

British
Dragonfly
Society



**Country Dragonfly Record
Reports England 2024**

CONTENT

[YOU CAN FIND THE UP TO DATE
COUNTY DRAGONFLY RECORDER
CONTACT LIST ON THE BDS
WEBSITE.](#)

Vice Counties with 2024 reports

- 1: West Cornwall with Scilly pages 3-5
- 2: East Cornwall pages 3-5
- 3: South Devon pages 6-7
- 4: North Devon pages 6-7
- 5: South Somerset page 8
- 6: North Somerset page 8
- 7: North Wiltshire pages 9-10
- 8: South Wiltshire pages 9-10
- 9: Dorset pages 11-12
- 11: South Hampshire page 14
- 12: North Hampshire page 14
- 13: West Sussex pages 15-17
- 14: East Sussex pages 15-17
- 15: East Kent pages 18-21
- 16: West Kent pages 18-21
- 17: Surrey pages 22-23
- 18: South Essex pages 24-25
- 19: North Essex pages 24-25
- 20: Hertfordshire page 26
- 21: Middlesex page 27
- 22: Berkshire pages 28-31
- 23: Oxfordshire pages 32-33
- 24: Buckinghamshire pages 34-40
- 25: East Suffolk page 41
- 26: West Suffolk page 41
- 27: East Norfolk page 42
- 28: West Norfolk page 42
- 29: Cambridgeshire pages 43-44
- 30: Bedfordshire page 45
- 31: Huntingdonshire pages 46-48

- 32: Northamptonshire pages 46-48
- 33: East Gloucestershire page 49
- 34: West Gloucestershire page 49
- 36: Herefordshire page 50
- 37: Worcestershire pages 51-54
- 38: Warwickshire pages 55-56
- 39: Staffordshire page 57
- 40: Shropshire page 58
- 54: North Lincolnshire pages 59-60
- 55: Leicestershire with Rutland pages 61-62
- 56: Nottinghamshire pages 63-65
- 57: Derbyshire pages 63-65
- 58: Cheshire pages 66-68
- 61: South-east Yorkshire page 69
- 62: North-east Yorkshire pages 70-71
- 63: South-west Yorkshire page 72
- 64: Mid-west Yorkshire pages 73-74
- 65: North-west Yorkshire pages 70-71
- 66: County Durham page 74
- 67: South Northumberland page 74
- 68: North Northumberland page 75
- 69: Westmorland with Furness pages 76-78
- 70: Cumberland pages 76-78
- 71: Isle of Man page 79

1: CORNWALL WITH SCILLY 2: EAST CORNWALL STEVE JONES

Observations for the 2024 flying season got off to a slightly later start than usual with the 12 April providing sightings of **Large Red Damselflies** from Goss Moor (Toby Cogan), Bissoe (Dave Cooper), Kenidjack (A F A Hawkins) and Marazion Marsh (Christine Moore). On the same day, Christine Moore also spotted a **Blue-tailed Damselfly** at Marazion Marsh and James Fowler recorded a **Beautiful Demoiselle** at Gwithian!

I was pleased to find teneral **Small Red-eyed Damselflies** once again at Rosewarne Mill along the Red River Valley LNR on 4 July, while just 2.6 miles south Kate Dalziel found and photographed at least 10 adults at Pendarves Woods CWT Reserve on 26 July. Further sightings of the species came from the Bude Canal (Hilary Philips, 30 July) and Mount Edgcumbe (Libbie and Bob Bosisto, 4 August).

Once again, there was just a single record of **White-legged Damselfly** from Cornwall during 2024 - a single male photographed by Louis Parkerson on 2 June at Boyton Bridge on the River Tamar; even this was technically on the Devon bank of the river! Targeting the River Tamar and its immediate tributaries by exploring the riverbanks at road crossings like Boyton Bridge, Polson Bridge, North Tamerton and Gunnislake would be very helpful in determining the current status of the species in Cornwall. Even if you visit these areas and don't find anything, please do let me know.

Laura Snell and I discovered a substantial colony of **Small Red Damselflies** at Lanjeth on the 14 August at a former aquatic nursery that is being restored following years of neglect. The site has big potential as a dragonfly habitat with numerous pools of varying sizes, which currently support breeding **Common Hawker** and **Emerald Damselflies** amongst the 14 species recorded during the first visit. On 9 August Laura and I also recorded Small Red Damselflies breeding at Colquite Lake and Marsh after a gap of around 35 years! Further records for the species came from its long-standing sites at Breney Common, (Leo Redman, 6 August), Carkeet, (Georgina Paul, 26 June) and Great Wheal Seton. Sadly, a County Wildlife Site at Tolvaddon, which supported a population of Small Red Damselflies and is within 5m of our Odonata Key Site at Great Wheal Seton, has been partially infilled by a developer clearing the area ahead of seeking planning permission for a mixed development. Environmental Impact Surveys were carried out AFTER the site was cleared!

The **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** was once again recorded at its regular Falmouth site where Dave Cooper noted it as early as 5 May. The species also continues to thrive at Great Wheal Seton, along the Red River Valley LNR, where counts of up to 100 adults were made (7 July), as well as at its long-standing sites at Bowthick and at the large shallow pool in Davidstow Woods, both on Bodmin Moor (Steve Jones).

On the 10 July I decided to visit one of my old haunts at Pennan's Pool, once home to Cornwall's only Ruddy Darter colony (extinct here since the late 1990s) and was delighted to find four male and two female **Southern Emerald Damselflies** a first for Cornwall, and indeed, a first for the South West! The site is just outside Penhale MOD camp, which is peppered with temporary pools and wet flushes across a dune complex, much the same as Pennan's Pool. Thus, it came as no surprise that Dave Thomas later found the species inside Penhale Sands SSSI on 29 August through to 2 September, including ovipositing pairs. We hope to obtain permission to hold a field trip within this restricted area to carry out a further search of the dunes during 2025.

One of the most exciting finds of the Cornish Odonata year came on 1 August when Christine Moore found two male **Norfolk Hawkers** at Marazion Marsh "jousting" together in a small clearing - a first for the county! Christine also noted two males, one with half a wing missing, still present on 3 August. Over at Nanjizal on 2 August, Mark Wallace discovered another male in a mist net. Not far from Land's End, this is likely to be one of the most south westerly Norfolk Hawker records that we will get; was it a wandering British insect that was just about to run out of land, or was it an immigrant just making land?

I was delighted to find **Scarce Chaser** still at Lethytep (Lanreath), where four males were holding territories

on 1 June, including one that stayed in tandem with a **Four-Spotted Chaser** for over five minutes! This is the second consecutive year that the same behaviour has been noted at Lethyep, but it does also seem likely that successful breeding has taken place; the same may also be the case along the Bude Canal where Hilary Philips once again recorded the species on 30 July.

The **Southern Migrant Hawker** was recorded at three sites in West Cornwall: Pennan's Pool, Penhale, by Matthew Broadbent, Elliot Cornelius and Steve Jones, (1-12 August); Windmill Farm by Dougy Wright (14-24 August); and Marazion Marsh by Christine Moore (29 August - 19 September). All three sites have areas of broadly suitable habitat for successful breeding, but no exuviae have been discovered yet, despite searches at the first two locations.

It was a relatively quiet year for the **Lesser Emperor** in Cornwall; only Windmill Farm and Marazion Marsh produced records. Dougy Wright regularly noted the species at the former site from 26 July to 4 September, while at the latter site Christine Moore recorded it from 31 July to 19 September.

Intriguingly, a single male **Emperor Dragonfly** was recorded off the coast at Looe Island by Claire Lewis on 12 August, and it remained there until at least 20 August when Adrian Langdon and Jasmina Goodair photographed the insect. A local or another immigrant to our shores?

There was a slightly better haul of records for the **Black Darter** in 2024 with sightings at Priddacombe (Steve Edmunds), Bowthick, Davidstow Woods, Crowdy Reservoir and Crowdy Marsh (Steve Jones and Teri Nicholls) across the north of Bodmin Moor. The numerous new scrapes and pools created by South West Lakes Trust at Crowdy Marsh have been particularly good for the species.

It seems to have been a poor year for **Red-veined Darters** in Cornwall with only a handful of records from Windmill Farm reported from 8 June and 30 August (Jason Chapman, Dougy Wright and Steve Jones).

After all the excitement of successful breeding by the **Vagrant Emperor** in 2023, there were just two records from VC1 in 2024, a single male photographed at Mousehole on Christmas Eve by Noah Bailey, followed by a single insect found close to a moth trap at Longstone, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly on Christmas Day by Michael Scott. This neatly brought the Cornish dragonfly year to an end on Santa's big day with 1897 Odonata records for VC1 and 2 in the bag.

If you can help with recording at under-recorded sites please do get in touch with me. Natural England are keen to get a more frequent recording regime across Goss Moor as are Cornwall Wildlife Trust at Breney Common and its other reserves, to name just a few.

Thank you to everyone who sent in records during 2024; each and every record, no matter how common the species, is a really important addition to our data set.



^ Southern Emerald Damselfly at Pennan's Pool, Cornwall on 10 July 2024 by Steve Jones.



> Norfolk Hawker at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, on 1 August 2024 by Christine Moore.

3: SOUTH DEVON

4: NORTH DEVON

DAVE SMALLSHIRE

Despite an unusually cool, wet spring, which suppressed insect numbers widely, numbers of Damselflies and Dragonflies at regularly monitored sites were not as low as they might have been. For example, Ventiford Ponds (private) had 131% of the average numbers found during 2018-23, although the adjacent Stover Country Park had only 59% of the 2019-23 average. However, the lower numbers at Stover can be put down to inhospitable conditions at the lake while it was being dredged. Looking at both sites overall, it would seem that more species were present in larger numbers in 2024 than were present in smaller numbers.

Norfolk Hawkers were seen again at Slapton Ley, between 30 May and 16 August (but a maximum of only three) and singles were seen at nearby Beesands (Widdicombe) Ley on 7 June and for the second year running at Lower Bruckland Ponds, in south-east Devon, on 21 July.

Checks of recently created bog pools high on Dartmoor at Ockerton Court (560 m above sea level) produced large numbers of Four-spotted Chaser exuviae, good numbers of Black Darters, breeding evidence for Common Hawker, Large Red Damselfly, Common Blue Damselflies and Blue-tailed Damselflies, and the presence of Emperor Dragonflies and Common Darters. If the last two species are able to breed in such bog pools, they might compete with the declining Common Hawkers and Black Darters.

Down at sea level, single Lesser Emperors were at Southdown Valley, Soar, on 1 and 16 August (seen here for the third year in a row) and at Slapton Ley on 12 and 16 August. The only records of Vagrant Emperor came in the run-up to Christmas: a male photographed in Plymouth on 18 December and individuals presumed to be of this species at Dawlish Warren and inland at Chudleigh on 24 December. Winter records are not unusual for this species.

Small numbers of Hairy Dragonfly were recorded between early May and early June at Darts Farm, Dawlish Warren, Decoy Country Park, Exeter Canal (exuvia found), Exminster & Powderham Marshes, Gallows Cross SUDS ponds (Kingsteignton), Grand Western Canal (up to eight), Little Bradley Ponds (exuvia found) and Slapton Ley; up to 11 were seen at both Stover and the adjacent Ventiford Ponds, with evidence of breeding at both. Two at Braunton Marsh on 11 May were the first to be recorded there.

Small numbers of Downy Emerald were noted at the expected sites: Bystock (including a mating pair on 20 June), Little Bradley Ponds (including one egg-laying on 10 June), Magazine Pond (Decoy CP), Squabmoor Reservoir, Stover and Ventiford Ponds, with a maximum of eight at the last site on 20 May.

Scarce Chasers were noted at Braunton Marsh (including egg-laying), Darts Farm, Dawlish Warren, Exeter Canal, Exminster Marshes, Grand Western Canal, Jennetts Reservoir (Bideford, four on 25 June), Lower Bruckland Ponds, Lower Tamar Lake (the first record for West Devon), River Culm at Hele and Slapton Ley, mostly in small numbers, but 35 were at Lower Bruckland Ponds on 2 June.

Black Darter was only recorded from Dartmoor (including one egg-laying at Smallerhanger, Cadover Bridge, at 210 m ASL) and at Stover, where there was a wandering male on 18 August. Nearby on the same day was the only record of Ruddy Darter, also likely a wandering male. The only records of Red-veined Darter comprised singles at Soar on 1 June (Warren Barn, West Soar) and 1 August (Southdown Valley).

A healthy population of Emerald Damselfly has built up in recent years at Ventiford Ponds, with over 100 on 17 July. Small Red Damselfly was noted at Aylesbeare, Bystock, Godborough, Emsworthy, Meeth and Upcott Grange, Broadwoodwidger, with up to 25 at Smallerhanger, Cadover Bridge. The only records of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly were of six, including two mating pairs, at Wigford Down on 11 July and four males at Smallerhanger, Cadover Bridge, on 12 August, probably wanderers from nearby sites. Only casual reports of Southern Damselfly had been received at the time of writing, from the known colonies at Aylesbeare and Prewley.

Red-eyed Damselfly was seen between mid-May and early September at Bystock (where first seen in 2023),

Darts Farm (14), Dawlish Warren (10 emerged), Decoy CP (56), Exeter Canal (100+), Grand Western Canal (75), Little Bradley Ponds (45), Lower Bruckland Ponds, Squabmoor Reservoir, Stover (115) and Ventiford Ponds (110). Two males at a SUDS pond at Holman's Wood, Chudleigh, on 31 May were presumably wanderers. Small Red-eyed Damselfly peaked at 150+ along Exeter Canal, 28 at Gallows Cross SUDS ponds (Kingsteignton), 40 at Little Bradley Ponds, 48 at Southdown Valley, Soar, 129 at Stover and 134 at Ventiford Ponds. There were also reports from the Grand Western Canal and in North Devon at Gammaton and Darracott Reservoir (Great Torrington).

A major indoor task has been a Priority Sites analysis covering the last 40 years. Detailed inventory files for all the county's important dragonfly sites can be accessed via the BDS [website](#). Please have a look at them and try to visit the unconfirmed sites to upgrade their status. An updated version of 'Dragonflies in Devon' is also now available to download from the website.

Make your recording contribute most to monitoring dragonflies by:

- adopting a site and making complete lists during visits through the season;
- recording numbers and breeding activity at unconfirmed Priority Sites for locally and nationally-important species;
- checking Dartmoor and Exmoor blanket bog, valley mire and ponds, and suitable heathy, lowland ponds for evidence of Common Hawker and Black Darter.

5: SOUTH SOMERSET 6: NORTH SOMERSET CHRIS CARDNO & JON VAN-GOWLER

Chris Cardno and Jon Van-Gowler are the new CDRs for Somerset.

Chris Cardno introduces himself: "I have a background as a specialist in Marketing & Research before moving into self-employment in Project Management / Business Analysis for Global IT projects.

Having retired, I was keen to spend a lot more time away from the laptop, out in the field. Having been a keen amateur nature watcher and photographer, I began volunteering for RSPB Ham Wall on the Avalon Marshes, undertaking Avian and Odonata surveys as well as a lot of reserve maintenance. I have also personally initiated Odonata Surveys at Priddy Pools on the Mendips.

During this time, I also began attending a local group who ran educational walks and talks on a wide range of topics, including Odonata. This sparked a real interest in Odonata and a very rapid learning curve.

I was keen to learn more and to ensure that the great work being done by volunteer surveyors resulted in records being captured and used upstream for scientific research, ensuring the effort was captured and had a clear purpose.

To this end when I was asked by David Hepper if I would work with Jon, a very experienced Odonatologist, as Joint County Recorder for Somerset, I was happy to accept. "

Jon Van-Gowler was a professional musician and lifelong Odonatologist, starting in the 1960s by studying Dragonfly biology via 'Tillyard'; later studying Odonata phenology and the distribution of species worldwide.

Jon has undertaken long-term study and raising of Larvae until metamorphosis including rearing from eggs. He has done this with most of the British dragonfly species.

He has regularly been sought out by organisations nationwide to give expert talks and provide consultancy on Odonata, including habitat creation and preservation..

He was finally coerced into becoming Somerset County Recorder and training up Chris as his apprentice.

His primary 'patch' in 2024 has been the Avalon Marshes which form the majority of the new 'Super NNR' stretching from WWT Steart Marshes on Bridgwater Bay, inland as far as Glastonbury and Wells in Somerset.

This area supports important populations of both **Variable Damselfly** (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) and **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*) together with a sizeable **Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) roost at RSPB Ham Wall.

During 2024 there have been multiple sightings across the Avalon Marshes of both **Lesser Emperor** (*Anax parthenope*) and **Norfolk Hawker** (*Aeshna isoceles*) both of which have been observed Ovipositing and we continue to chase down categoric proof of local breeding. We are looking forward to engaging with surveyors across the wider County this coming year.

7: NORTH WILTSHIRE 8: SOUTH WILTSHIRE ROSIE RAY

It was an early start to the season with the first records on 12 April; these were of **Large Red Damselfly** (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) and **Downy Emerald** (*Cordulia aenea*), which we would expect to see as being among the first emerging species.

I was lucky to witness a mass emergence of **Downy Emeralds** (*Cordulia aenea*) at Lower Moor Reserve, on 12 May. Many were struggling to emerge in the shade so were given a helping hand to a sunnier spot.

Hairy Dragonflies (*Brachytron pratense*) were recorded in the county, but not as many as last season. There was evidence of breeding; exuviae were found, and ovipositing was observed at Lower Moor Reserve.

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) numbers were good, in general, throughout the county. But, day after day, a pair of Black Headed Gulls decimated ovipositing females at Lower Moor Reserve. Time will tell what impact this will have on future numbers.

