

Yorkshire Dragonfly Group  
SKIMMER 2019





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### Front cover photo:

***Southern Migrant Hawker (Aeshna Affinis), Spurn***  
***Courtesy of Daniel Branch***

Many thanks for all the wonderful articles and amazing pictures.

This magazine is produced for the members, including articles by the members. Please consider writing just one article during the year for inclusion in the next edition. If the subject interests you, it will be of interest to other members of the group.

With particular thanks to Richard Shillaker for his help with contributions.

*June Gittens*

Editor



## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

### Keith Gittens

Who could have believed as we moved in to May 2018 that the long winter would suddenly turn in to such a glorious summer. While it was great for us to feel the sun on our backs, it was more important for the insects we enjoy to watch. The prolonged periods of warm sunshine giving our dragonflies greater opportunity to be active to mate and lay eggs. I cannot remember seeing so many pairs of Large Reds egg laying as I did last May, and later on, such good numbers of Brown Hawker. This should result in a boost in populations over coming years.

Our involvement with conservation management is expanding. As well as Worlds End, the joint team of Yorkshire Dragonfly Group (YDG), Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) and Butterfly Conservation (BC) volunteers are now involved with management of Larch encroachment at decommissioned Boltby Reservoir. near Thirsk. The Reservoir has a developing dragonfly fauna and the banks support a number of butterfly species. The site is owned by Yorkshire Water (YW) and it is hoped our involvement will result in YW producing a management plan, which will secure the best outcome for all wildlife on the site.

The involvement of YDG members in the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) Wolds Dew Pond project is another positive step for the group, you can read more about it in this copy of Skimmer.

It is excellent news to hear that Rodley Nature Reserve, Leeds will become an official BDS 'Dragonfly Hotspot'. The official launch will be at the 4th Leeds Bird Fair in July, YDG will be there and I hope you can join us.

Finally, I would like to remind members to keep recording in this the final year before the 2020 National Atlas update. The county dragonfly recorders look forward to verifying your records!

Let us hope summer 2019 allows us plenty of dragonfly watching.



## RECORDER'S REPORTS 2018

### VC 61 SOUTH-EAST YORKSHIRE

Martin Roberts

The season started late, with Large Red Damselfly not being reported until 5th May, but in the following week five other species of damselfly and two species of dragonfly (Four-spotted Chaser and Broad-bodied Chaser) were reported from North Cave Wetlands, all by the same keen-eyed Recorder.

Following an anecdotal report of Hairy Dragonfly on the upper stretches of the Pocklington Canal in 2017, I was able to confirm its presence at this new location in late May this year. This is not a particularly common species in the vice-county so its presence here is very welcome.

The highlight of the year for a few lucky observers was the appearance of at least three male Southern Migrant Hawkers at Spurn and Flamborough Bird Observatories in late July. Given the location, these individuals could have arrived across the North Sea, or could have been part of the UK dispersion seen this year. In October, a single Vagrant Emperor was reported from Spurn

Our hopes of finding home-bred Red-veined Darter this year following the many sightings near Goole, right on our border with VC63, at the end of last season came to nought unfortunately, though several individuals were seen at Spurn as usual.

A project to monitor Odonata for the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at newly restored dew ponds in the Wolds was not as productive as hoped, as many of the ponds virtually disappeared during the hot, dry summer. However, small numbers of the expected common species were seen. We are looking forward to repeating the survey on several additional restored ponds next year.

Over the course of the season, over 1100 records of Odonata were received via iRecord, the greatest number for VC61 since BDS adopted iRecord as its main recording tool. Many thanks to all those who sent in records of sightings.



## VC 62 & 65 NORTH EAST AND NORTH WEST YORKSHIRE

Keith Gittens

The long winter resulted in a late start to the season, the first record on the 3rd May for Large Red Damselfly was over three weeks later than 2017. Good weather developed from then on, resulting in an excellent summer for Dragonflies. A visit to the fish ponds near Ampleforth on the 22nd July recorded well over 20 Brown Hawker, ovipositing females were everywhere. If this is representative of the summer, the next two to three years should see good emergences in many species.

Records for *Erythromma* species remain restricted to one site near Scarborough and three near York. Please keep a look out for Red-eyes at any site you visit, it would be good to add some new areas to the list.

A Bioblitz at Nosterfield NR near Ripon in July was successful, producing over 50 dragonfly records for this excellent site.

The northern part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park remains under recorded. Anyone visiting the area please try and find some dragonflies to record!

Many thanks to all who sent in records.

### **BDS COUNTRY DRAGONFLY RECORDERS**

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## VC63 SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Alistair Mclean

The dry weather in the summer has inevitably had an effect on water levels, with some ponds completely drying up. Time will tell whether nymphs were able to survive the drought in these areas. On the plus side, the fine weather resulted in plenty of days with high Odonata activity.

Perhaps the star of the show 'on my patch' this year has been the Small Red-eyed Damselfly, *Erythromma viridulum*. Although this species has previously been recorded in the Sheffield area, its presence has been sporadic; here one year, gone the next. For the last few years, it appears to have become more established, particularly at Harthill Reservoir and Treeton Dyke. Interestingly, it appears to be following the colonisation pattern of its close relative, the Red-eyed Damselfly, *Erythromma najas*, which became established in the same areas around 8 years ago. The only site in Sheffield where *E. najas* has been recorded and *E. viridulum* has not, is the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal. I suspect that this river system will be one to keep an eye on over the next few years.

There is growing evidence for a small population of Golden-ringed Dragonfly, *Cordulegaster boltonii*, in the area around Agden, with several sightings over the last few years. This area is some distance north of the Derbyshire riverlets which are the main haunts of this species. Prior to these recent occurrences, the species was last recorded in this area in 1999.

In the next season, I would be keen to receive records from the area south and west of Huddersfield, as I don't have much recent data for this locality, but as ever, I am grateful to receive data from anywhere in the vice county.

Thank you to everyone who reported your sightings this year.



