

British Dragonfly Society Sussex Group Newsletter Spring 2012

No 28



Bell-bottomed Beasts and Intrepid Explorers!

Its amazing how many new and exciting discoveries can be made on the back of some expert knowledge and a truck load of enthusiasm. This is something that two of our most dedicated local members possess in excess, and on the back of their desire to know more about the whereabouts and why-fors of our interesting winged beasts, they will be embarking this year on a survey of the Club-tailed dragonfly on the Arun & Western Rother rivers in West Sussex.

Also known as the Common Club-tail, this dragonfly is anything but common in the UK. Although it is the most widespread Gomphid species in Europe, it is nationally vulnerable and is found in less than 100 10km-squares in Britain. The River Dee supports the most northerly population, five sites are in the Welsh Uplands and only two in Southern England (Thames and Arun). It is therefore a very exciting species for Sussex.

Historically, the Club-tail was known to fly from the Arun south of Wisborough Green down to Stopham Bridge near Pulborough. It has been found as far south as Arundel but these are mainly juveniles that have probably emerged locally and have not been spotted.

In recent years, the Club tail has been observed less on the River Arun, and more often on the River Rother near Fittleworth where young insects, copulating pairs and adults ovipositing have been seen.



© D Mitchell

Historic versus modern

In Sussex, the population of Club-tailed dragonflies on the Arun has been present since at least the 1930's when it was discovered by John Cowley. Our local members David Chelmick and John Luck, are keen to find out whether the breeding range of this rare dragonfly has declined or expanded since that time, and if so, what might be the causes of this change. There have been a number of sporadic surveys carried out since the 1930's, but nothing which can provide us with a comprehensive picture of what might be the breeding status of *Gomphus* on its one chosen Sussex river.

These dedicated chaps will be concentrating on looking at the wetland features in and around the wetlands where the dragonfly is found. They will be investigating the rivers to look at the vegetation, types of water features found nearby (such as still or flowing water and ponds), water quality, geology etc. to try and identify the specific features that favour the Club tail on this its only southern flowing river in UK. They are also hoping to establish the full breeding distribution of the species in Sussex.

So, we wish them luck on their intrepid explorations, and we look forward to receiving some fascinating insights into the lifestyle of the Common Club-tail and its Sussex habits and habitats.



Could river habitats like this on the Western Rother be a haven for the Club-tailed dragonfly?

With thanks to Dave Chelmick and John Luck

Recording in unrecorded squares - here don't be dragons!!

As well as the spreadsheets and emails that we receive from Sussex dragonfly recorders, we have also harvested well over 600 records from Sussex recorders who have entered their records on to Living Record, an easy-to-use online recording form developed especially for dragonfly groups all over the country. Using this data, and also the data that we have previously uploaded to the NBN Gateway (see articles in previous newsletters!), the Living Record creator has produced some brilliant target species maps showing the density of records across Sussex. The map shows where there are under-recorded areas, but even more brilliantly if you click on a square it shows you what species were recorded there pre-2000 but have not been recorded there since. This will help us hone in on under-recorded species and squares, and help us to fill a gap in our current knowledge. This is particularly important at this time, as the National Dragonfly Atlas is in it's final year of recording and this will help us fill the gaps for Sussex.

Thank you to all recorders who send in their records, they're very much appreciated. If you're keen to get set up to use Living Record to enter your dragonfly records, or to view these maps, then please drop me a line and I'll help you get going: pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk or 01273 497521.

In the meantime please look on the next page for the maps showing which squares we need to look at in order to get full coverage for Sussex, please help where you can. If you would like to help with a square, please let me know which one it is and I can send you which species have been recorded there to get you on your way.

As you can see from the maps we're not doing too badly, it's usually the half-squares around the edges of the Sussex borders which cause the problems! Where there is a blank square with no grid in it there are no target species to list (i.e. they've already been done). Continued....



Continued

East Sussex and West Sussex maps showing coverage:

Powered by LivingRecon.net: Environmental Recording for England, Scotland and Wales

© mc² Data Innovation Limited 2010-12

User: Penny Green

Sussex Dragonfly Group

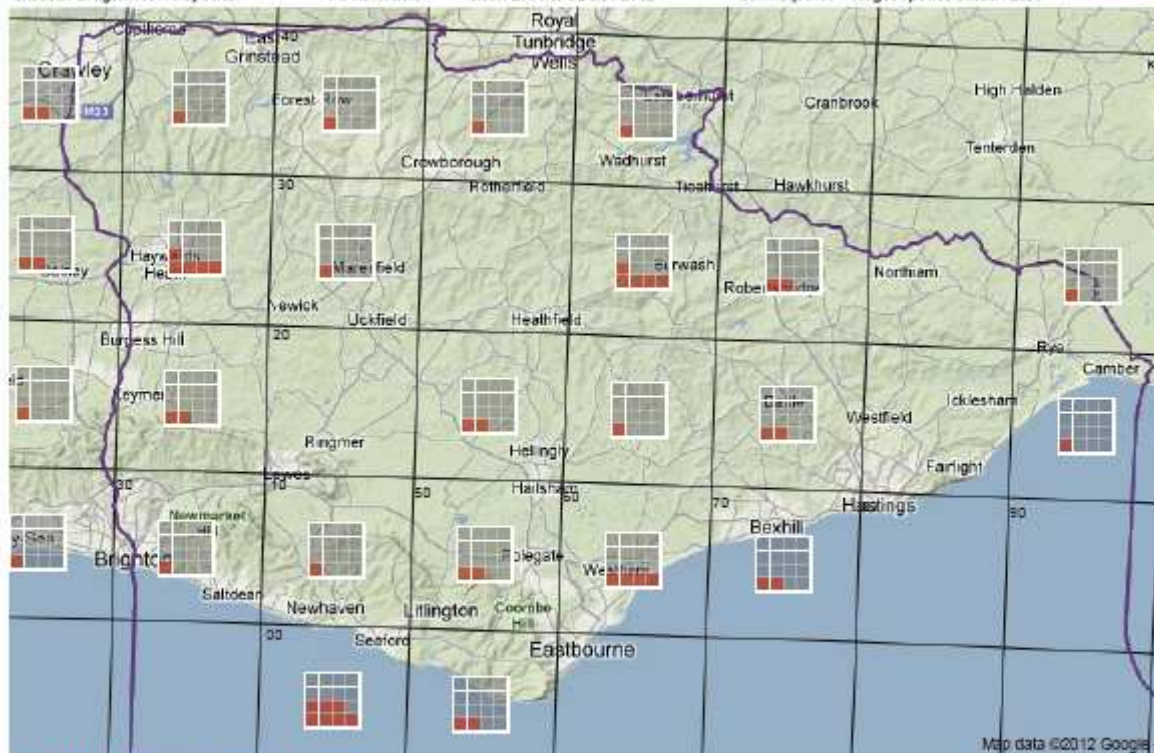
[Close Map](#)

Insects: Dragonflies: All species

All Recorders

1 Jan 2000 to 31 Dec 2012

10km Squares - Target Species Sussex East



[Click 10km squares to list the species...](#)

