

Shropshire (VC40) Dragonfly Newsletter



Spring 2026
Sue Rees Evans

Introduction

Spring has sprung and we finally seem to have emerged from the constant monsoons of February! I sincerely hope you are all still afloat and can take some comfort from the fact that the wet weather must have topped up waterbodies all over the county! It's hard to remember but in late March/early April 2025 conditions were already heating up and your records really reflected this with a notable number of 'early records' being broken and indeed the earliest start to the Shropshire flight season ever seen! Other headlines from 2025 were **Norfolk Hawker** sightings for a second year in a number of locations and to top it all our first **Willow Emerald Damselflies** flew into Shropshire!



Norfolk Hawker spreading it's wings across Shropshire!
Photo: B. Kemp

A huge thank you as always to everyone who managed to get out recording last year in what felt like a very long hot summer that saw a worrying number of waterbodies simply drying out. Despite this over 1600 records came in including many of our upland species as a number of you investigated or monitored upland areas. A summary of the **Upland Dragonflies Project** is included in the newsletter and though out of necessity I'm reducing the project itself, rest assured your records of upland species are just as important and useful as ever. They will continue to clarify the distribution of our upland species in the hope that we can ultimately improve the quality, quantity and connectedness of their breeding habitat.

Thank you too for another year of amazing photographs sent in for the **Shropshire Dragonfly Watch** blog... all available to view on the website!

<http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk>



The first Willow Emerald Damselfly recorded in Shropshire.
Photo: B. Kemp

Flight Season 2025

As mentioned in the introduction, 2025 really was a record breaking year! **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* set the tone with the earliest ever start to the Shropshire flight season on 5th April recorded by both Stephen Barlow and Harry Beaman at Whixall Moss. This is 3 days earlier than the previous record, made on 8th



Earliest Shropshire Large Red Damselfly at Whixall Moss.
Photo: S. Barlow

April 2017 by David Williams. Stephen and Harry both sent photos with their sightings illustrating that the record breaking individuals were female. It is possible that the same female was photographed by both recorders, but the sex is of interest as typically males emerge a few days before the females. A few days later David Williams sent in a record for this species on 9th April seen at Hollybanks SWT Reserve and again this was female.

After this early start April did not disappoint with ultimately an amazing 8 species taking to the wing during this month. On a national scale 16 species were recorded during April, a total only exceeded in 2011 when there was an unusually warm spring (Parr, 2025). Back in Shropshire **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* was next to emerge on 22nd April when Tim Walter recorded a female teneral at Pam's Pools near Bridgnorth. This was the second earliest sighting of this species and

only the third sighting ever in April. **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* and **White-faced Darter** *Leucorrhinia dubia* followed 2 days later on 24th April both just a few days after their respective earliest dates and then **Broad-bodied Chaser** *Libellula depressa* was seen in Minsterley on 27th April producing another Shropshire record! The final flourish (for April!) came on the 28th with



Record breaking Broad-bodied Chaser.
Photo: L. Edwards-White

sightings of **Beautiful Demoiselle** *Calopteryx virgo*, **Azure Damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* and **Blue-tailed Damselfly** *Ischnura elegans*. The first 2 species in this group broke Shropshire 'earliest records' by 1 and 2 days respectively and the last missed a record by just 2 days.

The situation calmed slightly into May though early records were made of **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens* and **Clubtailed Dragonfly** *Gomphus vulgatissimus* on May 3rd on the River Severn at Shrewsbury. This was followed by **Black-tailed Skimmer** *Orthetrum cancellatum* breaking another record being recorded by Tim Walter at Pam's Pools on 19th May- a full 6 days earlier than previously known.



Record breaking Black-tailed Skimmer.
Photo: T. Walter

In May I also returned to Isle Pool near Shrewsbury to do an early season survey and unexpectedly saw **Norfolk Hawker** *Isoaeschna isoceles* in almost exactly the same location as in 2024! I discuss the exciting implications of this later in the newsletter, but with respect to the date it was a huge surprise as it was only 21st May - about 2 weeks earlier than the 2024 sighting. The trend of early records continued with late May seeing early **Golden-ringed Dragonflies**

Cordulegaster boltonii and June

seeing a raft of species typically associated with July records. These included **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea* seen on 8th June in the Wyre Forest and **Black Darter** *Sympetrum danae* and **Keeled Skimmer** *Orthetrum coerulescens* seen on 11th and 14th June respectively. **Ruddy Darter** *Sympetrum sanguineum* broke records in 2024 being seen on 7th June and was again seen early in 2025 on 14th June –one of only a handful of June records ever made for this species. One of our recent arrivals **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma viridulum* was also recorded in June well ahead of the more typical August sightings.

