

British Dragonfly Society Sussex Group

Spring Newsletter 2009

No 22



Welcoming Dragonflies to the Political Agenda!

This is the Broads Authority's new 'eco-friendly' Headquarters in Norfolk.

Environment Secretary Hilary Benn (who announced the South Downs National Park on 31st March 2009) recently opened "**Dragonfly House**" in Norwich as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations of the National Parks.

Broads Authority chairman Dr Stephen Johnson presented the Secretary of State with a dragonfly lapel pin.

The Government Minister had lunch with a group of academics working on climate change at the University of East Anglia, and said:

"We have taken the natural world for granted. We thought we would always be able to rely on the bountiful gifts of nature. But life is delicately balanced on Earth. We need to nurture it so nature protects us."

The Broads contain more than 200 miles of rivers and man-made lakes in Norfolk and Suffolk, precious habitat for many of our species of dragonfly, including the well-named Norfolk Hawker. Perhaps this little foray into the wilds of UK politics will help promote the plight of these incredible little creature and the wetlands they live in? We hope so.



Broads Authority
The Broads - a member of the
National Park family

First and Last

What has been seen so far this year?



In Sussex, as surely as night follows day, one can be almost always certain that the first damselfly will be a Large Red and the first dragonfly will be a Hairy. And so it was this year.

Come Spring, my wife and I head for one of our local woodlands as a matter of course to enjoy the carpet of wood anemones and the rich sounds of the newly arrived blackcaps and willow warblers: anything else we encounter is an added bonus. It's so much more rewarding than targeting a particular species: with always an element of surprise awaiting one around the next corner. Thus, we were in Abbot's Wood, listening to a nightingale singing nearby and all of a sudden there was a flutter of wings and an insect perched on a bramble. Our first Hairy Dragonfly and a female. It obviously liked this particular spot as it returned there after I disturbed it whilst attempting to take a photograph.

It's interesting to compare the subtle differences between the males and females with the yellow spots replacing blue ones and the short, slim antehumeral stripes. The golden leading edge to the wings glimmered in the sunlight: a beautiful sight and a perfect way to start the odonata season.

Another early starter this year was a beautiful demoiselle, as captured in this photo on the Ouse on May 5th. Lets hope that the sunshine we've had so far encourages a myriad more of these beautiful creatures to show themselves over the forthcoming year.

John Luck 2009



(Photo, Right, Beautiful Demoiselle. Copyright J Luck.

Odonata Recorder

Has it been a Record– breaking year?

Thanks to your fantastic recording efforts in 2008 we had 3,045 Dragonfly records for the year 2008, compared to 2,600 records for 2007. Some species, such as the Scarce Chaser, had lots of recording effort which is reflected in the numbers shown in the table below. In general however, we are receiving consistent numbers of records for each species year on year, although the number of individuals of each species may have fluctuated. Each one of these records contains information on how many males, females, copulating pairs, ovi-positing pairs etc. were present so we have a fantastic

Species Name	2008	2007
Common Darter	263	266
Azure Damselfly	262	234
Large Red Damselfly	236	193
Blue-tailed Damselfly	215	203
Migrant Hawker	191	178
Broad-bodied Chaser	183	123
Emperor Dragonfly	151	168
Southern Hawker	135	110
Black-tailed Skimmer	107	108
Brown Hawker	100	70
Common Blue Damselfly	97	72
Ruddy Darter	94	97
Beautiful Demoiselle	87	80
Hairy Dragonfly	86	56
White-legged Damselfly	85	75
Downy Emerald	83	21
Red-eyed Damselfly	82	51
Four-spotted Chaser	75	50
Scarce Chaser	72	42
Coenagrion	65	63
Banded Demoiselle	60	81
Zygoptera	59	61
Anisoptera	41	34
Darter Dragonfly	41	39
Variable Damselfly	33	31
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	29	20
Black Darter	27	6
Brilliant Emerald	26	4
Emerald Damselfly	14	13
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	14	27
Keeled Skimmer	12	8
Small Red Damselfly	10	3
Corduliidae	3	2
Anax	2	-
Club-tailed	2	4
Aeshna dragonfly	1	-
Calopteryx	1	-
Red-veined Darter	1	7

amount of important data coming in about the status of these species — for which it is difficult to do justice in a simple summary!

Of particular note, the Downy Emerald was recorded a great deal more in 2008 than in 2007 with 83 records in 2008 over 21 records in 2007, the Black Darter was up from 6 records in 2007 to 27 in 2008 and the Brilliant Emerald was up from 4 records in 2007 to 26 in 2008.

Emperor Dragonfly records were down on 2007 by 17 records and the Banded Demoiselle was noticeably down by 21 records. Strangely the Small Red-eyed Damselfly, a new coloniser which is spreading across Sussex, had less recorded in 2008 than in 2007 – is this recorder effort or a change in the weather?

