

# Shropshire (VC40) Dragonfly Newsletter



**Spring 2024**  
**Sue Rees Evans**

## Introduction

Somehow it's March already and definitely time for the newsletter before our first damselflies emerge next month! A big thankyou to everyone who went out and about last field season and contributed more than 1000 species records which is superb! It's thanks to all voluntary recorders that we are able to monitor how



The wonderful Emerald Damselfly hanging on in Shropshire despite national declines.  
Photo: J. Shields

dragonflies are faring in a changing and challenging climate. The State of Dragonflies Report 2021 (Taylor et al, 2021) is a great example of how your biological records have been used. Despite many species appearing to do well this report highlighted national declines in some of our upland species and the publication of such evidence really encourages positive conservation action at a local level. A local **Species Action Plan for Upland Dragonflies** has been produced by the Stepping Stones Project and Natural England and I am

'championing' the cause. It feels really positive to be involved in a project that ultimately should improve the quality, quantity and connectedness of Upland Dragonfly breeding habitat. What's more there are **real opportunities to get involved this year so please make sure you read page 10 for the full details and do get in touch if you can help.**

A big thankyou also to all who have sent in fabulous photos for the **Shropshire Dragonfly Watch** flight season blog. You capture incredible detail that we would never see with the naked eye and I have no doubt inspire many people to go out and enjoy (and start recording!) these spectacular insects. The **Shropshire Dragonflies Website** will soon be updated with the first events for 2024 and up to date species maps. Later this year I will also (incredibly!) add Norfolk Hawker to the coming soon pages where it joins **Willow Emerald Damselfly**. Surprisingly the latter remains unrecorded in Shropshire...surely 2024 is the year...



A head on female Broad-bodied Chaser.  
Photo: J. Cartwright

## Flight Season 2023

The Shropshire flight season began as usual at Whixall Moss where Stephen Barlow recorded **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* on 15<sup>th</sup> April. This was just one day earlier than in 2022 and about a week later than the earliest ever Shropshire



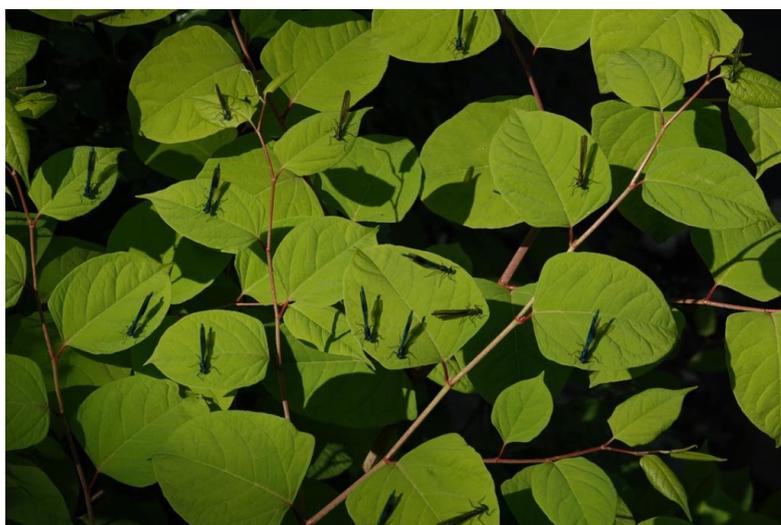
One of the few April Large Red Damselflies enjoying the aubretia. Photo: J. Almond

record. Typically this is followed by a number of species also in April, for example 6 different species were recorded in April 2022. Large Red Damselfly however remained the only April species for 2023 and even these were reportedly low in number. Stephen Barlow in early May at Whixall Moss noted how few Large Reds were present and the majority of these were teneral. This unremarkable start was mirrored on a national scale with just 10 species on the wing in April. This fell short of the 15 species seen nationally in April 2022 and 20 species in April 2011 (Parr, 2023a).

Eventually **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* was recorded at Whixall Moss on May 3<sup>rd</sup> a full 2 weeks later than the earliest ever Shropshire sighting made in 2019. A single **Banded demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens* was spotted on the River Severn in Shrewsbury on 6<sup>th</sup> May and then things started to pick up on the following day with sightings of **White-faced Darter** *Leucorrhinia dubia* (about 2 weeks later than the earliest record) and **Broad-bodied Chaser** *Libellula depressa*.