In stark contrast to the start of the season the later months were fairly unremarkable with regard to dates. Records of note were the first and last sightings of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** *Chalcolestes viridis* as these were the first ever Shropshire sightings and therefore the first local flight season dates for this species. Similarly **Norfolk Hawker** produced a far later sighting than the solitary 2nd June record made in 2024, being recorded as late as 2nd August in 2025. This resulted in a surprisingly long flight season for Norfolk Hawker and



Ruddy Darter take off!

Photo: T. Walter

indeed other species who coupled early sightings with later records. The most noticeable were **Beautiful Demoiselle** recorded from 28th April until 29th August (the 2nd latest record ever) and **Broad-bodied Chaser** recorded from 27th April until 17th August.

Despite relatively mild conditions few species extended far into the autumn months. **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* produced the only November record being seen on 8th November, nowhere near the latest record of 25th November made in 2021 by Stephen Barlow on Whixall Moss. After so much activity early in the season it almost 'felt' like many species finished early too, possibly due in part to many waterbodies dramatically drying out. This rather pronounced end to the flight season was reported nationally (Parr, 2025a) highlighting accelerated flight seasons and stresses associated with extreme weather as possibly affecting adult survival.



Hoverfly photo bombing Black Darter!

Photo: M. Underwood

The table below shows the first and last dates for those species recorded in Shropshire in 2025, 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. (Dams = Damselfly).

First and Last Recorded Sightings 2025

Species	Common Name	Date of first record	Date of last record
<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Banded Demoiselle	3 rd May	2 nd September
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle	28 th April	29 th August
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Emerald Damselfly	11 th June	23 rd September
<i>Chalcolestes viridis</i>	Willow Emerald Dams	30 th July	26 th August
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Azure Damselfly	28 th April	17 th August
<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	Variable Damselfly	21 st May	21 st May
<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Red-eyed Damselfly	7 th May	21 st August
<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	Small Red-eyed Dams	29 th June	26 th August
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damselfly	5 th April	24 th July
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Blue Dams	22 nd April	8 th September
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Blue-tailed Damselfly	28 th April	5 th September
<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Scarce Blue-tailed Dams	4 th June	4 th June
<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	White-legged Dams	16 th May	28 th July
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Southern Hawker	8 th June	9 th October
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Brown Hawker	17 th June	9 th October
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Common Hawker	13 th June	23 rd September
<i>Ioaeschna isoceles</i>	Norfolk Hawker	21 st May	2 nd August
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Migrant Hawker	24 th July	7 th October
<i>Anax imperator</i>	Emperor Dragonfly	16 th May	5 th September
<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Common Club-tail	3 rd May	31 st May
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	29 th May	24 th August
<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Downy Emerald	31 st May	31 st May
<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	White-faced Darter	24 th April	11 th July
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied Chaser	27 th April	17 th August
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser	24 th April	21 st July
<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Black-tailed Skimmer	19 th May	16 th August
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Keeled Skimmer	14 th June	8 th August
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Black Darter	11 th June	19 th September
<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Ruddy Darter	14 th June	3 rd September
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter	6 th June	8 th November



Species Summary

A total of 30 species were recorded in 2025 comprising 17 dragonfly and 13 damselfly species. This is 3 more than in 2024 due to 2 species being recorded that were unrecorded the previous year and 1 new species arriving in the county namely **Willow Emerald Damselfly** (full details on sightings and locations later in the newsletter).



The stunning unmistakable female Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly seen at Beckbury Meadows.

Photo: D. Williams

With no sightings in 2024 **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** made a welcome return in 2025. Around 10 individuals were recorded by David Williams at a new location Beckbury Meadows – a privately owned site on the River Worfe floodplain between Albrighton and Bridgnorth. This site is grazed by cattle and it may well be the ground