There were good numbers of **Lesser Emperors** (*Anax parthenope*) this year with records coming in from the far south (Langford Lakes) to the far north (Cotswold Water Park). It seems to be well established in the county now; breeding activity was noted at many sites.

While doing a survey at Caen Hill Locks, Devizes, with Heather England, she noticed a very odd pairing. A male **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*) had hooked up with a female **Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*). They remained in tandem for over 20 minutes and eventually flew off together. Heather managed to get very clear photos of them. It will be interesting to see if, in years to come, a hybrid species emerges from this.

Another successful species of the year was the **Willow Emerald Damselfly** (*Chalcolestes viridis*). Although there have been more records for this species than usual sent in, I suspect that this is partly due to the increased number of recorders which, in turn, are covering a wider area of the county.

I have received a few records of **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (*Erythromma viridulum*) outside of the known range for this species; after speaking with the Recorders, the records were accepted. This would suggest that this species is also spreading west; however, sometimes, it is difficult to determine whether a species actually *is* increasing its range or whether it has been there all the time but not recorded.

A noticeable trend in all species this year is the time spent on the wing; adults were noted much earlier *and* later than in previous years.

In conclusion, although good numbers of most species have been recorded this year, numbers overall were down compared to previous years.

v Black Headed Gulls ambushing ovipositing Emperor Dragonflies by Rosie Ray.





< Scarce Chaser male and Four-spotted Chaser female copulating by Heather England.

> Newly emerged Downy Emerald at Lower Moor Reserve by Rosie Ray.



< Lesser Emperor with prey at Langford Lake by Rosie Ray.



> Willow Emerald Damselfly by Rosie Ray.

9: DORSET ANDREW BROWN

Greetings from Dorset, where the season started extremely early this year with a **Beautiful Demoiselle**, seen in a Christchurch garden on 20 March. This is technically in VC 11, but I'm going to bag this one for geographical Dorset!

Between iRecord and Living Record, 34 species were recorded in Dorset in 2024, the same as in 2023, although the species composition is slightly different; we had a couple of very special visitors this year whilst other migrants (Red- veined Darter and Vagrant Emperor) were missing.

Common Hawkers and **Black Darters**, which share a similar habitat preference of acidic and nutrient poor waterbodies: bogs, ponds and lakes, still appear to be in decline. For the **Common Hawker**, always elusive, and almost certainly under-recorded (I've never seen more than one at a site, and not every year), there wasn't a single record for this year anywhere in Dorset. This is quite worrying, but fits the trend of decline we have been seeing. Even in sites where it has previously been recorded, such as Morden Bog, which has had comprehensive surveys undertaken this year thanks to a new initiative (more below), none were found.

It is a similar story for **Black Darter**; there have been just a hand full of records this year from sites which are fairly close to each other, such as Arne, Wareham Forest, Tadnoll (a single sighting) and Holt Heath. However, there are still healthy populations to be found at Town Common and East Ramsdown ARC reserves (technically in VC11).

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies appear to be doing extremely well in recent years, with small colonies now well established at Tadnoll, and Winfirth Heath, and there's a small population at Portland (I have not visited the site, but it would be interesting to compare to the others). Recently, the species has also reappeared at Upton Heath and nearby Upton County Park, which has started a recording scheme - a really positive development. This year a number were also seen at Silverlake, which also had some other special visitors – see below.

The **Norfolk Hawker** is now firmly established in Radipole Lake, and has spread to locations nearby, such as Bennett's Water Gardens and Lodmoor, and up the coast near Abbotsbury. This year two were recorded at Sculpture by the Lakes, near Moreton (presumably a result of the species spreading from Weymouth) and has appeared at Lychett Bay, in the east of the county. I expect this species to continue to spread if it can find suitable habitat to breed.

Lesser Emperors, a regular migrant, are still breeding at Longham Lakes and have been for a number of years. This year they have been found at a new location in good numbers (up to five) at Silverlake, Crossways, along with another spectacular migrant (more on that later!). The presence of so many may suggest they may have already established themselves there; it seems unlikely so many would just arrive. They are regularly recorded at many places in the west of the county, such as Radipole Lake, but always as lone individuals. They are also often sighted further along the west coast of Dorset, at places like Abbotsbury and West Bexington, sites on bird migration routes, favoured by birders who often spot them; they have also been recorded up in the Wareham Channel and Lytchett Bay.

Willow Emerald Damselfly, first seen in 2021 right at the east of the county at Hengistbury Head; the species appeared to be breeding here as egg scars were found in 2023. It continues to do well; at least seven individuals were seen in 2024, with two females and a pair in copulation. There is also evidence that the species is spreading; three individuals were seen at Mudeford Wood, just north of Hengistbury, and in early 2025 egg scars were found at this site too - very exciting! However, in 2024 it was also recorded further west - just single individuals, one in Bournemouth at Queen's Park, one at Upton Country Park and one at Holes Bay, Poole Harbour.

Scarlet Darter, was clearly the highlight of the year in Dorset; it caused a huge amount of attention and many people came from far and wide to the site at Silverlake, Crossways, part of a recently opened up Knighton Reserve SANG (previously gravel pits). It is a very open site, with small warm shallow lakes surrounded by scrub, and it's attracted a large number of other interesting species including: **Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** and **Lesser Emperor**. First reported on 23 July, the Scarlet Darters were on the wing well into August; up to four males were seen, a pair copulating, and an ovipositing female, which I believe is the first for the UK (see photo). As with the

numbers of **Lesser Emperors**, it would seem unusual to have some kind of mass arrival; when I spoke to Adrian Parr, The Migrant Dragonflies Project Leader, he suggested that a small population may have already established itself there, and just not been recorded. This is a site that hasn't had enough attention, but will from now on!

There were no other UK sightings of Scarlet Darter in 2024; if there was a migration surely they would have been recorded at other sites? As a caveat to this, as Steve Cham discussed in the recent British Wildlife (vol 16 No.3), real proof of breeding may need several years of occupation, so searches for exuviae will be needed, and regular monitoring will need to be done in the future. Any volunteers?

Late in the year we had another special visitor - a single **Southern Emerald Damselfly**, found and photographed (see below) by Guy Freeman on 15 September. This is a first for Dorset and adds another species to the list - we are closing in on Norfolk!!

This year I was heavily involved with surveys in Wareham Arc, an ambitious and collaborative nature recovery project in South East Dorset, which will actually officially begin in 2025 and run for 20 years. Bringing together over 25 land-owners and managers, its aim is to restore a diverse mosaic of priority habitats with the support of local farms and businesses, and improve opportunities for local people in and around Wareham Town to connect with nature. This area is the gateway to the Purbecks and covers more than 4000 hectares of very diverse landscape. Wareham Arc is one of the first Landscape Recovery Projects in the Landscape Recovery Scheme, created by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), resulting from a two-year development phase, which involved liaising with land-owners and collecting baseline data.

The project aim is to connect habitat patches, allowing species to move through the landscape more easily and expand their ranges into new areas. Linking up areas of the same habitat will increase the resilience of the habitats and the species using them.

This summer the first Odonata surveys as part of the Project were undertaken at a number of sites, including Morden Bog and Sandford Heath and a large private estate, which has many lakes and the River Piddle running through it. The estate will feature important river restoration features in the future, so getting baseline data was important. During the first season an impressive 16 species were recorded including **Banded Demoiselle**, **Beautiful Demoiselle**, **Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Downy Emerald**, **Scarce Chaser** and **Hairy Dragonfly**, so a great start to this exciting project.

v Scarlet Darter mating by Sharon Tawning.



^ Southern Emerald Damselfly female by Guy Greeman.

v Southern Emerald Damselfly female by Guy Greeman.



11: SOUTH HAMPSHIRE 12: NORTH HAMPSHIRE PHIL YOUNG

As expected the 2024 flight season started with the usual burst of **Large Red Damselfly** sightings. The earliest record of adult(s) on the wing was of three at Wildern Local Nature Reserve near Southampton on 30 March. It was a week before the next recorded Hampshire sighting, on 6 April, which happened to be the date of the first such record in 2023.

A male **Southern Migrant Hawker** was observed at Wildern Local Nature Reserve on 29 July. A male was seen at the same site a month later, indicating that the individual had remained in the area. On 1 August another male, was encountered on Bartley Heath in North Hampshire and was pictured having been taken in hand. Later in the same month, on the 25th, another male was seen at Pennington Marsh on the Solent coast, south of Lymington.

In the last week of July, **Lesser Emperors** were spotted in both North and South Hampshire. A male was observed on the River Loddon, north-east of Basingstoke, while a female was photographed in Ampfield Wood near Romsey. However, the most significant appearance, seen by several observers, was at Farlington Marshes East of Portsmouth. On 30 July Peter Gamage reported seeing multiple adults (6-20), including a pair in tandem, around a lake on the edge of the marsh that was saline at the time. Tim Doran, who was also present, reported in Bird News on the 'Going Birding' website that "...*They favoured the reeds just below the sea-wall 25m north of the lake viewpoint ... Walking to the W end of the stream we saw a few more so possibly 10 in the area this evening.*" On the following day Keith Cogan reported seeing at least two individuals in the same part of the marsh and was able to capture images of a male at rest on a reed stem.

Farlington Marshes, in late July, provided another interesting sighting: a **Green-eyed (Norfolk) Hawker**, photographed on the 24th - unusual for Hampshire. A month later, in late August, images were caught of a **Lesser Emperor** at Tundry Pond near Fleet, in the north of the county, and of a male at Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve near Ringwood, on the edge of the New Forest. The last reported 2024 sighting of **Lesser Emperor** in Hampshire was of a female spotted on 5 October on Pamber Heath near Silchester.

For a comparatively small suburban nature reserve, Wildern Local Nature Reserve in Hedge End has once again shown itself, thanks to the diligent recording of Terry Crow, to host a surprisingly diverse collection of Odonata. In 2024 this was comprised of 23 species, including **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, **Small Red Damselfly**, **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** and **Hairy Dragonfly**. The latter two species, along with **Downy Emerald**, and 16 other species, were recorded at the nearby Swanwick Lakes Nature Reserve by Alison Barker, who has been carrying out regular transect recording of all Odonata across the reserve for a number of years.

Willow Emerald Damselfly has now turned up across the county from Yateley in the north-east to Bournemouth and Ringwood in the south-west. It has also been recorded in Andover in the north-west of Hampshire and near Horndean in the south-east of the county.

At the end of this year's flight season the last recorded sighting of adult **Willow Emerald Damselfly** was on 27 October in Southampton. The Southampton area was also the location of the last record of **Southern Hawker** on 14 November and of **Common Darter** on 25th of that month.

This year I have noted, with a mixture of both interest and some dismay, the increasing use of Facebook and WhatsApp groups to post reports and photographs of sightings to the delight of many people. The dismay arises from the fact that as far as I can tell (at least as regards Hampshire) more often than not these sightings do not appear in one or other of the nature/wildlife recording systems (i.e. iRecord, iNaturalist or Living Record). Our knowledge of the distribution of Odonata in Hampshire could be much improved if more of these sightings actually resulted in the submission of records. Once again, many thanks to all the observers who have submitted records of sightings during the year.

13: WEST SUSSEX 14: EAST SUSSEX SIMON LININGTON

The 2024 Odonata season in Sussex was quite good with 35 species reported and reasonable numbers of most common species. Due to a wet late winter and a generally cool summer, ponds and waterways were well supplied with water. However, the conditions encouraged too much growth of vegetation in some ditches and the choking of a number of ponds by alien weed.

A total of 3,815 records for 2024 were submitted by the year end, nearly all via iRecord. Of the 572 observers, six sent in over a quarter of the sightings while nearly half submitted single (though valuable) records. Just 45 of the accepted records related to larvae, exuviae or egg-laying scars. Not unexpectedly, the most frequently recorded species were **Common Darter** (12.4%), **Azure Damselfly** (8.8%) and **Beautiful Demoiselle** (7.6%). The tenth most frequent is now **Willow Emerald Damselfly** (4.1%) underlining its meteoric rise within Sussex (now in 375 1-km squares, up from just one in 2016). In addition to the above, 512 records relating to previous years were received.

As usual, the first species to be seen as an adult was **Large Red Damselfly**. In April, one was at Heathfield on the 7th. There were then reports of **Hairy Dragonfly** on the 10th, **Beautiful Demoiselle** on the 13th and **Broad-bodied Chaser** on the 14th. These four species comprised all of the records nearly to the end of the month. By mid-May, a total of 16 species had been recorded on the wing. In the second half of May, a further four species were added including the only **Common Clubtail** record, this probably reflecting under-recording rather than anything of concern.

Norfolk Hawker consolidated its foothold within Sussex with records from ten locations. The highest counts, during June and July, were on the Chichester Canal (30+) and at West Rise Marsh, Eastbourne (up to 20, including ovipositing females).

The first of 15 **Brilliant Emerald** records and the first **Emerald Damselflies** were recorded in early June. The latter species remains a concern, though there were 18 widely scattered records including reports of 41 and 50 from different sites.

There were 25 records of **Southern Migrant Hawkers** from 12 locations; the small **Lesser Emperor Dragonfly** colony at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) appears stable with additional sightings of this species from four other sites. After fears of extinction in Sussex, it was encouraging that up to six **Black Darters** were found on Iping Common during August and September and three were reported at RSPB Pulborough Brooks in early August. Excitingly, there were also reliable reports of **Scarce Emerald Damselflies** from one confidential location.

Sightings from the second half of summer onwards were generally unremarkable. However, 200+ **White-legged Damselflies** at Hellingly on 17 July, and a male Ruddy Darter in tandem with a female Common Darter near Newick on 4 August, were interesting. The only rarity at this time was a **Red-veined Darter** found by Bob Eade in Cradle Valley (Seaford) on 1 October. A record of a **Variable Damselfly** at Burton Mill Pond on 10 September was the first Sussex record for this month. The very last sightings of adults for the year were: **Willow Emerald Damselfly** on 11 November; **Southern Hawker** on 12 November; **Migrant Hawker** on 13 November; and **Common Darter**, with an exceptional record (Alastair Gray and Bob Johnston), on 15 December at Weir Wood Reservoir.

Finally, 2024 was marked by the publication of 'The Damselflies and Dragonflies of Sussex' (Alan Martin, Simon Linington and Bob Foreman) which documents the population changes since the previous 2004 book by Phil Belden *et al.* The new book contains many photos of the species found in Sussex plus potential new arrivals. It also has up-to-date distribution maps and details on the 25 best sites.



^ Male Downy Emerald in flight on 2 June 2025 near Spithurst by Simon Linington.

v Male Ruddy Darter in tandem with female Common Darter on 4 August 2024 near Newick by Simon Linington.



^ Male Black Darter on 12 August 2024 at Iping Common by Simon Linington.

v Male Migrant Hawker in flight on 25 August 2024 near Spithurst by Simon Linington.



15: EAST KENT 16: WEST KENT MARC HEATH

The first Large Red Damselfly was seen on 5 April at New Hythe followed a few days later by a **Hairy Dragonfly** on the 8th at the same location. The first **Variable Damselflies** were seen at Westbere Lakes on 12 April, and the following day five **Hairy Dragonfly** were seen at Dungeness. 14 April saw the first **Broad-bodied Chaser** at Dartford, and on 18 April two **Common Blue Damselflies** were identified at Sandwich Bay. By the end of April **Red-eyed Damselfly** were on the wing; four **Downy Emerald** were noteworthy at Kenardington, Ashford, on 29 April. The first **Dainty Damselfly** was seen at Sandwich Bay on 12 May; **Black-tailed Skimmer** followed a few days later on the 15th.

19 May saw the first two **Lesser Emperor** Dragonfly at New Hythe; the same date also produced 20 **Scarce Chaser** at Westbere. A probable **Red-veined Darter** sighting was reported at Sandwich on 24 May; five **Dainty Damselfly** and 15 **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** were seen at Oare Marshes on the 25th. 29 May produced 37 **Scarce Chaser**, 15 **Norfolk Hawker** and 10 **Hairy Dragonfly** at Westbere, and one **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** at Sissinghurst. The **Keeled Skimmers** continue to hold on at Hothfield and the first was seen on 2 June. An excellent count of 300+ **Dainty Damselfly** were counted at Sandwich Bay on 3 June, whilst at New Hythe on 5 June five **Lesser Emperor** were noted. **Norfolk Hawk**s r continue to spread within Kent; three were seen at Dungeness on 6 June. The next day, at Oare Marshes, 50 **Dainty Damselfly** and 25 **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** were noted.

8 June saw the first **Southern Emerald Damselfly** at Sandwich Bay and 13 June produced an excellent 62 **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** at Oare Marshes. **Southern Migrant Hawk**s bounced back this year; the first were seen on 16 June at Northwood Hill and Whitstable. On 21 June, at Bedgebury, 14 **Brilliant Emerald** and 20 **Downy Emerald** were recorded; the next day, at New Hythe, one **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**, three **Norfolk Hawker**, six **Lesser Emperor** and two **Downy Emerald** were seen. New Hythe again, on 23 June, produced an excellent count of 20 **Lesser Emperor**; on the 24th four **Norfolk Hawker** were seen at Oare Marshes and 20+ **Southern Migrant Hawker** were found in Orlestone Forest. 6 July produced seven **Southern Emerald Damselfly** at Cliffe and three **Keeled Skimmer** at Hothfield; on 20 July, 10 **Keeled Skimmer** were at Hothfield, a good count for this site.