After a slow start to the season mid-May saw the beginning of a sustained dry and hot spell extending well into June which triggered much activity as we literally

went from one extreme to the other! Amazingly between 10-20<sup>th</sup> May 14 species were on the wing including the earliest ever Shropshire sighting of **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** *Cordulegaster boltonii* seen by Steve Oates on the East Upper Onny on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Some species such as **Four-spotted Chaser** and **Banded Demoiselle** were being recorded in high numbers and then many of our high and late summer species were starting to emerge early.

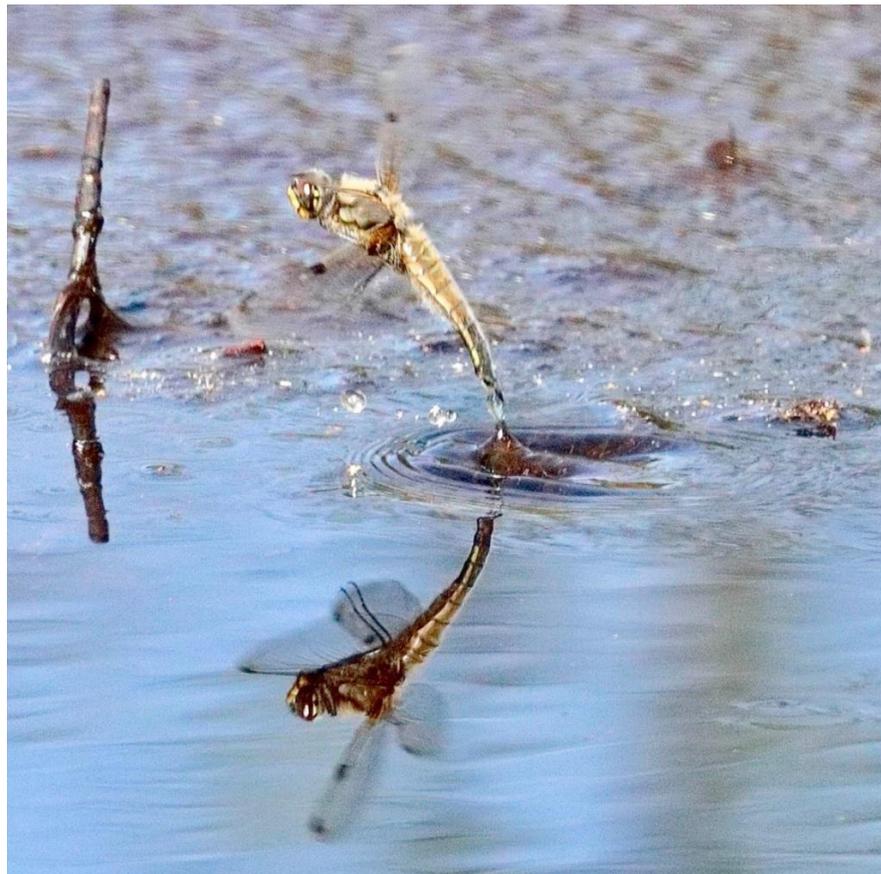


Clouds of Banded Demoiselles.

Photo: M. Roberts

**Black-tailed Skimmer** *Orthetrum cancellatum* and **Ruddy Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* equalled their earliest ever sightings and **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma viridulum* usually recorded in Shropshire in late July or August was spotted on 15<sup>th</sup> June at Prees Heath and 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms. **Common Hawker** *Aeshna juncea*, **Black Darter** *Sympetrum danae* and **Keeled Skimmer** *Orthetrum coerulescens* seen typically from mid/late July onwards all had records in early June.

All this activity resulted in some great site visits with really good numbers which was lovely to see. This sudden profusion may also have accounted for some species turning up in new sites and occasionally unusual sites as discussed in the species summary. But the weather broke in July and extensive rains really gave the impression that the year had peaked with my site visits being limited to brief sunny windows. Relatively mild autumnal weather suggested late records may be broken but **Common Hawker** and **Black Darter** were last recorded on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, a good few weeks short of the November records made in 2021. Only **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea* and **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* were recorded in November, the latter by Nigel Jones on 15<sup>th</sup> November at Cole Mere which was the last record for the season.