## VC64 MID WEST YORKSHIRE

Simon Joseph

In 2018 352 records were submitted by 47 people, for 19 species. This is similar to previous years – (570 in 2017, 212 in 2016 and 174 in 2015). Records were provided by 47 people. The flying season began on 19<sup>th</sup> May (Large Red damselflies) and closed on 22<sup>nd</sup> October (Common Darter).

There were some concerns with ponds drying out at Timble lngs and Grindleton Fell, although the number of species recorded at these sites did not change. There were no records of Small Red-eyed Damselflies this year. Last year's records were all by one person who was measuring their range. Last year's Beautiful Demoiselle sighting was not repeated.

Askham bog was in the news following a planning application for 500 houses next to the bog, which could threaten water levels. We supplied a species list to naturalists challenging the application.

The advantage of the dry weather was that it made some sites easier to explore, and I found a small pond in a normally inaccessible area of Grindleton Fell which was very popular with Common Hawkers.

Golden-ringed Dragonflies are still doing very well at Cross of Greet, and still present at Timble.

The high point of the year was having a stall next to the pond at the Denso Marston Nature Reserve celebration day (Bradford in June) – a group of fascinated children got to witness the maiden flight of a Southern Hawker!

Birdwatchers at St Aidan's RSPB worked hard again this year to provide comprehensive dragonfly records. Submitting 158 of the 352 records. Unlike last year no Red-veined Darters were seen. Working with such groups seems to be very productive so this year I made contacts with Gisburn Forest Hub and Wharfedale Naturalists, and plan to contact birdwatching groups in 2019.

## SKIPWITH NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE FIELD TRIP REPORT

Anne Carter

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2018

This was a joint venture with Freshwater Habitats Trust to visit and look for dragonflies on this National Nature Reserve, one of FHT's Yorkshire Flagship Ponds sites. We had a fantastic turnout with 29 attendees.

The conditions were good for dragonfly hunting with lots of sunshine and just a light breeze, though due to the continuing summer heat wave many of the ponds had dried up. Despite the drought conditions many key species were still present including Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*, one of the most abundant damselfly species seen around the dried up ponds. This species lay their eggs in vegetation around the pond margins, often above the water line, so the absence of water isn't a problem as the ponds will hopefully fill up by the following spring.

Three darters species, Black Darter *Sympetrum danae*, Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* and Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* were seen, with the latter being the most abundant. Several mating pairs were noted ovipositing onto the damp soil in the dried out ponds. Again, like Emerald Damselflies, the eggs of the Ruddy Darter, suspend development during unfavourable conditions, hatching in the following spring.

Over the heathland four hawkers were also seen including Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*, Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*, Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* and Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*.





## DRAGONFLIES OF PRESPA



In late June 2018 we flew to Thessaloniki, Greece, to start a twelve-day tour with a small tour company, Balkan Tracks. This was something of a pioneer tour as the company had not attempted a tour for dragonflies before and had little expertise on the taxa. The tour was made up of myself, my wife June and our guide Chris Mounsey. Between us we had researched potential sites to visit and what we were likely to find, but in reality information was limited.

Our target area was Lake Prespa and Lake Ohrid which meant us travelling up to the NW corner of Greece. Lake Prespa is actually trisected by the borders of Greece, Albania and Northern Macedonia (the latter previously known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Macedonia) and we would travel through all three countries. The area is mountainous with Lake Prespa lying at 950m above sea level and rich in wildlife. The lakes hold important populations of pelicans and National Parks such as Galicia and Pelister are renowned for their flora and butterflies.

Lake Prespa actually comprises two lakes, Little and Great Prespa. Little Prespa has well vegetated margins and holds a variety of dragonfly species some familiar to fenland habitat here such as Norfolk Hawker (*Aeshna isosceles*) and Scarce Chaser (*Libellula fulva*) but surprisingly also Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*). Mixed with these you can find Scarlet Darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Southern Darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*) and Lesser Emperor (*Anax parthenope*). Notable damselflies on our visit were Variable (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) and Small Red-eyed (*Erythromma viridulum*).

Great Prespa is quite different, the margins having beaches of either sand or stones with little vegetation. As a result, the dragonfly fauna is more limited but with strong populations in sheltered bays of Green-eyed Hooktail (*Onychogomphus forcipatus*) and Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*).



Where submergent vegetation reached the surface Goblet-marked Damselfly (*Erythromma lindenii*) could be found. We discovered a small jetty which proved a popular place for emerging Goblet-marked Damselflies and Green-eyed Hooktail.

Close to where we stayed in Greek Prespa we searched the mountain streams and discovered Two-toothed Golden-Ringed Dragonfly (*Cordulegaster bidentata*) and Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*).

As we headed for the Albanian border, we explored the Ladopotamos River valley finding an area of flood plain with small pools and here we added species such as Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*) and Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*).

In Albania we discovered a small stretch of stream which was particularly busy with a mix of both Beautiful and Banded Demoiselle, the latter being the sub-species Balcanica (*Calopteryx splendens ssp. Balcanica*). Added to this Dainty Damselfly (*Coenagrion scitulum*) and Southern Skimmer (*Orthetrum brunneum*) were notable.

There was once a third lake for the region which was solely in Albania, Lake Maliq, but this was drained under communism and developed as farmland. One area remains wet for much of the year and so has limited farming value.



Southern Skimmer - Male



Red-veined Darter - Female

Here we found many Red-veined Darters (*Sympetrum fonscolombii*) and our only White-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum albistylum*) of the tour.

Moving to Northern Macedonia we explored the cattle ponds in Galicica National Park the highlight at one particular pond being many freshly emerged Southern Emerald Damselflies (*Lestes barbarus*).

On moving towards the western shore of Lake Prespa at Stenje Marsh we found another Emerald in good numbers, this time Small Emerald (*Lestes virens*).



Bladetail - Male

On completing our tour circuit, we travelled back in to Greece with one final stop on the way to the airport. This was Lake Vegoritida, a known site for the enigmatic Bladetail (*Lindenia tetraphylla*) and we were not disappointed. This made a great finale.