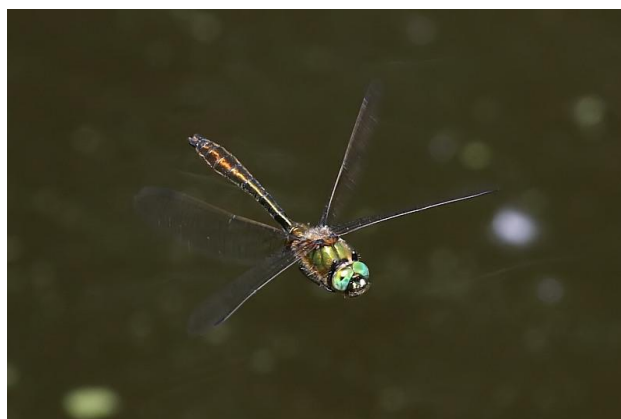
disturbance creating suitable habitat for this species. There were apparently numerous **Blue-tailed Damselflies** present, but when David spotted the stunning orange female pictured above a closer inspection of the blue males revealed a good number were in fact **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies**. Interestingly elsewhere in the UK this species was again found to be dispersing into new areas, the shallow ephemeral nature of this species' preferred habitat quite likely prone to drying out and stimulating this dispersal (Parr, 2025). The Shropshire sightings were made in early June, but it is interesting to note that elsewhere in the UK a number of records were made not only at new sites, but also late in the year indicating bivoltine behaviour- the production of 2 generations in a year (Parr, 2025b). So keep an eye out even later in the season particularly around wheel ruts and similar on Titterstone Clee Hill where a number of sightings were made in 2023 by Julian Cartwright. The male looks very similar to the male Blue-tailed Damselfly but the blue 'tail' area is further towards the end of the abdomen (segment 9 rather than 8 in Blue-tailed) and often has a pair of black dots visible.



A male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly seen at Beckbury Meadows.

Photo: D. Williams

The second 'returning' species was **Downy Emerald**, seen by myself at a private site near Shrewsbury on 31st May. Whilst the handful of known sites for this species are privately owned there have been records made at Mousecroft Pool in Shrewsbury. Individuals were seen here in 2022 and 2023 so this site is always worth a check in late May/early June.



A fabulous inflight picture of the sensational Downy Emerald. Photo: J. Almond

With new arrivals in the last two years the total number of species ever recorded in Shropshire is now 36! The unrecorded 6 species are discussed in the Missing in Action article and include rare migrants, transient species and occasional rarities that do not cross our borders with any regularity. Nationally it was a good year for some of our 'missing' migrants in particular **Red-veined Darter**, **Lesser Emperor** and **Vagrant Emperor** (Parr 2025c). Their absence in Shropshire could be due in part to species such as **Red-veined Darter** being recorded as the common and widespread **Common Darter** so it's definitely worth familiarising ourselves with these rarer possibilities in a changing climate.

Large Red Damselfly was the most frequently recorded species followed by **Common Blue Damselfly** and then **Common Darter**. High numbers of records were also received for **Four-spotted Chaser** and **Azure Damselfly**. As I state each year this is completely biased by recorder effort, and it is probably to be expected that every year these 'garden pond regulars' produce good numbers of records. Surprisingly fewer records were made of **Banded Demoiselle** than usual and for the third year in succession these records were outnumbered by those of the **Beautiful Demoiselle**. **Black Darter** also produced a good number of sightings though this was probably influenced by monitoring of upland pools and at Whixall Moss.



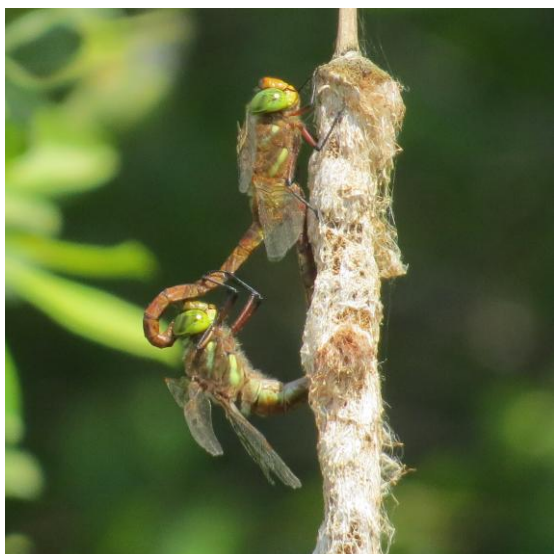
A wonky Variable Damselfly but with textbook exclamation mark antehumeral stripes & a black stemmed U shape on abdominal segment 2. Photo: S. Rees Evans

At the other end of the scale **Variable Damselfly** was again only recorded once by myself at a private site near Shrewsbury. This species remains 'scarce and localized' in much of Britain (Smallshire and Swash, 2025) which may be due in part to misidentification as it is 'variable' in appearance and even a 'textbook' individual is similar to the common and widespread **Azure Damselfly**.