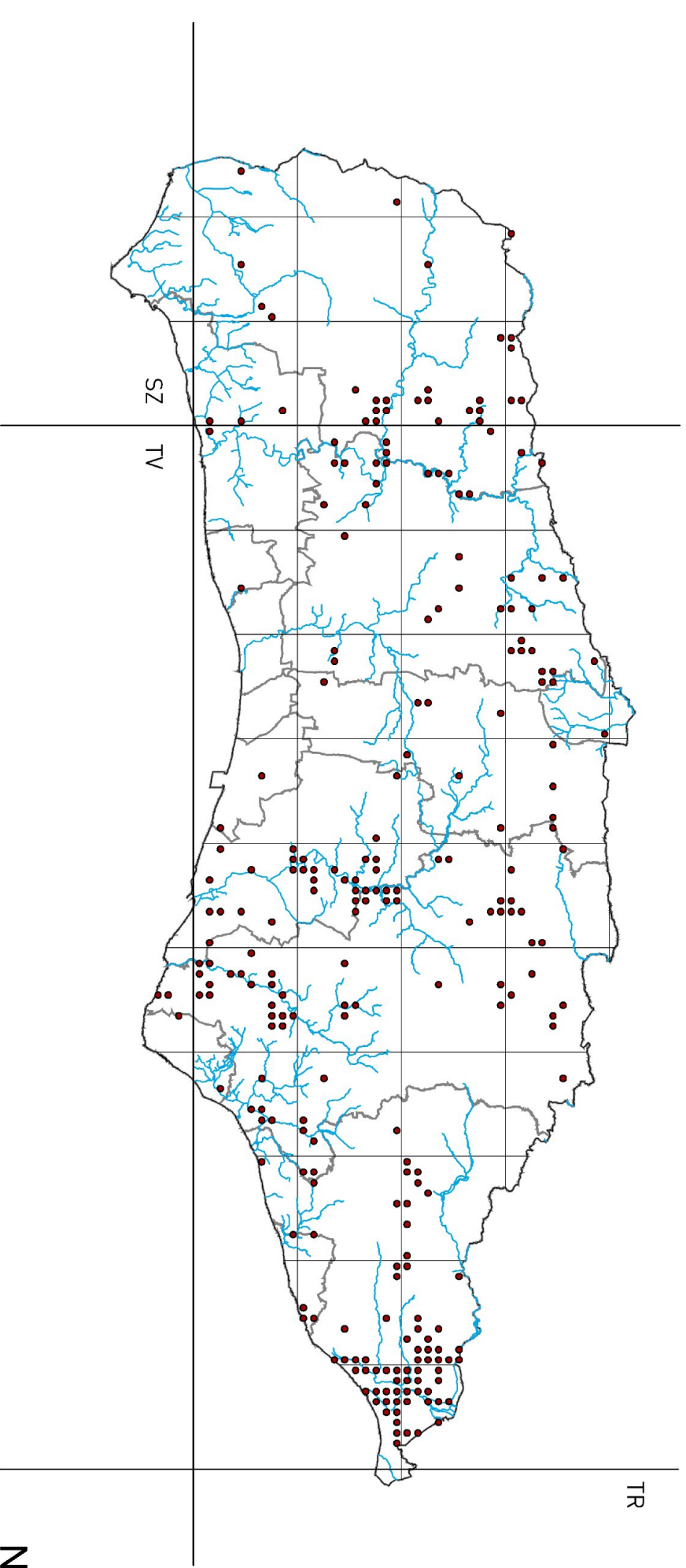
Although recording was fairly widespread across Sussex the main areas for which data was sent in for across the year includes Ebernoe and Butcherlands, Amberley, Pulborough and Stopham, Warnham LNR and Southwater Country Park, Buchan Country Park, Bolney Ponds, Weirwood Reservoir, Lewes Railway Lands, Barcombe Mills, Isfield, Old Lodge LNR/SWT Reserve, Friar's Gate at Crowborough, Lullington Heath, Abbot's Wood, Eridge Old Park, Pevensy, Pett, Iden and Rye, to name but a few! Many thanks to those who visited new areas and sent in their records to us.

The map on the following page shows the 2008 records at a 1km resolution so you can get an idea of where Dragonfly recording when on last year. Perhaps we could try some new areas next year?

We hope this inspires you to get out and fill the gaps by exploring new water bodies in 2009. Perhaps you fancy a foray into the wilds of Sussex to look for Common club-tails or Red veined darters? If you do then we'd be happy to hear from you and we look forward to receiving your data in due course. Please send your records to Penny Green at the SxBRC: pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk rather than John Luck who is stepping down from being the County Recorder after six years of hard work!

Penny Green

2008 Dragonfly Records at a 1km resolution



The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre would like to acknowledge The Environment Agency for the hydrological data.

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West Sussex County Council 100018485, 2008
 East Sussex County Council 100019601, 2008
 Natural England 100046223, 2008

Key to Map:

- 1km square with Dragonfly Record(s)
- Main River

Presenting the National Biodiversity Network

The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) is proud to announce that it has exported just under 60,000 Sussex Dragonfly records to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway. This is the first dataset to be sent to the NBN Gateway from the SxBRC due to this being a good clean dataset, verified by John Luck, the County Dragonfly Recorder. It is a huge milestone for the group.

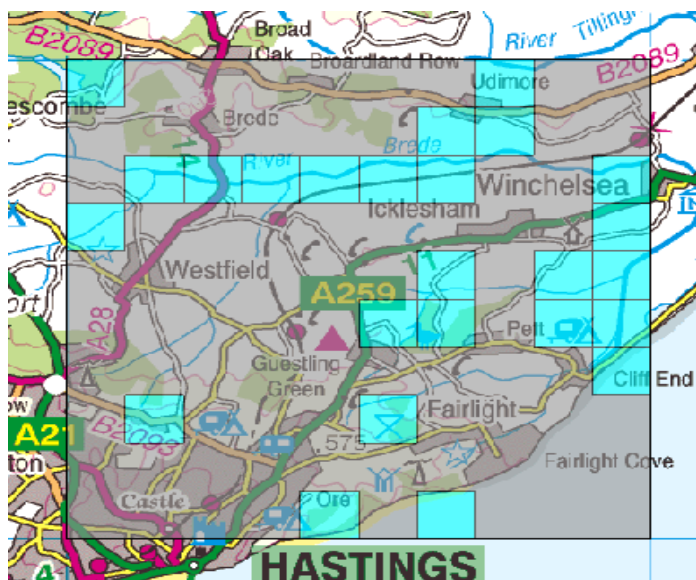
The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) describes the Gateway as “an innovative website which acts as a “data warehouse” for biodiversity information, which can be quickly and easily accessed to understand the distribution of particular species in the UK. Individual records, can be displayed on a map of the UK in a number of different ways.”