Fabulous reflection of a Four-spotted Chaser. Photo: C. Shaw

The table below shows the first and last dates for those species recorded in Shropshire in 2023, but it is important to understand that these are directly influenced by recorder effort and the sites visited. **Red** = Shropshire record **Blue** = notably early/late, but not a county record

### First and Last Recorded Sightings 2023

Species	Common Name	Date of first record	Date of last record
<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Banded Demoiselle	6 <sup>th</sup> May	20 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle	11 <sup>th</sup> May	7 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Emerald Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> June	23 <sup>rd</sup> September
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Azure Damselfly	13 <sup>th</sup> May	6 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	Variable Damselfly	11 <sup>th</sup> May	11 <sup>th</sup> May
<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Red-eyed Damselfly	11 <sup>th</sup> May	7 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	Small Red-eyed Damselfly	15 <sup>th</sup> June	9 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damselfly	15 <sup>th</sup> April	29 <sup>th</sup> June
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Blue Damselfly	16 <sup>th</sup> May	7 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Blue-tailed Damselfly	11 <sup>th</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	14 <sup>th</sup> June	22 <sup>nd</sup> June
<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	White-legged Damselfly	20 <sup>th</sup> May	20 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Southern Hawker	12 <sup>th</sup> June	5 <sup>th</sup> November
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Brown Hawker	16 <sup>th</sup> June	21 <sup>st</sup> September
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Common Hawker	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	22 <sup>nd</sup> October
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Migrant Hawker	16 <sup>th</sup> July	15 <sup>th</sup> October
<i>Anax imperator</i>	Emperor Dragonfly	27 <sup>th</sup> May	22 <sup>nd</sup> August
<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Common Club-tail	12 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> June
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	16 <sup>th</sup> May	19 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Downy Emerald	24 <sup>th</sup> May	30 <sup>th</sup> May
<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	White-faced Darter	7 <sup>th</sup> May	19 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied chaser	7 <sup>th</sup> May	13 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser	3 <sup>rd</sup> May	9 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Black-tailed Skimmer	25 <sup>th</sup> May	2 <sup>nd</sup> September
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Keeled Skimmer	10 <sup>th</sup> June	17 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Black Darter	10 <sup>th</sup> June	22 <sup>nd</sup> October
<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Ruddy Darter	25 <sup>th</sup> June	7 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter	12 <sup>th</sup> June	15 <sup>th</sup> November



## Species Summary

A total of 28 species were recorded in 2023 comprising 16 dragonfly and 12 damselfly species. This is 1 more than in 2022 thanks to the welcome return of **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** unrecorded since 2016. The total number of species ever recorded in Shropshire is 34, but this includes rare migrants, transient species and occasional rarities that do not cross our borders with any regularity.

As in 2022 the common and widespread species were recorded more frequently with **Large Red Damselfly** again producing the most damselfly records followed by **Azure Damselfly**. These both emerge early in the flight season and are regulars at garden ponds which undoubtedly boosts the numbers of records. With regards to dragonflies again it was ‘garden pond regulars’ that produced good numbers of records in 2023; **Common Darter**, **Southern Hawker**, **Emperor Dragonfly** and **Brown Hawker**.

Notable records of a number of species are discussed in the individual species reports, but in addition unusual sightings were made of 3 species typically associated with upland habitat.

- ✈ **Common Hawker** was recorded by Chris Shaw at Smalley Hill Nature Reserve near Telford. Records show that historically this species has also been recorded in nearby Dawley and even in Telford Town Park!
- ✈ **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** was seen by Steve Oates unexpectedly hawking along narrow woodland near the Brompton sewage works near Atcham.
- ✈ **Black Darter** was recorded at Dolgoch Quarry in October by Nicole and Gareth Lambe. This is an old limestone quarry and certainly not an acid bog pool, but a few were seen in amongst the ‘expected’ Common Darters and Migrant Hawkers.

Interestingly two years ago in the newsletter (Rees Evans, 2022) I reported unusual sightings of the same 3 species. Golden-ringed Dragonfly is unmistakable really for anything else, but it’s certainly worth having a closer look at hawkers and darters as these unusual sightings seem to be turning up.



One of a few Black Darters seen at Dolgoch Quarry in 2023.  
Photo: N. Lambe

Conversely, just as species typically found in our upland pools were cropping up elsewhere, **Migrant Hawker** (typically found in lowland pools) was recorded at Wildmoor Pool, high up on the Long Mynd plateau. This is the first ever sighting of Migrant Hawker at this frequently recorded site. Migrant Hawker larvae are unable to tolerate low temperatures which determines the current species distribution (Smallshire & Swash, 2018) but as winters get milder this may open up previously non-viable habitats. One of the aims of the Upland Dragonflies Species Action Plan (see page 10) is to set up long term monitoring at Wildmoor Pool and 2 other sites so we have a far more accurate idea of how our upland habitat areas are supporting different dragonfly species. As the climate changes, generally warmer conditions may well enable some species to expand their ranges possibly to higher altitudes. This could potentially have a detrimental impact on some of our upland specialists due to increased competition for resources.

