



**Country Dragonfly Record
Reports Scotland 2024**

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72: DUMFRIESSHIRE TO 94: BANFFSHIRE 97: WEST INVERNESS-SHIRE TO 110: OUTER HEBRIDES 112: SHETLAND PAT BATTY

Like most of Britain, it was a poor summer in Scotland with quite a few wet days. There were a few dry spells earlier on particularly in the west and some good autumn weather. Numbers of records were generally down on last year with fewer sightings of the spreading southern species.

The flight times of the more common species were generally later:

- **Large Red Damselfly** from 19 April to 1 September
- **Common Blue Damselfly** from 3 May to 17 September
- **Four-spotted Chaser** from 8 May to 7 September (later than 2023)
- **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** from 31 April to 11 September (earlier emergence)
- **Blue-tailed Damselfly** from 14 May to 7 September

The **Azure Damselfly** was recorded from 2 May to 24 August, and is now spreading south of the Great Glen, including in Aberdeenshire and on Deeside, overlapping with some **Northern Damselfly** sites. It was seen near Tain and Muir of Ord, north of Inverness

The **Hairy Dragonfly** had very few sightings this year - 16, similar to last year. There was a sighting from 28 April in Knapdale, with emergence seen on 14 May, but most sightings were from the end of May. Most sightings were from Argyll and Dumfries and Galloway, where there were two new breeding sites.

The **Keeled Skimmer** had only 20 records this year, from 29 May to 19 August, with an earlier emergence and later flight time. There were new sites in Argyll, Kintyre, Morar, Ardnamurchan and near Newton Stewart in the south-west.

The **Beautiful Demoiselle** was recorded from 21 May to 22 June with very few sightings this year, only 16 compared with 67 in 2023, the poor weather being the main factor. Records were from Argyll and Ardnamurchan, with some sightings in new areas.

The **Banded Demoiselle** had far more sightings than the **Beautiful Demoiselle**, but fewer than last year. It was seen from 6 June to 6 August. It is expanding its range in the Borders and Edinburgh area and along the Solway coast. There were sightings of a single male near the east coast, north of Dundee in Angus, and from near Aberdeen this year.

The **Brilliant Emerald** had very few sightings this year, only seven again, and it was seen from 24 June to 28 July. Records were from Glen Affric, Loch Bran and Argyll.

The **Downy Emerald**, too, had only a handful of records, six from 1 May to the 21 July, with records from the same areas as the **Brilliant Emerald**.

The **Variable Damselfly** had more sightings this year, flying from 18 May to 28 July. A survey was completed of the Forestry and Land FLS sites in south-west Scotland. Despite the poor weather it was seen at most known sites. FLS created several new ponds in the area and these are being colonised by a range of species. New sites were found this year, with additional records from Galloway, Ayrshire and Argyll.

The **Emerald Damselfly** had similar numbers of records to last year, flying early from 8 June to 29 September, with sites scattered throughout Scotland.

The **Black Darter** is fairly widespread in upland areas flying from 1 June to 8 November, reflecting the better

Autumn weather; the late individual survived at least two periods of frost.

The **Common Darter** was flying from an early date of 11 April, even earlier than last year, to 8 November. It has had a very long flight time in the past few years. It is far less common in the north and is on Uists but not Orkney.

The **Southern Hawker**, with 99 sightings, had similar records to 2023. It has expanded out from the Inverness area, the west coast, and Southern Scotland, into Deeside and was recorded from Achmelvich in Sutherland this year. It was seen from 23 June to 30 October.

The **Common Hawker** was also very early, again recorded from 27 April, and emergence was seen on 4 June in Argyll; the last sighting was 8 November. Records were from throughout Scotland but fewer from lowland areas and south-east Scotland. There were 453 records this year; more than last year.

Northern Damselfly had 66 records in 2024, for both adults and larvae; most were from Speyside and Deeside. Emergence was seen on the 15 May and the species was recorded flying until 17 August. A new site was discovered in Moray, east of the site near Rothes. Breeding has been confirmed from both sites; it was also recorded on at least two other new sites in Speyside.

Survey work by Stephen Corcoran in 2023 found that creating new ponds in areas nearby to existing **Northern Damselfly** populations was very successful with breeding confirmed in five of the new ponds. This habitat creation, along with management of 12 other breeding sites in the Cairngorm National Park CNP, will help maintain the population. As a result of the success with **Northern Damselfly** pond creation, the CNP has established the **100 Ponds Project**, an ambitious target. Funding has been given to BDS for 2025 with the hope of producing 33 new and managed ponds by September - a tall order given the complexities of planning.

With the wetter season the bog pools generally retained more water, however there were inevitably some long dry spells with some pools drying out for a period, especially in the west.

Azure Hawker was seen emerging on 16 May above Loch Quoich, Glen Garry, a rare occurrence, and was last seen on 8 August. Adults were seen in managed woodland in Glen Coe and over 30 newly emerged adults were seen in wooded gorges near Kishorn in Wester Ross where larvae were found in a bog nearby. There were also sightings in new areas on Corroul Estate, Assynt and the Glen Affric/ Dundreggan area. Interestingly, a dead adult was found on the island of Lunga, Argyll. New breeding pools were found on the hills above Loch Garry and Loch Quoich.