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User: Penny Green

Sussex Dragonfly Group

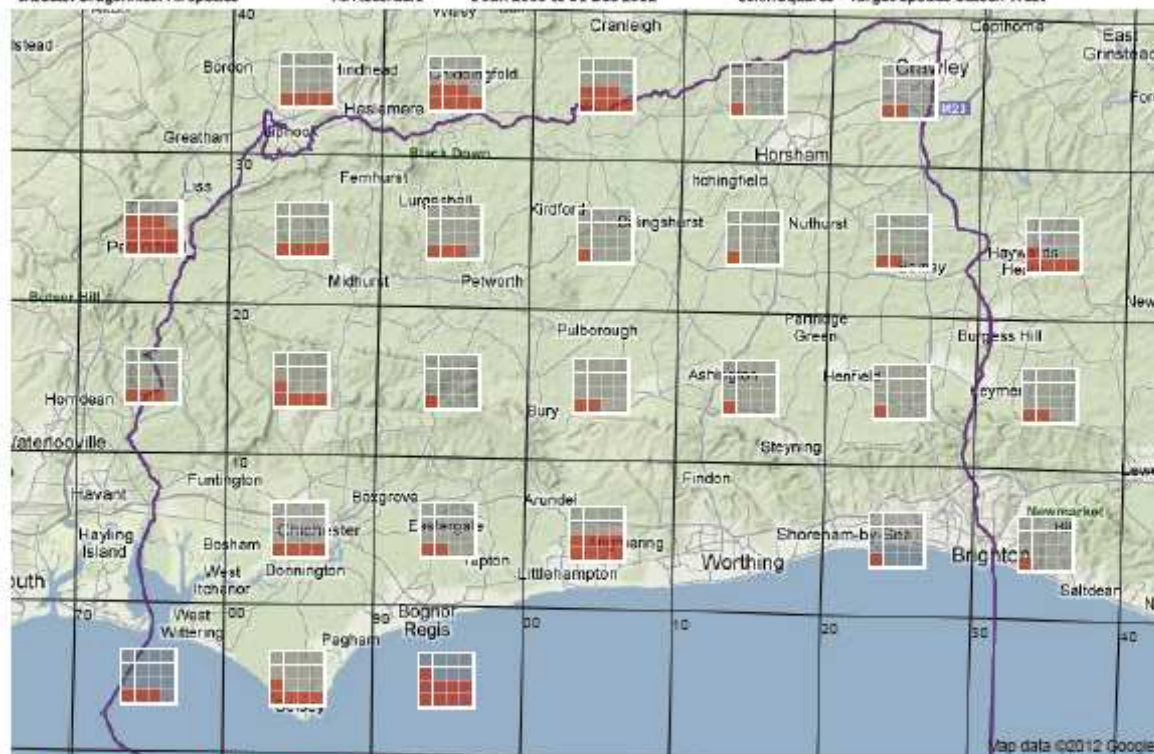
[Close Map](#)

Insects: Dragonflies: All species

All Recorders

1 Jan 2000 to 31 Dec 2012

10km Squares - Target Species Sussex West



[Click 10km squares to list the species...](#)

Acknowledgements:
Google for Google Maps
Bill Chadwick for OS graticule
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright 2011

Priority Ponds for Dragonflies

For an Order which in some cases contains species which fly less than 250 metres from their core territory during their entire life-span, having a network of interconnected wetlands and smaller permanent and seasonal ponds is essential for the long term survival of dragonfly and damselfly populations. We know that one of the most important wetland resources in Sussex is its network of over 17,000 ponds. However we still know very little about the actual wildlife and biodiversity value of many of these ponds.

Thanks to the efforts of some very dedicated volunteers and particularly Bev and John who run the Sussex pond project, we now know far more about our ponds than we ever did before. Supported by Ponds Conservation (www.pondconservation.org.uk), they form part of a team of thousands across the UK who are now helping to survey and map some of our most precious ponds. In particular, they are trying to map as many 'Priority Ponds' as possible, following the publication of the Ponds Habitat Action Plan.

So what is a Priority Pond? Priority ponds need to meet certain specified criteria and it is estimated that around 20% of the 400,000 or so ponds (ponds not in gardens) in the UK will meet one or more of these criteria. These criteria are:-

1. Habitats of high conservation importance

Ponds that meet criteria under Annex I of the [Habitats Directive](#).



Ponds found in protected habitats such as this chalk fen, are Priority Ponds

2. Ponds with species of high conservation importance

Red Data Book species, BAP species, species fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 5 and 8, Habitats Directive Annex II species, a Nationally Scarce wetland plant species, or three Nationally Scarce aquatic invertebrate species.

The presence of species such as this Water vole (right) help to designate ponds as priority ponds



3. Ponds with exceptional populations of key species

- (i) Species used in the selection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (amphibians and dragonflies)
- (ii) very rich sites with 30 or more wetland plants or 50 or more aquatic macro-invertebrates.

4. Ponds of high ecological quality

Ponds classified in the top category for ecological quality, as assessed by the standardised method for assessing the biological quality of still waters in England and Wales - the Predictive System for Multimetrics ([PSYM](#)).

5. Other important ponds

These are individual ponds or groups of ponds with a limited geographic distribution recognised as important because of their age, rarity of type or landscape context e.g. pingos, duneslack ponds, machair ponds.

Sussex has a few dragonfly and damselfly species which might help designate a priority pond, including near-threatened and locally rare species such as the Club-tailed dragonfly (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*) and the Red Data Book vulnerable species - Scarce emerald damselfly (*Lestes dryas*) and the Sussex Dragonfly Society is looking forward to showing that we have Priority ponds with national importance for dragonflies.

If you would like to be a part of this fantastic new initiative, and want to be trained as one of the Sussex Pond Surveyors team, then please contact ponds@sussexwt.org.uk. Or if you have a pond and would like it surveyed or would like more information about pond survey methods click [here](#).

Picture Right : Important populations of species such as the Common toad may also help to designate priority ponds.



Dragonfly hunting for human consumption

Keith Wilson 2005

A full version of the following article can be found at
www.africa-dragonfly.net/Articles/Commercial%20Odonate%20Fishery.pdf

All pictures are Copyright Keith Wilson

In August 2005, I travelled from Guangzhou to Weining in southwest China and visited a large montane lake called Cao Hai. To my surprise I found the local Hui and Yee people actively engaging in commercial fishing for odonate larvae destined for human consumption.

Cao Hai is a shallow, high altitude lake at over 2,000 m elevation. The lake is groundwater fed with no obvious surface water feeder streams, surrounded by Karst limestone mountains. Due to the alkaline nature of the water, the lake supports a high diversity of aquatic plants such as stoneworts and lilies. Fyke net fishing is widespread around the lakes, and these conical shaped nets allow Odonata larvae to swim in to the net but not back out again.

The dragonfly fishery is a commercial one and is based almost entirely on the local population of *Anax parthenope* (Selys 1839) larvae. The larvae are dried and sold at retail prices by merchants which in 2005 were around 100 yuan per kilo (approximately \$13 per kg). Each kilogram contained several thousand larvae, with each Odonata trader holding a stock of several million dried larvae.