This year Richard Hammerton (Biodiversity Data Officer for Shropshire Council) has kindly assisted me by analysing how local distributions have changed in recent years. Since the 2017 field season 12 species have been recorded in new county hectads. Most dramatically **Migrant Hawker** and **Ruddy Darter** have each been recorded in 4 new hectads. These species were both increasing their range prior to 2017 and this trend has clearly continued. **Emperor Dragonfly** has been found in 3 new hectads and it is interesting that these 3 aforementioned species have shown the greatest increases in occupancy on a national scale over the last 50 years (Taylor et al, 2021). The Shropshire analysis also showed **Beautiful Demoiselle** has been recorded in 3 new hectads and the following species recorded in 2 new hectads; **Four-spotted Chaser**, **Red-eyed Damselfly**, **Downy Emerald** and **Black Darter**. Both **Red-eyed Damselfly** and **Beautiful Demoiselle** had also been increasing their range prior to 2017. During 2023 both our Demoiselle species were well recorded and surprisingly the more 'choosy' **Beautiful Demoiselle** actually exceeded the number of records of the common and widespread **Banded Demoiselle**.



The first recorded sighting of Migrant Hawker at Wildmoor Pool.  
Photo: G. Hall

## Individual Species Reports



### **Downy Emerald**

*C. aenea*



Male Downy Emerald at Mousecroft Pool. Photo: J.Almond

In 2022 Downy Emerald was conveniently recorded at a publicly accessible site namely Mousecroft Pool just south of Shrewsbury. A single male was recorded by Dave Chapman on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and again by Jim Almond the following day. In the last newsletter I wrote ‘there’s no reason to believe lightning will strike twice’, but it has! Jim returned to Mousecroft pool and photographed a single male on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023. So having dismissed this as a

one off it’s definitely worth keeping an eye out this May at Mousecroft. Elsewhere good numbers were seen at 2 private sites and a possible unconfirmed sighting was made at Whixall Moss so exciting times for this lovely insect.



### **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**

*Ischnura pumilio*



Male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly. Photo: J. Cartwright

Since 2016 Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly has been a regular on the ‘missing in action’ list, but on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Julian Cartwright recorded this species back on Titterstone Clee Hill in the pools where it used to be recorded. A week later Julian also found this damselfly 1km further down the slopes of Clee Hill at the Clee Hill Common lower reservoir. It’s very easy to dismiss this species as the common and widespread Blue-tailed Damselfly so if you’re by small pools, streams or even

wheel ruts in heathland or in recent mineral extraction sites then have a close look at the blue on the end of the abdomen. If all of S8 is blue then it’s Blue-tailed Damselfly, but if just part of S8 and all of S9 is blue then you could be in luck!



**Keeled Skimmer**  
*Orthetrum coerulescens*



Male Keeled Skimmer at a new site on the Long Mynd.  
Photo: G.Hall

Cartwright recorded a male on Titterstone Clee Hill. This is only the second sighting of this species at this location, the first being made by Jason Kernohan in 2018.

Keeled Skimmer is only recorded at a handful of sites in Shropshire, but sightings in 2023 suggest this species is possibly on the move, perhaps due to areas of habitat drying out. The majority of sightings in 2023 were made surprisingly early in mid June. Some of these were from known sites, but 4 adults were seen at an unknown flush in the Wildmoor area of the Long Mynd. To see this many is really exciting and this

flush may well represent a new breeding site for this rarity. In addition Julian



**Small Red-eyed Damselfly**  
*E. viridulum*



Small Red-eyed Damselfly at Prees Heath. Photo: D. Emley

Hill in the south right up to Whixall Moss in the north. All previous Shropshire records for this species have been made in the second half of August, but in 2023 over half the records were made in June so depending upon the weather they may be on the wing earlier than we think.

