

Country Dragonfly Record Reports Wales 2024



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Beautiful Demoiselle ovipositing near source of the river Teme 24 June 2024 by Martyn Moore.

35: MONMOUTHSHIRE STEVE PREDDY

Our most notable record this year was the presence of up to three male **Southern Migrant Hawkers** near Goldcliff. This is the second year in a row this species has been found in the county, hinting that it may become a regular feature of our local dragonfly fauna as it has in neighbouring areas of England.

Our fifth **Lesser Emperor**, another potential colonist, was seen briefly at nearby Uskmouth.

Common Hawker was rediscovered after an eight year gap at its only site in the east of the county, (it is fairly widespread in the uplands in the west along with **Black Darter** and **Keeled Skimmer**, two other species typical of moorland habitat).

A review of all historical records of **Small Red Damselfly** concluded that this species has never been reliably recorded in the county and that all records are likely to have been misidentifications for **Large Red Damselfly**.

We're now halfway through our ten year project to compile Monmouthshire's first county dragonfly atlas. While we already have enough data to create a set of maps more comprehensive than has been possible previously, there's still a lot of work to do. The least well-recorded half of the county (the northern third including the Black Mountains, and a wide swathe running south between the Usk and Wye Valleys) has generated just 7% of our atlas period records, and contains many sites with no records at all. Encouraging more recording here will be the project's main focus for the coming year. We're also hoping to encourage more recording in the less well-visited parts of the Gwent Levels in the hope of turning up further sites for **Variable Damselfly**, and perhaps 2025 will be the year that a population of **Common Clubtail** is finally confirmed on the Usk.

41: GLAMORGANSHIRE

STEVE PREDDY

2024 was a rather poor year for Odonata in Glamorgan. Records received into the SEWBRc database were much reduced; numbers of individual species were lower and very few migrants were recorded at the two County hotspots of Kenfig Pool NNR and Cosmeston Country Park. In addition, a number of previously active, young recorders have moved away.

The East Glamorgan ponds survey that started just after Covid lockdown continued during the year. In 2020 a desktop survey was conducted and over 50 ponds were identified as having no Dragonfly records or had only been visited once before. A lot of these were new fishing ponds, several were small ponds within cemeteries and there were new balancing ponds adjacent to new housing estates. Waterbodies were also identified on reclaimed coal spoil sites. At a number of the sites access was not possible, or denied by the owners, or ponds were found to have been drained, but to date over 40 have been visited and a further 12 identified for a visit in 2025.

The Gower Commons are a rare habitat in a Welsh context with only the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire bearing any similarity in South Wales. Natural Resources Wales have in the past carried out management work at one of the two remaining **Southern Damselfly** sites on Gower, with a number of people and bodies providing input to ensure the work was correctly completed. Concerns were raised at the time especially about increased silting of the streams and why the work was only being undertaken at one site. Numbers at the second, more inaccessible site have fallen significantly over time. It was therefore good to hear that Buglife have appointed an officer covering the Gower Commons who previously worked on **Southern Damselfly** in Hampshire. Hopefully, some good news might be forthcoming in 2025.

Finally, a review is underway concerning historical **Common Hawker** and **Ruddy Darter** records. These two species are the most mis-identified species in Glamorgan. Both have been found away from traditional sites or suitable habitats so not all 'odd' records are incorrect. As always, a good photograph goes a long way to help the county recorder accept the record!

43: RADNORSHIRE

BOB DENNISON

This year there were 495 records submitted by 39 different people, and together we noted 22 out of Radnorshire's 24 resident species.

It was a standard start to the year with **Large Red Damselfly** first noted on 20 April, the only species found in April. The bulk of the spring species only began to emerge in May, with **Broad-bodied Chaser** and **Four-spotted Chasers** being recorded across the county.

Common Blue Damselflies, **Azure Damselflies** and **Blue-tailed Damselflies** emerged in mid-May. The total number of **Azure Damselfly** records this year (68 records) was the most we've ever gathered for a season in Radnorshire, so a good year for this species.

The end of May saw the emergence of our river specialists, with **Banded Demoiselle** and **Common Clubtail** found along the River Wye below Glasbury, although only in small numbers. After a good year for **Beautiful Demoiselle** sightings in 2023 (40 records) this season yielded a more typical 24 records. There were only four records of **White-legged Damselfly** this year, mainly from beside the river at Hay-on-Wye, but there was one record from Crossgates made on 18 July. Occasional sightings have been made along other parts of the River Ithon in previous years.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly was found on Beacon Hill on 2 June; this is now the most easterly record in Radnorshire for this species. Previously this species was well recorded on Aberedw Hill and Llandelio Hill, but it has not been noted there since 2021. It would be worth visiting these areas again in 2025 to check the status of this Red-listed species.