In total we recorded 31 species of Odonata on our tour of this beautiful part of the Balkans. Anyone wishing to know more about the area and its wildlife should visit [www.balkantracks.com](http://www.balkantracks.com).

*Keith Gittens*

### Yorkshire Dragonfly Group On-line

Check out the website for the latest news, first sightings of the year, field trip diary, dragonfly locations to visit and how to submit your records. To download the latest edition of Skimmer please contact Martin Roberts for password. Previous issues are also available.



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## WHY I WENT TO ESSEX FOR THE DAY



*Male Southern Migrant Hawker in flight*

Why indeed? - Essex is nowhere near as nice as Yorkshire, but Southern Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna affinis*) does not occur in Yorkshire. In fact in the UK it is largely confined to a few sites around the Thames Estuary, mostly in south Essex. In 2017, Facebook groups began to report numerous sightings of Southern Migrant Hawker near Benfleet, but as so often happens, posters were rather vague about the exact location. However, after some

research and the help of the Ordnance Survey website it was fairly easy to identify the main site. I was unable to visit in 2017 but as soon as it became clear in early July 2018 that even larger numbers of Southern Migrant Hawker were present at the site, I decided to visit.

York to Essex and back is too far to drive in a day so the easiest option was to go by train. By leaving York on a day-return ticket at 07.00 I was at Kings Cross soon after 09.00. The Tube got me to Fenchurch Street station in time for a 9.50 train which got me to Benfleet soon after 10.30. Less than 30 minutes later I was watching my first Southern Migrant Hawker.

The entrance to the site (TQ779852) is easy to find directly opposite the entrance to the local recycling centre, and just over 800m walk from Benfleet station. The route is alongside a busy road but is a wide paved footpath all the way. Access to the site is though a



*Male Southern Migrant Hawker landed*

gate and the ditch runs westwards parallel to the public footpath along the sea wall. Because of the hot summer, the first 100m of ditch were almost totally dry and I walked 200m before I found reasonable patches of water. Two photographers already there told me that the ditch got wetter the further west you walked, but given that it was so hot with a totally cloudless sky and no shade at all along the ditch, I decided not to venture much further.

By then I had seen at least 20 male Southern Migrant Hawker, one female and one pair in cop. I was able to get some pleasing in-flight photos of males but they were so busy defending territories that they simply would not land for more than a few seconds at a time. When a male did eventually settle it was not in a good location to photograph, nor was the female.

After two hours I could stand the heat no longer but on the way back to the road I saw numerous Scarce Emerald damselflies (*Lestes dryas*) and collected one Southern Migrant Hawker exuvia.



*Male Scarce Emerald Damselfly*

In the weeks following my trip, Southern Migrant Hawker was reported from numerous sites across southern England, with a few individuals even seen in Yorkshire at Spurn and Flamborough. Some of these may have been fresh immigrants but some may have been dispersing from the established UK sites and hopefully some of them managed to breed successfully. The guidebooks say that the duration of the larval stage

in the UK is 'unknown but probably one or two years', raising the exciting possibility that we may not need to travel as far as Essex to see Southern Migrant Hawker in the near future. We should certainly start to consider the possibility of Southern Migrant Hawker when out and about. It helps to know that Southern Migrant Hawker is the only UK Hawker species which oviposits in tandem.

*Martin Roberts*

## YORKSHIRE DEW PONDS PROJECT

Dew ponds on the Yorkshire Wolds were dug during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century for watering stock in an otherwise dry landscape. The need for these ponds is thought to have been particularly a consequence of field enclosures, which prevented livestock from being regularly herded down from high pastures to drink at village ponds and springs.

A great deal of information on the construction of Yorkshire dew ponds can be found in an article by Hayfield & Brough (1986). They mention circular ponds of 36 to 90 feet diameter and depths in the centre of 5 to 8 feet. Initially puddled clay was used to form an impermeable layer. A later technique involved lime plaster instead of clay. The base of the ponds consisted of several layers but the nature and sequence of the layers varied. For instance, the clay lining could be covered with straw (to help keep the clay damp and crack-free if the pond dried out in summer) and then chalk rubble laid down to prevent



*Mature Dew Pond near Fridaythorpe*

the feet of livestock perforating the underlying clay. A layer of lime, above or below the clay, was included to deter worms and other small animals from burrowing through the clay.

I am not sure why they are called dew ponds because they are filled by rainfall and storm water runoff. The ponds were often built at the intersection of

fields so that one pond could serve more than one field. Fencing could be erected across a pond by fixing posts into stone blocks rather than driving posts through the base of the pond.

The change in agriculture on the Wolds, from pasture to extensive arable, combined with the increasing ease of installing piped water supplies, resulted in these ponds becoming redundant and left to become overgrown with vegetation.



The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has been awarded a grant for two years by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore and survey dew ponds on the Wolds, and to document aspects of their cultural heritage. Eleven ponds were restored during the winter of 2017-8 and work on a further eight took place last winter.

As a contribution to the YWT project, Martin Roberts, Chris Abbott and myself, surveyed dragonflies on five ponds in the Thixendale/Sledmere area last summer. We recorded a total of nine species (six with evidence of breeding) even though several of our ponds were at times completely dry. We plan to repeat our survey this coming summer and then report our results in next year's Skimmer. It is hoped that the project's wildlife findings will encourage farmers to maintain an interest in their dew ponds.



*New Dew Pond near Thixendale*

Yorkshire dew ponds would appear to have received limited attention from local naturalists. So far we have only been able to locate two botanical reports (Chicken 1996, Trotman 2010).

If you fancy helping to restore/survey the ponds, or have memories or stories of dew ponds you would like to share, please contact the YWT Dew Pond Project Officer, Emily McGregor, on 01904 659570.