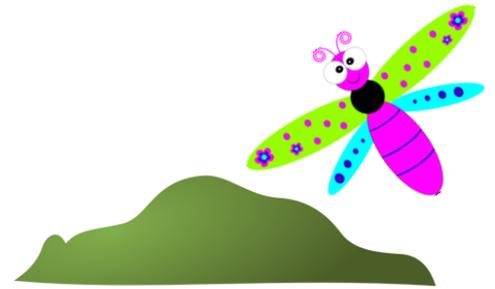
2023 brought records for Small Red-eyed Damselfly from 2 new sites. Firstly from Julian Cartwright who recorded this species in late July and early August on Clee Hill, and secondly from D. Emley who recorded an individual very early on 15<sup>th</sup> June. Since the first county sightings in 2019 we now have 9 sites where this species has been recorded. Interestingly these sites extend from the Wyre Forest area and Clee

## Missing In Action...



- ✈ **Hairy dragonfly** *Brachytron pratense* –**possible sighting at Whixall Moss** 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022 but unconfirmed. Recorded previously at this location in 2013 by B. Smith but then no records until 2020 when Richard Lamb saw 2 near Button Oak in the Wyre Forest. Previously also a rarity in neighbouring Worcestershire until it was surprisingly recorded 17 times in May/June 2020 at Ryall and Ripple and the Croome River (Averill, 2021). Consistent evidence now of breeding in Worcestershire so a reasonable possibility it may be seen again in Shropshire. Typically the first hawker dragonfly on the wing in mid-May so be on the look-out in late spring/early summer.
  
- ✈ **Scarce Chaser** *Libellula fulva* –still living up to it's name in Shropshire where there remains only 1 Shropshire record ever made at Attingham Park in June 2008 by J. Balcombe. In contrast doing well in Worcestershire and even described as 'increasingly widespread' further south where it is turning up at garden ponds (Perrin, 2021). This species has a relatively early flight season emerging on mass in early May and is typically found on neutral or base-rich muddy slow flowing small rivers, dykes in floodplains and water meadows (Smallshire & Swash, 2018).
  
- ✈ **Vagrant Emperor** *Hemianax ephippiger* –an individual was photographed in Shrewsbury in 2018 representing the second Shropshire record following that made by G. Hiatt on 23<sup>rd</sup> November at Muxton Marsh (SJ715132) in 2013. Elsewhere there was a significant influx of this species last spring into southern areas of the UK. Breeding behaviour was observed and in September 2023 the first record of successful breeding in the UK was made with a teneral and the exuvia being found (Parr, 2023b).
  
- ✈ **Lesser Emperor** *Anax Parthenope* - first recorded in Shropshire by P. Hope on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016 near Fenemere then secondly in July 2019 by S.Barlow at Alderford Lake. No further sightings, but elsewhere in the UK there have been a good number of records which possibly reflect strong local breeding populations (Parr, 2023c). Lesser Emperor was again recorded at Ripple Lakes in Worcestershire during 2023.
  
- ✈ **Red-veined Darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii* – remains unrecorded since the 2012 sighting at Venus Pool. Sightings of interest elsewhere in Britain during 2023 included Newtown, Powys (Parr, 2023c) and Ryall in Worcestershire where a fresh specimen was recorded suggesting local successful breeding.
  
- ✈ **Yellow-winged Darter** *Sympetrum flaveolum* - no Shropshire records since the mid 1990's. 1 solitary male was recorded in East Yorkshire on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2022. This constituted the first and only British record since 2015 (Parr & Chelmick, 2022). Always an outside chance they may revisit Shropshire if there is a large influx of migrants.

# Help our Upland Dragonflies



**Stepping Stones** is a landscape-scale nature conservation project in the Shropshire Hills. The project area covers over 200km<sup>2</sup> within the Shropshire Hills AONB and includes 2 major sites of conservation importance: Long Mynd SSSI and the Stiperstones NNR. As the name suggests the project aims to connect wildlife habitats by strengthening existing habitat and creating stepping stones and corridors of habitat between and around the 2 aforementioned sites. Species Action Plans (SAPs) have been produced by Natural England and the Stepping Stones Project for 12 species that rely on particular habitat types that we are trying to connect. One of the SAPs is for Upland Dragonflies and I am ‘championing’ the cause.

The recent State of Dragonflies Report 2021 (Taylor et al, 2021) illustrated how a number of our upland dragonfly species are declining nationally. **Black Darter** and **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** form the focus of the SAP, chosen as they occupy different upland habitat types. It is hoped that if we improve the quality and quantity and connectedness of both habitat types then far more of our upland species will benefit.