Although there was no evidence to the contrary, the commercial fishery appeared at the time to be having a limited impact on the local population of *Anax parthenope* which were still present in their thousands. My group decided to order a dish of dragonfly larvae at a local restaurant, and were served with freshly fried and seasoned larvae which tasted remarkably like crisps.

Although *Anax parthenope* was the mainstay of this commercial dragonfly fishery, I also observed other larvae being fished including *Ischnura asiatica*, *Ischnura aurora*, *Cercion calamorum* and *Crocothemis servilia*.



**Left: *Anax parthenope* emerging, and Centre: exuviae.
Right: Dried food merchant at market with dragonfly larvae.**

Hunting for historic Dragonflies

We are lucky enough these days to have at our fingertips some incredibly complex technology which allows us to electronically record and map millions of species records from around the globe. Our local Biodiversity Records Centre www.sxbrc.org.uk is host to a vast array of information collected over many years by dedicated naturalists such as Francis Rose, all of which can be displayed easily (well, if you know how to use the technology!) on colourful maps and spreadsheets at the touch of a button. We now feed all our species records into a national network of databases, and so if you wanted to, you could go right now to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (data.nbn.org.uk) and find a map of all the records of the Emperor dragonfly in the UK. It is truly astonishing when you consider the scope of what is occurring with the data and information behind these maps.

This method of recording our local wildlife populations has allowed the conservation of many species and habitats to progress in vast leaps, whilst also documenting the speed of the decline of others. But for many centuries, this incredible technology was not available to a budding naturalist, and even the ability to take photographs only became possible in the early 1800's.

Instead, naturalists had to rely on their own skill as an artist and a scientist, to enable them to document the species that they found in a way which could be interpreted by both their peers and by future generations. Many of these historic naturalists did not even have the luxury of a readily available identification guide at to tell them what species they had found, but had to laboriously process samples and go through scientific verification. Often they would have to be meticulous in describing exactly where they found their wildlife treasure, and exactly what the species looked and behaved like.

Many of these wonderful records of local species now lie in long forgotten drawers and shelves of dusty tomes of drawings and notes, or in the glass cases of museums preserved as row upon row of specimens fixed painstakingly with pins to a background of white card. When you think of the dedication and work that it took to find and document these insects and animals, it seems a shame not to honour that labour by translating these specimens and records into a more modern format so that they can be used.

Even I can remember having to hand-colour in the habitat maps for my site management plan at Seven Sisters Country Park only 14 years ago, and I still get as excited as a child when I see the sophisticated maps I can produce at the touch of a button. But more than this, I try and use any information I can to inform the conservation management that I recommend to people through my work. We know so little about the historic distribution of our wetlands, that every little dot on a map of a dragonfly record from the 1600's can be as precious as gold dust. It can help us make much more informed decisions about what we are trying to conserve and restore, and where.

On a daily basis, the team at the Biodiversity Records centre plough through thousands of wildlife records. But if you are a bit of a history buff, and enjoy quiet hours perusing old documents in the archives and museums of Sussex, then maybe you can help us. Who knows, you may discover a Dragonfly treasure that we never knew lived in Sussex two hundred years ago!..... And if you want to, you can still use modern technology to email your records to us once you've finished :) .

Fran Southgate

Dragonflies in Amber

Many of you will have read the Jurassic Park style stories of how the DNA of long-dead creatures is extracted from specimens preserved beneath the earth's surface in long-buried ice, rocks and sediments. It appears however that these once fairy-tale like stories are now becoming closer and closer to reality.

South Korean and Russian scientists have recently vowed to attempt to clone a woolly mammoth from remains found in Siberia, following a successful attempt to resurrect an ancient flower from fruit and seeds hidden in an Ice Age squirrel's burrow. This giant Ice Age mammal last roamed the Earth some 10,000 years ago - but experts believe it is possible to bring it back to life and to see it roam again.

So it is not perhaps, so far fetched, to envisage that some of our smaller species might also be able to be resurrected, despite the obvious ethical and moral dilemmas that such experiments pose. Although I for one would rather not come face to face with a dragonfly the size of those which roamed with the dinosaurs!! what future might this hold for our humble friends the Odonata?

One of our members recently brought to our attention these fascinating samples of amber in which dragonflies and damselflies from years ago have been preserved. Possibly due to their hyper mobility, and the fact that the adults do not swarm, members of this order are a very rare find in amber, so the quality of the preservation of the sample below is incredible.

Phylum Arthropoda
Class Insecta
Order Odonata
Superfamily Coenagrionoidea
Family Coenagrionidae
Genus Africallagma
Species rubristigma (Schmidt, 1954)



It is fascinating to think that we can be privileged enough to see creatures like this, preserved in such incredible detail as to even be able to see their wings.

Hopefully, if we are sensible, we will try and use this privilege to allow us to learn more about the intricacies of the evolutionary process which led to the presence of the magnificent dragonflies and damselflies which we know and recognise now, rather than to sensationalise and commercialise them.

Perhaps they will also help us understand better how to conserve them as real, living specimens.

Photos Copyright : www.ambericawest.com/damselfly.html

Dragonfly Culture !

Its not often we get poetic about dragonflies ! But we thought that we'd give you a cultural treat thanks to a famous poem brought to our attention by a reader. We hope that you enjoy it !

"The Dragon-fly"

"Today I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.
An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk: from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew."

From Alfred Lord Tennyson



Azure Damsel © B Rainbow

First and Last

The Competition Hots Up!

In a bid to encourage a bit of stiff competition between our more earnest dragonfly spotters, the Sussex Dragonfly Group decided to run a competition this year: The first person to record a dragonfly or damselfly, in Sussex during 2012 was offered a free copy of the excellent "Britain's Dragonflies" field guide by Dave Smallshire and Andy Swash (2007 ed).

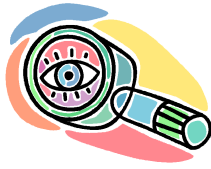
There were two conditions for winning the prize:

1. That the full details must be submitted via the 'Odonata Sightings' box on our 'Recent Sightings' webpage and
2. That a photograph of the recorded specimen must be uploaded to the 'Members' Photos' section of our website

Unsurprisingly, following some unseasonably warm weather our first sighting was posted by Julia and Malcolm Redford on 1st April 2012 — and the stunning pictures show that it wasn't an April Fool's day joke either! This Large red damselfly female, emerged today in a garden pond and basked in the sun for some 25 minutes before flying off. Hopefully it made it through the slightly inclement weather which has since followed!

Many thanks to the Redfords for sending in their records, and we sincerely hope that they are enjoying their prize. To be honest, with such amazing pictures, we probably should have offered them a photography prize too!





