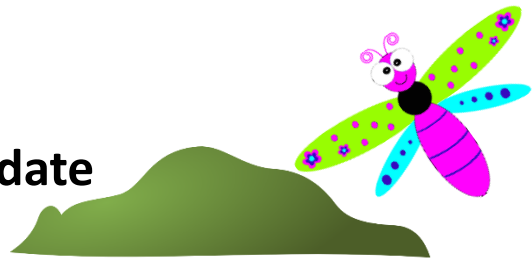


# Upland Dragonflies Project Update

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In 2024 a number of local Species Action Plans (SAPs) were produced by Natural England and the Stepping Stones Project including one for upland dragonflies as a number of these species are known to be declining nationally (Taylor et al, 2021). Black Darter and Golden-ringed Dragonfly formed the focus of the SAP, chosen as they occupy different upland habitat types. It was hoped that if we improve the quality and quantity and connectedness of both habitat types then far more of our upland species will benefit (full SAP can be viewed at [shropshiredragonflies.co.uk](http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk)).

The first step was to find out more about the current distribution of our upland species and the quality and location of upland pools and streams that we have. With a more accurate picture we can then decide where habitat creation, links and improvements will be most beneficial.

## So how did you help?

### Investigating

I'm extremely grateful to a good number of people who signed up to investigate monads (1km squares) looking for dragonflies or potential dragonfly habitat. Some of your findings revealed areas of promising habitat which in some cases are already acting as good 'stepping stones' in the areas between the Stiperstones and the Long Mynd. Thanks to your investigations a privately owned site was brought to my attention that I was then able to survey and record 13 species including Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Black Darter and Common Hawker – all upland specialists.

A number of you made species records as you investigated your monads including a good number of records of the 2 focus species. These are illustrated in the maps at the end of this report. For each of the species the first map shows the records made in 2024 and the second overlays these records on the previously known data so we are able to see any evidence of change in distribution.

**Golden-ringed Dragonfly** has been seen in new areas north, south, east and west within the project area. Northwards individuals were seen in Eastridge woods and at the aforementioned private site, as well as a privately owned collection of pools in Pontesbury. To the south an individual was seen at the National Trust owned Barns Farm and to the west there were a number of sightings in privately owned areas of woodland near The Bog. To the east there were sightings at the Middle Marches Community Land Trust owned site Cudwell Meadow and right on the edge of the project area on the slopes of the Lawley. It is promising that all these records indicate this species is present more widely in the project area and will therefore make good use of any suitable stream habitat.

**Black Darter** results were less dramatic with most sightings being made in previously known areas. One exception to this is the record made at the private site I surveyed to the NW of the Stiperstones. Habitat improvements have been made at this site and Black Darter is a species known to 'wander' and therefore likely to find new suitable habitat should it become available. Investigations into potential habitat improvements elsewhere for this species have been really promising. The SAP highlighted a number of ponds on the Long Mynd plateau that could have potential for improvement and Tim Coleshaw investigated many of these. The results are currently being written up to be presented to Stepping Stones and the National Trust so that as future funding and time allow a number of habitat improvements could be made. These improvements are largely concerned with keeping pools wetter for longer so focused on repairing breached dams and in some cases making pools deeper and therefore more resistant to periods of drought.

### **Monitoring**

As well as investigating monads we also set up long term monitoring. Mark Underwood visited the pools at Pole Cottage and surveyed for dragonflies every month during the flight season. In addition Stephen Lewis and I monitored the pools at The Bog. A huge thank you to Mark and Stephen for doing this in a year where sometimes the weather made monthly visits a real challenge! Hopefully we can maintain monitoring at these sites in a standardised repeatable way for many years allowing us to see if our upland species are mirroring the national declines.

### **What next?**

Thank you to all who took part during 2024 and gave their valuable time to assist our upland dragonflies. The future with respect to Stepping Stones is unclear at this time however the focused recording of the **Upland Dragonflies Project** will continue as the need to connect areas of valuable habitat is still urgent and important. The issues highlighted by the SAPs remain very relevant and the challenges presented by climate change remain very real.