### References

- Chicken, E. (1996) Dewponds in VC61 – vegetation, succession and mapping. *BSBI News* 72, 37-41.
- Hayfield, C. & Brough, M. (1986) Dewponds and Pondmakers of the Yorkshire Wolds. *Folk Life* 25; 74-91.
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*Richard Shillaker*

## WORLD'S END CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT



World's End, to the West of Strensall Common in York, is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and is considered to be one of the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in the City of York. Managed by the Forestry Commission, the 42 hectare site consists of a mosaic of fen meadow, acidic and neutral wet grassland, heathland and pond and ditch habitats. In

1985, the area which now includes the ponds, was planted with Corsican Pine. The pines were felled between 2003 and 2005, and as part of the heathland restoration project, the ponds were dug to increase the diversity of habitats available on the site and to link with the nearby ponds on Strensall Common. The site is particularly well known for dragonflies. As well as the five common species of damselfly, both species of Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma najas* and *Erythromma viridulum*) breed on the ponds making the site one of the most northerly in the U.K. for these species. Many of the commoner species of dragonfly also occur including Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*), Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*) Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) and the spectacular Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*).

In recent years however, the area had become increasingly overgrown with birch scrub and the rich habitat, home to a wide range of fauna and flora, was in serious danger of disappearing.







Concerns over this encroachment led to a series of nature driven groups to join forces to tackle the problem. Removing scrub to prevent shading would ensure they maintained their diversity of marginal and aquatic flora, thus allowing the greatest number of dragonfly species to breed at the site.

Headed up by Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT), the Yorkshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation and the Yorkshire Dragonfly Group (YDG) a programme of work days were organised throughout January, February and March 2017 to tackle the problem. This was subsequently followed up with further tasks over the winters of 2018 and 2019. In total, fifteen work party days saw 200 volunteers, consisting of 60 individuals, turn out to help remove birch scrub on the site. Volunteers from FHT, YDG and Butterfly Conservation were also joined by members of Yorkshire Mammal Group, Yorkshire Amphibian and Reptile Group, Friends of Rawcliffe Meadows, Friends of Skipwith Common and The River Foss Society, a great bit of teamwork! To top it all off the Forestry Commission and the tenant farmer also carried out some management works. Their access to chainsaws and tractor driven equipment has meant that scrub control across the site is well advanced.

Thanks to the efforts of all those involved but particularly the wonderful volunteers, the ponds are now in great shape for dragonflies and indeed for dragonfly watching. Yorkshire Dragonfly Group in conjunction with Freshwater Habitats Trust now run an annual Dragonfly Walk across the Common, culminating in a visit to World's End. The next one is on Saturday 13th July 2019.



*Anne Carter*

## WHERE TO OBSERVE ODONATA AT SPURN

### INTRODUCTION

Situated at the most southern point of Yorkshire's east coast, Spurn is a unique location both in terms of geography and biodiversity. The work of the Spurn Bird Observatory (SBO) has ensured that Spurn is one of the most biologically thoroughly recorded locations in Britain. The main role of the SBO is to record migrant birds. Spurn currently holds the largest avian species list for any single site on mainland Britain, at an impressive 398 different species. The Spurn recording area, where the SBO operates, extends from the Point of the peninsula north to the Easington Gas Terminal (Although the areas north of the village of Kilnsea were only added to the recording area in the late 1990's). Recording has also expanded to include a range of other fauna, including Odonata.

Most of the Spurn area mentioned below has no issues with access; the main exceptions being the Church Field and Bird Observatory Garden, which are reserved for members of the Observatory only. However, for a small donation, day visitors are welcome to enter and explore.

As of December 2018, a total of 28 different Odonata species have been recorded in the Spurn area, making it one of the locations in Britain with the longest Odonata species list. However, only 14 of these can be considered resident or regular breeders in the area, either extant or extinct. As a result, it can be implied that half of the species recorded are of migrant or dispersive origin. Although insect migration is poorly understood, the pattern of records is strongly indicative of migratory behaviour in the Odonata seen. The SBO has been recording Odonata since 1996. Prior to this recording was largely limited to casual observations, although YNU Entomological Surveys undertaken at Spurn between 1947 and '53 provide solid data which show us a number of changes in species composition over time.

### SPURN GEOGRAPHY

#### Peninsula

With no permanent water bodies at any point along its three mile length, the peninsula would hardly seem to be the ideal place to look for dragonflies. Most of the habitat consists of rank grassland or thickets of Sea Buckthorn. However, its position, protruding into the Humber, serves as an excellent catchment area for migrant dragonflies. In autumn it can serve host to hundreds of **Migrant Hawk**ers and **Common Darters**. Rarer species have also been recorded here, including the second **Vagrant Darter** for Yorkshire and the only record for Spurn. Along the peninsula are two Heligoland Traps: one at the Point and another mid-way along the peninsula. These are primarily used for the monitoring and capture of migratory birds but can also be extremely productive at catching dragonfly species as a by-product. The Point refers specifically to the end of the peninsula.



### Clubley's Scrape & Warren Cottage

Just north of the breach, a tidal zone between the mainland and the Peninsula created by the 2013 tidal surge, lies the Warren, a small cottage and the former home of the SBO. Much of the ornithological migration work undertaken by the SBO occurs at the Warren, so observer coverage is very high. There is also a Heligoland trap here, which has yielded a number of rare migrant species such as **Norfolk Hawker** and **Keeled Skimmer**, both single records.



*Keeled Skimmer – courtesy Tim Jones*

Three scrapes make up the Clubley's area, situated just north of the Warren, each vegetated by low reeds and with open shorelines – providing ideal habitat for ground-perching species, especially **Black-tailed Skimmer**. Its proximity, less than 50 metres, to the coastline makes it an ideal catchment area for migrant dragonflies. The scrapes are particularly productive for **Red-veined Darter** which can be frequently seen on the scrapes during spring and autumn. Other migrant species have also been seen here, such as **Lesser Emperor**, as the scrapes provide the first habitat for any dragonflies which may have recently crossed the North Sea. As the scrapes have matured, more species use the area as breeding habitat, with **Common Emerald Damselfly** being the standout colonist of this habitat.