EYE — D Corner No 10

Identifying Southern Damselflies

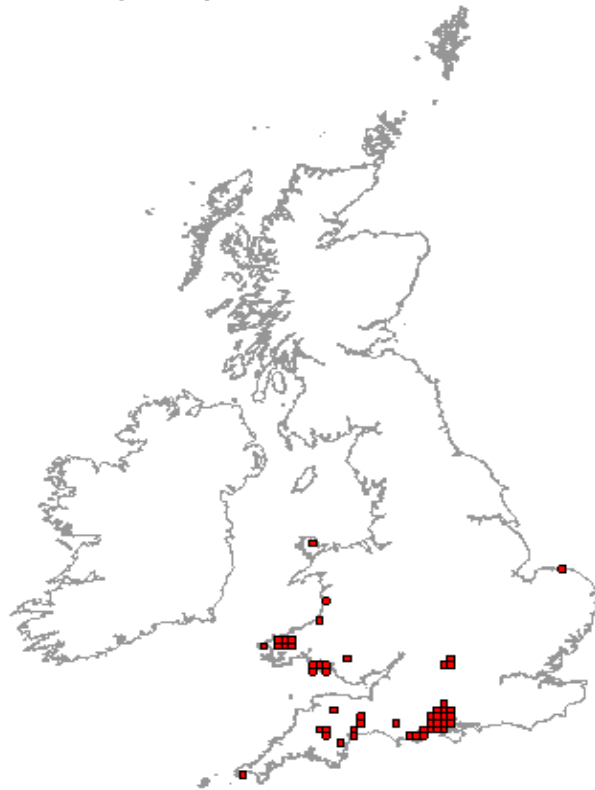
www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/species/southern-damselfly

Status and Distribution

The Southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*) is a rare species in the UK. Although on the extreme north-western fringe of its European range, it is believed that up to 25% of the global population of this species occurs in the UK. Its two main strongholds are in the New Forest and in the Preseli mountains in Pembrokeshire. Smaller colonies are found in Devon, Dorset, Anglesey, Gower, Oxfordshire and on the flood plains of the Test and Itchen rivers in Hampshire. There are old records from Cornwall and Somerset and elsewhere in Devon, Dorset and South Wales.

Although the range of the species has contracted in the last thirty years, and we don't know of any historic records in Sussex, changing weather patterns may encourage the species to migrate across our borders in the next few years. At least it's worth keeping an eye out anyway !

© NBN gateway



The Southern damselfly has also vanished or is on the edge of extinction in 7 countries along the northern boundaries of its distribution (Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Austria) and is declining in 3 others (UK, Germany, Switzerland).

This species is protected under Schedule 5 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, which protects it against a variety of factors including killing or selling of individuals and damage or destruction of habitat. In Great Britain it is classified as Rare (category 3) on the Red Data Book List, and it is a British Dragonfly Society "Key Species". It is also listed in Appendix II of the Berne Convention and Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive. Under EC Regulations sites can be proposed as internationally protected areas because of the presence of Southern damselflies. There are now more than 10 candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the UK with one of the qualifying criteria being the presence of Southern Damselfly.

Southern damselfly habitat

In the UK the Southern Damselfly is mostly found in base-rich fens and streams, often within acid heathland areas. However, it does also occur on water meadows in the floodplains of two chalk rivers in Hampshire, a habitat said to be more typical of many continental sites. At breeding sites the water is typically shallow and slow-flowing over a gravel or marl bed with patches of organic detritus. Its possible that a more or less constant, water temperature in winter in the spring-fed sites is particularly important.



Description

The Southern Damselfly is one of five members of the genus *Coenagrion* found in the British Isles (two others have gone extinct in the last 40 years). It is one of eleven members of the family *Coenagrionidae*. Together with Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) and White-legged Damselfly (*Platycnemis pennipes*), the *Coenagrion* species constitute the blue damselflies, which are all blue and black in colour.



Male Southern Damselflies can only be identified from their anal appendages, though the mercury mark on the second abdominal segment is a useful guide (picture right). Their flight is weak and low.



Southern damsel, *Coenagrion mercuriale* © M Aben (Right) & Fturmod (Left)

Breeding and dispersal

Adults are on the wing from mid May to August. They stay close to the breeding site and do not appear to disperse easily to colonise new areas. Low shrubs and *Juncus* spp. are used for perching, roosting and feeding forays. Eggs are laid in submerged tissues of aquatic and emergent vegetation and the plant dwelling larvae usually take two years to mature. The larvae are distinctive in that they have very small, un-patterned caudal lamellae.

Things you might get the Southern Damselfly mixed up with!

Unfortunately, this species is easily confused with the other members of the genus *Coenagrion* and with the Common Blue Damselfly [*Enallagma cyathigerum*](#). Female *Coenagrion* species are very similar making them difficult to distinguish from each other.



Above: Azure damsel, *C puella* © H Matcham

Below: Common Blue Damselfly, *Enallagma Cyathigerum* © D Chelmick



Left:
Variable damselfly,
C pulchellum
© G Jarvis

Continued

Things that might help you tell the difference between species!

Southern Damselfly is quite small compared with similar species and will only fly in full sunshine in the hottest part of the day.

Threats to Southern Damsels

The main factor thought to be influencing the decline of the species is its inability to disperse long distances. It is thought that it likes open vegetation at its breeding sites, so the removal of grazing animals may have a negative impact in some instances. Other threats include drought, abstraction of water leading to a lowering of the water table, drainage for agriculture and forestry, and nutrient enrichment from farm and urban run-off. In Sussex, our lack of true fen habitats and interconnected wetlands with a pure water source may well be the reason for its absence. It is so tantalisingly close however in Hampshire, that there is just a smidgen of a chance that one day it might stray, or get blown across our border, so keep your eyes peeled, you never know when you might get lucky!



Huge amounts of wetland habitat and river restoration work have been carried out in the New Forest over the last ten years — will it be this or changing climate patterns which tempts the Southern damsel across our borders? or will it disappear from its Hampshire range too despite conservation efforts?

National News



Dragonfly Recorders Network—National Meet

Over forty recorders and enthusiasts attended the annual meeting of the Dragonfly Recording Network at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre on Saturday 24th March. The programme was extremely varied with topics ranging from the new atlas to how our records are used to benefit conservation. The theme of the meeting was Cooperation with other conservation organisations and government agencies.

This was an important meeting for the DRN as it was at the start of the final recording year for the new national dragonfly atlas which will be published in 2013, on the 30th anniversary of the British Dragonfly Society.



Reds are racing ahead!

It appears that the Large red damselfly found in Sussex, was pipped to the post by a day for the first national record of the species this year, which was found at Dunyeats Hill pond. Broadstone, Dorset (posted on the British Dragonfly Society website).



Bug-eyed blue

Agnieszka Dymek's photo of a damselfly has won the bugs section of the Wildlife Extra UK Wildlife Photography Competition 2011. This category was sponsored by the BDS. Her magnificent image can be seen here (right).



