvae and exuviae of British Dragonflies on our website. Perfect for identifying your pond dipping finds this autumn and winter.

Price £7.50 plus post and packaging