### The Triangle

Most dragonfly records from Spurn come from the Triangle area, the fields and waterways south of Kilnsea village but north of the Peninsula. At the most southern point of the Triangle lies a small overgrown pond, known as Pallas's Pond. Species such as **Large Red Damselfly** have been recorded here in the past. The western edge of the Triangle is known as the Canal Zone, a large well vegetated ditch which provides excellent habitat for a myriad of species, both common and rare. **Emperor Dragonfly** is particularly abundant here, whilst some of the rarer migrant species which have been seen here include **Downy Emerald**, **Yellow-winged Darter** and **Southern Migrant Hawker**. Immediately adjacent to the Canal Zone, at the southern end, is Canal Scrape, a large freshwater pond with reed beds and open shoreline. Canal Scrape, which is the stronghold for **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** in the Spurn area, is best observed from the bird hide.

### Church Field & Kilnsea

Developed during the early 2000s, Church Field is an area of land with a number of small ponds, with edges composed of a wide variety of different vegetation. Because a large amount of the Observatory's observational work takes place here, the recording of Odonata in the immediate area is more comprehensive than in other areas of Spurn. Species such as **Ruddy Darter** and **Azure Damselfly** are most frequently seen around these ponds. A large Heligoland trap was constructed in the western corner of the field, for the purpose of catching migratory birds for ringing. However, during southerly winds it can also be extremely productive at catching dragonflies and a number of Spurn's rarer species have been found this way; **Southern Hawker**, **Brown Hawker** and **Black Darter**. Access to Church Field is restricted to members of the SBO, but day visitors can enter for a small donation.



*Southern Migrant Hawker*

Kilnsea is the first village encountered when coming north from the Peninsula. It comprises little more than a few houses and a single pub (The Crown & Anchor) located immediately north of the Triangle and west of Church Field. The new SBO building is situated within the village and the garden, although only a recent acquisition by SBO, has shown great potential for Odonata with many common species recorded.

### Beacon Lane, Beacon Ponds & Kilnsea Wetlands

Beacon Lane is a well vegetated pathway bordering the eastern cliff top north of the triangle. Bordered by thick hedgerows mainly composed of Common Hawthorn, it provides a sheltered avenue for hunting dragonflies. Its proximity to the coast means it provides the first landfall for migrant dragonflies, and during the autumn it can be an excellent place to observe **Migrant Hawker**. There is a small, overgrown pond mid-way along Beacon Lane, and species such as **Ruddy Darter** have been seen frequenting this water body, but it is currently unknown if these species have bred at this location. Beacon Ponds and Kilnsea Wetlands are both brackish water bodies, so do not support populations of Odonata. South of Beacon Ponds, adjacent to the North Sea, lie disused shooting ponds. These ponds nestle into an area of expansive reed bed and have, in the past, supported populations of species such as **Ruddy Darter**. Since the storm surge in 2013, these ponds have not been noted to support any species. Migrant species have been recorded along the edges of Kilnsea Wetlands and Beacon Ponds, such as **Red-veined Darter**, but not in any abundance.

### Sammy's Point & Long Bank Ditch

Sammy's Point is the most western point of the Spurn recording area. Most of the habitat is restricted to grassy and shrubby paddocks, with cereal fields covering large areas. There are very few water bodies in this area, the most extensive being the network of drainage ditches that flow between the fields, the largest of which is known as Long Bank Ditch. The ditches are slow moving and well vegetated but the number of species recorded here is low. During spring and early summer the ditches can be home to huge numbers of **Blue-tailed Damselfly** and **Common Blue Damselfly**, with **Common Darter**, **Four-spotted Chaser** and other commoner dragonflies occasionally seen roosting in the grass. The first **Hairy Dragonfly** for Spurn was seen in the paddocks at Sammy's Point. The flooded fields to the east of Sammy's Point are known as Long Bank Marsh, but access here is restricted and records here are rare. Historically **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** was found here, but associated with its national range contraction, the species is no longer found at Spurn.

### Easington

Until recently, Easington has been the most poorly recorded section of the Spurn Bird Observatory recording area. The lack of any large water bodies, combined with a historical lack of observers, has meant a very poor return on sightings from this area. Garden ponds in Easington have provided habitat for a number of common species, and habitat management by wildlife-friendly homeowners continues to improve the environment for Odonata species. **Broad-bodied Chaser** is one species more frequently seen in Easington than other areas of Spurn. These gardens have also produced rarer sightings; **Vagrant Emperor** and **Banded Demoiselle** are two examples of rarer species that have been seen in Easington. As the number of observers in the area increase, the number of records from this area will undoubtedly increase.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information about visiting Spurn, including a map of the SBO area and recent wildlife sightings can be found on the SBO website; [www.spurnbirdobservatory.co.uk](http://www.spurnbirdobservatory.co.uk). The SBO also produces an annual review of all the sightings recorded each year, and these can be found at the Observatory in Kilnsea. The review provides more detail about sightings from the previous year. Historical records of Odonata from Spurn (1947-1953) can be found in 1951 and 1954 editions of *The Naturalist*. Also to be submitted to the *Naturalist* in the near future is a summary of all Odonata records, recent and historical, from the SBO area. More information on breeding and migration will be highlighted in this document.

*Daniel Branch*



## THE DRAGONFLIES OF LINCOLNSHIRE

### 1. Lincolnshire wetland habitats

The traditional county of Lincolnshire including North and North-east Lincolnshire (VC53 and 54) is one of the largest recording area in the country. It covers almost 8000 square km (3088 square miles). It measures approximately 120 kilometres (75 miles) north to south and 77 kilometres (48 miles) east to west.

The wetland habitats found in the county are typical of many lowland counties. They comprise many modified rivers and streams; drains and canals; coastal ponds and lagoons; an expanding number of sand, gravel and clay pits; garden ponds and ornamental lakes; reservoirs; some peat fen in the south and a larger amount of peat bog in the north-west.