24 July revealed five **Southern Migrant Hawker** at Seasalter and five at nearby Oare Marshes, whilst at New Hythe 20+ **Lesser Emperor** were seen. A NEW species for Kent was found on the 31 July at Betteshanger- a female **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**. On 10 August 14 **Southern Migrant Hawker** were found at Nethergong. 12 August produced three **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** at Sandwich Bay; six were seen there on the 17th and 12+ were seen on 28th. Hopefully, with the excellent management that has been going on at the site, the species will get a foothold in the area. 7 September produced two **Red-veined Darter** on the coast at Kingdown. **Willow Emerald Damselfly** and **Migrant Hawker** showed well and in good numbers at various locations throughout their flight period.

It was a good year overall, with the addition of **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** to the county list, and good numbers of **Norfolk Hawker**, **Lesser Emperor** and **Southern Migrant Hawker** on the wing. **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** continued to spread and **Southern Emerald Damselfly** were seen at their traditional sites. **Dainty Damselfly** continue to appear in good numbers at their sites but on the negative side, **Emerald Damselfly** seemed to be low in numbers. Hopefully, with some good weather, 2025 will produce good numbers of the many species that Kent has to offer.

[Marc Heath's wildlife photography website.](#)

[Marc Heath's wildlife blog.](#)

[Dragonfly tours with Marc Heath.](#)



< Female Southern Emerald Damselfly by Marc Heath.



> Female Willow Emerald Damselfly by Marc Heath.



< Male Dainty Damselfly by Marc Heath.



^ Male Southern Migrant Hawker by Marc Heath.



> Male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly by Marc Heath.



< Norfolk Hawker by Marc Heath.

17: SURREY

LINDA PRYKE

14 species of Damselfly and 19 Dragonflies were recorded in Surrey in 2024.

Dragonfly watching was somewhat hampered by unreliable weather - a couple of HSBG field trips were cancelled; an adaptable approach to field meetings was needed with dipping nets and trays taken along in case the sun failed to show itself.

Records for all the expected Damselfly species were received, along with a couple of surprises: Richmond Park in August yielded not only the 2nd county record for **Southern Emerald Damselfly** (last seen near Dorking in 2021), but also provided a **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** (five historic VC 17 records from 1931-2011).

Emerald Damselfly were recorded via iNaturalist, at Thursley, and again at Richmond.

It was a relatively uneventful year for Dragonflies. **Scarce Chaser** were limited to their usual patch at the Western border of the county.

Sightings of **Lesser Emperor** were subject to debate; there was a 'possible sighting' (with photograph) at Molesey Reservoirs and another at Nutfield Marsh. Further west there were records from Tice's Meadow and a lovely photograph from Caesar's Camp.

The most interesting records were for **Norfolk Hawker**, which were seen and photographed copulating by P. Mair at Thursley National Nature Reserve on 2 August, which is a new record for the site, and was much later in the year than generally expected. Another late individual was photographed at the WWT Wetland Centre at Barnes on 30 July.

Completion of 'improvement' works to the M25 Junction 10 have been set-back due to bad weather and are not now expected to end until 2026. The works cut across heathland and habitats supporting **Black Darter**, **Small Red Damselflies** and **Emerald Damselflies**. Hopefully the habitat restoration and improvements that are planned will benefit the species populations over time.

Urban wildlife received a boost with the restoration of Fishponds Park Surbiton. The small park with its three ponds and waterfall was a shadow of its former self, but brought back to life, supported and cared for by an active 'Friends' group. The grand opening on 26 August was attended by eight Odonata species - and the mayor.

Work starts this year to rewild Tolworth Court Farm Fields. On the outskirts of London, the 107-acre site will include wetlands, meadows and hedgerows and connects to the Hogsmill River and other wetlands further south.

The Hampshire, Surrey & Berkshire Group (HSBG) maintains a newsletter via email (contact David Hepper; email: webmaster@british-dragonflies.org.uk) and has an excellent programme of field meetings through the 2025 season, to which all are welcome. It's a friendly, informal group; no expertise or special equipment necessary - just bring yourselves and your lunch.

This year's destinations include old favourites, a catch-up on some that suffered from a surfeit of weather in 2023, and some new places to explore as well. Do take a look at the BDS events page for more details.



^ Fishponds Parkm Surbiton by Linda Pryke.



< Norfolk Hawkers copulating at Thursley NNR by P Mair.

18: SOUTH ESSEX 19: NORTH ESSEX NEIL PHILLIPS

While there have been no new species nor rarities found, many recent colonisers continued to spread.

The season started with a **Large Red Damselfly** on 12 April at Rainham Marshes; the second species - the **Hairy Dragonfly**, followed two days later at Park Hall, St Osyth.

June started off the best ever year in the county for **Norfolk Hawker**, a species that appeared for the first time just a few years ago in the far north-east of Essex. It subsequently spread through Hertfordshire and across the border into the Essex region of Lee Valley Park, where it has now spread downstream as far as Walthamstow wetlands.

The species is now well established in the south-west of Essex and is being seen in a few other sites scattered across the county. At RSPB Rainham Marshes it was the most commonly seen large Odonata species with at least six individuals seen on one visit by me. It certainly seems to be here to stay now!

Another recent colonist is the **Lesser Emperor**; good numbers were seen again in 2024 at Little Belhus Country Park, and they seem to form part of a population with nearby Belhus Country Park and Hornchurch Country Park which have had records in recent years, and with Rainham Marshes which had records this year too.

There were also sightings at Hanningfield Reservoir, following those there in 2023, along with other individual records across south Essex.

Although no confirmed exuviae or nymphs of the previous two species have been found, I think it's reasonable to assume they have successfully colonised and are breeding in the County.

Downy Emerald, until recent years, was only ever recorded at and near Wake Valley Pond in Epping Forest where it continues to be seen every year. However, it turned up at Little Belhus CP in 2020 and has since seemed to follow a similar path to **Lesser Emperor** and colonised the Rainham-Belhus-Hornchurch area, with records from Hornchurch CP in the past, and the first site records for Rainham in 2023. It occurred again at Little Belhus and Rainham Marshes in 2024.

The **Southern Migrant Hawker**, since initially colonising the Thames Estuary, has spread to many sites across the country; however, it still has what is likely to be the largest UK population in the Thames Estuary area. They seem to be the commonest large Odonata in the South Essex Marshes area where they were first found; they also seem to have strong populations at other sites like Rainham Marshes and Wallasea Island, along with inland sites like Little Belhus Country Park and The Langdon Hills complex near Basildon. They have also been seen in 2024 at other sites with previous records, including Hanningfield, at Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve further north, as well as a few sightings in the west of the county.

Southern Emerald Damselfly continue to do well in their South Essex Marshes stronghold, after the awful 2022 season with only two records in the county; there were plenty the last two years. There were lots of sightings from the Canvey Way Ditch site, where many Odonata enthusiasts make the pilgrimage to see them each summer, but there were also some records from elsewhere in the area.

Sadly it appears to have disappeared from Little Belhus CP, as succession has taken hold on the main pond with the large area of rushes overgrown with Willow.

After Steve Arlow reported a new colony in 2023 at the RSPB Wallasea Island, and saw them again in 2024 at the rewilding project in the far east of the county, I was pleased to find the species at a site where I had predicted their presence in the south-west of the county. In addition, it was the longest season for them here - the first record on 9 June and latest on 30 September!

The **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** populations seem to be doing ok, with records from all the sites with the **Southern Emerald Damselfly** mentioned above, but unlike the Southern they persist at Little Belhus CP still

and have been seen at Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve in the north-east of the county.

The other recent colonist, the **Willow Emerald Damselfly**, is now found across the county and is probably among the most widespread species here.

White-legged Damselfly has had mixed fortunes in recent years. It seems to have disappeared in its former stronghold at Cornmill Meadows, but sightings from the River Stour and Chelmer and their tributaries continue. Last year a new colony was found just north of Southend, with sightings from there again in 2024.



^ Lesser Emperor at Little Belhus Country Park by Neil Phillips.

v Southern Migrant Hawker Little Belhus Country Park by Neil Phillips.



20: HERTFORDSHIRE

ROY WOODWARD

Although there seemed to be more wet and overcast weather than last year, records for the 2022 – 2027 Hertfordshire Dragonfly Atlas Survey continued to come in and, halfway through the survey period, over 10,000 records have now been collected from nearly 200 named observers. All records are valuable so please submit all Dragonfly and Damselfly sightings that you have from Hertfordshire (within either the modern county or the vice county boundaries), particularly if you have records from private land, including records from garden ponds.

This year there were no records of species that would now be considered to be rare visitors to the county, but scarce species that are currently colonising the county continued to be seen, with some species being recorded from new sites.

The most recent arrival, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, was again present at Kings Mead, and like last year records showed two clear generations, one in the spring and another in early autumn. **Beautiful Demoiselles** and **Downy Emeralds** continue to be reported from sites in the south and west of the county, with **Beautiful Demoiselles** reported from a number of new localities during 2024, although typically only in low numbers. **Downy Emeralds** don't yet seem to be showing much sign of spreading but maintained a toehold in the county.

Scarce Chaser is another species that continues to be reported but isn't yet giving much indication of spreading to new areas, although wandering individuals were again seen away from the usual sites in the Lea Valley and on the Grand Union Canal near Wilstone. **Norfolk Hawkers** can now sometimes be the most numerous dragonfly species at some sites in the Lea Valley early in the summer, and appear to be continuing to spread to new sites further west in the county, while **Lesser Emperors** are showing signs that they are beginning to become established at larger lakes and reservoirs across Hertfordshire.

There were a few records of **Southern Migrant Hawkers** and **Scarce Emerald Damselfly**, both species that seem to be struggling to become properly established in the county, perhaps due to their favoured habit being relatively scarce, and there were also a handful of records of **Red-veined Darter** which remains a scarce migrant.

Although it is still too early for any firm conclusions, preliminary results from the atlas survey suggest that most of the nineteen species that were breeding at the time of the previous atlas survey, from 2000-2005, are either stable or increasing. **Emerald Damselfly** does appear to have declined though, with both the number of tetrads the species has been recorded in and the total number of records down on what would be expected at this point during the current survey in comparison with the results from the previous survey. **Brown Hawker** and **Ruddy Darter** may also have declined slightly but this is less clear.

[Hertfordshire Natural History Society; Dragonflies in Hertfordshire](#)

21: MIDDLESEX

LINDA PRYKE

Perhaps due to the changeable weather we experienced, there seemed to be less predictability regarding the timings of species sightings in 2024.

Usually **Large Red Damselfly** kicks things off, but this year **Common Blue Damselfly** took the honour of being first species sighted with a very early photo by R. Millar on 21 March by Hackney Marshes. **Common Darter** brought the season to a close at Bushy Park on 24 October.

There were some surprises - a keen-eyed recorder spotted and photographed male and female **Scarce Chasers**, **Lesser Emperor** and **Norfolk Hawker** on separate visits to the county's eastern border at Walthamstow.

One to look out for early in the season (April onwards) is **Hairy Dragonfly**, which was missing from this year's list. Its sparse past records have tended to be from lush, flat habitats such as the Colne Valley to the west of the county; hopefully we can rediscover them in 2025.

The newly redesigned gardens at the Natural History Museum in Kensington are now fully open, and the ponds are teeming with life - **Willow Emerald Damselflies** and **Common Darters** have been seen amongst the dinosaurs.

As always, huge thanks to everyone who contributed their sightings in 2024; they are very much appreciated. The year gave us 10 Damselfly and 12 Dragonfly species.

22: BERKSHIRE DES SUSSEX

After a very poor spring, it was another pretty good year with over 4100 records. 33 species were seen, comprising of 15 Zygoptera and 18 Anisoptera.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly was seen at Bucklers Forest from spring to summer, including the attractive aurantiaca colour form. It was present in better numbers at 50 Acre Piece, which is proving to be one of the best sites for dragonfly richness in the vice county. It was also found in restored wetland at Buttersteep Forest, a new site for the species, and it will be interesting to see if a colony establishes here on what looks like suitable habitat.

The **Variable Damselfly** stronghold at Burghfield receives very little survey effort other than by one recorder, but a total of approximately 200 were seen from four locations along the canal and river on 24 May. No other 2024 records were received from the Burghfield location, which is an interesting and accessible site well worth a visit (park near Cunning Man pub). **Variable Damselflies** were also seen in small numbers at Cookham (Battlemead and Widbrook Commons).

Willow Emerald Damselfly (69 records) and **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (25 records) continue to be seen at numerous sites and are now well established as Berkshire 'residents'.

The **Common Clubtail** was seen at the usual strongholds on the Thames from Goring upstream to Abingdon and beyond, but one notable 'downstream' individual was photographed on the river at Sonning.

Lesser Emperor had a good year with an impressive 28 records from numerous sites such as Buckler's Forest, Twyford Gravel Pits, Moatlands (6 were seen together), Hosehill LNR (including a pair), and 50 Acre Piece.

It was a very poor year for **Brilliant Emerald** with just five records; four of those were from the very well watched Buckler's Forest, and the other was from the 'reliable' Forest Pond in Swinley Forest.

The **Downy Emerald** is reliably seen in small numbers across the county, including at Sole Common, Decoy Heath, Hosehill LNR and numerous woodland ponds and gravel pits.

Golden-ringed Dragonfly is understandably a very popular species, and was seen at a good scattering of sites in the south of the county, from Bowdown Woods and Mortimer West End across to Finchampstead Ridges and Swinley Forest.

The species of most conservation concern locally is probably the **Black Darter**, but we did have 14 records from Swinley Forest, Swinley Brick Pits, Decoy Heath, as well as 50 Acre Piece which was the only one producing any good counts.

Hairy Dragonfly used to be a very notable species in Berkshire, but it is now well established and regularly seen at many sites; we had 54 records this year from a diversity of habitats.

One to watch for in 2025 is the **Scarce Chaser** on the River Blackwater from Blackwater station up through Shepherd Meadows. It is found upstream in Hampshire, but there has been little survey effort looking for it at Sandhurst.

Note the north-western parts of VC22 are covered in the VC23 Oxfordshire report.



< Male Migrant Hawker at Greenham by Paul Olive.



v Small Red Damselfly at Sole Common by Dick Hornby.



^ Male Black Darter at Hundred Acre by Paul Olive.

v Male Keeled Skimmer at Burnt Common by Paul Olive.



^ Male Downy Emerald at Sole Common by Dick Hornby.

23: OXFORDSHIRE STEPHEN BURCH

This report covers the ceremonial county of Oxfordshire, including VC23 and the adjacent section of VC22. It also strays into VC24 in the northeast. This year the weather was generally disappointing for much of the season, with fine sunny days at a premium. Numbers of the commoner species were much reduced, but there were still notable highlights for some of the rarer species.

Unlike last year, 2024 was a more average one for **Common Clubtail** sightings, with 18 records between 9 May and 2 June. Most were from the traditional area of Cholsey and Goring, with a notable count of 11 exuviae downstream of Gatehampton Railway Bridge. There were also reports from the upstream section of the Thames at Chimney Meadows, Shifford and Tadpole Bridge, where this species is seen less often.

There was a better showing this year of **Variable Damselfly**, with six records. Most were from the usual Barton Fields area near Abingdon but two were from a site northwest of Oxford, an area from which there have been intermittent reports previously.

There were 26 records of **Downy Emerald** from nine sites (well up on the four sites last year), with the highest count being eight at Rousham Lake.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies were again reported from stormwater ponds at Longford Park, Banbury and Didcot, but in smaller numbers than previously. There was also a single record from Grove, near Wantage - a new location for this rare species.

Emerald Damselfly records were similar to last year, with reports of small numbers from just nine sites scattered across the county, with the exception of high numbers found at a new pond in Whitecross Green Wood.

Summer saw the first county record of **Norfolk Hawker**, on Otmoor, and there was an unprecedented increase in sightings of **Lesser Emperor**. Hitherto, this had been a very rare species, recorded less than annually; however, this year there was an early report of an immature, away from any potential breeding sites. This was then followed by over 30 reports from a further eleven sites, and breeding behaviour was widely noted; the peak count was seven at Tar Lakes.

Another new arrival, the **Southern Migrant Hawker**, continued to consolidate its presence on Otmoor – there were more reports than previously, from all over the reserve area. Smaller numbers were also seen at nearby Whitecross Green Wood and there was an isolated record of one from the Pinkhill reserve at Farmoor reservoir.

The comprehensive Cothill BBOWT transect surveys for **Southern Damselflies** and **Keeled Skimmer** showed a continuous slow decline in peak counts at Dry Sandford Pit but more stable numbers at nearby Parsonage Moor. Unlike last year, there were a few reports of **Small Red Damselfly** (peak count of five) at Parsonage Moor.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly numbers were well down, presumably due to the poor weather. However, the late season **Willow Emerald Damselfly** appeared more robust and is continuing to spread; there were over fifty reports from almost thirty sites, with several sightings into October.

Over the year as a whole, there were over 3000 records of 31 species – the highest ever species count.

Further details on sightings for the year can be found at [Oxon Dragonflies](#).



^ Male Willow Emerald Damselfly at Grove Meadows by Stephen Burch.

v Male Lesser Emperor at Tar Lakes by Stephen Burch.



24: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

ALAN NELSON

As always, many thanks to all who record and upload their records onto iRecord or sent an email or photos and comments. Again, records reflect where people go, how much free time they have and if they send in their observations; unfortunately, some key recorders have moved away. An increasing common recording method is taking photos with a phone, which I am happy to receive. Recording all our flora and fauna is critical in protecting and improving habitats and species abundance. However, some recorders say they are increasingly getting busier/have less free time/don't wish to sit in front of a PC and so do not often enter their records on iRecord. Emailing me records and photos taken is fine. You can download an Excel spreadsheet to collate and organise your records via the [BDS website](#).