The British Dragonfly Society - Sussex Group and the SxBRC have decided that the Sussex Dragonfly data will only be shown at a 1km resolution and that full details of the records will only be available on request; so the user will only be able to see a map of what data is available for Sussex and then they know that they can come to us for more information. This way we are not compromising the integrity of the dataset, information on any rare or protected species or losing track of who has used the data. By adding this data we will be adding a missing part of the jigsaw on a national level, so that population trends and distributions can be seen much clearer throughout the UK.

If you would like to see the Sussex Dragonfly dataset then visit the NBN Website, the data should be on the Gateway by the time you receive this newsletter: www.nbn.org.uk and go to the “NBN Gateway” tab. It’s worth a visit; you can search for individual species, search through the datasets that are available or even pull up all records for a particular site. Simply type in the species you would like to see a map for, e.g. Emperor Dragonfly, and when it comes up with the results click on ‘Grid map of the distribution of *Anax imperator*’ and you can then pick the location and play around with the changeable settings. You can also use the ‘Interactive map’ for which there is a link near the top of the page, so you can view where the data has come from, zoom in, and see the data against different boundaries including SSSIs and other designated sites. This is an excellent tool for highlighting gaps in our data, perhaps this Dragonfly season you could explore new or under-recorded areas? Happy hunting!

Penny Green

Insect - dragonfly (Odonata) records for TQ81—*Anax Imperator*



Dew Ponds on the South Downs

*" We have no waters to delight, Our broad and brookless vales
Only the dewpond on the height, Unfed, that never fails."*

Rudyard Kipling's words sum up the *raison d'être* of the dew pond, and the cause of many myths and misunderstandings about how, unfed by spring or groundwater, the best examples rarely, if ever, dry up. Many of us have lived on or near the South Downs for years and take these little oases for granted. So here is a little more background on the history and value of these watery gems.

The chalk hills of England offer no natural surface water stores because rain drains away into the extremely porous chalk. Hence, these man-made dew ponds have provided a reliable source of water in an otherwise arid environment for people, livestock and wildlife throughout the years.

It is possible that a type of dew pond was used in the earliest days of settlement on chalk hills, but those which are found today are, almost certainly, no more than two or three hundred years old, and often much younger. They were created to provide water for the sheep that grazed the Downs. The 18th century was the heyday of the sheep-rearing industry, and it is likely that the oldest ponds date from this era. They were still used to water stock until well into the last century, but the arrival of piped water sounded their death-knell and most fell into disuse. One downland farmer told me that after the 2nd World War, the Ministry of Agriculture decided that dew ponds were a source of TB in cattle that had by then joined sheep on the Downs, and commanded that they all be filled in. Apparently, one way of achieving this was to dump unexploded bombs in them!



How dew ponds obtain their water supply has been the subject of much speculation. The commonly held belief that it comes from dew is certainly not the case. The term 'dew pond' is less than 100 years old, and before this they were known as 'mist ponds', 'fog ponds', or 'ship (sheep) ponds'. While mist or fog may contribute a small amount of water to the ponds, rainfall provides virtually all the water content. The ability of some dew ponds to hold water through all but the longest summer drought (and I can testify to this through personal observation), is still something of a mystery although probably has something to do with the shape, depth, and evaporation rates. Certain methods of creating the dew ponds involved mixing the chalk until an almost concrete like substance was created, thus reducing the porosity of the underlying chalk.

There are now less than 100 Sussex dew ponds that regularly hold water. Those still used by stock have limited biodiversity value, but many are fenced off and provide important havens for wildlife and valuable oases to species such as dragonflies in an otherwise chalky desert. Interest in dew ponds for conservation and also as an historic landscape feature is growing, and hopefully in the next few years more will be restored to their former glory.

Bev Wadge

Look a little closer.

by Penny Green

The earliest record we have of the Red-eyed Damselfly at Woods Mill is from 1973, and we have been recording it regularly, almost every year, on the lake here since 1990. Last year it suddenly dawned on us that because we see it so regularly we don't check it properly, we just presume that it's a Red-eyed Damselfly that we are looking at because that's what we're used to seeing here. Could we have the recent colonist Small Red-eyed Damselfly here at Woods Mill but we just haven't noticed it yet?

So, in late July, telescope in hand, we walked down to the lake to see what we could find, and to our surprise amongst the Red-eyed Damselflies were some interlopers! The Small Red-eyed Damselfly is a smaller version of the Red-eyed Damselfly and is easily overlooked, but there are a few identification points that can help distinguish one from the other.



Small red eyed damselfly © D Sadler

It was good to have both species present to get the size difference, albeit only a few millimetres, and the abdomen was noticeably thinner on the Small. The male of the Small Red-eyed Damselfly has a half-blue half-black eighth segment whereas the male of the Red-eyed Damselfly has a completely blue eighth segment. Both sexes have smaller and duller red-brown eyes and paler legs than the Red-eyed Damselfly. One of the most obvious features of the Small Red-eyed damselfly was that its abdomen was held up-curved when at rest and the wings are quite a bit shorter than the Red-eyed Damselfly.