Most ponds lost from the landscape and the ones that remain are often shaded and silted up. Water levels in low-lying areas are up to two metres below where they were in 1900 thanks to pumped drainage. The water quality of most waterbodies is moderate. The greatest dragonfly diversity is found on sites with better water quality where aquatic and emergent vegetation is allowed to develop without overly-frequent management. Most of the best sites for dragonflies are nature reserves or disused canals.

### 2. The history of dragonfly recording in Lincolnshire

The earliest record is that of Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*, from before 1835 ('found in Lincolnshire in June' (Stephens, 1835)). It is still found widely in the county and has probably benefitted from the creation of larger waterbodies. Around the same time (before 1837), White-faced Darter *Leucorrhinia dubia* was found by a Mr Harrison near Glandford Brigg (modern-day Brigg). This species would have been lost to land drainage and peat harvesting by the end of the 19th century, as it was in Yorkshire (Limbert, 1997)

Lincolnshire's first species list dates from 1903 and comprises fourteen species. As was typical of the times, it was developed from casual records by various recorders (Shaw, 1903). The list contains Scarce Emerald Damselfly *Lestes dryas*, but curiously omits conspicuous species such as the Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*. Mr Bee added three species to the second list fourteen years later (Bee, 1917). Oddly Scarce Emerald did not appear on Bee's list, but widespread species such as Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum* were included. A lack of access to distant sites, e.g., Crowle Moor, probably prevented plentiful species such as Black Darter *Sympetrum danae* from appearing in these two early lists. In 1997, the county dragonfly recorder, Dave Bromwich, recorded 23 species on the county list reflecting more widespread recording effort and the spread of species northwards (Bromwich, 1998).



### 3. Recent Lincolnshire colonists

Between 1997 and 2018 another six species were recorded in Lincolnshire.

White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes* has a toehold in the county on the River Welland to the west of Stamford. It is not clear how long this population has existed, but this species is known to have expanded its range recently (Cham, 2014). There are signs that this species may be moving north as it was recorded 10km north on the River Glen at Thurlby Fen Slupe in 2018.

Scarce Chaser *Libellula fulva* has reappeared in Lincolnshire and is spreading from the south. This species was noted near Lincoln in 1917. It was probably a victim of modern drainage. It prefers slow, muddy rivers with plenty of vegetation. The New South Eau on the Lincolnshire/Cambridgeshire border where it was re-found in the county in 2016 matches this description. This species has also increased its range in recent years so its re-appearance was expected. The furthest north this species has been recorded is Spalding in 2017.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* appeared in the county in 2006 and now occurs throughout. Like Red-eyed Damselfly, it is best seen over open water. Populations appear to fluctuate between years, but whether this reflects variation in breeding success or migration between ponds is not clear.

Willow Emerald  
*Chalcolestes viridis*  
was known to be an occasional vagrant to Britain before breeding was first proven in 2009. The species was recorded in Lincolnshire in September 2016 at Baston Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a few days later at Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve (NNR).

The species has been seen at both sites in



Willow Emerald- photo Trish Thompson

2017 and 2018. In 2018 it spread another 4km north to Kirby Gravel Pits Nature Reserve on the River Bain, where multiple individuals were seen.

Currently this is the most northerly site for this species. It is usually seen perched on small, outer tree branches where they are reasonably free of leaves and they hang near or over water. Searches for it have been made further north, for example, near Lincoln, without success. It seems likely that colonising populations can be too small to detect for some while.

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* was first seen in Lincolnshire in 1998 at Gibraltar Point NNR. Further records from the early 2000s followed and the species has been seen most years since 2009. Breeding in the shallower, warmer coastal lagoons at Gibraltar Point NNR and RSPB Frampton Marsh is strongly suspected.

Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope* was first recorded in Lincolnshire in 2006 and has since been recorded from seven 10km squares. Ovipositing was seen in 2006 and larvae were recorded in the south of Lincolnshire in 2017.

#### 4. Good dragonfly watching sites in North and North-east Lincolnshire

##### Messingham Sand Quarry SSSI (SE9103)

Messingham Sand Quarry is a 40 hectare, ex-sand and gravel quarry with lakes and reed-fringed channels. It is North Lincolnshire's premier dragonfly-watching site and the 10km square in which it lies has the longest species list (24) of any in the county. Four of the species are occasionally recorded namely Norfolk Hawker *Aeshna isoceles* (recorded in 1997), Red-veined Darter (2005), Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea* (last seen in 2009) and Black Darter (last seen in 2014). Most of the other species are seen more or less annually and numbers of certain species, such as Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*, can be impressive.

##### Far Ings NR TA0123 and Water's Edge, Barton on Humber TA0223 (part of the Humber Estuary SSSI)

A series of large lakes and reed beds beside the Humber Estuary were left behind by clay extraction. The reed bed complex is well known for its breeding birds. It is probably under-recorded for its dragonflies but 16 species are seen regularly.







Norfolk Hawker- photo Dave Mainwaring

Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR TF4691 (part of the Humber Estuary SSSI)

A 950 hectare coastal site including ponds within the dune system. The site is best visited from the carpark at Rimac as the ponds are most easily accessed to the south of here. The ponds were largely created in the 1970s. Several species were lost in the 1976 drought. Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma*

*nymphula* was not regularly recorded on the NNR until the 1990s, although it was present in drains inland of the reserve.

The NNR has 17 regularly recorded species plus four occasionally recorded species namely Yellow-winged Darter *Sympetrum flaveolum*, Black Darter, Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* and Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*. Brown hawker is widespread inland but irregularly recorded on the coastal reserves.

## 5. The Lincolnshire list

In 1903, Shaw listed fourteen species namely, Brown Hawker, Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*, Common Hawker, Hairy Dragonfly, Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*, White-faced Darter (not resident at this date), Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*, Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*, Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*, Red-eyed Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*, Scarce Emerald Damselfly, Large red Damselfly and Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*.