Also, I'd like to thank all those who ferried me around my local area following my wrist injury; I am very appreciative - without you my surveying activity would have been considerably more limited.

As I recall it, 2024 was not a good year weather-wise; conditions were very variable and this may well have influenced species sightings as some were very late emerging – this was especially noted in North Buckinghamshire.

Buckingham species recorded in 2024: 17 Dragonflies and 14 Damselflies

Species list for VC24 (recorded after 2000): 21 Dragonflies and 17 Damselflies; 38 total

Downy Emerald, long overdue, this species has expanded its range in North Buckinghamshire with records from many new sites. There was also an increased abundance at Emberton Country Park; one was the total recorded count in 2010, three in 2024 (by several recorders). These, I believe, are very likely to have come from the nearby Yardley Chase, where I have surveyed a few times. Other sites that had single sightings of **Downy Emerald** were Tongwell Lake and Willen South Lake. Up to three, including an ovipositing female, were observed at the large pond at Manor Park; this site contains two very open newly reconstructed ponds and the larger pond that has dense marginal vegetation on two sides. The Grand Union Canal runs close to all three sites; other potential sites for the species, including Linford Lakes Nature Reserve (formerly HESC), were surveyed but no Downy Emerald were observed. Other potential sites for this species include the Wolverton flood land site and the Stony Stratford complex, but both have limited access owing to breeding birds.

Norfolk Hawker was reported, by a well-known recorder, on the Grand Union Canal, although regrettably they were unable to take a photograph, so it can't be confirmed. Norfolk Hawker was recorded for the first time (with photo verification) in Northamptonshire.

In North Buckinghamshire, we have two known wetland sites containing Water Soldier, the best being Stony Stratford complex, which may attract the species. Observations can be made from two hides, one overlooking the Water Soldier; however, none were observed in 2024. I need to rearrange access to better survey the site at it is possibly the best potential site in North Buckinghamshire for **Norfolk Hawker** (the other is a very small pond with Water Soldier). Emberton Country Park could also be a good site to keep an eye on as it is one of the nearest complexes to Felmersham Gravel Pits (WT Bedfordshire); as mentioned, it is close to the River Great Ouse.

Common Hawker only produces an occasional record and is now very rare in the Vice County like the **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**. The latter species still gets a few records: one in 2023, two in 2024 - one was photographed taking a wasp at Black Park by Chris Lamsdell who previously recorded the species here back in 2021.

Scarce Chaser has had a scattering of recorders in the Vice County over the years, possibly as a result in changes in river water quality. This species can be found at Felmersham in good numbers and has been recorded at several locations in North Buckinghamshire: on the River Ouzel, at Emberton Country Park (one record), on the River Great Ouse near Tyringham, and at a private site upstream from Emberton Country Park, where copulation was photographed. It has also been recorded at Linford Lakes Nature Reserve, Walton Lake by the River Ouzel, at Sheringham near the River Great Ouse (June 16, 2023), and at Newport

Pagnell Lakes complex (a private site).

Keeled Skimmer has a small population at Burnham Beeches

Black Darter had one record in 2023 at Black Park; there used to be a small population many years ago; it is worth keeping an eye out for it here still, and in the Burnham Beeches area. Over the last few years this species has been recorded on a new private site.

Red-veined Darter was last recorded in 2023 (20 in total), around Incombe Hole and Pitstone Hill area.

Common Darter and **Ruddy Darter** both showing a decline in records. While this again may partially reflect a decline in recording effort, abundance for both species was lower than expected on a number of sites visited in 2024.

Emperor had very good numbers of exuviae again on some sites in North Buckinghamshire, several hundred in some cases.

Lessor Emperor had more records in 2024, mostly males. Although copulation and oviposition have been recorded on some sites successful breeding has yet to be confirmed; although, a male was found some years ago with damaged wings, suggesting it was injured while emerging nearby.

Brown Hawker, Southern Hawker, Migrant Hawker and Hairy Dragonfly had noticeably fewer numbers in 2023 and 2024; I didn't find many Southern Hawkers until late in their flight season

Broad-bodied Chaser had another good year; this species does fluctuate noticeably year on year.

Four-spotted Chaser and **Black-tailed Skimmer** records are decreasing; again may reflect the reduced number of recorders in the vice county, but abundance was noted to be down on sites visited in 2024.

Variable Damselfly has a small population at Felmersham Gravel Pits where it is expanding. Apart from that one male was recorded 19 May 19 (14.50) in North Buckinghamshire at Manor Park; none were seen during subsequent visits or at other sites.

Small Red Damselfly has a small population, which was discovered a few years ago, on a private site; the max count was 30 and 6 pairs ovipositing. This species was recorded many years ago in South Buckinghamshire around Burnham Beeches and Black Park.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly can be found on many sites now and often in greater abundance than the **Red-eyed Damselfly**. Although recorders were greater in 2023 than 2024 this may reflect recording effort.

White-legged Damselfly is a species which is showing signs of increasing again, but it is mainly being recorded on ponds, lakes and other novel sites and usually only as individual counts. Previously, the species was recorded in abundance (counts of up to 2000) on the River Great Ouse and River Ouzel in North Buckinghamshire, but recently it has been occurring in small numbers. However, at Manor Park on the larger pond a pair copulating and ovipositing were observed for over 90 mins. Water quality in all our rivers may be a factor in the relatively sudden loss of the species.

Willow Emerald Damselfly was recorded on almost all sites that others and I survey. Coppicing and removal of trees around watersides in the late autumn has resulted in the loss of this species from some sites but they are doing well in other sites in Buckinghamshire. One of the best sites in North Buckinghamshire is Manor Park: 15+ ovipositing pairs were observed on one small branch (300mm long and 11 mm diameter). I have recorded Willow Emerald ovipositing on Willow and several other species of tree and plant, including: Ash, Hawthorn, Sycamore, Walnut, Oak, Alder, Silver Birch, and Bramble. I have seen ovipositing less than 0.5 metres; in addition, they do not always oviposit on branches over-hanging water; I have seen branches utilised up to 0.3 metres from the water's edge.

Manor Park, now a public park, was once the private garden of the Manor House in the 17th and 18th centuries. This small site became overgrown but has been extremely well renovated by The Parks Trust. There is an increasing fish population, including Sticklebacks and introduced species, Rudd, Roach and Goldfish; it will be interesting to see if it has any effect on abundance of **Willow Emerald Damselflies** and

other species. Emperor are present on this site, as well as **Small Red-eyed Damselflies**; the clear water means you can watch females descending to oviposit underwater. I have spoken to the site's rangers regarding coppicing and have asked them to leave the main stems with eggs, which they currently do.

Table 1. Willow Emerald Damselfly ovipositing sites on two Willow (Salix) trees; branch size, numbers of scars, height above water, and aspect listed.

Tree #1 Stem #	Stem base dia mm	Dia around ovipositing	Number of scars	Number of groupings	Approx. height from water level m	Approx. aspects
1	11.4	7.90	20	1	0.750	S
2	16.5	11.65	110	4 all groups close together	0.750 -0.850	S,W,N
3	9.9	5.75	14	1	0.600 – 0.750	S
4	13.9	8.0	18	1	0.900-1000	S
	-	6.70	106	3 groups close together	1000-1100, 1300	S,W,N
5	14.0	8.0	19, 12	2 groups very close together	0.850 -0.900	S
	-	6.6	63	2 close together		SW
6	13.0	7.9	35	1	1350	S
	-	7.4	66	1		S
Tree # 2 Stem #						
1	36.0	12	40	3 groups very close together	1300-1400	S
2	21.0	12	28	2 very close together	1300-1400	W
3	22.0	5	28	2 very close together	0.550	N

Tree 1 consisted of fresh new growth after coppicing late 2023-early 2024. Maximum height 2.7 metres; average height of most stems 1.8 metres; 40 stems total (stems counted from west to east i.e. clockwise); stems closely spread. Water depth 250mm in front of the tree. Other small trees in the immediate area. Scars were mainly laid on the south-facing side of the stems but not always, some were on the west and a few on the north facing section.

Tree 2 was old growth from coppicing a few years ago. Maximum height 3 metres; average height of most stems 2 metres; number of stems 6; stems widely spread. Most scars are facing west with a few facing north and south.

It appears, from this limited sample, that there's a preference for stems no larger than 12 mm diameter.

Red-eyed Damselfly doesn't seem to be so common on some sites; possibly due to the increasing abundance of **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**.

Common Blue Damselfly and **Azure Damselfly** seem to be on many sites and still in good numbers.

Large Red Damselfly is becoming unusual to find in good numbers.

Blue-tailed Damselfly is not as abundant as it used to be on some sites when I used to see in hundreds, suggesting a decline.

Table 2. Buckinghamshire species list. P=present. V=vagrant. Y= yes present. N= not present.

	Damselflies	Recorded in Buckinghamshire from 2000 up to 2024	Buckinghamshire list
1	Beautiful Demoiselle	P - not so abundant in this season	Y
2	Banded Demoiselle	P - again appears to be less abundant in 2024	Y
3	Emerald Damselfly	P	Y
-	Scarce Emerald Damselfly	N – expected	N
4	Southern Emerald Damselfly	P	Y
5	Willow Emerald Damselfly	P - increasing population	Y
6	White-legged Damselfly	P - starting to re appear on sites in low numbers; used to be widespread 25yrs ago	Y
7	Large Red Damselfly	P	Y
8	Small Red Damselfly	P - records from a private site	Y
-	Southern Damselfly	N	N
9	Azure Damselfly	P - abundant	Y
10	Variable Damselfly	P - a record in north bucks	Y
11	Common Blue Damselfly	P - abundant	Y
12	Blue-tailed Damselfly	P - abundant	Y
-	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	N - presumably lost	N
13	Red-eyed Damselfly	P - abundant	Y
14	Small Red-eyed Damselfly	P - abundant	Y
	Dragonflies		
1	Hairy Dragonfly	P	Y
2	Common Hawker	P - occasional records	Y
3	Migrant Hawker	P	Y
-	Norfolk Hawker	N - not confirmed - expected	N
4	Southern hawkler	P	Y
5	Brown Hawker	P	Y
6	Southern Migrant Hawker	P - more records received	Y
8	Emperor	P	Y
9	Vagrant Emperor	V	Y
10	Lessor Emperor	P - more records and over a wider area	Y
11	Common Club-tail	P - occasional records	Y
12	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	P - occasional records	Y
13	Downy Emerald	P - increasing in north Bucks	Y
-	Brilliant Emerald	N - presumably lost	N

14	Four-spotted Chaser	P	Y
15	Broad Bodied Chaser	P	Y
16	Black-tailed Skimmer	P	Y
17	Keeled Skimmer	P - small vulnerable population	Y
18	Ruddy Darter	P	Y
19	Common Darter	P	Y
20	Black Darter	P - few records from a private site	Y
21	Red-veined Darter	V - few records	Y

Table 3. Total number of records for Buckinghamshire received into iRecord for 2024 and 2023 at the time of writing (not abundance). Species listed in **BOLD** were recorded in Buckinghamshire.

Damselflies – Zygoptera		2024	2023
Beautiful Demoiselle	Calopteryx virgo	59	58
Banded Demoiselle	Calopteryx splendens	80	105
Southern Emerald Damselfly	Lestes barbarus	0	0
Emerald Damselfly	Lestes sponsa	6	17
Willow Emerald Damselfly	Chalcolestes viridis	18	65
Scarce Emerald Damselfly	Lestes dryas	0	0
White-legged Damselfly	Platycnemis pennipes	15	17
Large Red Damselfly	Pyrrhosoma nymphula	71	58
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Ischnura elegans	49	106
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	Ischnura pumilio	0	0
Common Blue Damselfly	Enallagma cyathigerum	114	263
Southern Damselfly	Coenagrion mercurial	0	0
Variable Damselfly	Coenagrion pulchellum	1	1
Azure Damselfly	Coenagrion puella	67	103
Irish Damselfly	Coenagrion lunulatum	0	0
Northern Damselfly	Coenagrion hastulatum	0	0
Red-eyed Damselfly	Erythromma najas	19	65
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	Erythromma viridulum	9	65
Small Red Damselfly	Ceriagrion tenellum	0	2
Dragonflies -- Anisoptera			
Common Club-tail	Gomphus vulgatissimus	0	1
Hairy Dragonfly	Brachytron pratense	9	35
Azure Hawker	Aeshna caerulea	0	0
Common Hawker	Aeshna juncea	0	1
Brown Hawker	Aeshna grandis	30	89
Southern Hawker	Aeshna cyanea	39	80
Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta	23	193
Southern Migrant Hawker	Aeshna affinis	1	9
Norfolk Hawker	Aeshna isosceles	0	0
Emperor Dragonfly	Anax imperator	75	176
Lesser Emperor	Anax parthenope	2	4
Vagrant Emperor	Hemianax ephippiger	0	0

Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Cordulegaster boltonii	2	1
Downy Emerald	Cordulia aenea	4	6
Brilliant Emerald	Somatochlora metallica	0	0
Northern Emerald	Somatochlora arctica	0	0
Broad-bodied Chaser	Libellula depressa	59	39
Scarce Chaser	Libellula fulva	0	2
Four-spotted Chaser	Libellula quadrimaculata	35	55
Keeled Skimmer	Orthetrum coerulescens	3	0
Black-tailed Skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum	33	70
Scarlet Darter	Crocothemis erythraea	0	0
Vagrant Darter	Sympetrum vulgatum	0	0
Common Darter	Sympetrum striolatum	61	224
Red-veined Darter	Sympetrum fonscolombii	0	3
Yellow-winged Darter	Sympetrum flaveolum	0	0
Ruddy Darter	Sympetrum sanguineum	27	77
Black Darter	Sympetrum danae	0	1
White-faced Darter	Leucorrhinia dubia	0	0

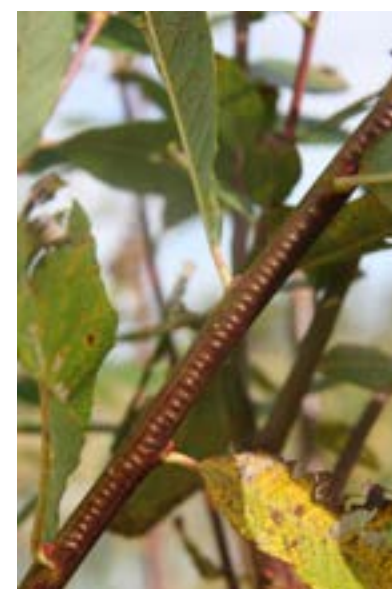
The results of table 3 may reflect where people record dragonflies more than it reflects a species distribution or abundance.

Below is a small selection of the better dragonfly sites across Buckinghamshire that are worth a visit (not including private sites or Estates). Site alphabetical order: Black Park, Blue Lagoon MK, Boarstall Decoy NT (Habitat being improved 2025), Buckingham Flooded Canal Section, Burnham Beeches, Caldecott lakes and River Ouzel, Calvert Jubilee (not private boating lake), Chess Valley, College Lake, Denham County Park Complex, Emberton County Park and River Great Ouse, Foxcote Reservoir (very limited access now), Furzdon Lake and Tottenhoe Brook and Park Ponds, Linford Lakes (Permit ONLY Site), Little Marlow Complex and River Thames, Manor Park and Grand Union Canal, Rushmere and Stockgrove County Park, Stoke Common, Stony Stratford NR, Stowe Gardens and Park NT, Swanbourne Old Park Pond, Tring Reservoirs and Grand Union Canal, Walton Lake and River Ouzel, West Drayton River Colne, Weston Turville Reservoir, Whitecross Green Wood, Willen Lakes and River Great Ouse.

Alan Nelson BDS VC24

[British Dragonfly Society website](#)

[Recording Scheme - British Dragonfly Society](#)



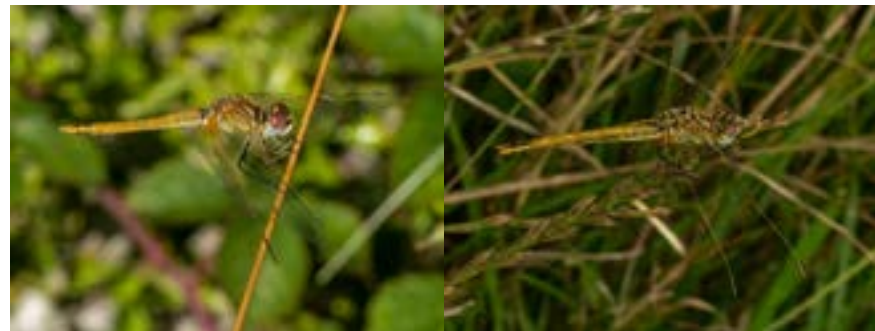
< Willow Emerald ovipositing into a new branch, tree # 1, leaving behind distinctive new scars by Alan Nelson.



> Willow Emerald ovipositing into an old branch, tree # 2, leaving behind distinctive new scars by Alan Nelson.



^ Golden-ringed Dragonfly by Chris Lamsdell.



^ Red-veined Darter by Roy Hargreaves.



^ Downy Emerald by Jo Angel.

v Lesser Emperor by Martine Harvey.



25: EAST SUFFOLK 26: WEST SUFFOLK ADRIAN PARR

Dragonfly recording in the county during 2024 was again at an all-time high, with some 6000 records received either direct from observers, via iRecord or via BirdTrack; a further 500+ were received via iNaturalist. Detailed monitoring of various key nature reserves and ‘rewilding’ areas continued, with an important addition being Redgrave and Lopham Fen SWT Reserve, on the Suffolk/Norfolk border.