White-faced Darter emerged on 14 May in Glen Garry and was last seen on 16 July at Abernethy. New breeding pools were found in the Glen Coe area, the north-west, Abernethy, Moray and the Glen Garry area. Bog pools up to 300m and above provide breeding habitat in Scotland but larvae and adults are usually seen in only small numbers at each site.

There are scattered breeding sites for **Northern Emerald** north of the central belt, with the Trossachs and Flanders Moss near Stirling being the most southerly sites. A BSc Student is looking at the breeding requirements at marginal sites. There have been sightings from new areas in Morven and West Inverness-shire, Glen Garry and at Corroul, a new site for the species some distance from woodland. Records dated from 21 May to 20 August.

The new sightings for all three species is encouraging, although they breed in very small numbers in scattered bog pools and need a large area to maintain the population. Several of the known sites from 20 years ago in Glen Torridon, Glen Garry and Argyll are now no longer viable because of habitat changes and many pools were dry again this year.

The trial pool creation project at **Corroul** continues to be successful, with larvae found at 57% of sites, several of which were in the final instars close to emergence with continuing evidence that they travelled overland to these pools, which retained water when some neighbouring pools were drying out. **White-faced Darter** larvae were found in two pools in September 2024. A **Northern Emerald** larva was found in a runnel below the pools, the first sighting for Corroul.

Pools created in the process of bog restoration work at Corroul proved to be important for dragonflies. In Stephen Corcoran's survey 21 of the 27 new pools had dragonfly larvae after less than a year, including the **Common Hawker** and **Black Darter**, which have a stronghold in Scotland but are declining in England and Europe. Three had **Azure Hawker** larvae in two new areas.

The BDS has been awarded Nature Restoration Funding to expand the successful pool restoration and creation work. The project will involve four of the main Azure Hawker breeding areas in Scotland, with work at Corroul this winter.

Despite the poorer weather in 2024, the range of southern species continued to expand.

The **Emperor Dragonfly** had fewer sightings and was seen from 31 May to 18 September. It continues to breed throughout the Borders and south-west Scotland and Ayrshire with larvae found. A dead male was found on the roadside in Fife.

The **Migrant Hawker** had similar records to last year with clusters in the south-west, the south-east Coast and Ayrshire, and there was also a record from Arran. Sightings were from 29 July to 11 November despite spells of frosty weather.

There were no records for the **Red-veined Darter** but the **Black-tailed Skimmer** had just a few sightings from 26 June to 28 July along the Edinburgh coast.

Broad-bodied Chaser is slowly expanding its range in southern Scotland with new sites in Dumfries-shire and near Selkirk; it was seen from 13 May to 19 July.

The **Brown Hawker** is now breeding at two sites in central Scotland.

The **Lesser Emperor** was seen at Mire Loch, St Abbs on 28 July in the same area as it was seen previously in 2022. It is not known if it was part of an influx of migrants moving north, as about that time there were reports from Cumbria, or whether it bred locally.

Many thanks to the growing number of people who have submitted records.

111: ORKNEY

GRAEME WALKER

In Orkney, May was warmer than normal, with the flight season beginning a little earlier than usual. Unfortunately, June and the first half of July were cold and wet which slowed things down again, but the weather improved once more, allowing the later emerging species their time in the sun. Overall, 35 recorders sent in nearly 200 records, the most productive year since 2017. These were all of resident breeding species (seven of the eight present in the county) as there were not any reports of migrant or dispersive odonates.

First sighting of the year was a **Large Red Damselfly** (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) near Sandy Loch on 10 May, seen by a tourist during a wildlife tour in Hoy with Wild Orkney Walks. The following day, during the first site monitoring visit of the year, the presence of **Large Red Damselfly** was confirmed at the Brinkies Brae pond in Stromness.

Sightings of **Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) are rare in Orkney, as there is only a small population here. It was therefore pleasing to have a record submitted in 2024 from the pool by the road bridge over the Rackwick Burn in Hoy on 17 May.

Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*) and **Common Blue Damselfly** (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) were both reported from their usual haunts around the archipelago, but there were no sightings of **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** (*Cordulegaster boltonii*) reported in 2024.

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*) was first reported on 24 June, from Lyness plantation pool, Hoy. This was a surprise as it was more than a week earlier than the previous earliest date for the species in Orkney, despite the dismal weather we experienced in June. On 23 July, a mixed pairing of a male **Emerald Damselfly** and a female **Large Red Damselfly** was seen at the Museum pool at Lyness, Hoy.

There were several reports of **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*) from suburban gardens (if that adjective can be applied to anywhere in Orkney), during the summer. On 28 June, Myles the cat brought in a large dragonfly to his owner's home in Kirkwall. Judging by the photos posted on Facebook, the insect was still flightworthy so advice was given to put it in a safe and sunny spot so that it could make its own way back to more suitable moorland habitat. Then, on 18 August, a male **Common Hawker** was reported from Finstown, basking on the leadwork of a roof. On 23 August, a large blue dragonfly was photographed in Graemsay which was later identified as a blue form female **Common Hawker** and was the first official record of the species for the island.

Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*), was seen in a few new sites during 2024: at the Scapa Flow Museum pool in Lyness, Hoy; at a garden pond in Swannay; and at Sands Water, in the west of Hoy. The last sighting of the year for **Black Darter**, indeed for any Odonate in the County, was on 2 October in Rendall. West Mainland.