Bee (1917) added Scarce Chaser, Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*, Common Blue Damselfly and Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum*, but did not list Scarce Emerald Damselfly.

By 1997 Dave Bromwich had added Emperor, Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*, Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*, Yellow-winged Darter, Black Darter and Black-tailed Skimmer.

In 2018, Scarce Chaser had re-colonised the county and Lesser Emperor, Red-veined Darter, Yellow-winged Darter, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Willow Emerald Damselfly and White-legged Damselfly had been seen for the first time.

Downy Emerald *Cordulia aenea* was recorded on Thorne Moors in the 1820s (Limbert, 1997) and it is highly likely that it was found on the north-west Lincolnshire moors at this time. There are two records for this species from near Lincoln in 1949 but they are not included in this table,



### References

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- Shaw, A.E., Entomologist's Weekly Intelligencer Orthoptera and neuroptera in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire 1903 Volume 15 p91-95.
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*Nick Tribe*



## DRAGONFLIES ON LESBOS

The revised Dragonflies of Lesbos was published as an e-book in 2016 [Dragonflies of Lesbos ebook edition, Friends of Green Lesbos, 18th June 2016; for a copy email johnbowers1081@gmail.com]. At the time of publication there were 41 species on the Lesbos list. Since then there have been three changes:

the subspecies of one species has been identified – some observers treat the sub-species as a separate species;

a species listed in the book as expected but not yet arrived has been found on the Island;

a vagrant species has been recorded for the first time.

We examine these in turn.

### *Ceriagrion tenellum georgifreyi*

In the late 1990s there was a substantial population of *tenellum* on Mikri Limni which was wiped out when the lake dried up, probably as a result of water abstraction for the town of Polychnitos in the early 2000s. In 2015 Ursula and Pieter Pyrkosch found a small population and photographed a male on an entirely different site, a spring-fed pool in the upper Krioneri River. In 2016 Wulf Kappes caught a male at this new site and identified it as *georgifreyi*. There is now quite a long list of southern sub-species of familiar northern dragonflies and Dijkstra Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Europe has listed a series of criteria for accepting them as full species. I have accepted his criteria and have applied them in my ebook. Unfortunately, Dijkstra doesn't consistently apply them in his book. One of his criteria is that the candidate species should be visibly distinguishable without catching. On that basis *georgifreyi* doesn't qualify as a separate species, Dijkstra himself says that *georgifreyi* is superficially identical to the nominate race, differing only in very minor differences in the genitalia. However, he gives the 'benefit of the doubt' to *georgifreyi* and treats it as a species. I do not. Incidentally I have no idea to which race the extinct Mikri Limni population belonged since I never managed to catch one.

### *Diplacodes lefebvrei* discovered

I included this species in my book even though it had not been recorded because there was evidence that it was moving north at a fair rate and, voila! Wulf Kappes recorded it, at the same spring-fed pool on the Upper Krioneri in 2017.



Male *Diplacodes lefebvrei*



Male *Seliothemis nigra*

I had a second reason for including this insect. the danger of confusion with *Selysiothemis nigra* which is occasionally found on Lesbos, although to my knowledge there is no regular site for it. The mature male *nigra* is black, allegedly sometimes, it is said, with a bluish prunosity although I have never seen that, with weak venation, a shortish semi-transparent pterostigma with heavy black edging top and bottom giving the appearance of an = sign, and with slight clubbing of the abdomen (not as much as the Black darter, *sympetrum danae*) dark anal appendages and disproportionately large eyes separated by a pale but not white nose. The mature male *lefebvrrii* is also black but without a clubbed abdomen. The eyes are large, although they don't extend so far down

the side of the head as *nigra*. Venation is not as weak as *nigra*. The pterostigma is longer than *nigra* and pale brown, edged with black in the same way as *nigra* so that what one has is an = sign filled in with brown. The nose is black, but the anal appendages are pale.

The identification problems arise because the pale face of *nigra* and the pale anal appendages of *lefebvrrii* darken with age, the brown pterostigma of *lefebvrrii* can look very pale in bright light and the difference in the density of wing venation is not easy to see or to judge unless you have both species resting vertically on a neutral background in good light. The definitive difference is that the anal triangle, the cell on the rear wing closest to the body is brown in *lefebvrrii* but clear in *nigra*. This can be seen in the field and can be photographed. If you are not sure which species you are seeing, try to get a record of the anal triangle.

**A vagrant, Vagrant Darter, *Sympetrum vulgatum decoloratum***

A period of south-easterly winds in the third week of September 2013 accompanied by the usual 'Lesbos mirk' - Saharan dust - adding a brown haze to all photographs but fortunately easily removed in Photoshop, resulted in the arrival of huge numbers of Red-veined Darters, *Sympetrum*



*Sympetrum vulgatum decoloratum* Lesbos September



*fonscolombii* on the south and east coast of Lesbos together with a few parties of *Anax ephipigger*. On September 22nd on a dirt road through the pine forests above Cape *Agrillios* east of Xaramida Lake there must have been many thousands of them, together with a single very pale *Sympetrum* with a clubbed abdomen. I was able to observe it for several minutes and to take some photographs before it flitted away and was lost in the ruck! I thought immediately that it was an unusual form of *Sympetrum vulgatum* and knowing that it was therefore the first record for Lesbos, concentrated on getting photographs that showed the diagnostic features. I subsequently identified it as *Sympetrum vulgatum decoloratum*. There is a population of this species in south-east Turkey extending into Syria, more or less precisely upwind of Lesbos.

The overall coloration of the thorax and abdomen was pale yellow on the sides shading to orange pink on the top of the abdomen and to brown on the top of the thorax with pale cream coloured, broad thoracic stripes. There was a complete absence of black markings on the body: even the black stripes on s9-10, found on all other European *Sympetra*, except very mature male *S. meridionale*, were absent. The pinched or clubbed abdomen was at least as pronounced as in the ruddy darter, *S. sanguineum* and was obvious in the field. The legs were pale yellow, per Dijkstra, but with a black frontal stripe. The black at the base of the frons extended down the side of the eye margins and was also visible in the field. Dijkstra says that the black at the base of the frons is 'hardly visible'.