Local News



Plea for local experts

The BDS Sussex Group committee is looking for walk leaders to help out with our guided walk programme; we'd like to hear from people with good dragonfly identification skills and are able to spare one or two days a year to help out with the walks. Please drop Penny Green a line if you fit the bill! It would also be great to have a field events organiser on the BDS Sussex Group committee to help with the planning of the guided walks. We only have a couple of evening meetings a year so it's not too time-consuming! Contact me if you can help: 01273 497521 or pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk



Sussex news (taken from the Sussex Wildlife Trust blog):

<http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/2012/05/crouching-ranger-hidden-dragons/>

Crouching Ranger, Hidden Dragons...

For about a year and a half, Sussex Wildlife Trust's Youth Rangers have been managing an area beside the Foredown Tower, in Portslade. There are a number of community allotments on the site, but our responsibility is to monitor and care for the woodland and the pond. Besides having to do a massive litter clearance, we've been battling to control scrub and to prevent vegetation from covering the pond.

Recently, we returned to the site to see how things were going. Despite some dull weather and a rather menacing forecast, we aimed to carry out a pond survey. This basically involves us dipping with nets and then recording what we catch. We began to dip, catching a variety of things, such as beetles, water boatmen, pond skaters and an abundance of newts. We were also catching mayfly, damselfly and dragonfly nymphs. In particular we caught a large number of broad-bodied chaser dragonfly nymphs. They are quite easy to identify as their squat bodies and shaggy exteriors make them appear more like mossy spiders than dragonflies.



Immature Broad-bodied Chaser
basking by Calumn Lyle



The youth rangers carrying out our
pond survey at the Foredown allot-
ments. That's Matt sporting the waders!
By Ruth Garner

Continued.....

Continued

We'd been surveying the pond for around 30 minutes when someone noticed the empty skin of one of these chaser nymphs stuck to a grass stem. Once a dragonfly nymph is fully grown (which can take up to five years!), and conditions are right, it begins its metamorphosis by crawling out of the water and up the stem of a plant. The nymph then breaks out of and sheds its outer skin, known as the 'exuvia'. It begins pumping water into its legs and wings, which stretches them to their adult size. Once full size, the dragonfly begins to forcibly ejecting water and pumping air into the appendages, causing them to harden.



Damselfly metamorphosis at Foredown. By Elisabeth Darwent.

After spotting this first exuvia, we noticed another on a neighbouring stem, and next to that one from a damselfly, and then near to that an adult broad-bodied chaser dragonfly sitting on a stem, just above its exuvia. As we looked up from that one clump of grass, we began to see these chaser dragonflies in almost every patch of vegetation around the pond. There must have been well over 50 of them, and they were all seemed to be emerging on this same day! It was like witnessing the birth of an alien race.

They were at different stages of their emergence. Some were just breaking from their skin; others were still very pale and hunched up, whilst quite a few appeared almost ready to take off there and then. In the final stages of development, with an excess of oxygen available, colour pigments are produced in the outer skin (or cuticle). This turns the very pale emerging dragonfly into a brightly coloured immature adult. Many species will undergo a secondary colour transformation that informs others they are ready to set up territory, find a mate, and reproduce. The adult dragonfly will only spend a couple of months on the wing.

So it was great to see things really springing to life, especially after we'd been working hard to improve the pond and the surrounding area. We now look forward to seeing what other surprises might pop up as we return to the site over the coming months.



A freshly emerged, rather pale looking, Broad-bodied Chaser. By Ryan Greaves.

As part of the [Sussex Wildlife Trust's Youth Rangers](https://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk), we're a group that enjoys getting stuck in and then letting the wildlife reap the benefit. We meet up every Thursday to carry out practical conservation tasks on a variety of different sites across Sussex, but we're most often based in Stanmer Park, Brighton. For more information about the work of the Sussex Wildlife Trust please visit:

[Vwww.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk](https://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Meet the Committee . .

And Victoria Hume, our Web editor

Hello there, I'm Victoria Benstead-Hume and I manage the website for the Society.

I first got interested in conservation relatively late in life – sure I liked invertebrates when I was a kid but I was more interesting in making them crawl up my knees than identifying what species they were. It wasn't until I went away to Tanzania to do field surveying work on my gap year that I really became interested in learning more about the species around me. I packed in my plans to study philosophy at university and changed to a degree in Ecology and Conservation at Sussex, which was soon followed by an MSc in Biodiversity Recording.

My main interest is in plants. Recently I revised the Ancient Woodland Inventory for West Sussex and am currently doing the same for the Chilterns. The work involved lots of woodland surveying as well as a great deal of historical research. Every now and again, whilst I'm out in the woods, I'll look up from the forest floor and get excited about a dragonfly sunning itself in a glade or buzzing down a ride. I'm still not very good at identifying them, but I'm hoping to improve this summer.

I joined the Sussex Dragonfly Society several years ago and enjoyed attending several of the meetings, but it was only whilst working at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre that I was inspired to help out more directly by building the new website.

My other interests tend to be more on the arty side: painting, reading, sewing and photography. Sadly I've yet to master the subtle art of creeping up on dragonflies, they always see me coming before I'm close enough to take a picture!



Kids Corner

Make this glittery dragonfly brighten up your wall

Instructions

You will need:

An A4 piece of plain card, and A4 piece of paper (or just two pieces of thin card), some scissors (ask an adult for help if you need it), some glue, colouring pens, paints or crayons, and lots of sparkly things to decorate your dragonfly wings with - you can even use some googly eyes if you have them too!

1. Print off two of the templates for the dragonfly (see next page).

Hint - Print one template onto light card, to give the dragonfly base more strength

