



Upland Dragonflies Project Update

Investigating:

Over the last 2 field seasons volunteers have been out investigating new areas for the Upland Dragonflies Project to find out more about the current distribution of our upland species and the quality and location of upland pools and streams in existence. This has led to locating some areas of good habitat and other areas for potential habitat improvements. I'm particularly grateful to Michael Howard for investigating the Stapeley Common area in the west of the county and Michael Brian for focusing on the hills east of Church Stretton near Willstone. Both found areas that I will be hoping to take a further look at this year. I also visited a number of private pools in the project area including an excellent pond in the Brookshill Marsh area where I saw **Common Hawker**, **Emerald Damselfly** and mating pairs of **Black Darter**.

Casual Recording:

Casual records from 2025 also revealed 5 new locations in the project area for **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**: Northwest of Picklescott, Plox Green, Hope, Pollardine Farm and Pontesbury Hill. These sightings were often surprisingly some distance from typical habitat, but good at least to see the species is present. **Black Darter** was recorded largely in known areas of the project during 2025.

Monitoring:

Mark Underwood has continued the long-term monitoring at Pole Cottage Pools surveying for dragonflies every month during the flight season. I have continued similar monitoring at The Bog and I'm pleased to report Ivan Grove has started monitoring at Wildmoor Pool. A huge thankyou to both Mark and Ivan for doing this. In the long-term, monitoring these sites in a standardised repeatable way for many years will allow us to see if our upland species are mirroring the national declines. Even with just 2 years data the results have already proved useful. The Upper Onny Wildlife Group kindly sent me a summary report of dragonflies in their survey area and noted a number of upland species having less records than the previous year. This of course may well be directly affected by recorder effort so I compared this observation with the standardised monitoring results for 2024/25. Pole Cottage monitoring conversely showed an increase in number of records and abundance of **Common Hawker** and **Emerald Damselfly** though no change for **Black Darter**. At The Bog I also saw an increase in **Common Hawker** (none in 2024, 6 individuals recorded in 2025) and **Black Darter** (2 records of 7 individuals in 2024, 2 records of 18 and 9 individuals in 2025). Regular monitoring has also enabled Mark to witness the impact of sustained hot weather on our upland pools. His pictures below show the dramatic impact on Pole Cottage Pools last July and underline the need to keep pools wetter for longer where possible. The water returned in September though Mark did record a notable lack of Black Darters at this time.

LOCATION 2 GR341179 293837 09.07.2025



LOCATION 3 GR341130 293978 09.07.2025



Monitoring results have also shown 2 more species (**Brown Hawker** and **Common Darter**) being present at Pole Cottage Pools than in 2024. At The Bog I also observed 2 more species this year with the addition of **Beautiful Demoiselle** and **Common Hawker**. At both Pole Cottage and The Bog **Emerald Damselfly** was one of the most abundant species recorded in both 2024 and 2025 which is good news for the most rapidly declining species in the UK (Taylor et al, 2021).

Reporting: Following investigations during 2024/25 on a large number of ponds on the Long Mynd Tim Coleshaw and I compiled a report. This suggested a number of habitat improvements aimed at keeping pools wetter for longer by focusing on repairing breached dams and in some cases making pools deeper and therefore more resistant to periods of drought. We presented this to Dominic Bowyer, the National Trust Countryside Manager (Shropshire Hills) and he is now planning to action some of these recommendations. Some of the suggested improvements relate to the Pole Cottage pools photographed by Mark so there's no doubt this work is required and will hopefully allow the pools to retain water for longer.

Reference: Taylor, P., Smallshire, D., Parr, A.J., Brooks, S.J., Cham, S.A., Colver, E.F., Harvey, M., Hepper, D., Isaac, N.J.B., Logie, M.W., McFerran, D., McKenna, F., Nelson, B. & Roy, D.B.(2021) **State of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland 2021**. British Dragonfly Society, Old Weston, Huntingdon