Mature male Southern darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*) for comparison

I was persuaded to send the record to the German journal *Libellula*. Where it was rejected on the grounds that I couldn't describe the anal appendages (or better still, produce them, I don't think the editorial board is too fond of photographs). The referee said he thought it was *meridionale*, which doesn't have a clubbed abdomen and in other ways looked nothing like it. As it happens there is a population of *meridionale* on Lake Xaramida but this would have died out by the end of the summer. Subsequent correspondence with the referee revealed that he thought all *Sympetra* had clubbed abdomens, a confusion in translation between clubbing and the normal sculpting or keeling that characterises the underside of the abdomen.

*John Bowers*



## RECORDERS NEEDED FOR HULL CITY DRAGONFLIES

We are spearheading a new challenge in 2019 to record urban dragonflies in the Hull area (as per the Flora of Hull survey by Hull Natural History Society), i.e. from the Humber Bridge in the west to Paull Haven in the East and from the Humber boundary to the villages of Skidby, Cottingham, Wawne and Bilton) for the upcoming 2019 season.

The plan is to document the presence and any evidence of breeding of species in as many accessible sites as possible on at least two dates (early and late season). The data will be uploaded in iRecord using the available British Dragonfly Society dragonfly form by each volunteer and will follow the usual verification process.

Hull has a variety of wetlands and ponds, including temporary and permanent, large and small; ditches and drains. Many of these are open to the public and others will be made available to us via permission of Hull City Council. Records (but not necessarily breeding) of 17 species are already available, including the recently established and still expanding Small Red-eyed Damselfly and Hairy Dragonfly and a record of a Vagrant Emperor at Hessle in 2015 and a historic report, dated 1836, of a Vagrant Darter in the city.

If you live near Hull and would like to contribute please let Africa Gomez (a.gomez@hull.ac.uk) know which sites you'd be interested in surveying so that we can make sure we cover as many sites as possible. We are hoping to compile all the data and summarise it in a future issue of Skimmer.

Please note, details of any sightings of dragonflies in the Hull area, and not just near water, are welcome. If you don't use iRecord please email your records (species, date and location) to Africa.

*Africa Gomez and Richard Shillaker*



## UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2019

**Under 18s are welcome with an accompanying adult, and with the agreement of the event leader**

**Non-members are welcome – fee £2 per visit. Sorry dogs are not allowed**

**For all outings please bring lunch, binoculars and wear appropriate footwear and clothing**

### Saturday 22nd June

#### Leeds Bird Fair

YDG / BDS Stand and launch of Rodley NR as a BDS 'Dragonfly Hotspot'

Rodley Nature Reserve

Moss Bridge Road

Rodley, Leeds, LS13 1HP

9.30am - 4pm

For more details - [www.rodleynaturereserve.org](http://www.rodleynaturereserve.org)

### Sunday 7th July

#### Royal Entomological Society Insect Festival

YDG / BDS Stand

Museum Gardens

Museum Street

York, YO1 7FR

10am - 4pm

For more details - [www.royensoc.co.uk/insectfestival](http://www.royensoc.co.uk/insectfestival)

### Saturday 13th July

#### Strensall Common / Worlds End

Joint meeting with Freshwater Habitats Trust, to explore the numerous ponds of the Strensall Military Training Area and Worlds End SSSI. To date 19 species of Odonata have been recorded. Distance 3 - 4 miles.

Meet 10am at Galtres Road Car Park, SE648611

Leaders - Keith Gittens, Anne Carter

Bring a packed lunch, strong footwear recommended.

Contact - [vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk](mailto:vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk), 07903 449509

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July, 11:00am**

### **Treeton Dyke, Sheffield**

Joint meeting with Sorby Natural History Society and Museums Sheffield. A walk down the easy going footpath around Treeton Dyke. We'll specifically be looking out for the small red-eyed damsel, *Erythromma viridulum*, which has been recorded here for the last few years. Meet where the footpath meets Falconer Lane (SK43828608). Please note that in wet weather, the trip will be cancelled. If in doubt, contact [Alistair.mclean@museums-Sheffield.org.uk](mailto:Alistair.mclean@museums-Sheffield.org.uk) for confirmation on the day.

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 11:00am**

### **Sheffield & Tinsley Canal**

Joint meeting with Sorby Natural History Society and Museums Sheffield. A walk up and down the canal, in search of the small red-eyed damsel, *Erythromma viridulum*, which has yet to be recorded here. Meet at the Tinsley canal basin, near Tinsley locks (SK395802). Please note that in wet weather, the trip will be cancelled. If in doubt, contact [Alistair.mclean@museums-Sheffield.org.uk](mailto:Alistair.mclean@museums-Sheffield.org.uk) for confirmation on the day.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August - 1pm to 3pm**

### **Foxglove Covert LNR, Catterick Garrison**

An opportunity to learn more about Dragonflies at this fantastic nature reserve.

Access to the nature reserve is through Cambrai Lines, Catterick Garrison, DL9 3PZ. Photo ID will be required. Strong footwear recommended.

Leader - Keith Gittens

Contact - [vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk](mailto:vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk), 07903 449509

For more details - [www.foxglovecovert.org.uk](http://www.foxglovecovert.org.uk)

**4th August**

### **Skipwith Common NNR**

Joint meeting with Freshwater Habitats Trust to explore the numerous ponds of this heathland nature reserve.

Leaders - Keith Gittens, Anne Carter

Meet 10am at the reserve car park at SE669377

Bring a packed lunch, strong footwear recommended.

Contact - [vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk](mailto:vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk)

## Volunteers Needed

YDG are increasingly asked to attend wildlife events, to set up a stall to promote Dragonflies and their conservation. If you enjoy talking to people, are passionate about Dragonflies and would like to help out, please contact me on [keith.gittens@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk](mailto:keith.gittens@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk)