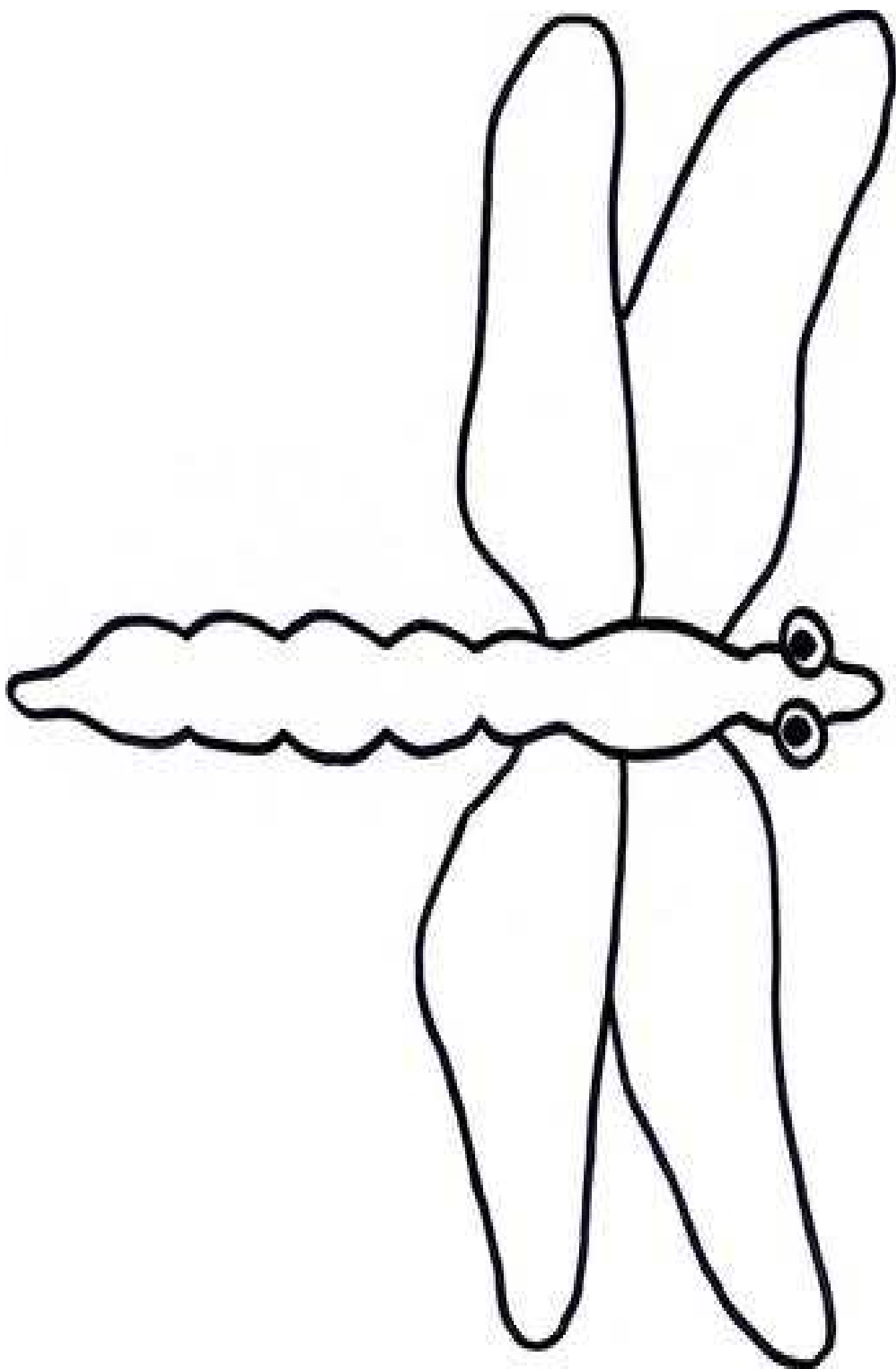


2. Colour in both your dragonfly templates in bright colours, or find a dragonfly book and colour in the wings and body like a real dragonfly.

3. Cut out the two templates so that you have two whole dragonflies with wings and bodies

4. Take one of the dragonfly templates (use the one on paper if you have one on card too) and stick it on top of the other one **BUT, only stick the thin middle body part** so that you get a double wing effect. Hint - With the help of an adult if needs be, use a pair of scissors to lightly score a line along the edge of the body, this will weaken the paper in the right place to make it easier to bend the wings up. Dont press too hard though or your wings will go floppy :)

5. Now's your chance to make your dragonfly sparkle by sticking on as many decorative things as possible ! Glitter, sequins, material, or anything you have handy.



Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Sussex Wetland Conference

Fri Jan 6th 2012 . 10.00 - 16.30

When Sussex Wildlife Trust set out to hold a Wetland Conference at Brighton University as a means of celebrating the publication of the State of Sussex Wetlands Report, we had no idea what an overwhelmingly positive response the idea would have. Nearly 200 delegates attended the conference from over 75 different organisations across the South East. Some fantastic speakers provided inspiring insights into wetland work across four core themes of Rivers and the Catchment; Wetlands and climate change; Wetland species and habitats, and the Marine environment (see below for details). The day was summed up by the Chief Executive of Sussex Wildlife Trust, Tony Whitbread, who gave a thought provoking speech about the value that we place on water and wetlands in our lives and our landscapes.

A full copy of the State of Sussex Wetlands Report can be downloaded from www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/2012/03/sussex_wetland_conference/ along with copies of presentations given at the Sussex Wetlands Conference.



Pictures of Sussex Wetlands Conference - a resounding success and very well received

Speaker	Subject	Theme
H Brocklebank	Welcome	
Fran Southgate	The Potential for Sussex Wetlands	Background & Context
Rob McInnes RM Wetlands & Envmtl	Ecosystem Services and Wetlands in Sussex	
Cat Fuller Environment Agency	Delivering Better Rivers for Sussex - The Ouse & Adur Pilot Project	Rivers and The Catchment Scale
Matt Jones Staffs Wildlife Trust	Farming Floodplains for the Future	
Sarah Purnell Brighton University	Aquatic Management of Catchments for Heath and Environment (AquaManche)	
Martin Ross South West Water	Land and Water Management – The Water Industry's Catchment Role	
Harriet Orr / Mike Acreman	Lunchtime Workshop, Predicting Effects of Climate Change on Wetland Species New Environment Agency Web Tool demonstration	Wetlands and Climate Change
Nigel Holmes Alconbury Environmental	The Chalk Streams of Sussex: Their Recognition, Protection and Enhancement	Wetland Species and Habitats
Margaret Pilkington Sussex University	The Restoration of Species Rich Floodplain Meadows and Washlands in the Ouse	
Catherine Chatters New Forest	Invasive Non Native Wetland Plants. How Can we Eradicate Them at the Catchment Scale?	
Adrian Lloyd Jones Welsh Wildlife Trust	Species as ecosystem engineers - The Beaver	
Chris Joyce Brighton University	Sussex Saline Lagoons: Status, Changes and Challenges	The Marine Environment
Phil Teasdale Brighton University	Estuarine Sediments and Their Role in the Prediction of Climate Change & Sea Level Rise	
Adrian Thomas RSPB	Managing Coastal Realignment – Medmerry	

Dragonfly Events 2012

Your Local Guide to Dragonfly Rambles!

Arundel Amble (7 mile walk)

Date: Sunday 8th July
Time: 10.30am until 3.00pm
Venue: Middle Arun valley
Meeting Point: Arundel Train Station at TQ024063
Finish Point: Amberley Train Station at TQ026118
Leader: Phil Belden (07747 664093)
Possible Species: Variable Damselfly, Beautiful and Banded Demoiselle, Emperor Dragonfly, Broad-bodied Chaser, Southern Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser.
Additional Info: Please bring lunch and your own refreshments. Donations welcome. This is a linear walk (not a circular) where we will be walking from Arundel Station to Amberley Station. We have coincided start & finish times with the train times

Burton and Chingford

Date: Sunday 22nd July
Time: 10.30 am until 3.00pm
Venue: Burton and Chingford Ponds, Black Hole, and then on to Lord's Piece.
Meeting Point: Burton Pond SWT car park at SU978180
Leader: Ben Rainbow (07748 490110 on the day)
Possible Species: Variable Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Southern Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser and Black-tailed Skimmer.
Additional Info: Please bring lunch and your own refreshments. Donations welcome.

Ashdown Forest Adventure

Date: Sunday 29th July
Time: 10.30am
Venue: Old Lodge / Moorlands Nature Reserve
Meeting Point: Old Lodge car park TQ469306
Leader: John Luck
Details: We'll be at Old Lodge in the morning and then in the afternoon we'll proceed to Moorlands private reserve, by kind permission of Lucy and Mark Love.
Possible species: Black Darter, Keeled Skimmer, Small Red Damsel and Golden-ringed
Additional Info: Please bring lunch and your own refreshments. No dogs. Donations welcome.