Individual Species Reports



Norfolk Hawker *Isoaeschna isoceles*



Mating pair of Norfolk Hawkers at Whixall Moss.
Photo: R. Kinrade

On 2nd June, 2024 much to my surprise I recorded the first Shropshire Norfolk Hawkers; a male and a mating pair at a private site near Shrewsbury called Isle Pool. I returned to this site on 21st May 2025 and in almost the same location saw 2 adults flying in 2 separate bay areas at the end of the pool. This was very exciting as it strongly suggests breeding in the locality. Bob Kemp also visited the site and though he found no evidence of breeding in the surrounding area it still seems very likely given their recurrence. I will be continuing investigations in 2026!

Incredibly this was only the start for this species in 2025 and on 17th June Jeff Hodgson and Richard Would recorded a

single adult at Whixall Moss. This began a flurry of records extending until 3rd July - most likely sightings of the same individuals with at least 3 (1 male and 1 mating pair) being seen at any one time. Bob Dennison then saw a single male at New House Farm Ponds near the base of Caer Caradoc, Church Stretton. This range expansion was seen elsewhere in the UK with Norfolk Hawker 'turning up in many new areas' including a number of records in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Glamorganshire (Parr, 2025c). Going forward this is definitely a species to look out for from mid-May onwards. Previously habitat requirements for this species in the UK have been fairly specific referring to grazing marsh and fen ditches with good levels of Water Soldier. It would appear with a changing climate that the UK Norfolk Hawker is currently much less 'fussy' and perhaps a European dragonfly guide (Smallshire & Swash, 2020) where this species is described as 'locally common' gives us a better idea of suitable habitat: *swamps, ditches, canals, ponds and lakes with beds of Common Reed, bulrushes, sedges and dense Water Soldier. Occasionally also at slow flowing water.*

In the near future an updated Odonata Red List will be published and it is likely that Norfolk Hawker will be downgraded from the category 'Endangered' to 'Least Concern.' Domestic legislation however moves slowly and for now this species will continue to be legally protected despite the changes in distribution. Another change is the Latin name which has changed from Aeshna to Isoaeschna with an extra 'c' to keep you on your toes. This is due to recent genetic studies proving this species to be sufficiently different to warrant it's own genus. The specific epithet remains the same, but another one to spell carefully isoceles not isosceles!

So keep an eye out this year for early brown coloured hawkers with green eyes, clear wings and the yellow triangle at the top of the abdomen and we'll see what happens next! Maybe someone will find the first exuvia – proof of Shropshire breeding?



Small Red-eyed Damselfly

Erythromma viridulum



Male Small Red-eyed Damselfly
Photo: G. Hall

on 26th August. Individuals have previously been recorded at Dudmaston, but on Big Pool some distance away over the main road. The majority of Shropshire records have been made in late July and August though some individuals are being recorded in June so don't rule out this species earlier in the summer and let's see where it shows up in 2026...

Since the first county sightings in 2019 this species had been recorded at 9 sites extending from the Wyre Forest area and Clee Hill in the south right up to Whixall Moss in the north. Though individuals were recorded in 2024 at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre there was no further range expansion so I'm pleased to report 2025 was a different story with 3 new locations for this species. These were a private site near Market Drayton where 2 males were seen on 30th June, David Austin Roses in Albrighton where 5 adults were seen on 3rd August and Seggy Pool at Dudmaston where a mating pair were seen



Keeled Skimmer

Orthetrum coerulescens



Female Keeled Skimmer found in
Colliersford Gutter, Long Mynd.
Photo: G. Hall

summers drought conditions will prove a challenge for this species going forward. Further afield following sightings on Titterstone Clee Hill in 2023 and 2024, no sightings were made in 2025. The majority of records for this species continue to come in from Cramer Gutter on Catherton Common.

Keeled Skimmer continues to show up in flushes of the Wildmoor area on the Long Mynd, though with the exception of 1 'reliable' population few other locations appear to persist from one year to the next. In 2023 four Keeled Skimmers were seen at a 'new' flush by Geoff Hall though despite searching no follow up sightings were made in 2024. The same year Anna McCann saw a single female in the lower Catbatch Brook near to the road and in 2025 Geoff saw a single female on June 18th on the Colliersford Gutter near Upper Darnford. This was approximately 1 km from any previous sightings. It's quite possible that localised drying of wet flush areas triggers a level of dispersal and judging by recent

Willow Emerald Damselfly arrives in Shropshire!