At the moment we have 124 records of the Small Red-eyed Damselfly in Sussex, mostly in East Sussex at sites such as Icklesham, Rye, Pett and Winchelsea with a few records at Ringmer, Pevensey, Arlington and Glynde. There are a few records in West Sussex, including sites at Beeding Brooks, Trotton Common and Brick-kiln Pond at Aldsworth. They are often found in the same habitats, with the Small Red-eyed Damselfly being recorded slightly later in the year than Red-eyed Damselfly but their flight period overlaps.

So, when you see some Red-eyed Damselflies it's worth looking a little closer!

Every picture tells a story

I've recently returned from a holiday in the Mediterranean where I amazed myself with an astonishing lack of interest in the native wildlife. The colourful insects that flew or scuttled by me didn't get a second look. When everything is new and unfamiliar it holds no interest for me. It made me realise what excites me about a stroll in the Sussex countryside – there's always that chance that something unusual will appear – something different. And it's those days in the field which stick in the memory.

In May 2008 I was conducting a butterfly survey in Plashett Wood, a private woodland near Ringmer. I had arranged to meet Dan Hoare of Butterfly Conservation back at the car-park so I retraced my steps. As I neared the car park an unfamiliar dragonfly alighted on some bramble next to me. Now, I'm no dragonfly expert - but I know when I haven't seen something before. The size, colour and dark wing tips...despite never having seen one before the name Scarce Chaser popped into my head.

Maybe on some cold winter's evening, when I sat flicking through my Brooks & Lewington by the fireside, the identification features osmotically seeped into my brain. John Luck had recently raised the profile of this species by arranging some events to search for it at Barcombe – not too far away from the woodland glade I was now standing in.

But I would need a photograph to confirm my sighting. I reached into my backpack, pulled out my camera and right on cue the dragonfly flew off into the car park. I chased the chaser and found it perched in the middle of a bramble patch.

I moved closer – oblivious to thorns scratching my legs and – when I had got as close as the scrub would allow - I raised my camera and moved it towards the insect. Scared even to breathe in case the dragonfly would take flight I pushed the shutter release and....



Suddenly there was a commotion in the nearby car park – I turned to see Dan running towards me shouting and pointing crazily at the sky. I looked up directly into the sun - temporarily blinding myself. My vision cleared in time to see a Black Kite emerge from the oak canopy and lazily glide low overhead – the first time I've ever seen this spectacular raptor in Britain. With a few flaps it had disappeared from view. I stood, open-mouthed and turned to Dan who gave me an inquisitive look. It was then I remembered I was waist deep in a bramble bush with my camera at arms length pointing at...nothing. The dragonfly had gone – but I found that I had managed to get my photo.

I emailed the pic to John Luck who confirmed that it was indeed a Scarce Chaser which was, like the Black Kite, a new encounter for me in Sussex. Marvellous. Another great day in the Sussex countryside. This year I think I'll go for the Yellow-winged Dart/Booted Eagle combination.

Michael Blencowe

From the Recorder's Pond

Spring 2009

So, now it is a time for a change on the recording front and a warm welcome to Graeme Lyons who is taking over as County Recorder. Six years is sufficient time to achieve a few goals, but also a good time to hand over the baton so that others can carry on and introduce fresh ideas.

It's been an eventful period since I joined the committee in May 2002, becoming Recorder later that year. Committee meetings were frequent, as we worked towards the publication of "The Dragonflies of Sussex" over the next two years. In the record input area, entry is now available in automated form and I have been most fortunate to have such willing support from the staff at SxBRC in putting this into effect. The internet with its email capability has provided access to far greater numbers of recorders than would ever have previously been possible and thus enabled a far greater number of records to be collected. It has been a pleasure to have made some many new friends via this medium. It is also particularly encouraging to see that Field meetings are now attracting such enthusiastic support.

Exciting times and challenges lie ahead with the NBN Gateway link being established.

But for now, I look forward to meeting you all at our forthcoming first Indoor Members' meeting and also at this season's field trips.

John Luck, 4th May 2009



EYE — D Corner No 4

Red Darters

The commonest species of dragonfly in Sussex and the U.K. is the Common Darter, which is on the wing from mid June until the end of Autumn. You all know what the male looks like - red abdomen, brown thorax, brown eyes, dark legs and red pterostigma – so no problem identifying it is there? Well unfortunately there is. The Ruddy Darter, our other resident Red Darter species, has exactly the same features. So we need to look at other more subtle differences.

Applying our “Rule of 3” to make it easy to confirm identity, we can focus on:

- 1) Colour of legs ...black (Ruddy), dark with pale stripe (Common)
- 2) Shape of abdomen...waisted and shorter (Ruddy), almost straight (Common)
- 3) Colour of abdomenblood-red (Ruddy), orange-red (Common)

Adult male Ruddy Darter



If still uncertain of these features – is it really waisted or is it nearly straight? (there is a fair degree of variance in the various specimens we may happen across) - or unable to gain a sufficiently good view, let's add a 4th feature which could be even more difficult to get a sight of:

Fronsdark line across the top and down the sides (Ruddy), across the top only (Common).

Having said that, my eyes automatically home in on the side of the thorax whenever I see a darter, looking for the two yellow-green stripes and placing a large tick in the Common Darter box, if they are present. That is, after ensuring that I'm not looking at a Black Darter. So after all that, we've finished up with 5 features, which is probably a wise precaution since *Sympetrum*s are a notoriously difficult genus.

