

Can dragonflies benefit from the introduction of beavers?

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We have volunteered for the National Trust as conservation volunteers and wildlife surveyors for over ten years prior to taking on the role as County Dragonfly Recorders for North Northumberland, (VC68) in 2024.

The beaver enclosure pre beaver in 2023.



In July 2023, a family of four beavers were released into an enclosure on the National Trust Wallington Estate in South Northumberland, (VC67) in an effort to see how they can help to restore nature by creating a wildlife rich landscape as part of the Wilder

Wallington project.

Prior to the release invertebrate, amphibian, bird and plant surveys had taken place. Unfortunately, no surveys just for Odonata had been done.

We had the opportunity to visit the enclosure in 2024 when the beavers were just beginning to make a difference.

Surveying in the beaver enclosure August 2025

In August 2025 we were invited to visit the Beaver enclosure again on two occasions. On our first visit we were amazed at the transformation of the landscape. There were beaver dams at regular intervals. The dams were holding back water into the landscape forming large ponds up to a metre in depth and narrow water filled channels leading into marshy areas



all created by these industrious ecosystem engineers. **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* were ovipositing along most of these ponds with **Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes sponsa* ovipositing as well. **Blue-tailed damselfly** *Ischnura elegans*, **Common Hawker** *Aeshna juncea*, **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea*, and **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** *Cordulegaster boltonii* were also recorded.



A beaver dam.

This made us wonder what species were present here before the beavers arrived. Luckily just on the other side of the road, north of the enclosure, is land that the Harwood Burn also flows through. This land

mirrors what the beaver enclosure would have been like prior to their arrival with the Harwood Burn being a fast-flowing narrow burn that you can step over easily.

We received permission to conduct a second survey on this area that was equivalent in size to the beaver enclosure. The land on either side of the burn was dry as it quickly drained into the burn. As we surveyed, we saw just two species of Odonata, 15 **Common Darter** and one fast moving unidentified Hawker. We then continued the survey by entering the beaver enclosure for our second visit so that there was a good comparison as the weather conditions remained the same.

As the Harwood Burn passes under the road and through the metal grate that allows Otter to pass through into the enclosure, the difference is astounding. Froglets and toadlets were everywhere and ten species of butterfly were also recorded along with a single **Willow Emerald damselfly** *Chalcolestes viridis* that was at the time the most northerly record for this species and a single male **Black Darter** *Sympetrum danae*. This took the total number of species recorded within the enclosure to eight.

The beavers have coppiced waterside trees which have put on a lot of new growth. Some



larger trees have become waterlogged which will produce a habitat that is rare these days; standing deadwood. This will be good for other invertebrates, birds to feed and nest and also bats to find roosting sites.

We are looking forward to surveying these two areas in the future to see how the biodiversity of the habitat created by the beavers changes over time.

The question was “Can dragonflies benefit from the introduction of beavers?”

The evidence we have been privileged to see up to now is full of positives for not just dragonflies but all nature and could well be a lifeline for many endangered species during these uncertain times with climate change and habitat loss. These eco engineers, if allowed to get on with their lives, will benefit not only nature but help alleviate flooding downstream in villages, towns and cities.



The beaver enclosure in July 2025.

Many thanks to Head Ranger Helen McDonald of the Wallington National Trust Estate for arranging our visit and providing the aerial photographs.

More information about the Beavers at Wallington can be found [here](#).