The 2024 season started relatively early, with reports of **Large Red Damselfly** from two sites on 7 April and with **Hairy Dragonfly** and **Variable Damselfly** then being seen from 13 April. With the last record of the year being a **Common Darter** noted on 28 November, it was clearly quite a lengthy season!

Of the county’s less common damselflies, **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** were again reported from their strongholds at Redgrave & Lopham Fen NNR and the Black Bourn Valley SWT Reserve east of Thurston. Very few records of **White-legged Damselfly** were received during the year. In Suffolk, this species is largely restricted to the River Stour along the county border with Essex, and records are often strongly influenced by the recording activities of a few specific observers. Even allowing for this, it would seem the species had a poor season. Similarly, **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** was not recorded from central Suffolk during the year though, as this area traditionally tends to be under-recorded, the exact significance of this is perhaps more uncertain.

With regard to the county’s dragonflies, **Keeled Skimmer** was seen on two occasions – at North Cove on 24 June and at Minsmere on 17 July. First noted as recently as 2018, records of this species are apparently increasing and maybe breeding isn’t far away. **Lesser Emperor** was noted from at least eight sites along the East Suffolk coast during the year, though there were no records from West Suffolk. Several coastal sites now host the species pretty much annually, and with records of multiple individuals at Carlton Marshes and East Lane, Bawdsey, during 2024 it is likely that many represent local breeding colonies. Suffolk’s breeding **Southern Migrant Hawker** population at Redgrave and Lopham Fen was well represented in records received during the year, though records from the coastal strip between Felixstowe and Southwold were more patchy. In the west of the county, single immatures were photographed both at Lakenheath and Thurston during late June. These likely represent local wanderers from as yet undiscovered breeding sites.

As for other species, **Norfolk Hawker** was once again reported from most of the coastal strip and a little inland, this trend forming part of the species’ ongoing national range expansion. In the west of the county reports are as yet only sporadic, but the first records from Lackford Lakes SWT Reserve during late June represent an important development. Continuing range expansion by **Scarce Chaser** was also noted during the year, with increasing sightings along the River Lark upstream beyond Mildenhall; a presumed wandering individual even turned up at Thurston in late June. In the east of the county, a couple of intriguing coastal observations require confirmation.

As for immigration during the year, it was apparently a fairly quiet time, as it was nationally. There were just two sightings of **Red-veined Darter** – one was noted at Carlton Marshes on 27 July while another (an immature male) was attracted to a moth-trap at Felixstowe Ferry over the night of 5 September. Some of the year’s records of **Lesser Emperor** and **Southern Migrant Hawker** may well also refer to immigrants, though it is becoming increasingly difficult to assess the status of specific individuals.

27: EAST NORFOLK 28: WEST NORFOLK PAM TAYLOR

Overall, the number of records received for 2024 was down on the two previous years, perhaps reflecting the above average rainfall in April and May, as well as July, compared to the 30 year averages. Although April and May were also warmer than expected, I suspect these damp conditions limited dragonfly recording opportunities.

The news for Norfolk in 2024 had both its ups and downs. There were only four reports of **Common Hawker** *Aeshna juncea*. Sadly none of these could be accepted because they came from unlikely sites and lacked supporting evidence. Although one known site in the eastern broads is no longer surveyed regularly, the other main location from past years is a well watched site on the east coast. The species can be easily overlooked, since it is very rare in Norfolk and similar to Migrant Hawker, but the bright yellow leading edge to the wings usually stands out well. Please keep a look out for this species and wherever possible, please add a photograph of the actual dragonfly seen to any record entry.

Small Red Damselfly *Ceriagrion tenellum* was thankfully seen once again at both Scarning Fen and the sensitive site in West Norfolk, but in extremely low numbers at both locations. Among the reports for Scarning Fen a pair was seen on 20 June, with another female alongside two males a month later. Another species with a renewed presence during 2024 was **Southern Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes barbarus*. This was seen at no less than five locations, including its two known colonies on the north and east coasts. Two other locations were also coastal, but a single female was photographed at an inland site in East Norfolk in early September. At Winterton Dunes numbers recorded were into double figures with the occasional pair also observed.

Lesser Emperors *Anax parthenope* were reported from sixteen locations, with good numbers and breeding behaviour observed once again at the Trinity Broad colony. Numbers were also good at the repeat site of Winterton Dunes where the species has been reported annually since 2017. A group of at least six individuals was seen at Great Yarmouth North Denes in mid-July, presumably fresh immigrants, but the remainder of the sightings referred to just a handful of scattered individuals, twos or threes. Overall there were significantly fewer reports of this species than in previous years. Does this reflect lower numbers on the wing or simply the fact that the species is becoming more commonplace.

There were thirteen reports of **Red-veined Darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii*, but four lacked supporting evidence and could not be verified as correct. All of the accepted sightings came from various places across Winterton Dunes. Between 20 June and 17 August numbers reported were between one and five with most, if not all, being male. Also seen at Winterton Dunes, as well as twelve other locations, was **Southern Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna affinis*. Some reports came from other coastal sites, but further sightings were inland. At Syderstone Common four males and a female were seen on 5 August. This reduced to three males and a female on 7 August, but did include a pair. By 10 August no less than fifteen were reported, with two pairs noted. For the second year in a row there were no reports of **Vagrant Emperor** *Anax ephippiger* from Norfolk and only four accepted records from the rest of Britain, with a fifth record still awaiting review.

Finally for our less common species in the county, records of **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** *Ischnura pumilio* came in from two sites; one in East Norfolk and one in West Norfolk. I don't believe the West Norfolk site was regularly counted during 2024, but at the other location numbers varied between one and a dozen with immatures also present. With regard to our more widespread and common species there's only one point of note. Once again I received significantly more reports of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** *Chalcolestes viridis* (189) compared to **Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes sponsa* (105). Does this reflect recorder bias towards the more recent colonist or the true status of these two species in the county at the present time?

My sincere thanks to everyone contributing records for Norfolk in 2024. The overall number of sightings was just under 8,000. You can either enter your sightings directly into iRecord or, if you record regularly at one or more sites, you can email pam.taylor@british-dragonflies.org.uk for a spreadsheet that contains all the required data entry columns in the correct order necessary for upload by me to the national database.

29: CAMBRIDGESHIRE 31: HUNTINGDONSHIRE VAL PERRIN

The 2024 season yielded 2440 records in iRecord, ranging from 6 April (**Large Red Damselfly**) to 11 November (**Common Darter**). For the more notable records, **Norfolk Hawker** continued to be seen at widely distributed sites around the two vice counties, including in Brampton Wood, near Huntingdon, in two gardens at Houghton and Cambridge, and with up to five being seen at Roswell Pits, Ely on 4 July. **Southern Migrant Hawker** also had a good year, with new records from Cambridge Botanic Garden and Coe Fen in the city, and at fens at Fulbourn, Little Wilbraham and Teversham and Wicken, as well as at its previously established sites at Quy Fen and Ditton Meadows, Cambridge. One was also seen at Hampton NR, Peterborough on 13 August, with another three at the Great Fen three days later.

There were also a number of singleton records of **Lesser Emperor** throughout July from Northstowe, Dernford Reservoir, Stapleford, Paxton Pits and Stuntney. Unlike in 2023 I did not receive any records of **Downy Emerald** from Fowlmere, although presumably it is still breeding at a private site near Foxton, south of Cambridge.

Regarding the less common damselflies, **White-legged Damselfly** was recorded in low numbers at 11 sites, with the best count (6-20) being at Cambourne lakes. Similarly, only small numbers of **Emerald Damselfly** were seen, although the meadow at Little Paxton NR held an estimated 21-100. Doing better than this was **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**, which reached numbers in the region of 500 at Longstanton and West Cambourne. **Willow Emerald** also continued to flourish, with records from 18 sites; 50 being seen at Quy Fen and 21-100 being recorded at Logan's Meadow NR in Cambridge.

Another **Beautiful Demoiselle** was recorded by Kevin Royle near Old Weston, near to where he had recorded another back in 2021 (see photo). There is also another relatively recent record from the Great Fen. Although the species is not known to breed in the county, it does do so across the border in Northamptonshire, so perhaps these isolated Cambridgeshire records are dispersals from these populations.

Keeled Skimmer used to breed at Wicken Fen in the 1800s but has not been recorded here since. However, Andy Frost recorded one at the Great Fen on 16 August while surveying dragonflies for this new grand wetland creation scheme linking Holme and Woodwalton Fen NNRs as well as acres of adjacent lands.

In my report on the 2023 season I mentioned a record of **Southern Emerald Damselfly** at Fulbourn Fen, near Cambridge, which was supported by a couple of photographs. I was unable to confirm this record when I visited later that year, but last year I received another iRecord sighting from this site by an unknown recorder. In late July Adrian Parr recorded a lone male Southern Emerald Damselfly basking on a sunny track adjacent to the Fen, so clearly some likely local breeding at very low density must be occurring. However, the area of the recent sightings appears unsuitable habitat, being a private fenced agricultural field. A 2023 aerial Google Earth image appears to show two small depressions in the field which may temporarily contain water. Further investigation is clearly necessary to unravel the mystery of these records.



^ Male Beautiful Demoiselle by Kevin Royles.

v Male Southern Emerald Damselby by Jean Bacon.



30: BEDFORDSHIRE RORY MORRISEY

It has been another remarkable year for Odonata in Bedfordshire. Scarce species have been turning up in new locations and we have another two to add to the VC list of confirmed breeding species. Perhaps owing to the weather patterns, the flight season of several species was extended both ways.

Scarce Emerald Damselby was found to be breeding in Bedfordshire for the first time at a small pond near Milton Bryan. **Lesser Emperor** turned up in many locations and breeding evidence was found for the first time at Brogborough Landfill Lake. **Southern Migrant Hawker** was seen at a few sites, mostly males, and no evidence of breeding has yet been found. **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselby** and **Keeled Skimmer** are still doing well at Sundon Quarry. **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselby** was also picked up by a birder at Grovebury Quarry, who posted photos of an *aurantica* female on X (formerly Twitter). **Beautiful Demoiselle** appeared to be more widespread, but not common, probably breeding but no definite evidence found as yet. **Green-eyed Hawker (Norfolk Hawker)** was also widespread but no breeding evidence has yet been seen although one was seen ovipositing at Felmersham. The number of confirmed breeding species in VC30 now stands at 27.

The first species to be seen in adult form was, once again, the **Large Red Damselby** on 11 April, and the latest flying Odonate was, unusually, **Migrant Hawker** on 5 November. **Beautiful Demoiselle** appeared at many sites over a long flight period. Several **Southern Migrant Hawker** males were observed at various locations and one female was recorded. Very few records of **Downy Emerald** were received from the Heath and Reach area but a few were seen elsewhere including at Willington, some distance away from any known breeding site. None were seen copulating, ovipositing or emerging. **Emerald Damselby** had possibly its worst year in recent times with only 13 records.

The “Nationally Important” Dragonfly species noted by the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) that are regularly seen in the county are **Green-eyed (Norfolk) Hawker** (Endangered) and **Scarce Chaser** (Near Threatened). These two species have been expanding their range in Bedfordshire and the Scarce Chaser is quite common all along the River Great Ouse and nearby.

The “Nationally Important” Damselby species noted by the BDS that have been seen in the county are **Scarce Emerald Damselby**, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselby** and **Variable Damselby**, which are all classed as Near Threatened. The first two have just returned to single sites and the last has been present at a few locations in recent years. Large numbers of **Variable Damselby** were to be seen at Felmersham NR at the end of June and beginning of July.

32: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

MARK TYRRELL

“Northants is on fire this season!” – Ian Merrill, Leicester County Recorder, which pretty much sums up the year we have had in 2024, as the most exciting for dragonflies for a number of years. Despite fluctuating weather, we had confirmed sightings of four important species on top of the existing breeding species, and several species showing interesting signs of dispersal. The County total hit 28 recorded species for the first time, with evidence of breeding of 26.

The first exciting event of the year was the discovery of a colony of **Norfolk Hawker** at Wicksteed Park in Kettering, with ovipositing photographed in mid-June, and adults seen into late July. This followed sightings of individuals at Summer Leys Nature Reserve and Thrapston Town Lake. These latter two were only one-offs, but the Wicksteed Park records appear to be an existing or new colony. This site has no Water Soldier, but plenty of dead reeds in the water, and hosts **Variable Damselflies** and **Hairy Dragonflies**.

Lesser Emperor was again recorded at the same sites as in 2023, with additional records at Stanwick Lakes, Kinewell Lake, Earls Barton Gravel Pits and Corby Old Quarry, with ovipositing recorded several times at Ravensthorpe Reservoir.

Three male **Southern Migrant Hawk**s were discovered in August in gullet ponds in a new housing development near Corby, being the first recorded in the County since 2019. This generated quite a bit of interest locally. Unfortunately, no females were recorded here. Another male was seen at a private woodland estate close to the Bucks border at the end of August.

Another first occurred in mid-August when a few **Scarce Emerald Damselflies** (*Lestes dryas*) were photographed at Priors Hall, while I was waiting for the **Southern Migrant Hawk**s to appear. Posting my photo on social media led to several responses with photos of other “odd looking” **Common Emerald Damselflies**, but a male photographed at Pitsford Nature Reserve on 12 August 2024 was confirmed as Scarce Emerald Damselfly, predating the Priors Hall sighting by four days. A female was then photographed on 7 September. Needless to say, all keen dragonfly watchers are checking every single Emerald from now on, and focussing their cameras on the anal appendages!

It was also an interesting year for both **Variable Damselflies** and **Downy Emeralds**, where both were seen at a number of new sites. In the case of the Variables, three new colonies were confirmed; on MOD land, a private estate adjacent to the MOD land and at Irthlingborough Lakes & Meadows Wildlife Trust Reserve. The Downy Emeralds were all singles, however a female was photographed and reported on our Facebook group by the esteemed Henry Curry at Barnwell Country Park, which has the right habitat and is well recorded, leading the speculation that we may get flying adults emerging in 2 years’ time.



^ Lesser Emperor at Pitsford Nature Reserve, 29 July, by Mark Tyrrell.

v Ovipositing Norfolk Hawker at Wicksteed Park, 14 June, by Mark Tyrrell.





^ Scarce Emerald Damselfly at Priors Hall, 16 August, by Mark Tyrrell.

v Southern Migrant Hawker at Priors Hall, 29 August by Mark Tyrrell.



33: EAST GLOUCESTERSHIRE 34: WEST GLOUCESTERSHIRE RICHARD MUNDY

A total of 1,068 records of 29 species of Dragonfly and Damselfly were accepted in Gloucestershire in 2024. 2024 was notable for an early emergence of several species; the earliest dates for Gloucestershire were recorded for three species: **Hairy Dragonfly**, **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** and **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** (see below). 2024 was also notable for range expansions and an increase in the number of records of three recent colonists: **Willow Emerald Damselfly**, **Southern Migrant Hawker** and **Lesser Emperor**.

The range expansion of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** southwards along the River Severn continued in 2024. Most records came from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Coombe Hill Meadows Nature Reserve where a male was seen on 21 August; there were also several records of one or two through August, September, and October. A tandem pair was present on the 26 September, with two tandem pairs also recorded on 29 August and 4 October, and three tandem pairs plus a seventh individual on 11 October when oviposition scars on a Willow were also noted. Away from Coombe Hill Meadows, oviposition scars were noted on 17 March at Kemerton and Beckford in the Warwickshire Avon catchment to the northeast of Tewkesbury and an adult was at Kemerton Lake on 30 August. Much further downstream on the Severn, a tandem pair and oviposition scars were recorded close to Frampton on Severn on 12 October.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly was recorded at two locations in 2024. One was seen at a regular site on the outskirts of Bristol on 9 May, the earliest date this species has been recorded in Gloucestershire, and a pair in tandem was photographed at RSPB Nagshead on 16 June, the first record from the Forest of Dean, a former stronghold for the species, since 2016.

A **Downy Emerald**, photographed at the unusual location of Strawberry Banks in the Golden Valley on 11 May, may have originated from the population at Woodchester Park or perhaps indicates an unknown breeding population somewhere in that area. More typical, two were recorded at Whelford Pools in Cotswold Water Park and one was at Fairford on 7 May.

Only one record of **Common Clubtail** was received, close to Hartpury on the River Severn the 19 May, a typical date.

Seven **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** records were received, most from typical locations in the Forest of Dean but, unusually, one was photographed at Slimbridge on the 20 June. In the forest, a female was recorded at Crumpmeadow, Cinderford on 21 May, the earliest date this species has been recorded in Gloucestershire. In addition, one was at RSPB Nagshead on 2 June, two were at Flaxley on 23 July and one was there on 18 August, and two were at Wigpool on 13 August.

Lesser Emperor records in 2024 were from the east and south of the county with a concentration close to the Wiltshire border in Cotswold Water Park. This is becoming one of the best places in the country to find this species, and there were records from all sections of the water park. In addition, one was at Shorncliffe on 2 August, three were at Cerney Wick on 6 August, two were close to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Whelford Pools Nature Reserve on 9 August and one was at Lechlade on 29 August. Elsewhere, a male was at GWT's Coombe Hill Meadows on 6 June, and a male was at Kemerton Reserve on 13 August and 30 August.

A male **Hairy Dragonfly** was photographed at Slimbridge on 16 April, which is the earliest date this species has been recorded in the county. A pair was in tandem and ovipositing at Hempsted on 19 May while singles were recorded at Barton on the Warwickshire Avon on 2 June and at Welford-on-Avon on 18th June. Only one record of **Common Hawker** was received - one was at RSPB Nagshead in the Forest of Dean on 16 August, a typical date and location.