We can also apply features 1, 2 and 4 to separate immature males. A couple of years ago, I was walking on the Downs and was surprised to come across approximately 20 immature darters. In the field, it caused a fair degree of head-scratching as to which was Common and which was Ruddy so I took a few photographs and examined them in more detail when I returned home.



Left: Common Darter, Immature Male. Right: Ruddy Darter, Immature Male

As you can see, both darters have the same coloured yellow-brown abdomen, brown and green eyes and brown upper thorax. However, the differences in leg colour, shape of abdomen and extent of frons are sufficiently clear to make a confident diagnosis.

So now we are reasonably comfortable with sorting out the males or even immature specimens of our two common species, how will we cope if a rarity turns up? What if the insect we are looking at is a Red-veined Darter? This is the most likely rarity to turn up in Sussex as it is a common species just over the channel. You might be alerted to its skittish behaviour or its presence on an earlier date than normal.



So what to look for:-

Abdomen...a brick-red colour and straight

Red veins in leading edge of wings

Pterostigma....pale with dark edging

Frons....red with white edging

Thorax...Pale, bluish diagonal stripe half-way along the side

Eyes...Blue underside

Frons...Dark line along the top and down the side (as for Ruddy).

That's a bit more than a "Rule of 3", but if we are to have such a record "accepted", we cannot have too many distinguishing features.

There are other rare darters, which we may encounter such as Yellow-winged (less likely to occur, but easier to identify because of the fairly obvious yellow colour at the base of their wings), Vagrant (very similar to Common) and Southern. Perhaps keep your eyes out for this but I think they are better kept for another day.

John Luck March 09

Can't get enough of those Blues!

For those of you who own a Dragonflies of Sussex book, you may have noticed the maps with all the dots on showing the historical records of dragonflies and damselflies across the County. Sometimes however, the Grid Reference for a sighting has a 10km margin of error, so we have great difficulty pinpointing important local sites in need of conservation measures to protect valuable populations of dragonflies.

This year we will be targeting key species for recording—the Azure, Common and Variable Blue Damselflies. The idea is that we survey wetland areas in the 1km squares which make up a larger 10km square. This is so that we can try and get a better picture of the distribution of the blues! We are suggesting a survey of 3 separate 10km squares. The squares we are suggesting are :-

- Central Sussex TQ3010 (Lewes/Burgess Hill)
- Central West Sussex TQ0010 (Arundel & Pulborough including River Arun)
- Central East Sussex TQ6010 (Heathfield/Bexhill)

We are proposing to send out dedicated teams of up to 4 people for each area, to go out during the flight season which runs from mid May for 3 — 4 months; (although you are welcome to adopt your own local 10km square). It's a great way to get out and visit some of the wildlife hot-spots of Sussex as well as improving your recognition of these 3 species. There will be a prize for the team of dragonfly spotters which shows the most dedication by recording in the most 1km squares in their 10km squares.

New to recording Dragonflies?

Here's a few tips to help you get started.

What is a record? 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.

Sussex Dragonfly Field Trips 2009

Please bring lunch, drink, binoculars and appropriate outdoor gear. In case of inclement weather, please assume the event is cancelled.

Wander around Warnham (W Sussex)

Sunday 14th June. 10.30am.

Walk Leader: Phil Belden.

Location: Warnham Road (B2237), Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 2RA. OS map reference: TQ167323. Easiest access is off of the Horsham by-pass (A24).

Join local wildlife experts at this scenic Local Nature Reserve to see Emerald Dragonflies, Scarce Chasers, Demoiselles and other uncommon wildlife species (see www.friendsofwarnhamlnr.org.uk for more details). If time allows we will move to another site in the afternoon.



Wildlife of Constantia Manor (E Sussex)

Sunday 5th July. 10.30am.

Walk leader: John Luck

Location: OS map reference: TQ449192. Postcode: TN22 5XU. Just north of New House Farm. Meet by the side of the road and go through iron gates with walk leader.

Be one of the privileged few to have access to this wonderful private nature reserve created on a farm in Isfield near Lewes. We hope to see Small Red-eyed Damselflies, Black-tailed Skimmer and Emerald Dragonflies.

Dart over to Black Down (W Sussex)

Saturday 1st August. 10.30am.

Walk leader: John Luck

OS map reference: SU921308. Nr Haslemere.

If you read our autumn 2008 newsletter you will know what an unsung jewel Black Down is. We hope to see a myriad of wildlife including Black Darter, Keeled Skimmer and maybe even the (un) Common Hawker!

Do you have dragonfly walks or talks in Sussex that you would like to advertise in this Newsletter? If so, contact our editor for more details.

EVENTS

Dragonflies and Dinner

Venue — Arundel WWT

Dates - Wed 16 & Thurs 24 Sept

Time - 5 p.m.

Information - A two hour course on the incredible diversity of dragonflies in Britain and some easy and sure-fire ways of identifying them in the field. With a delicious meal thrown in! £18.50pp.



An introduction to Dragons and Damselflies

Venue — Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield

Date - Saturday 4th July 2009

Time - 10.00 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Information - Tutor Mike Russell will help those with little or no knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies to develop basic identification skills and to learn more about these fascinating creatures. Includes an afternoon session on Woods Mill Reserve looking for local species. £22.50/£30

Dragonflies of Sussex

Venue - Burton Mill Pond nr Petworth

Date - Sunday 19th July

Time - 10.00 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Information - Local expert Simon Curson will teach you how to identify dragonflies at one of the best dragonfly sites in West Sussex. Highlights hopefully include views of Golden-ringed Dragonfly and Variable Damselfly, Scarce Chaser and White legged Damselfly.