The full SAP can be viewed on [shropshiredragonflies.co.uk](http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk), but essentially the first step is we need to know more about the current distribution of our upland species and the quality and location of upland pools and streams that we have. Once we have a more accurate picture we can decide where habitat creation, links and improvements would be most beneficial.



## How can you help?

If you have **no identification experience**:

**Investigating - sign up to a monad** (1km square) in the project area and check it 3 times during May-Sept for the presence of pools and streams with dragonflies, any evidence of breeding (mating, egg laying, exuviae), and any evidence of old vegetated pools/dried up streams that could be reinstated.

More information and maps of the project area and the monads are all available on the Shropshire Dragonflies website. There is also a list of things to consider when choosing a monad such as weather, proximity to your monad and legal access.

If you have **identification experience**:

**Monitoring** – sign up as an individual or group and choose either Wildmoor Pool or The Bog to carry out **standardised monitoring** monthly from May-Sept. These sites are easy to access and known to support upland species and the hope is to set up good regular monitoring so we can see if our species are mirroring national declines. I will discuss with those interested the different levels of monitoring, time commitment required, and can direct you to useful dragonfly survey forms. I will also meet you at the site to ensure you are happy to go ahead. Monitoring is a **long term commitment** if it is to produce meaningful results so it must be standardised so it is repeatable for years to come (either by yourself or others).

Please do take a look at the Shropshire dragonflies website  
<http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk>  
and get in touch if you can help monitor, investigate or with one of the options below:

- ✈ You are confident in dragonfly ID and happy to assist me checking sites
- ✈ You have experience in hands on wetland habitat management



**THANK YOU!**

## **Recording Elsewhere**

I fully appreciate many of you will live too far from the Stepping Stones Project area to be involved, but please be assured all recording is hugely valuable and all records gratefully received. The Shropshire Dragonflies Website now has a **Dragonfly Hotspot Map**. This allows the user to zoom into a particular 1km square and see which species have been recorded there. Furthermore each 1km square has a link directly to the NBN where you can access those species records in detail. This is a really great resource and can be accessed via a direct link on the Shropshire Dragonflies website. This map also enables recorders to see those areas of our county that are less well recorded and it's always good to investigate new pools and streams. Wherever you go please ensure that you are legally allowed to access the area and always seek permission from the owner before going onto private land. For those with more time available it is also worth remembering that the BDS website has detailed information on the different levels of dragonfly recording. These range from **casual ad hoc records** to **complete lists** to actually **adopting a local site** whereby you carry out complete lists at a named location three times between May and September. If you visit a site several times a year and would be interested in 'adopting' it then please do get in touch.



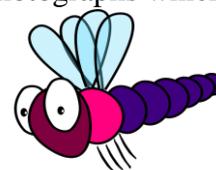
The majestic male Golden-ringed Dragonfly.  
Photo: J. Cartwright

## Recording Top Tips

I have included the following tips again as it remains important and enables me to make best use of all your hard work.



 **iNaturalist:** If you use **iNaturalist** your record is given a default license : CC BY-NC This means that **we cannot add it to the British Dragonfly Society data on the National Biodiversity Network**. This is because the BDS data is ‘open’ for people to view whereas CC BY-NC means you retain more control over the data and any media ie. attached photographs. iNaturalist records filter into iRecord and the upshot is I can verify these records but cannot add them to our data which is a great shame. The records mostly have attached photographs which is great for ease of verification and could also be great for posting on the Shropshire Dragonflies blog if the license allowed. **The best current solution if you use iNaturalist is to please alter your own default licensing to CC-BY.** This is called a Creative Commons Attribution and it allows individuals, governments, not-for-profits and commercial organisations to use the data without having to ask permission.



 **iRecord:** When using iRecord please use the specific **Dragonfly Recording Form** developed by the BDS as this allows you to specify the life stage. This form can be found by looking under Record >Activities >search for British Dragonfly Society and click the gold star to add it to your activities. It is also better if you have an iRecord account and login before entering your records.

 **Record quality:** Please where possible use a real name attached to your record. It is also statistically useful if you can declare if the list is a **complete list** ie. all species visibly present at a location. This requires ticking a further box when entering records via iRecord and using the Dragonfly Recording Form. **If sending your own spreadsheet then please add a new ‘complete list’ column and tick where appropriate.** This allows the BDS to do more robust trend analysis which is important given the climatic changes we are seeing. Also please **record abundance** when you make species records. Presence or absence data alone gives us no real idea how populations of species are faring and a simple species list may give the impression that dragon and damselflies are ok when in fact the actual numbers of each species are declining.