Male Willow Emerald Damselfly at Comer Wood
Photo: B. Kemp

For the second year running a new species has arrived in Shropshire – the **Willow Emerald Damselfly** *Chalcolestes viridis*. Bob Kemp spotted the first single male on 30th July in Comer wood at Dudmaston, prompting a number of us to go and investigate! As a result several records were subsequently made at the same location with as many as 10 individuals seen on one visit including 3 mating pairs.



Ovipositing pair of Willow Emeralds at Comer Wood
Photo: B. Kemp

I had the pleasure of visiting the site with the British Dragonfly Society Youth Forum and saw a number of Willow Emeralds ‘hanging’ from vegetation in the area between Seggy and Wall Pools and also along the northern bank of Seggy Pool. Amazingly about 2 weeks later on 15th August Geoff Hall then recorded a solitary male a considerable distance from the first sighting at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms. This male was seen on the larger of the 2 main ponds (the one without the jetty).

Willow Emerald 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, 2025). Since then Willow Emerald became firmly established rapidly expanding it’s range both north and westwards. Following records in 2022 in nearby counties Cheshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire I felt surely the first Shropshire record was imminent so I’m thrilled it is here!

This insect does not disappoint having a far longer abdomen than the similar Emerald Damselfly. All individuals that I saw were hanging in the vegetation with their wings spread (like Emerald Damselfly) at 45 degrees. The large pale pterostigma (narrow and dark in Emerald Damselfly) really stand out as do the pale anal appendages of the male. Unlike Emerald damselflies the Willow Emerald mature males have no powder blue pruinescence and the eyes remain dark not blue. We did however notice a blue area on the frons of several individuals.



Male Willow Emerald seen at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre. Photo: G. Hall

It will be fascinating to see how this species spreads in Shropshire during 2026. Keep an eye out from late July onward 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. These oviposition scars usefully mean we can actually be **out looking now** as the scars are considered a positive record for this species.

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

Please definitely get in touch if you think you have seen oviposition scars or the wonderful adults...



Missing In Action...

- ✧ **Hairy dragonfly** *Brachytron pratense* –2 possible sightings mid-May 2025 made by Geoff Hall at Shropshire Hills Discovery centre and Bob Kemp at Isle Pool. Previous confirmed sightings in 2020 when Richard Lamb saw 2 near Button Oak in the Wyre Forest and in 2013 recorded by B. Smith at Whixall Moss. Interestingly also a rarity in neighbouring Worcestershire until surprisingly recorded 17 times in 2020 at Ryall and Ripple and the Croome River (Averill, 2021). Consistent evidence now of breeding in Worcestershire so a possibility it may be seen again in Shropshire. Typically the first hawker dragonfly on the wing in mid-May.

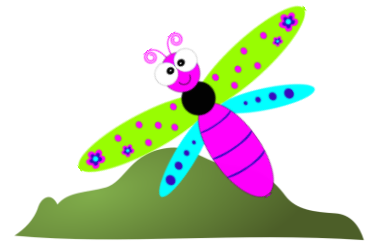
- ✧ **Scarce Chaser** *Libellula fulva* –still living up to it's name in Shropshire where there remains only 1 Shropshire record ever made at Attingham Park in June 2008 by J. Balcombe. In contrast doing well in Worcestershire and has spread so significantly in England over the last 10 years that in some locations it is the most abundant chaser (Cham, 2024). 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, 2025).

- ✧ **Vagrant Emperor** *Hemianax ephippiger* –despite a good number of records across the UK in 2025 there were no local sightings however one individual was seen in Worcestershire at Ryall Water on 13th July 2025 by Andy Warr. Previously 2 sightings in Shropshire; an individual photographed in Shrewsbury in 2018 and a freshly dead female found by G. Hiatt on 23rd November at Muxton Marsh (SJ715132) in 2013. In September 2023 the first record of successful breeding in the UK was made with a teneral and the exuvia being found in Cornwall (Parr, 2023).

- ✧ **Lesser Emperor** *Anax Parthenope* - first recorded in Shropshire by P. Hope on 20th June 2016 near Fenemere then secondly in July 2019 by S.Barlow at Alderford Lake. Disappointingly still no further sightings in Shropshire despite records across the UK (even possibly as far as the Shetland Isles!) of both locally bred individuals and fresh migrants (Parr, 2025c). In 2024 individuals successfully emerged from Ripple Lakes in Worcestershire and were recorded here again in 2025.