Dragonfly Week

Dragonfly Week will run from **23rd - 31st May 2009**. Keep an eye out for events in your area, or if you would like to arrange your own, get in touch with your national or local dragonfly group.

News



The Sussex Pond Survey & Million Pond Project

Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre is planning a survey of all of the ponds found in the Sussex countryside in order to provide a definitive map of the type and nature of these valuable wildlife watering holes. They are looking for volunteers to train in survey techniques to give them baseline information on as many ponds as possible (excluding garden ponds). From this they will target those of greatest conservation interest for full ecological survey. If you are interested, please contact Bev Wadge at ponds@sussexwt.org.uk or on 01273 497570 (Mondays only).



SDS helps Sussex Wetlands

Sales of the Dragonflies of Sussex book have helped swell our coffers a little, and we've been receiving requests for supporting projects that could potentially benefit dragonfly conservation. We're coming up with some guidelines for how to deal with such requests. Through the newsletter we'll let people know what projects are out there and what we will be supporting. Watch this space!



National News

New Patron for the BDS Sir David Attenborough

The British Dragonfly Society warmly welcomes Sir David Attenborough OM CH FRS as Patron in its 25th anniversary year. Sir David has long been active in the conservation world and his distinguished career in natural history broadcasting has inspired a whole generation of environmentalists. From his first famous Zoo Quest series, through the memorable Life on Earth trilogy, to his most recent project, Life in Cold Blood, his programmes have raised awareness and increased understanding of our natural world.



National BDS Update – April 2009 – Issue 3

To DRN Recorders, Local Group contacts and BDS Voluntary Officers.

Welcome to the third BDS Update. I want you, as key people in the BDS, to be aware of developments and events ahead of our general membership. I also feel you should be kept up-to-date about what is currently going on in the Society, because you are the backbone of it.

Dragonfly News and Trustees

I'm pleased to tell you that we have a successor to David Hepper as Editor of Dragonfly News. The spring issue is due to hit doormats soon so Mark Tyrrell, Northants VC Recorder, will be taking over the reins. Not only is Mark to become Editor, he will also become a BDS Trustee on May 1st. Our grateful thanks to Steve as he takes a well earned break from service.

DRN Recorders' Day 2009

It was absolutely fantastic to see so many of you at this year's event on March 28th. Pat Batty made it down from Scotland, Dave Smallshire was there from Devon in the south-west, we had representation from Wales and the East Anglian contingent, including myself, were out in force!

The programme for the day covered an update on progress of the Dragonflies in Focus (DiF) Project, a demonstration of the AditSite-Darter software, plans for the new national atlas and discussions about the role of VCRs. There was also a presentation about monitoring dragonflies and an open forum when anyone present could question the organisers.



Downy Emerald © S Smith

Monitoring

The BDS needs to monitor dragonflies for a number of reasons, not least because it is part of our commitment to ensure funding for the DiF Project. In addition, the Dutch have been monitoring dragonflies for years and are now keen to encourage other European countries to join them.

Dave Smallshire (DCG Convenor) has drafted a manual for a two-year pilot monitoring scheme starting in 2009. The manual and methods are based on Dutch protocols and very straight forward. A questionnaire sent to VCRs in January revealed that at least 35 transects in 14 Vice-Counties are already taking place, giving us a small, but sound start to the pilot. If you know of any transects already being recorded in your area or if you would like to find out more about getting involved, please contact Dave Smallshire (DaveSmalls@supanet.com or 01626 853393)

AditSite-Darter

The preferred recording software of the DRN for many years was Darter, but it is no longer supported and copies have been failing leaving many VCRs without a usable package. One alternative is an excel spreadsheet known as Species Recorder.

AditSite is another alternative and is now being developed to suit the needs of the DRN. The software is at the beta-testing stage. Once this is complete, the software will be made available, free of charge, to VCRs.

Recording life stages of dragonflies

It was noted at the Recorders' Day, that decisions taken by the DCG relating to recording have not been publicised widely enough. As a result the Guide to Recorders on the BDS website will be expanded and revised to make explanation of the six life stages and how to record them much clearer. The instructions for the new AditSite Darter software will also be improved in line with the website.

The main points to note are that tandem pairs should be recorded in the 'Co' column along with actual copulating pairs. The reason being that both qualify as Possible Breeding according to the Proof of Breeding Criteria. In both cases it is the number of pairs that should be counted, but they also count as two individuals in the Adult column. In the same way, ovipositing females are counted for the 'Ov' column, but that is also a sub-count of the Adult column, so they should also be included in the 'Ad' total. Finally, emergents (Em) are now defined as any dragonflies found emerging or just emerged, that are judged still to be at their site of origin. This could include deformed individuals incapable of flight. If these are changes to your past practice, don't worry, just start recording according to these guidelines from now. For further details, please check the BDS website.



Data on the NBN Gateway

It has come to our notice that some data on the NBN Gateway (<http://data.nbn.org.uk/>) is incorrect and that for some rare species this has led to worrying errors in distribution analyses carried out by government agencies and policy makers. One easily spotted error was the Azure Hawker in Epping Forest, but other errors will only be obvious to people such as yourselves with local knowledge.

For this reason, we are asking all VCRs and other interested people to check their local county data on the NBN. If you spot an error, you can identify the dataset it comes from by switching datasets on and off at the bottom of the screen. Navigating around the NBN website is fairly easy, but if you need any help, please contact Steve Prentice or Kat Parkes in our BDS office. Once you identify an error and its source, please notify Steve and he will contact the data custodian. We believe our own DRN dataset is clean, so we need to ask others putting data on the NBN to correct theirs.