 **Timescales:** Where possible please get your records sent in asap after the end of the flight season and certainly by Christmas. This allows me to finish verifying them, analyse them and hopefully get a newsletter out before anything takes to the wing in April!

Please rest assured that I’m still very happy to receive spreadsheets of records and even records in the post and despite my long list above (!) all your records are still very gratefully received.

## Norfolk Hawker coming this way?



Male Norfolk Hawker.

Photo: S.M.Campossmall

**Norfolk Hawker**  
*Aeshna isosceles* is one of only 2 legally protected dragonfly species in the UK. This was previously due in part to its limited distribution unsurprisingly in a few sites in the Norfolk Broads and north-east Suffolk. In recent years however things

have changed and this species can be found much further

afield and indeed breeding some distance from Norfolk. 2023 saw this trend continue with a number of records including new sites in Devon, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire. Perhaps most surprisingly a record was also made at Llangorse Lake in the Brecon Beacons (Noble, 2023) underlining the fact that this species could possibly be seen in Shropshire over the next few years.

So if you see a large brown dragonfly, just bear in mind it might not always be Brown Hawker and it could be a county first! The main differences to look for are clear wings not brown as in Brown Hawker. The Norfolk Hawker also has striking



Male Brown Hawker.

Photo: P. Appleyard

green eyes (not brown/blue eyes) and has a bright yellow triangle on segment 2 of the abdomen—hence the species name *Aeshna isosceles*. The Norfolk Hawker is also smaller than the mighty Brown Hawker.

So good luck and if you do see a ‘not so brown’ hawker then please do try and get a photograph too!

## Still Coming to a Pond Near You.....

### **Willow Emerald Damselfly**

*Chalcolestes viridis*

This species was first recorded as 'one-offs' in the UK in 1979 and 1992 in Sussex and Kent. A female was then recorded in Suffolk in 2007 followed by numerous records in 2009 from 35 sites in East Suffolk, North Essex and south Norfolk (Smallshire & Swash, 2018). Since then Willow Emerald has become firmly established and is rapidly expanding its range both north and westwards. **During 2022 records were made in Cheshire,**

**Staffordshire and several sites in Warwickshire and**

**Worcestershire (Parr, 2022) so I really thought 2023 was the year...but no! 2023 brought further range expansion to Northumberland in the north and Severn Beach in the west (Parr, 2023b). Sightings were also made again in Worcestershire so surely the first Shropshire record is imminent!**

Willow Emerald is usually seen from August onward found typically at sheltered standing water and slow flowing rivers with trees and shrubs overhanging the water from the banks. They egg lay into the overhanging twigs and branches (often but not exclusively willows) and this produces distinctive scars in the plant tissue.



Oviposition scars provide a record of species presence. Photo: © S. Cham

further differences in the anal appendages and the extent of a dark spur on the side of the thorax and the full identification details can be seen on the Shropshire Dragonflies website 'coming soon' page. **Usefully we can look for evidence of this species during the winter months when the oviposition scars are easily visible. These scars are considered a positive record for this species** so please get in touch even if you think you have seen such marks but no sign of the adults.



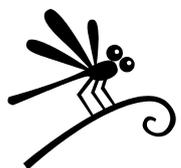
Male Willow Emerald Damselfly.  
Photo: © S. Cham

The only similar species we have in Shropshire is the fairly common and widespread Emerald Damselfly. Both species belong to the family Lestidae and both rest with their wings held open at 45°. Willow Emerald however has a far longer abdomen and large pale pterostigma (narrow and dark in Emerald Damselfly). Noticeably Willow Emerald mature males have no powder blue pruinescence and the eyes remain dark (not blue as in Emerald Damselfly). There are

## The Last Word..

Thank you again for all your valuable records last year. I always enjoy collating all your information and hopefully giving you an idea of what's happening dragonfly-wise in Shropshire. If you'd like to contribute an article in next years newsletter or advertise any dragonfly related Shropshire event on the website then please do get in touch. Please also get in touch if you'd like to be involved in **Stepping Stones and helping our upland dragonflies.**

I look forward to seeing more of your amazing photographs and hearing about your sightings during 2024. Enjoy the Shropshire summer and I'll maybe see you out and about by a pond somewhere!



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