- ✧ **Red-veined Darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii* – nationally records indicated 'one of the biggest arrivals of migrant Red-veined Darters ever seen' (Parr, 2025c) though none recorded locally. This species remains unrecorded since the 2012 sighting at Venus Pool. Interestingly none were recorded in Worcestershire either despite a fresh specimen being recorded at Ryall last year suggesting local breeding.

- ✧ **Yellow-winged Darter** *Sympetrum flaveolum* - no Shropshire records since the mid 1990's. 1 solitary male was recorded in East Yorkshire on 5th 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.



Upland Dragonflies Project Update

Investigating: Over the last 2 field seasons volunteers have been out investigating 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**.



Beware the water boatman!

Photo: M. Underwood

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 during 2025 with the exception of a sighting miles from the project area near Ellesmere made on 13th July.

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. Richard Small of 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 has also recorded 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.



What next?

Thank you to all who have contributed records and your valuable time during 2024 and 2025 to assist our upland dragonflies. The Stepping Stones project has come to an end though a bid has been put forward for the Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections project. If successful this hopes to cover a much larger area than the Stepping Stones project and is hoping to improve habitats and build climate resilience- all very relevant to our upland dragonflies. The issues highlighted by the upland dragonflies Species Action Plan remain very relevant and the challenges presented by climate change remain very real. This has been underlined by **Black Darter** and **Common Hawker** being categorised as Near Threatened on the 'soon to be published' Odonata Red List for Great Britain. These 2 upland species are also now listed as Endangered on the European Odonata Red List along with **Emerald Damselfly** categorised as Near Threatened (De Knijf, G.,2024).

Sadly due to restrictions on my time and health and the end of the Stepping Stones project I cannot continue to single handedly sustain the investigating aspect of the project. I am however really pleased we have set up the very valuable long-term monitoring which will continue and thanks to your investigations our knowledge of species and habitats in the project area has increased greatly along with establishing new landowner contacts. I am also confident that our reporting will lead to real habitat improvements on the ground. All species records and habitat information recorded during monad investigations remain extremely valuable and will feed into conservation efforts and potential future projects going forward.

It remains the case that each and every future species record is important and please do continue keeping an eye out for our upland species, record anything you see and enter the records on iRecord or simply send them to myself.

THANK YOU!



Inflight Common Hawker.

Photo: M. Underwood

Coming to a Pond Near You.....?



Magnificent male Southern Migrant Hawker in Worcestershire!
Photo: A. Warr

This may be optimistic, but far from impossible so I thought I would again include Andy Warr's amazing photos of **Southern Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna affinis* taken just down the road in Worcestershire in 2024. This is a recent colonist categorised as rare but increasing (Smallshire & Swash, 2025) and is known to have bred in Essex and Kent.

Amid a flurry of activity with regard to migrants in 2025 little seems to have been reported nationally for this species. Sightings are typically made during late July and August in the south and east of the UK though individuals have been recorded much farther up the country including Worcestershire when over a number of days Andy Warr saw and beautifully photographed at least 11 males at Ryall Gravel Pit.



Beautiful predominant blue colour of the Southern Migrant Hawker. Photo: A. Warr

This is a small hawkler similar in size to Migrant Hawker, but the male is much more blue in appearance. It may be seen earlier on the wing than Migrant Hawker and the sides of the thorax in both the male and female are distinctive in their overall pale coloration lacking the 2 'racing stripes' seen on the Migrant Hawker.

This is still very much a long shot for Shropshire, but high on the recent success of Norfolk Hawker and Willow Emerald Damselfly anything is possible!




Photo: A. Warr


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.

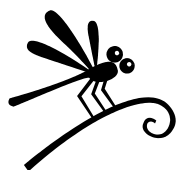
 **Timescales:** Where possible please get your records sent in asap after the end of the flight season and certainly by Christmas. This allows me to finish verifying them, analyse them and hopefully get a newsletter out before anything takes to the wing in April!

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.

The Last Word..

Thank you for all your records last year enabling me to keep an eye on our Shropshire dragonflies. If you'd like to contribute an article in next years newsletter or advertise any dragonfly related Shropshire event on the website then as ever please do get in touch. I'll be updating all the species pages on the website shortly and **I really need some help with upgrading the website maps this year so please do get in touch if you happen to be a whizz with creating great distribution maps!**

I look forward to receiving your records and seeing all of your stunning photographs this year and hopefully getting some confirmed sightings of Hairy Dragonfly early in the year? Have a great flight season!



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