2024 was a good year for **Southern Migrant Hawker** with an apparent range extension from the small established site close to the River Severn where up to six males were present between 21 July and 10 August. There were three records involving at least five different individuals in a second area a couple of kilometres away: a female on 24 July, four males on 13 August, and a male on 23 August. A male was also present at a third different site, 7km away, on 28 August, perhaps indicating a further range extension. Many thanks to everyone who submitted records in 2023 and to all the people working so hard to protect Gloucestershire's wetlands.

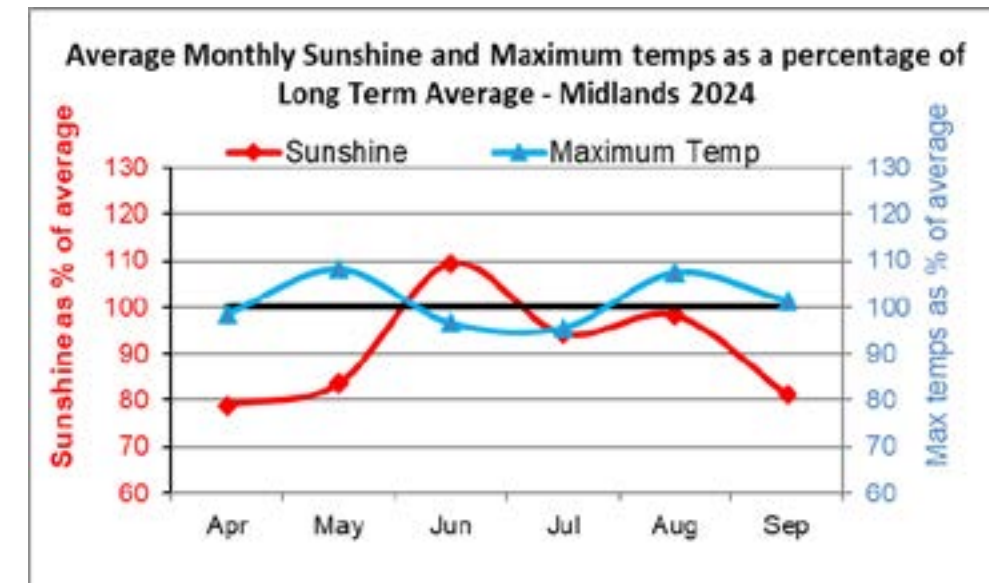
36: HEREFORDSHIRE CHRIS HARRIS

During 2024, a total of 289 records for 19 species were received and accepted from 55 observers in Herefordshire. The total number of records is significantly down on last years 391, which may be partially accounted for by the exceptionally wet weather experienced throughout 2024. Despite a record-breaking warm spell in early May, which pushed up average temperatures for spring, early summer was characterised by higher than average rainfall and lower than average temperatures; 2024 was the coolest summer since 2015. This trend continued into autumn; September was one of the wettest on record, with Herefordshire receiving 300% of its average rainfall for that month. The first record for Herefordshire, predictably, was a **Large Red Damselfly**, on 16 April. The last, again predictably, was a **Common Darter** on 10 November. Any later sightings were cut short by the arrival of snow at the end of November. **Southern Hawker** was our most frequently recorded dragonfly, a species noted for its propensity to colonise garden ponds and oviposit in the most unlikely places. Other species frequently seen include **Azure Damselfly** and **Common Blue Damselfly**, **Broad-Bodied Chaser**, and **Emperor**. There were only four records for **Common Clubtail** in 2024, down from 10 in 2023 and 32 in 2022. Similarly, there were only two records for **White-legged Damselfly**, another riverine species frequently recorded in previous years. While at present it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions as to the status of these species in the county, the poor state of Herefordshire's rivers is a cause for great concern. The Wye in particular is badly polluted with phosphate from the discharge of untreated sewage from wastewater treatment works, made worse by extreme weather events, and agricultural runoff, especially from chicken manure generated by a growing number of intensive poultry units in the catchment area. Phosphate pollution can lead to algal blooms that chokes aquatic plants; the Wye was once famous for its extensive water crowfoot beds, a vital part of the river ecosystem, which have all but disappeared in recent years. As the algae dies, it depletes the water of oxygen and smothers riverbeds, which can have a devastating effect on aquatic invertebrates. In contrast to the above two river species, there were frequent records for **Beautiful Demoiselles** and **Banded Demoiselles** across the county. There were no surprises recorded this year, although I had hoped for sightings of **Scarce Chaser** and **Hairy Dragonfly**, both of which are now well established just over our eastern border in Worcestershire. Hairy Dragonfly was last recorded in the county in 1977. Many thanks to all the recorders who submitted sightings. Let's hope for a marginally drier 2025.

37: WORCESTERSHIRE MIKE AVERILL

At the time of writing, 3408 records have been received so far for 2024, for 27 species from 205 recorders. One is a new species for the County and a first for the UK, but it doesn't get added to our normal list.

The point has been made before that the number of dragonflies seen and recorded is a measure of the weather. In recent years we have had a run of above average monthly temperatures making the trend to a warmer climate very believable, but 2024 was different in the Midlands and instead of the 3 – 4 months above average that we have had since 2017, this year, only May and August were warmer. There were three months with below average temperatures whereas we have got used to only one or two in previous years. Sunshine is just as important as warm days to see active dragonflies and 2024 was quite dull with only June being above average. This all meant the active insect days were fewer than we had got used to. The poor September and October did mean that it felt like the season was over very early this year. Despite that, we received 3408 records, our highest ever annual number from 205 recorders.



Graph showing the summer temperatures and sunshine amounts for the south Midlands in 2024 as a percentage of the long term average. [Data from Met. Office UK](#) regional series of monthly, seasonal and annual values for regions.

With the high level of recording this year it might be expected that most species would be recorded more than in previous years but there are some that were noticeably down in numbers such as the **Broad-Bodied Chaser**, **Common Darter**, **Common Clubtail**, **Emerald Damselfly** and **Scarce Chaser**.

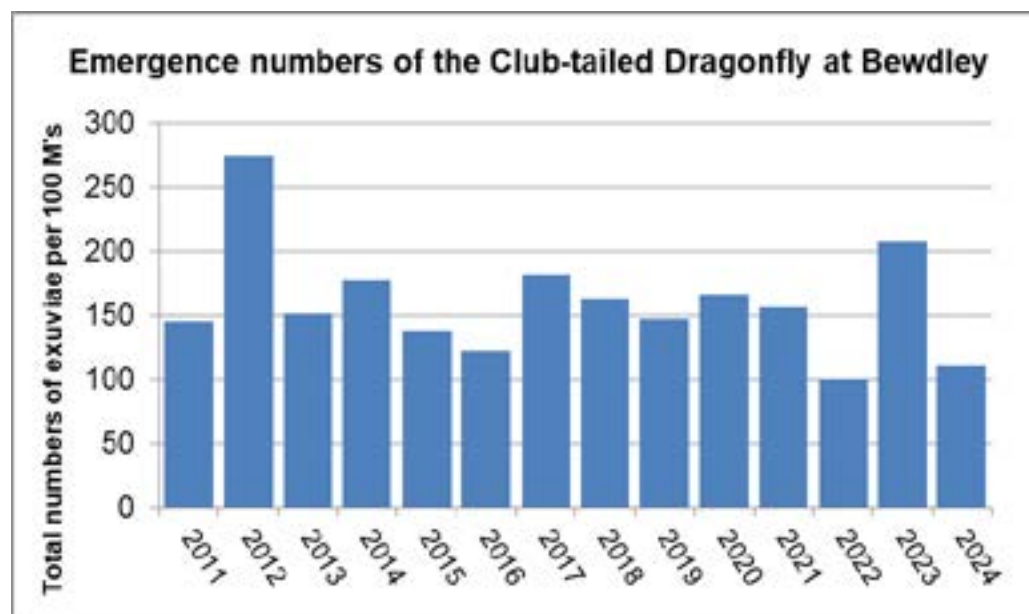
There isn't any real concern over the apparent drop in numbers of Scarce Chaser this year as the count in 2023 was exceptionally high.

Looking at the more recent arrivals, the **Hairy Dragonfly** did very well while the **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** continued in its restricted habitat. The **Willow Emerald Damselfly** also maintained a foothold in the county, although down a bit on 2023 and the **Lesser Emperor** has gradually increased in numbers over the last 3 years. All of the Emperor species lay eggs on their own except for the **Lesser Emperor** where the male is still attached and the photo below shows the male and female together - a useful aid to identification.

Adding a fourth new species in five years, we welcome the stunningly blue **Southern Migrant Hawker**. This was a bit of a surprise as we were really on full alert looking for a possible **Norfolk Hawker** after one was seen in Shropshire.

With growing concerns over the reduction in water quality in the River Severn, each year's annual **Common**

Clubtail larval case count is eagerly anticipated. After what appeared to be an encouraging count last year, numbers dropped to one of the lowest counts for years this May, nearly half that of 2023. It is interesting that while some aquatic plants have obviously gone missing from the Severn in the last five years, there is also concern that invertebrates will suffer as well, and yet other than this long term survey, there is little or no quantitative analysis for them. If it is bad news for **the Common Clubtail** next May, then that will surely mean a general collapse of the creatures at the bottom of the food chain resulting in an inevitable knock on to others further up.



Graph showing the annual Common Clubtail emergence rates at Bewdley 2011-2024.

At the other river sample site at Eckington on the River Avon, counts showed a slightly better year for most species except for **Scarce Chaser** and **Large Red Damselfly**. It should be remembered though that 2023 was the second highest showing of **Scarce Chaser** ever, after 2018. This year there was a new species at Eckington, the **Hairy Dragonfly** which was seen twice, making that the 18th species at the site.

The **Scarce Chaser** continued at its isolated outpost at Hillditch Pool, Hartlebury breeding once again for the 13th year.

There has been a paper published this year about hybrid dragonflies in the Americas (Johnson, Jim, 2024. A review of Odonata hybrids of the Western Hemisphere. Bulletin of American Odonatology Vol. 14, No. 1). In that, 38 cases of breeding between different species were explored. We sometimes see different species attempting to pair but there has been very little work in the UK on whether it ever leads to a hybrid species. Normally it is assumed that the unique male to female coupling appendages make it impossible for different species to successfully complete copulation but occasionally you might see attempts. An example of a male Migrant Hawker and female Southern Hawker, see photo below, occurred at Hillditch Pool and they remained in tandem for about 20 minutes before they separated without completing the full circle.

Finally there is the interesting occurrence of an exotic dragonfly, in Bromsgrove, a first for the UK, – the **Slender Skimmer**, *Orthetrum Sabina*. There is a separate account of finding this species in this issue.

Interestingly, as it is as an exotic introduction it won't count on the all-time species list for Worcestershire which remains at 34.



< Attempted copulation between male Migrant Hawker and female Southern Hawker at Hillditch Pool by Mike Averill.



> Male and female Lesser Emperor egg laying, Ripple, by Andy Warr.



^ Southern Migrant Hawker at Ryall August by Mike Averill.

38: WARWICKSHIRE MICK SCHILLING

VC 38 Warwickshire continues to be served by an encouraging number of keen enthusiasts submitting regular sightings around the county, though some notable groups have not submitted any data this year. These contributions are greatly valued, and my thanks are gratefully extended to those individuals.

Some notable points from the 2024 season in Warwickshire:

Banded Demoiselle remain common or very common along the majority of the slower flowing rivers.

Beautiful Demoiselles continuing to widen their reach.

White-legged Damselfly remains common along slower flowing rivers.

Willow Emerald Damselfly sightings continue to widen and were seen into the autumn. Warwickshire enthusiasts are encouraged to continue to seek this species out into October and November.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly remains absent since 2016 with no further sightings reported.

Scarce Chaser numbers again remain encouraging, with very early sightings reported for the county.

Common Clubtail are still elusive, although a possible sighting was reported along the Avon at Marlcliffe, which is the location of confirmed sightings around 8 to 10 years ago. Again, members are encouraged to look out for this species along the Avon between Bidford and Salford Priors in mid to late May, in the hope that a breeding population might be confirmed again. They might also be a possibility at the very lowest end of the River Arrow at its confluence with the Avon.

There were no further reports of **Southern Migrant Hawker** received this year, following a lone sighting in 2022 near Rugby.

Notable sites in the County that return good numbers and variety of sightings include: the Heart of England Forest; WWT sites such as Hampton Wood, Snitterfield Bushes and Brandon Marsh, Marsh Lane NNR, Middleton Lakes, Kingsbury Water Park, Alvecote Wood, Ladywalk Nature Reserve, Earlswood Lakes, and Bidford and Saxon Mill National Trust sites at Charlecote Park. Packwood House and Coughton Court can also be productive especially where they offer a variety of waterbodies.



^ Broad Bodied Chaser with Black-tailed Skimmer at Charlecote Park by Mick Schilling.
v Emerald Damselfly at Alvecote Wood by Mick Schilling.



39: STAFFORDSHIRE DAVE JACKSON

Many thanks to the County's contributors for a great series of records in 2024.

Pleasingly there were at least three **Hairy Dragonflies** reported from Branston Gravel Pits.

Emperors have been well recorded over numerous waterbodies, and a **Lesser Emperor** was recorded at Belvide Reservoir in July.

Common Hawkers were reported 'hawking' over Cannock Chase.

White-faced Darters were seen at Chartley Moss.

Keeled Skimmers were reported again at their "sensitive" boggy location near Burntwood.

Broad-bodied Chasers appear to have had a good year from the number of records submitted.

A **Scarce Chaser** was seen at Saltwells Nature Reserve.

A **Black Darter** was reported from a site near Burntwood.

A **Red-veined Darter** was found at Belvide Reservoir, and this site also hosted a **Willow Emerald Damselfly**, as did sites at Caverswall, Trentham, and a bog near Burntwood.

Emerald Damselflies were reported from several new locations including Weeping Cross, Womere Rugeley Quarry and Baggeridge CP.

Beautiful Demoiselles and **Banded Demoiselles** have been located at several new locations.

Small Red-eyed Damselflies were seen again at Doxey Marsh but previous years' site reports were lacking.

Two **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** were reported, and a photograph supplied from a bog near Chasewater.

White-legged Damselflies were reported from two new locations.

40: SHROPSHIRE

SUE REES EVANS

In Shropshire we had a relatively early start to the flight season with **Large Red Damselflies** emerging on 12 April – the earliest sightings in the last seven years. A lull followed with cool temperatures and relatively few records drifting in until two other species were also recorded in April, relatively early, both at Whixall Moss: **Four-spotted Chaser** on 24 April and **White-faced Darter** a few days later on 28 April. Early records were then made at the start of May with both **Blue-tailed Damselfly** and **Beautiful Demoiselle** being recorded on 5 May. The latter constitutes the second earliest Shropshire sighting of this species.

The flight season seemed frustrating weatherwise though the theme of early sightings continued with the second earliest Shropshire emergence of **Common Darter** - a typically high/late summer species recorded on 26 May. **Southern Hawker** then produced an early record on 25 May and then **Ruddy Darter** was seen on 7 June – a Shropshire record! Only a handful of June records have ever been made for this species and the earliest prior to 2024 was made on 25 June 2023. The weather largely remained disappointing throughout 2024 but I hoped, towards the end of the season, that relatively mild autumnal weather might lend itself to some late species records. This however was not the case and **Common Hawker**, **Black Darter** and **Common Darter** were last recorded on 26 October, well short of the November records made in 2021. Surprisingly the only species recorded in November (just!) was **Southern Hawker** on 1 November in Pontesbury which was in fact the last record for the season.

In total 27 species were recorded comprising 16 Dragonfly and 11 Damselfly species. **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** and **Downy Emerald** were both unrecorded; the former most likely due to poor weather limiting recording and the latter due to a lack of recording at mostly privately owned sites. On a more positive note I was surveying a private site called Isle Pool near Shrewsbury on 2 June and was amazed to see the first Shropshire sightings of **Norfolk Hawker**! One male and a separate mating pair were observed in flight and settling on vegetation. I really didn't expect this species, though I was expecting the **Willow Emerald Damselfly** which surprisingly still eludes us and we await our first Shropshire record.

Black Darter was seen at Dolgoch Quarry for the second year in succession. This is an old limestone quarry and certainly not an acid bog pool, but the sighting of a fresh female in August 2024 raises the question of possible breeding at this unlikely location. Speaking of **Black Darter** I'm very grateful to a number of people who volunteered to either monitor sites or investigate areas of the Shropshire Hills for our Upland Dragonflies Project. Full updates will shortly be added to the Shropshire Dragonflies Website detailing ways you can still help our upland species in 2025. On the website (in a few weeks!) you will also find a much more detailed account of the 2024 flight season in the Shropshire Dragonflies Newsletter.

Grateful thanks to all of you who sent in records & photographs for the flight season blog during 2024. Here's to a long and sunny summer in 2025!

[Shropshire Dragonflies website](#)

54: NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE

FIONA MCKENNA

After a particularly wet and stormy winter, dragonfly season finally kicked off on 12 April with the first record of the year; Brian Hedley spotted a **Large Red Damselfly** at Marton. It was nearly a month later that the first dragonfly 'proper' was recorded, that being a **Broad-bodied Chaser** spotted in a garden pond on the 4 May by Russell Foster in Boston. A big thumbs up from me to anyone with a garden pond. Never mind home-grown veggies it's all about home-grown Dragonflies!