National Atlas Project

The dragonfly season for 2009 is just starting, with the first Large Red Damselflies reported just before the end of March. It is therefore important to make sure that Steve Prentice already has your records for 2008 and earlier. If you're a VCR then please send your collated records directly to Steve. However, if you're a Voluntary Officer or Local Group Contact, then your records need to go to your VCR first.

British Waterways

Finally, Kat Parkes in the BDS office has just received lots of lovely new leaflets about the British Waterways' Wildlife Survey for 2009. These leaflets are both colourful and informative about the wildlife you can find by our rivers and canals, and what's more they promote the BDS and carry our logo. If you would like some leaflets to hand out, please get in touch with Kat and she will send you some. (katharine.parkes@naturalengland.org.uk or 0300 060 0638)

Thank you for your continued support.
Pam Taylor – BDS President

Something for the Kids!

Make your own Giant Dragonfly

What you will need

1. An adult to help you (adults can be quite helpful!)
2. Wallpaper paste (without fungicide), flour and water paste or PVA glue
3. Brush for the glue
4. Torn newspaper about 6cm x 3cm & white paper about 6cm x 3cm
5. Long, narrow balloon
6. String
7. Pipe cleaners
8. Wire – the green coated greenhouse wire is ideal
9. Wire cutters
10. Ping-Pong ball, cut in half to give 2 semi-circles
11. Tracing paper, tissue paper or muslin (thin material)
12. Pin
13. Picture of a dragonfly
14. Paints and brushes
15. Very soft broad pencil (2B or softer)
16. Cotton thread



Image © Northmoor Trust

What to do - (Please refer to the Picture)

1. Blow up the balloon so it is about 45cm long but less than 5 cm wide.
2. Tie (with string) or twist the balloon about 5 cm from the tip, so you make the head. (Make sure the knot on the balloon is at the rear end).
3. Tie (with string) or twist the balloon again, about 10cm behind the first tie. Now you have the thorax and the abdomen of the dragonfly.
4. Mix up the paste in a bowl. Use the brush to put glue on strips of newspaper. Put the strips onto the balloon until the whole thing is covered. Set it aside to dry.
5. Next day use the plain paper and do the same thing. Again, set it aside to dry. (By alternating between plain paper and newspaper, you can see where you put paper the day before.)
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until you have about 6 layers built up and the papier mache is firm.
7. Allow it to dry thoroughly – an airing cupboard is good for this.
8. Using the pin, carefully pop the balloon. Protect your eyes when you do this.
9. Paint the body with paint – use a picture of a dragonfly to help you. Allow it to dry.
10. Bend the wire into a wing shape – about 25cm long and 8cm wide at the widest point. Do this 4 times to make 4 wings).
11. Carefully cover the wings with tissue paper or muslin. Glue these to themselves by folding it over the wire and glueing it underneath to the layer above. The glue will not hold it directly onto the wire. Be certain to cover 2 wings on the underneath for the left, and 2 wings on the underneath for the right. This way you won't get a seam on the top side. If you are hanging the dragonfly from the ceiling, then you may wish to swap and put the seam on the top.
12. Using the picture of a Dragonfly as a guide, draw lines on the wings to represent the veins.
13. Fasten the wings onto the thorax by using more wire to hold them firm.
14. Bend pipe cleaners to form the legs, 3 pairs, and fix these to the thorax with wire.
15. Use the half Ping-Pong balls to make the eyes by fixing them to the head with more glue.
16. When it is completely dry, use cotton thread to make a cradle and hang the dragonfly from the ceiling or enjoy running around your garden imagining the adventures your dragonfly will have!

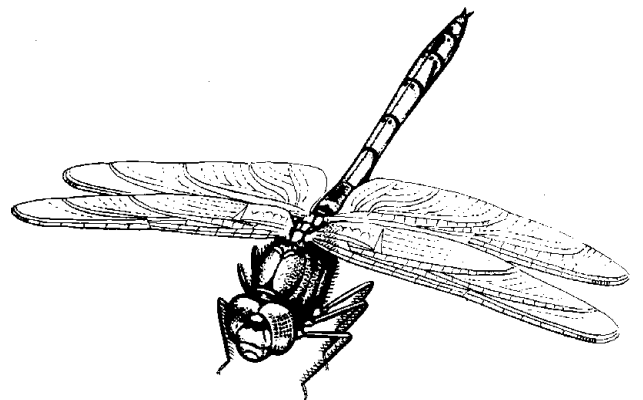


Image © Natural England

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)



Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Meet the Committee

Below, one of our founder members, Phil Belden (honest!), is relishing the moment the Government finally gave the decision to confirm the South Downs National Park. 25 years on from the little pin badge promotion (see photo) and exhaustive battles and campaigns – if at first you don't succeed, keep crusading !



The man himself!

It was the Torrey Canyon oil tanker disaster off the SW coast that sowed the conservation seed in Phil's head while he was at school. However, it took the shock therapy of a sojourn in the City, for him to actually embark on a conservation career – starting on the Dorset Heritage Coast. It was here that he moved on from Butterflies to taking on Dragonflies, a scary ID thing as there were no field guides around! He worked along the spectacular coastline from Lulworth to Lyme Regis, looking after the National Trail, adjoining access and habitats; in his spare time, liaising with the Record Centre, searching out species from old records.