Emperor Dragonfly was first sighted on 8 June, and went on to be recorded 39 times. This is the second largest number of individual records for the species since we noted 40 sightings in 2018, with a good number coming from the Begwns, and the first ever sighting in the Elan Valley at Gors Goch.

Golden-ringed Dragonfly records were more confined to the west of the county than normal, as was **Keeled Skimmer**, however a pair of sightings on Beacon Hill in July were the first from that area since 2010.

Our newest resident species, **Red-eyed Damselfly** was first noted in Radnorshire at Abbeycwmhir in 2023. This year it was found at the same site again in very small numbers with just one copulating pair seen.

Common Darter first appeared on 26 June at Ffynnon Gynydd and went on to be the last record of the year on 11 November at Llyn Gwyn. A total of 60 **Common Darter** records were made this year, the highest number since 2016.

Southern Hawkers, **Brown Hawkers** and **Common Hawkers** all began to emerge in July; all of our 'Hawkers' showed up with a fair spread of records from across Radnorshire and they seem to have had an average year.

Unfortunately this was not the case for **Emerald Damselfly** which was recorded in below average numbers. Only two recorders sent in records of this normally widespread species, and it is curious why more people are not recording them.

There were fewer sightings than previous years for **Black-tailed Skimmer**, but at the same time two new sites were discovered both with strong populations; first at Fforest Fields campsite and also at Gwynllyn near Rhayader. The latter is now our most westerly location for **Black-tailed Skimmer**.

All **Black Darter** records for the past couple of years have been in either the Elan Valley or Beacon Hill areas. Another stronghold used to be Ireland's Well Pool on Llanbedr Hill, but there haven't been any records made from there since 2021. It would be useful to revisit these areas next year.

There were no confirmed records of **Ruddy Darter** this year; this is not unusual as we rarely get more than one or two sightings a year in the county. Also missing this year was **Migrant Hawker**, which has not been recorded in Radnorshire since 2018. Known sites in the past have been Monk's Pool on the Begwns, Ireland's Well area north of Painscastle, and even confirmed breeding at Llanbwchllyn Lake in 2015. Perhaps a targeted search of these sites is required in 2025. Emergence is relatively late in the season, so seek these out from mid-August onwards.

Overall, the 2024 flight-season appears to have been fairly average, although it is hard to say how the cooler and wetter summer might have affected breeding success of the adults we recorded. Radnorshire is home to some of the UK's most threatened dragonfly species, with **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**, **Common**

Hawker, Black Darter and **Emerald Damselfly** making up the five species showing the largest decrease in occupancy on a national scale. All these species are associated with our upland areas. Many of my own observations this year were made visiting smaller upland pools and it was good to see so many full of water; I even noted some locations that had been completely dry in 2022 and 2023 but this year were active with ovipositing females. So, hopefully, the wet conditions will have at least benefited the habitats that these species rely on.

Thanks to all those who contributed records through the season. All records are welcomed, including common species and those visiting your garden. If you need any help please do get in touch.

46: CARDIGANSHIRE LIN GANDER

Nearly 400 sightings of Odonata were recorded in Ceredigion in 2024 from around 85 locations.

The first seen was a **Large Red Damselfly** on 4 April at Cors Fochno NNR; the last was a **Common Darter** near Tan y Bwlch beach, Aberystwyth on 29 October.

Most of Ceredigion's 21 breeding species were well represented except for:

- the usually more common **Common Hawker** with only three records; this species seems to have been declining in recent years, maybe owing to misidentification or some other reason.
- the **Keeled Skimmer** with just one record; this species is more habitat and site specific - its usual sites may not have been visited last year.
- the **Banded Demoiselle**; 32 records of the **Beautiful Demoiselle** were received but just one of the **Banded Demoiselle**; although the **Beautiful Demoiselle** is generally more widespread it may be a case of misidentification - the females can be difficult to tell apart by the untrained eye.

The **Migrant Hawker** appears to be widening its range.

v Keeled Skimmer in the Elan Valley 24th June 2024 by Sorchia Lewis.