Our beautiful coastline attracted a few showy migrant species throughout the summer, notably **Southern Migrant Hawker** being spotted at Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Gibraltar Point nature reserve by Adam Faiers in August. Another, or perhaps the same one, was spotted by Jody Scott slightly further north at Ulceby only 10 days later. Sticking at the coast there were also three separate sightings of **Norfolk Hawker** in July at: Withern Ings (Phil Espin), Rimac and Saltfleetby/Theddlethorpe Dunes (both Mark Johnson).

In July I was invited to Woodhall Spa golf course by a member of the green management team, Stephen Thompson, not to play golf (I've only ever played crazy golf anyway!), but to search for dragonflies. We spent a sunny afternoon wandering the course with a few club members doing a walk and talk and capturing a few dragons to show their beauty up close. We saw 11 species during a couple of hours and Steve has recorded 15 in total during 2024. It just shows that golf courses can be nature havens if managed sympathetically, benefitting wildlife and enhancing the experience for golfers too. I look forward to following the progress of this site under Stephen's sympathetic management.

I would encourage anyone who has access to private land, either a garden, workplace, farmland or other place the public cannot enter, to please submit records as you may be the only person who is able to let us know about the species at these sites. I've noticed regular records coming from private college campuses for example and it is great to see what species are in residence there each year.

Lastly but most importantly a huge thank you to everyone who submitted records last year, keep up the great work. We wouldn't know what was happening to dragonflies out there without you all. I hope to visit more sites across lovely Lincolnshire this year and run a few public events too so keep an eye on the events pages on the website. Have a great dragonfly season everyone!

Thanks to Steve Thompson for sharing a few photos from our dragonfly day at Woodhall Spa Golf course.



^ Male Banded Demoiselle by Steve Thompson.

v Male Migrant Hawker by Steve Thompson.



55: LEICESTERSHIRE WITH RUTLAND IAN MERRILL

From a recording perspective, the highlight of 2024 was undoubtedly the discovery of a new population of **Scarce Chasers** on the mid reaches of the River Wreake, in Northeast Leicestershire. I had speculated about the suitability of the River Wreake for this species in the past, as its size, morphology and surrounding habitats mirror those of the River Welland, on our southern borders, in many ways. Credit for the exciting discovery of **Scarce Chaser** at this new site must be jointly shared, between Tim Goodlife and Matthew Billings, who miraculously found them on the same date, at Priory Water and Frisby Gravel Pits respectively.

Subsequently the species was found at two more locations on the River Wreake itself, demonstrating that there must already be a small population established on the watercourse. 2025 will be an interesting year at this site, when we discover whether Scarce Chaser makes an annual appearance on the Wreake or whether, as is the current status on the River Soar, it still makes a biannual emergence linked to its two-year life-cycle. The atlas map below clearly shows the new River Wreake population, midway between the existing colonies on the Rivers Welland and Soar. The population on the lower reaches of the River Soar, north of Kegworth, remains one of the most northerly in the UK and again made a strong showing in 2024, as per its current 'even calendar year' credentials.

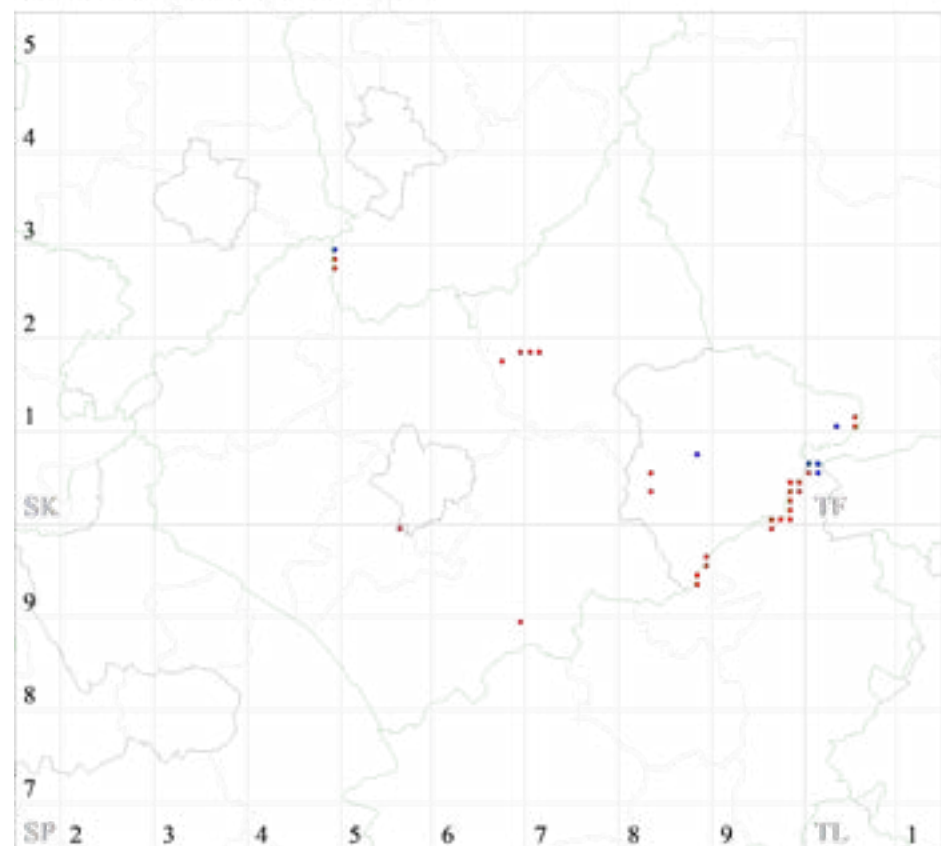
Beautiful Demoiselle continued its slow but relentless expansion to the north in 2024, with sightings now becoming regular to a point just shy of the Leicester City boundary. Numbers remain low, in habitat which one would not necessarily associate with a species which purports to favour fast-flowing gravel-bottomed streams. As has been the case in neighbouring Northants, it seems that Beautiful Demoiselle can adapt to our clay-dominated lowland landscape and numbers on the River Avon, at least, are certainly building into a healthy and stable population. In 2024 one wanderer made its way as far north as the Wreake Valley, almost 20km beyond the previous northernmost VC 55 sighting.

My final 2024 talking point actually refers to a different recording area, where Northamptonshire revealed the presence of a breeding population of **Norfolk Hawkers** and a new site for **Southern Migrant Hawker**. History has shown that what happens in Northants generally follows-on up north and over the recording border, so I would conclude by raising awareness of these species; they are two spectacular dragonflies which certainly need to be very much on the VC 55 recording radar in 2025!

As ever, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those who went to the trouble of submitting Odonata records for 2024, which are invaluable in plotting the evolution of our changing populations in the face of climate change and habitat developments. Lastly, I will conclude with my usual plug for the Leicestershire and Rutland Dragonfly Facebook Group, which has continued to serve as a focal point for dragonfly interest in the counties and continues to increase in popularity.

vMap. Scarce Chaser Range in VC 55, to the end of the 2024 flight season, courtesy of MapMate. A long-established population lies on the River Welland on our southeast boundary, the River Soar population remains restricted to SK42, with a surprise new population appearing in 2024 on the River Wreake, mid-way between the two. Red dots are 2020 to present records, blue dots are 2000-2019.

Scarce Chaser (*Libellula fulva*)



v Teneral Scarce Chaser on the lower River Soar, June 2024, by Ian Merrill.



56: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 57: DERBYSHIRE CHRIS BRADBURY

Once again it seemed like a quiet year for dragonflies, but there were almost 4000 accepted records.

A female **Beautiful Demoiselle** photographed on 31 July at Mill Lakes, Bestwood is a third for Nottinghamshire. Additionally, I managed to track down a 2001 record of this species at Rufford Park, Nottingham, from a reliable observer who now resides in Canada.

Variable Damselfly, in recent years, has been recorded on gravel pits by the Trent between Netherfield and Holme Pierrepont with occasional isolated records elsewhere, but close to those locations. In 2024 individuals were recorded as far as Langford Lowfields RSPB to the north and Willington Gravel Pits DWT in the south-west. The latter becomes the first **Variable Damselfly** for Derbyshire, photographed on 8 May.

Other unexpected records came from Hickling on the Grantham Canal and Staunton Quarry. This last one may have been undetected were it not for the Grizzled Skipper Butterflies that attract attention to the site.

Norfolk Hawker has been on my wish list but it was still a surprise when one was photographed at Attenborough Nature Reserve NWT on 29 June becoming a first for Nottinghamshire. This was published on Facebook and not formally submitted though the observer knew it was a county first.

Remarkably, the county second of this species was photographed on 30 July at Skylarks Nature Reserve NWT.

Keeled Skimmer has previously been recorded in Derbyshire just a handful of times. Just one was found away from the eastern moors. All of them were males and the photographed ones had all mated. This can be deduced from the missing patches of blue pruinosity on the abdomen which are eroded by the legs of the female during copulation. This was fascinating and led me to believe there must be a local population. I have been asking for volunteers to do the leg work to find them and it paid off in 2024.

On 20 June a female was photographed in a suitable breeding location. A month later, on 18 July, a male was photographed in the same location, followed by a flood of records included couples and ovipositing. The final one of the year was a male photographed on 6 August.

Scarce Chaser was not recorded at the Nottinghamshire/Leicestershire border site in 2024 despite being expected due to its two year life cycle with flights on even-numbered years. I hope we have not lost this lovely species.

All of the common breeding species of Odonata for each county were recorded in 2024.

Nottinghamshire has 20 or 21 species breeding, depending on the continuity of the colony of **Scarce Chasers**.

Derbyshire now has 23 breeding species with the addition of **Keeled Skimmer** in 2024.

Many thanks to the nature groups and individual contributors who made this report possible.



^ Male Variable Damselfly by Ian Preston.

v Keeled Skimmers copulating by Andrew Woodhouse.



^ Norfolk Hawker by Andrew Lee.

58: CHESHIRE JOHN ROBERTS

Despite a cold, slow start to the year and a warm autumn, 2024 turned out to be generally unexceptional when examining first and last sightings e.g. **Large Red Damselfly** first sighting 16 April, **Common Darter** last sighting 11 November, and **Migrant Hawker** last sighting 14 November.

However, there was a very late sighting of **Southern Hawker** on 7 November which, although not a record, was significantly later than the 10-year average (ca, 20 October).

Regarding the Anisoptera, the only record of special note was an exceptional sighting of a **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** near the Oakmere Way in July. These are rarely seen in VC58 so any sighting is noteworthy. However, it was the Zygoptera which caused the most interest in 2024 i.e. **Scarce Blue-tailed, Willow Emerald Damselfly, Small Red-eyed Damselflies** and **Beautiful Demoiselles**.

A **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** breeding population was first recorded in Cheshire in 2018 near Mow Cop and has been regularly recorded there every year since. Since then, no records of the species from other locations have been submitted until July 2023 when an unconfirmed sighting of a single immature female (aurantiaca) at Moore Nature Reserve was logged. This is deemed an exceptional record and the site is not typical habitat.

In May 2024, a confirmed exceptional sighting of the aurantiaca form was made at Woolston Eyes near Warrington. This is the first sighting at this site since the 1980s and published in Gabb & Kitching's "The Dragonflies & Damselflies of Cheshire", a sighting which was unconfirmed. Another probable sighting (no images) of an immature female aurantiaca form was made in June 2024 near Rostherne Mere.

The first **Willow Emerald Damselfly** records for Cheshire were submitted in 2022 at Maw Green Pool north of Crewe. Although 2023 drew a blank at this site, there was a confirmed exceptional sighting at Hare Hill near Alderley Edge that year.

The species has been quietly spreading however, as in 2024, records were submitted from five sites in total as follows:

1. Confirmed sightings and egg-laying scars at Maw Green Pool by several recorders. Scars were reported on four different willows.
2. Confirmed sightings and egg-laying scars at a site near Gawsworth.
3. Confirmed sightings and images of ovipositing at Jacksons Brickworks near Poynton by several local recorders.
4. Confirmed sighting at Groby Flash north of Crewe.
5. Confirmed egg-laying scars at Wychwood Park south of Crewe.

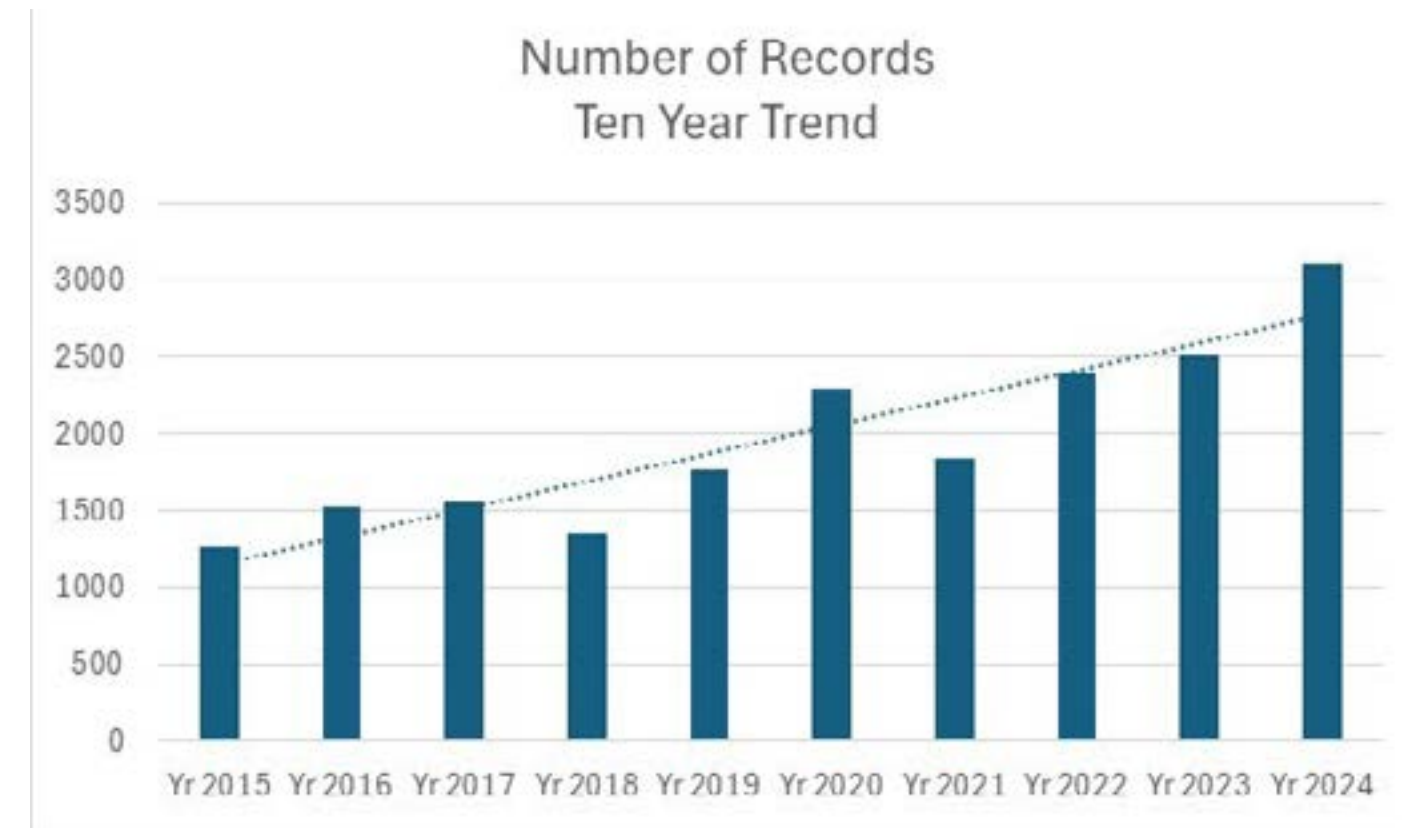
It is apparent that the species is now firmly established in Cheshire and it's expected that 2025 will reaffirm this.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly was first recorded in August 2015, and the species has been relentlessly expanding its range in Cheshire in ponds and lakes mostly along the Weaver and Wheelock river valleys, and in water bodies around the Tatton region. They have now spread into the Wirral and have been recorded at Red Rocks NR in 2024, the most westerly sighting in Cheshire.

In Gabb and Kitching's 1992 publication, the range of **Beautiful Demoiselle** is stated to be quite small, confined to the upper reaches of the Weaver. Since that publication, it is evident that the range of this species is wider, encompassing the Weaver and Dee basins and pockets along the Llangollen Canal. In 2024, one such new pocket was found near Marbury along a drainage stream next to the canal.

The graph shows the 10-year trend in records submitted for VC58. There has been a steady increase in numbers of records, which topped 3,000 last year. It is unlikely to be a connection with numbers of dragonflies, however, and the increase is probably caused by a) improved ways of reporting using WhatsApp, BirdTrack and iNaturalist and b) the dedication shown by our local recorders to getting out-and-about looking for Odonata.

The graph shows the 10-year trend in records submitted for VC58. There has been a steady increase in numbers of records, which topped 3,000 last year. It is unlikely to be a connection with numbers of dragonflies, however, and the increase is probably caused by a) improved ways of reporting using WhatsApp, BirdTrack and iNaturalist and b) the dedication shown by our local recorders to getting out-and-about looking for Odonata.



< Willow Emerald Damselfly at Maw Green Pool by Mike Barth.



< Willow Emerald Damselfly at Jacksons Brickworks, probably ovipositing, by Andy Bissitt.



< A pair of Small Red-eyed Damselflies in tandem by Dennis Swaby.



< Immature female Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly, aurantiaca form, at Woolston Eyes by Dan Owen.

v Female Beautiful Demoiselle at Batherton Hall by John Roberts.