Bimble along the Brede

Date: Saturday 11th August
Time: 10.30 am
Venue: Maxfield Manor, Brede
Meeting point: Doleham Station, TQ835165
Leader: Fran Southgate / Phil Belden (07747 664093 on the day)
Details: A great opportunity to explore this private wetland nature reserve.
Possible Species: Migrant Hawker, Common Blue Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Red-eyed Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Emperor Dragonfly, Four-spotted Chaser.
Additional info: Please bring lunch and your own refreshments. No dogs. Donations welcome.

Event: A visit to Pippingford Park

Date: Sunday 1st July 2012, 10.30 a.m.

Venue: Meet at lay-by on A22 (TQ 437302) to drive in convoy through private land to the Park.

Walk Leader: David Chelmick (07803 288072)

Details: Bring lunch, binoculars, camera. Walking poles maybe helpful as the heath is very uneven. Total walking 3.0 km.

Additional information: The habitat comprises wooded lakes with adjacent open heath with pools for local acid loving species such as Small Red Damselfly and Keeled Skimmer. The lakes are a stronghold for Brilliant Emerald which should be holding territory and with others emerging. This meeting was amazingly productive last year with 22 species and the hope is to at least equal that count again.

An Introduction to Dragonflies and Damselflies

Date: Saturday 16th June, 10:00 - 16:00

Venue: Woods Mill, Henfield

Tutor: Mike Russell

Content: This course is aimed at anyone with little or no knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies but who would like to know more. The indoor session will cover basic biology, identification tips and the range of species found in the UK, particularly in Sussex. The afternoon session will be out on the reserve looking for dragonflies and damselflies and putting the identification tips into practice.

Learn about• The dragonflies and damselflies found in the UK and Sussex• Their biology and habitats• Techniques in identification• Learning about the fascinating world of dragonflies and damselflies

Course Highlights• Given good weather, a variety of dragonflies and damselflies on the reserve

To book please ring 01273 497561 Cost: Members/volunteers £25, Non-members £35

An Introduction to Dragonflies and Damselflies

Date: Friday 6th July 10:00 - 16:00

Venue: Linklater Pavilion, Lewes

Tutor: Mike Russell

Content: This course is aimed at anyone with little or no knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies but who would like to know more. The indoor session will cover basic biology, identification tips and the range of species found in the UK, particularly in Sussex. The afternoon session will be out on the reserve looking for dragonflies and damselflies and putting the identification tips into practice.

Learn about• The dragonflies and damselflies found in the UK and Sussex• Their biology and habitats• Techniques in identification• Learning about the fascinating world of dragonflies and damselflies

Course Highlights• Given good weather, a variety of dragonflies and damselflies on the reserve

To book please ring 01273 497561 Cost: Members/volunteers £25, Non-members £35

Wild about Wetlands

Date: Friday August 31st, 10:00 - 16:00

Venue: Knepp Castle Estate, West Grinstead, West Sussex

Tutor: Fran Southgate & Mike Russell

Content: This course will look at the importance of wetlands for wildlife and the work going on to re-create this wonderful landscape in Sussex. The morning session will be in the The Bothy on the Knepp Estate and will look at the wildlife associated with wetlands and in particular the work done through the Sussex Wetlands Project. In the afternoon there will be a tour of the estate to see some of the work to introduce natural processes on the upper reaches of the River Adur.

Learn about The importance of water and wetlands to people and wildlife• Some of the work being undertaken in Sussex to improve wetlands• Wetland wildlife in Sussex

Course Highlights A chance to see river restoration work in action in one of the biggest 're-wilding' projects in the UK

To book please ring 01273 497561

Cost: Members/volunteers £25, Non-members £35

A Pond is for Life- Wildlife Gardening Event

Date: Saturday 5th May, 10:30 – 14:30

If you have ever thought about creating a pond or wetland area for wildlife in your garden this is your opportunity to find out more about how to do it. Or maybe you just want to join in the fun and try your hand at pond dipping to meet some of the creatures that live here in our forest pond.

Suitable for all ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Follow signs to the pond in Friston Forest from the Visitor's Centre at Seven Sisters Country Park Exceat, Nr Seaford. Wheelchair access to Forest and pond. Toilets at the Visitor Centre.

Sorry no dogs. Pay and display car park.

No booking necessary – free drop in event.

Donations to Sussex Wildlife Trust appreciated.

The Sussex Festival of Nature

Date: Sunday, 24th June

Venue: Stanmer Park, Brighton

Previously known as Springwatch, this fantastic family festival will be hosted by Brighton and Hove City Council, the South Downs National Park and the National Trust. It'll be a great day for friends and family to attend.

**See also www.sussexwt.org.uk/events/courses_diary/index.htm
for other wetland events and courses**

National Events

National Dragonfly Week

9th - 17th June 2012

Don't forget to celebrate the winged wonders during this annual week of dragonfly events all across the UK. Many of the events will be dragonfly walks where you will be able to see dragonflies in their wetland habitats and learn about their lifecycle and ecology. For more details see the BDS website. <http://british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/diary-field-trips-and-other-bds-events>

National Insect Week

25th June — 1st July

A week of insect related activities across the whole of the UK. www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk



Female Hairy dragonfly © J luck

New to Recording Dragonflies?

Here's a few tips to help you get started. A basic dragonfly record has 5 parts to it:

1. Your name and contact details
2. The date you made your sighting
3. The name of the site you were at
4. An OS Grid Reference for the site (Guide on how to do this to follow very shortly)
5. What you saw

Other information that can be recorded, and is useful to us, includes the type of habitat, the weather, the altitude of the site and breeding behaviour. Please send your records to pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk



Newly created saltmarsh at Rye Harbour in East Sussex. It will be interesting to see how quickly dragonflies and damselflies colonise the area and what species in particular make use of this brackish coastal habitats

Here Be Dragons: Our Spring Quiz on the Winged Wonders!

Dragons and Damsels Mini Quiz - Guess the species from the snapshot!



1. Common British damselfly found in a wide range of water-bodies, maybe even your garden pond!



2. Common in Sussex. Often seen patrolling water-bodies on a warm summer's day



3. Locally common in Sussex. Often seen in the middle of ponds, perched on floating vegetation

4. Predominantly found across the High and Low Weald in Sussex, where it can be locally abundant, and well distributed along sections of the upper Arun and mid-Sussex Adur. Flies with a bouncy, fluttery flight and has a preference for well vegetated rivers and streams. Listed on the Sussex Rare Species Inventory



5. Can be observed flying fast and low over water, sometimes numerous metres from the bank

6. Rare in Sussex. This species tends to prefer acid habitats. Listed on the Sussex Rare Species Inventory

A big thank you to Ben Rainbow for the fantastic photographs used in this quiz



Answers: 1. Male Azure Damselfly 2. Male Emperor Dragonfly 3. Male Red-eyed Damselfly 4. Male White-legged Damselfly 5. Male Common Blue Damselfly 6. Male Keel Skimmer

Welcomes, Thank You's & Goodbyes

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this season's newsletter.

Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Top Ten Things To Do To Keep Dragons Flying In Sussex

1. We have developed our own version of Species Recorder called Odonata Recorder, which can be downloaded from <http://sxbrc.org.uk/odonatarecorder> . Report your sightings either on the SDS recorder, or to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre at Woods Mill
2. Take photos of unusual dragonflies you see
3. Come on our free training days and guided walks with local experts – more pairs of eyes mean we know more about what's happening with our dragonflies
4. Build a pond in your garden
5. Become a member of your local group – No charge, just send your contact details to pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk or c/o Penny Green, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD, and we'll keep you up to date with our newsletters.
6. Adopt a waterbody near you and report back to us on its dragon and damselfauna
7. Report the first and last times you see individual species in each year
8. Use less water! Simple as it sounds if we use less water there is less pressure on our water resources and therefore on our wetlands that these amazing insects rely on.
9. Use eco products for washing clothes and washing up — they leave less damaging residues in our waste water and so help our winged friends by reducing pollution.
10. Look out for aliens! Not little green men, but plants: Parrot's feather, Australian swamp stonecrop, Floating Pennywort and Water fern among others. These non-native plants when released into our wetlands can reproduce rapidly and can smother ponds and ditches etc making it difficult for dragonflies and damselflies to breed and to reproduce.



If you would like to contribute to the next edition of the newsletter or would like to participate in any of the events listed, please get in touch.

Adopting a Waterbody

It's easy!

I'm sure that many of you get out and about in the countryside on a regular basis, and that on your way you spot the odd streak of dragonfly colour zooming across your field of vision. Well, if you would like to adopt a local pond, reservoir or stream that you visit regularly and tell us what dragonfly life you see there then it couldn't be easier.

Just complete and return the form below to Penny Green, Sussex Dragonfly Society, c/o Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD. All returns will be held in our local database so that we can provide you with support on identification. If you're not great at identifying dragonflies, never fear, you can email or send us your pictures and we'll get our experts to identify them for you!

Name

Address

Contact Tel No

E-Mail

Name of Adopted Site

OS Grid reference (where possible)



Where would you choose to peruse for dragonflies on a sunny afternoon in Sussex?

Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Contacts

Core Group

Chairman:	Phil Belden - Hobhouse, 47 Arundel Street, Brighton BN2 5TH
Editor & Wetland advisor:	Fran Southgate - fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk
Sussex BRC:	Penny Green - 01273 497521; pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk
Website:	Victoria Hume — Please contact via Fran Southgate
Press/Publicity:	Ben Rainbow — Ben.Rainbow@westsussex.gov.uk
Pond Conservation Advisors:	Jon Wood - jonwood555@hotmail.com / Bev Wadge - ponds@sussexwt.org.uk

Other useful Contacts

Wildcall – Free advice on all wildlife issues. 01273 494777; WildCall@sussexwt.org.uk
British Dragonfly Society - bdssecretary@dragonflysoc.org.uk
Booth Museum - boothmuseum@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Pond Conservation Trust — www.pondconservation.org.uk
Sussex Ouse Conservation Society — www.sussex-ouse.org.uk
Sussex Wildlife Trust — www.sussexwt.org.uk
Sussex Wetlands Project — www.sussexotters.org
National Insect Week — www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk
British Dragonfly Society Shop — www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/shop.html

Donations

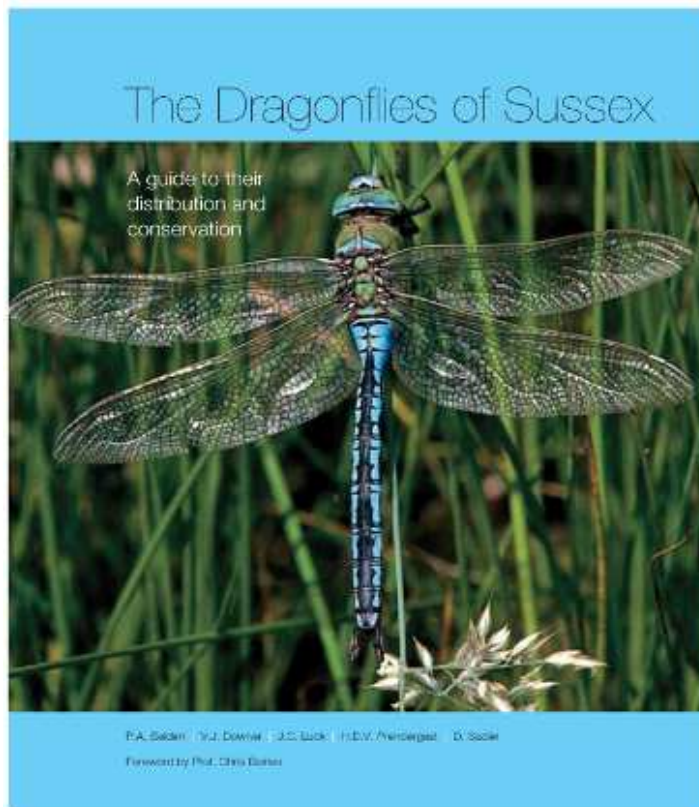
The Sussex Dragonfly Society is run exclusively with donations and proceeds from the sale of the Dragonflies of Sussex book.

If you would like to make a donation towards dragonfly work and restoring wetlands for dragonflies then please write a cheque made out to British Dragonfly Society (Sussex Group), and send it to Sussex Wetland Landscapes Project, c/o Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD. All donations will be reserved exclusively for dragonfly and damselfly habitat enhancement work.

Useful Publications

- The Natural England leaflet 'Dragonflies and Damselflies in your garden' is available as a pdf file at :- www.naturalengland.twoten.com/naturalenglandshop/docs/NE21dragonflies.pdf
- Field Guide to the Dragonflies & Damselflies of Great Britain & Ireland. S Brooks & R Lewington.
- Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Britain. Field Studies Council
- Dragonflies: New Naturalist. PS Corbet. Collins
- How to encourage dragonflies and damselflies on your land — www.sussexotters.org/wildlife/dragonflies.htm
- "British Dragonflies" 2nd edition. D Smallshire and A Swash.

The Essential Garden Companion & Guide for Countryside Explorations **THE DRAGONFLIES OF SUSSEX**



The first ever published book on Sussex Dragonflies.
by Phil Belden, Vic Downer, John Luck, Hew Prendergast & Dave Sadler.

The indispensable guide to these aerobatic, highly colourful and beautiful insects.
With detailed distribution maps and notes on status, habitat and conservation, , etc.

Available from Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, Sussex BN5 9SD. (01273) 492630, or from good book shops (ISBN 0-9525549-1-7)

NOW JUST £5 plus post & packaging
Payable to 'Sussex Wildlife Trust' c/o Fran Southgate
Proceeds go to dragonfly and wetland conservation

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