Going forward the **long term monitoring will continue and I would still be interested in an individual or group carrying out standardised monitoring monthly from May-Sept on Wildmoor Pool on the Long Mynd**. This site is easy to access and known to support upland species. If anyone is interested I would be happy to discuss 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. Areas being monitored have been 'Adopted' as sites under the British Dragonfly Society's recording scheme indicating that a more in depth level of regular recording is underway.

All species records and habitat information recorded during **monad investigations** remains extremely valuable. **There are many 1km squares within the project that still haven't been looked at in detail so please do get in touch if you'd like to sign up to an area in 2025**. It remains the case that each and every species record is important even **casual sightings** so I would encourage all of you to continue keeping an eye out in the project area for dragonfly

activity, record anything you see and enter the records on iRecord or simply send them to myself.

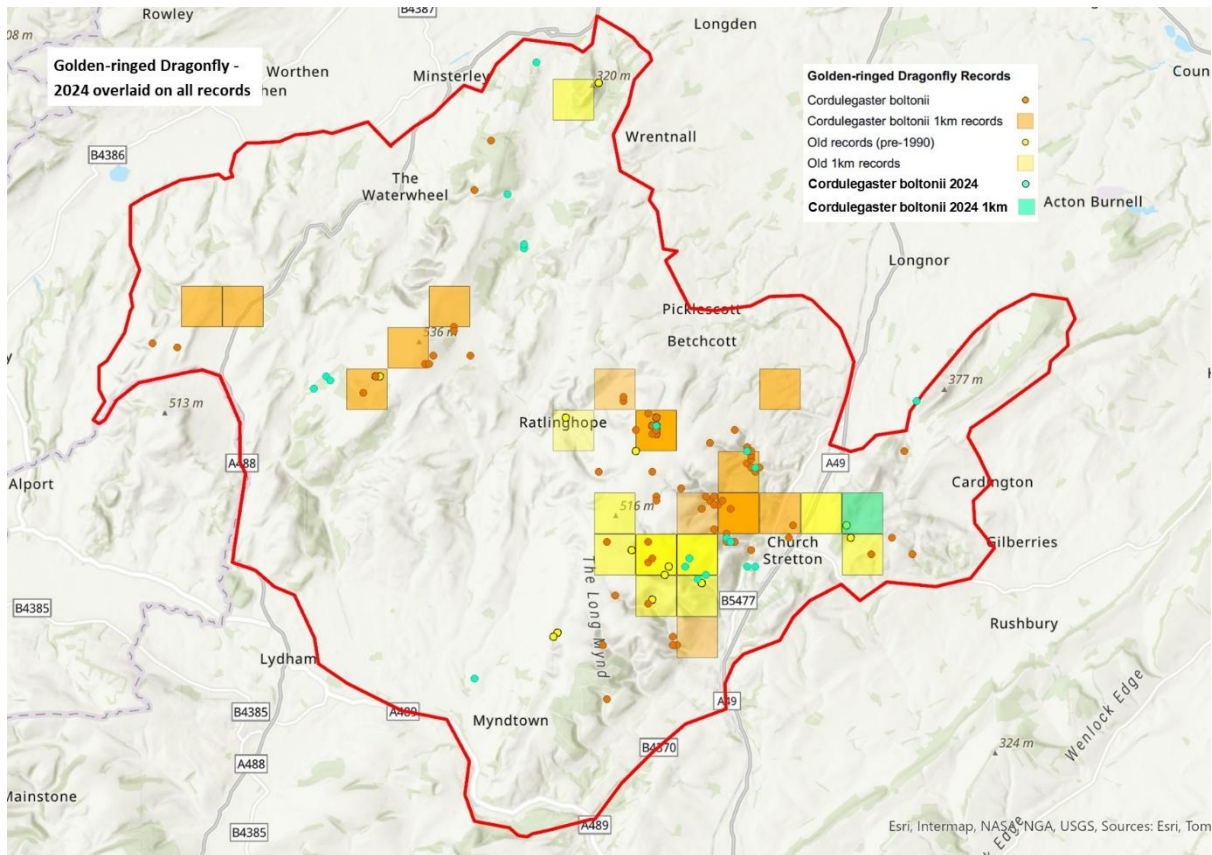
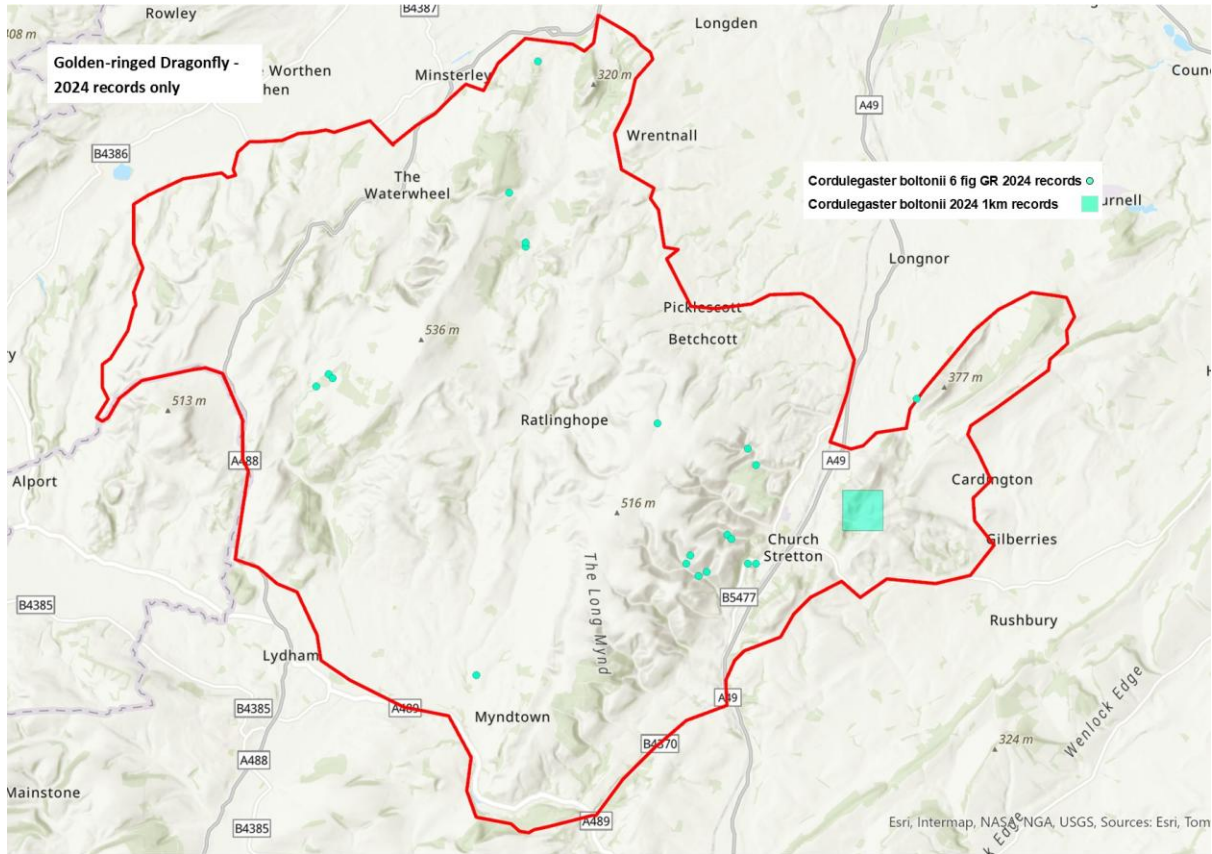
The British Dragonfly Society (BDS) will use all species data to inform important national reports and as County Recorder I am constantly keeping an eye on our local species. All our findings and the Long Mynd ponds report by Tim Coleshaw will be made available to the National Trust in the hope that some real practical habitat improvements can be made.

Finally I just want to say **THANK YOU** again for all your hard work in 2024, in particular to Mark Underwood and Stephen Lewis for monitoring pools and to Tim Coleshaw, Ivan Grove and Isabel Carter who all produced excellent reports from their extensive investigations. Thank you also to Charlie Bell for producing the maps.

## **References**

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

# Golden-ringed Dragonfly



# Black Darter