61: SOUTH-EAST YORKSHIRE MARTIN ROBERTS

The season got off to a late start with the first **Large Red Damselfly** not being reported until 21 April, and the first **Hairy Dragonfly** reported soon afterwards on 1 May. The last Odonata of the year were a **Common Darter** and a **Migrant Hawker**, both reported on 16 November.

In total, 1317 records were accepted and verified in iRecord.

A single male **Norfolk Hawker** was seen at Tophill Low on 28 July.

A single male **Lesser Emperor** was reported at Primrose Valley near Filey on 29 July, the third year running that this species has been seen there.

A single male **Southern Migrant Hawker** seen at North Cave Wetlands on 26 August. It remained for several days and was seen by numerous observers.

Adrian Parr verified a report of a single *Ischnura senegalensis* from York in January, presumably an aquarium import. The VC Recorder lives in York but unfortunately missed the opportunity to see the insect in person.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted records this year. If events go according to plan, after 30 years living in Yorkshire the current VC Recorder will be migrating southwards later this year in search of fresh habitats to explore. Please get in touch if you might be interested in taking over as Recorder for VC61.

62: NORTH-EAST YORKSHIRE 65: NORTH-WEST YORKSHIRE KEITH GITTENS

After a promising start, cool cloudy weather affected numbers of many species in June.

The highlight of the season was a first record for North Yorkshire and VC62 of **Scarce Chaser** at Wykeham Lakes on 3 August. The recorder, Chris Bull, only realising the find when he checked his photos a few weeks later! This is only the second record for Yorkshire in over 100 years; the last record was from VC63 in 1970.

There was also a first record for VC65 of **Norfolk Hawker** on 7 July, discovered at Nosterfield Nature Reserve during their public dragonfly walk. Only seen in flight we were fortunate to get a confirming photo thanks to the skill of one of the attendees, Brian Needham.

Two **Hairy Dragonflies** were also seen at a new site in VC62, Scorton Lakes, on 2 June. This is the most northerly known record for North Yorkshire. There was also proof of breeding of **Hairy Dragonfly** at a new site on the edge of Strensall Common.

There were several early records for **Common Darter** across VC62, with eight sightings between 21 May and 16 June 16th. Previously the earliest recorded date was 18 June. This brings the earliest recorded date for the VC forward by exactly 28 days! This trend does not appear to have occurred in any other species.

A visit to some recently created pools on Rosedale Moor, in the North York Moors National Park, produced records for nationally declining species: **Common Hawker**, **Black Darter** and **Emerald Damselfly**. The pools were the work of the Yorkshire Peat Partnership team as part of their peatland restoration work.

In conjunction with Freshwater Habitats Trust and Butterfly Conservation, scrub control continued at Yorkshire Water's Boltby reservoir to maintain habitat for both dragonflies and butterflies.

Several events were attended throughout the year including wildlife days, ID training talks and walks.

Many thanks to all who contributed records.



< Rosedale Moor by Keith Gittens.

v Male Scarce Chaser by Chris Bull.



v Norfolk Hawker by Brian Needham.

© Brian Needham

63: SOUTH-WEST YORKSHIRE

ALISTAIR MCLEAN

Over 1100 field records were submitted for 2024, which is about average. The spread of recording across the county was fairly even, and the usual hotspots at Old Moor RSPB reserve, Potteric Carr and Treeton Dyke were well covered. At the time of writing, the earliest flight record of the year was a **Large Red Damselfly** (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) on 10 April, at the aforementioned Potteric Carr (Warne, M). The last confirmed flight record of the year was a **Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna mixta*), seen hawking in the Rivelin Valley on 5 November (Luke Nelson). The area around Treeton saw several further records of **Hairy Dragonfly** (*Brachytron pratense*) this year from several recorders, indicating that this species may now be established in the area. The biggest surprise of the year was a teneral specimen of **Norfolk Hawker** (*Aeshna isoceles*), spotted at Thorne on 27 June (David Hunton). The first vice-county record for this species came in 2023, spotted at Goole Brick Ponds on the 29/07/2023 (Anne Howard Webb). The presence of a teneral individual this year, just a short flight away from Goole, suggests that breeding has been occurring in the area for the last few years. Recorders in South-west Yorkshire, particularly in the Eastern side of the county, are urged to keep an eye out for **Norfolk Hawkers** in 2025.

64: MID-WEST YORKSHIRE

SIMON JOSEPH

9 Damselfly species and 13 Dragonfly species were recorded in mid-west Yorkshire in 2024. The species seen were the same as 2022 and 2023.

The flying season started 20 April with one female Large Red Damselfly at Rodley Nature Reserve. This was the only April record (other than larvae). There were 170 May records (the earliest on 7th) with 15 species on the wing after 7 May. The earliest species were: **Blue-tailed Damselfly**, **Common Blue Damselfly**, **Large Red Damselfly**, **Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Azure Damselfly**, **Banded Demoiselle**, **Hairy Dragonfly** and **Four-spotted Chasers**.

The last species were: **Black Darter**, **Common Darter**, **Brown Hawker**, **Southern Hawker** and **Migrant Hawker**, and **Willow Emerald Damselfly** were on the wing in October. In November there were two records for **Common Darters**.

Flight periods for most species are similar but some started and finished later due to cool weather.

This year we have had help from the Yorkshire Peat Partnership who surveyed Swarth Moor, which has previously had few records. We are grateful to Jessica McMaster for organising the volunteers. 13 species were recorded there between May and September.

Thanks again to the staff and volunteers at Rodley Nature and St Aidans reserves for their records, particularly Peter Mill and Peter Haigh respectively for collating the records.

We had a stand at Denso Marton Nature Reserve open day and had introduction and identification talks with Make It Wild™ and Nelson Naturalists Society.

In 2025 we already have planned introduction and identification talks at Climate Action Silsden and Make It Wild™

In 2024 **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** had sightings in Skelton for the first time.

Willow Emerald Damselfly is well established along the Selby Canal, St Aidans and Rodley nature reserves. Last year they were only established along the Selby Canal.

Black Darter fewer records were received this year, just one for Timble and Malham. Swarth Moor was very well surveyed this year with 52 records. Likely to be more common and widespread than this but under-recorded due to habitat preference making them inaccessible. They are also common on Grindleton Fell, but this site was not surveyed in 2023 or 2024.

Black-tailed Skimmer had several records for Skelton and Swarth Moor, which have not previously had records for this species.

Golden-ringed Dragonfly had few records for this year.

Last year there was a single record for **Hairy Dragonfly** from St Aidans; this year there seven records on seven separate dates. Hopefully, they are becoming established there.



^ Common Hawker at Swarth Moor by the Yorkshire Peatland Partnership.

66: COUNTY DURHAM 67: SOUTH NORTHUMBERLAND MICHAEL COATES

[The VC 66 County Durham can be downloaded as a separate full report.](#)

[The VC 67 South Northumberland can be downloaded as a separate full report.](#)

68: NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND IAN & ELAINE BURNELL

North Northumberland has the beautiful coastline to the east from the Border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed south to the River Coquet at Amble including Lindisfarne (Holy Island) then rises to over 2000 ft in the Cheviot Hills to the west.

There were 178 records for 2024 from 31 recorders, 20 using iRecord and 11 Birdtrack. Of the 178 records, 92 were submitted by 2 recorders.

The year's first record was of a **Blue-tailed Damselfly** at Hedgeley Gravel Pits on 18 May. Nineteen records were received from five locations through to 3 September.

Banded Demoiselle had 12 records from seven locations from 25 May - 2 August. They are continuing to expand on many of the rivers in the area.

Four-spotted Chaser had eight records from four locations from 31 May - 2 August.

Large Red Damselfly did not receive a first sighting until 7 June. They were recorded at five locations the last being 2 August.

Common Blue Damselfly had 24 records from 1 June - 11 August at seven locations.

Broad-bodied Chaser had five records in separate locations from 3 June - 28 July. It was first recorded in VC68 in 2019.

Azure Damselfly had seven records from two locations from 20 June - 2 August.

Black-tailed Skimmer had five records at Hedgeley from two separate recorders between 21 June and 11 August. One recorder reported seeing both sexes with three individuals seen. Unfortunately, there are no photos to confirm these sightings but they would be a first for VC68.

Common Hawker had 11 records from five locations from 28 June - 2 October.

Common Darter had 35 records from 10 locations between 6 July - 1 November.

Southern Hawker had 13 records from six locations between 8 July - 7 October.

Ruddy Darter only had 1 record which would have been a first for VC68 if only a photo could be supplied for confirmation. That record has been recorded as "plausible" until a photo provides confirmation. Another one to look out for in 2025.

Emperor Dragonfly had two records between 28 July - 23 August from two different locations.

Black Darter had nine records all at the same location- Slipper Tarn, between 30 July - 7 October.

Migrant Hawker had 10 records from five locations between 11 August - 11 November.

Golden-ringed Dragonfly had no records in VC68 this year despite there being plenty of suitable habitat. Another one to look out for in 2025.

The National Trust property of Cragside proved to be a popular recording site this year. It is a tourist attraction with Slipper Tarn being very accessible and a great location for the public to get up close to dragonflies. It is an ideal habitat with 11 species recorded. Other sites of interest are the Hedgeley and Branton Gravel pits alongside the River Breamish at Powburn with eight species and Corby's Crag with nine species.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted records and I hope to hear from you in 2025. Also, thanks to Brian Rutter for his superb photo of the Banded Demoiselle.

69: WESTMORLAND WITH FURNESS

70: CUMBERLAND

DAVID CLARKE

2024 was notable for cool, wet and cloudy periods that greatly affected wildlife numbers, and insects in particular. As the chart below shows, the most productive weeks in 2024 (only 7 of which much-exceeded 100 records) were interspersed with many more that were far less so. The pattern reflects the activity of recorders as much as that of dragonflies. Both will have responded in their own ways to the often unstable weather in 2024 - which may well have consequences for dragonflies in 2025.

Unsurprising that, in contrast to 2023, there were no reports of vagrants or local migrants this year. The nearest contender for the latter was a male **Black-tailed Skimmer** near Tindale Tarn (NY56) on 30 July. Although this species is gaining a foothold in some southern parts of the county, this was an isolated northerly occurrence, the individual concerned possibly having reached that location by movement across from Northumberland. (A more convincing example of this postulated scenario occurred at Tindale in 2006 and involved greater numbers and various migrant species.)

Banded Demoiselle: The species was reported from at least 50 tetrads in 2024 - not all records being from breeding sites. It seems clear that range expansion is still ongoing.

Variable Damselfly: Poor weather forced abandonment of planned monitoring of the single Cumbria colony at Beckermet, where its continuing presence was confirmed.

Common Hawker: A female ovipositing in a small Lake District tarn at about 720 metres (2400 feet) on Sergeant Man (NY2808) on 22 September, was a good illustration of the range of challenging environments this northern species can utilise. Upland 'refuges' may become more important for this species as the climate warms.

Migrant Hawker: The date range and volume of records gives increasing confidence that this species is breeding widely, at least at lowland sites not far from the coast. The best evidence so far is of immatures well distant from known sites to the south, in VC 60. One such was a Solway record for the late date of 10 October - a very recently emerged female. However, there are no records from the start of emergence in July and there have not been any finds of larvae or exuviae - which would be the ultimate proof of breeding.

Brown Hawker: Several were present at Tarn Hows - which straddles the NY/SD boundary. Mating and egg-laying were both observed in September at several points around the lake. These are the most inland breeding records in the county so far and might signify that the species is at last in the process of expansion from its persistently southerly range - and may therefore now be anticipated elsewhere.

Downy Emerald: For a third year running this species was noted at the north end of Derwentwater very early in the season (12 May). This is yet a further indication that it may have an established breeding presence at this end of the lake. These are the most northerly modern records in the county, and it is thus tempting to suggest that it might also occur at suitable points on Bassenthwaite Lake, perhaps along the more vegetated easterly margins.

Broad-bodied Chaser: A useful barometer species of records performance generally. It

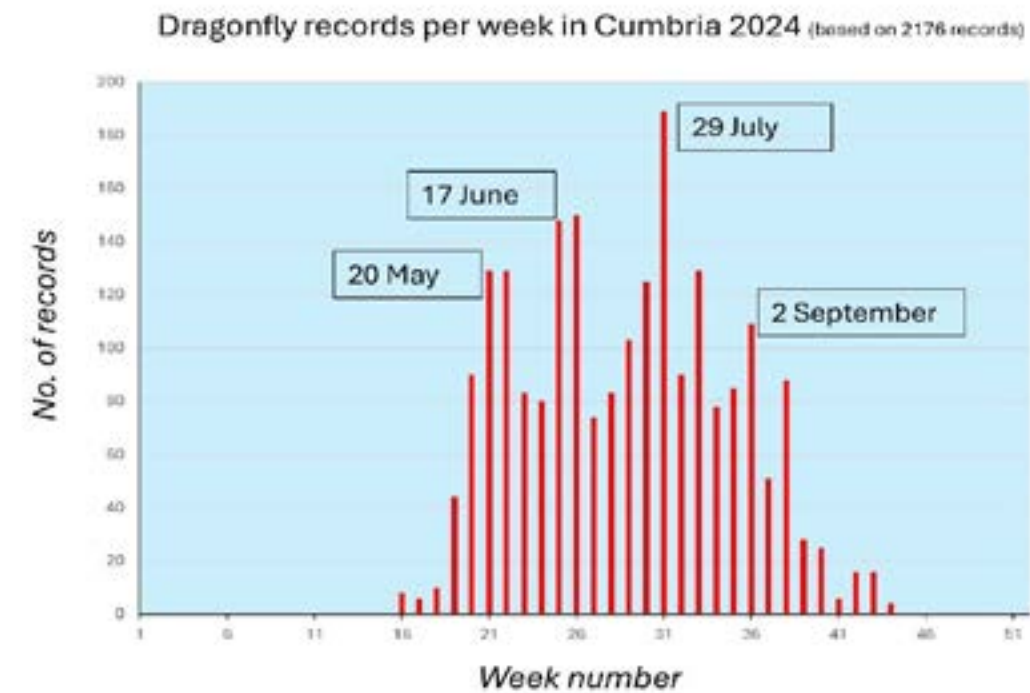
was reported from c. 35 tetrads in 2024, compared to c. 57 in 2023. This is in the context of the rapid colonisation of the county that appears to be continuing. Breeding records included Rickerby Park, Carlisle.

Black Darter: Good numbers were reported from the mosslands at either end of the county, The species has been shown to be declining in more southerly areas of the UK, so its trends in our area will be important to note.

Ruddy Darter: Occurs at only one site, for which there are no 2024 records. A resurgence of this species in the county might be expected as the climate warms. (It has already moved significantly further north on the east side of the Pennines.) An account of its history in the county is given in Clarke, 2025 (Clarke, D. (2025) The Ruddy Darter's first ventures into Cumbria. *Lakeland Naturalist*, **13.1** (Spring 2025). In press).

White-faced Darter: Exuvia counts at its three Cumbria sites (Foulshaw Moss, Drumburgh Moss and Scaleby Moss) showed little evidence that numbers emerging were unduly affected by poor weather. The latest introduction site - Drumburgh - yielded nearly 700 exuviae in this last year of the project. A male was seen c. 1 km east of Foulshaw on 19 May in agricultural land near the R. Kent; a male was seen for a second year running at Duddon Mosses, compounding the mystery of the species' status there. A new first-time introduction project, at RSPB Campfield Marsh on the Solway, is due to start in spring 2025.

The writer is grateful to all who submitted records and to the following variously in connection with the notes above, and the images: Caroline Allen, Chris Arthur, Dave Blackledge, Jack Dryden, Martin Keiller, Tony & Heather Marshall, Graham Megson, Adam Moan, Adrian Parr, Mo Richards, Nathan Sowerby. The images below relate to some of the records mentioned above.



v Black-tailed Skimmer at Tindale, 30 July 2024, by Adam Moan.



v Brown Hawker ovipositing at Tarn Hows, 19 September 2024 by Mo Richards.





< Variable Damselfly, Beckermat, 19 June 2024.



< Downy Emerald at the north end of Derwentwater, 12 May 2024 by Caroline Allen.



< White-faced Darter at Duddon Mosses, 17 June 2024 by Nathan Sowerby.

71: ISLE OF MAN PETE HADFIELD

Our Dragonfly season started on 27 April with 14 **Large Red Damselfly** at Ballaugh Plantation, 83 Large Red exuviae were also found at the two ponds there.

As in 2023 the early part of the 2024 summer had all the year's excitement with excellent reports showing the recent **Azure Damselfly** colonisation was increasing with more numbers and more site occupancies. At the main site of Ballaugh Plantation the maximum count was 20. Site occupancy went up to four (from two); the furthest distance between these sites was 18.5 miles. In 2023 the distance between the two sites was 5.7 miles.

The most amazing record of the year came from a garden pond in Sandygate in the north of the island. Previously our highest count of **Emperor Dragonflies** was 19 and our earliest record was 30 May but at this garden pond **Emperors** started emerging on 10 May and by the 21 May the owner of the pond had collected a total of 90 **Emperor** exuviae.

The news from the newly opened POA NR was mixed. Maximum numbers were poor across the board possibly due to the poor summer weather and **Brown Hawker** (which only occurs at the POA Reserve) was not recorded for the second year running. On the positive side one male and one female **Black Darter** were recorded there for the first time. This is a very unusual site for our **Black Darters** as nearly all Manx sites are in upland plantations and moorland but as those ponds are under threat from climate change a new population in the lowlands would be great news.

It seems again, as in the case of 2023, the poor summer weather affected our Odonata numbers with low numbers of all the common species but the odd exception was **Emerald Damselfly**, which had its highest count ever of 105 from Stoney Mountain (upland ponds) on 31 August.