He moved to Suffolk, where he co-founded the Sandlings Group, set up to save the rare coastal heaths. He worked with Chris Baines (who wrote the foreword to *The Dragonflies of Sussex*) on some pioneering environmental education. He roamed the East Anglian countryside, observing and recording wildlife; and he went to the county museum to go through historic records, and read the old Suffolk Naturalists' Society volumes, to note any dragonfly records (providing the baseline for the museum's later published *Dragonflies of Suffolk* book).

In 1983 he moved to Sussex (first East, then West) – his third Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). He was struck by the vulnerability of this 'Protected Area' in the pressurised South East. He took on the embryonic Volunteer Ranger Service and later set up a companion West Sussex group. He stood on the shoreline and worried about the marine environment, so he established the Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, bringing together 40 organisations to agree a constitution.

Agricultural intensification was another concern, so he worked on a big lobby, resulting in the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area, which encouraged farmers to manage their land to safeguard the landscape, wildlife and archaeology.

Meet the Committee Continued

Major road developments (Twyford Down and Brighton bypass), out-of-town superstores and much more (often incremental) damage to the Downs, brought renewed calls for better protection. Phil sat down with others and the South Downs Campaign was born, which has grown over the years to encompass over 150 national, regional and local organisations.

He moved on to the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, “a national experiment in AONB management”, which later became the South Downs Joint Committee. Lots of good things done: conservation (eg restoring internationally rare chalk grassland); sustainable access (eg “Take the Bus for a Walk”); ensuring economic underpinning of the landscape (eg marketing of local produce – farmers with sheep to graze the Downs, local processing, butchers supplying consumers, who in turn are the downland visitors). Sadly, this was a temporary fix, with no long-term clout or commitment, so his restless mind wandered back to the perennial problem of ‘Saving the Downs’.

The South Downs provided his rural tranquillity, but he gained his urban edge, setting up Brighton Urban Wildlife Group, to raise the profile of nature conservation in town, galvanise people to protect their local patch and get some serious wildlife policy written and implemented. Many local community groups have become established, all busy looking after their green-spaces, street trees have been planted and Local Nature Reserves established.

He did have a niggling concern at the lack of any information on dragonflies in the county, so in 1987 he started a little dragonfly survey. He encouraged others, gave talks, formed a small group and, over time, many, many people joined in the recording. 15 years on and 35,000 records later, it was time to put it all in a nice, accessible book, to provide that basic info of where our Sussex dragonflies are, and to stimulate yet more interest in these lovely little creatures, which are good indicators of the health of our world.

Phil is a passionate and enthusiastic conservationist, who has contributed to a number of fora concerned with improving our quality of life. Ensuring the environmental voice is heard loud and clear is a top priority. Unwinding from all this, he enjoys his family life, exploring the countryside and its many hidden treasures (on push bike!); but keeping an eye on the urban green-space, that vital oasis for the people of the city.



And having read that little lot I can safely say that we are truly lucky that he decides to dedicate some of his precious little spare time to continue fighting the cause for dragonflies and damselflies. Phil’s life demonstrates what a substantial amount of commitment, enthusiasm, passion and dedication can do for a large chunk of the UK’s valuable wildlife habitats.

Left: The South Downs from Devils Dyke (looking West)

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



Questions

All the answers can be found in *'The Dragonflies of Sussex'*

- 1) What's the first damselfly of the year to emerge?
- 2) Which town, now in the new South Downs National Park, was the focus for Sussex's first dragonfly recording study (over 150 years ago)?
- 3) At 3½ inches or 84mm which is our longest dragonfly?
- 4) What is the 'scarce' dragonfly that, thanks to more recording eyes, is found on all our main East and West Sussex rivers, but in *The Dragonflies of Sussex* book only features in West Sussex?
- 5) How many resident species are there in Sussex?
- 6) If you dig a pond to aid wildlife, what fat little dragonfly is likely to be an early coloniser?
- 7) Who wrote the first authoritative book on dragonflies (in 1900)?
- 8) Who loves, only, our acid bogs?
- 9) What rare dragonfly found on the River Arun is found on just 6 other rivers in England & Wales?
- 10) Which dragonfly habitat in the county, scene of a 2008 field trip by the Sussex Group, was declared a Wetland of International Importance in 1999?



Welcomes, Thank Yous & Goodbyes

A hearty welcome is extended to Graeme Lyons and Victoria Hume who have recently joined the SDS, bringing with them a vast wealth of ecological knowledge. Thanks to all those who contributed to this season's Newsletter, and who supplied their dragonfly records and pictures. An immense thank you to the authors of the newsletter items, and to Victoria Hume for taking on the responsibility of the SDS website. A fond farewell and thank you is bid to James Worsley who after working tirelessly on the SDS website has recently had to step down from the Committee. A special thank you also to John Luck who, although not retiring will be stepping down his involvement in the group and who has been (and still is) a major driving force behind the recording and conservation of dragonflies in Sussex. Graeme Lyons will be taking up the recording mantle in his place!

How you can help keep dragons flying in Sussex

- We have developed our own version of Species Recorder called Odonata Recorder, which can be downloaded from <http://sxbr.org.uk/odonatarecorder> . Report your sightings either on the SDS recorder, or to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre at Woods Mill
- Take photos of unusual dragonflies you see
- Come on our free training days with local experts – more pairs of eyes mean we know more about what's happening with our dragonflies
- Build a pond in your garden
- Become a member of your local group – No charge, just send your contact details to penny-green@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.
- Adopt a waterbody near you and report back to us on its dragon and damsel fauna whenever you can
- Report the first and last times you see individual species in each year
- 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.
- 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.



Odonata Quiz Answers

- 1 Large Red Damselfly
- 2 Lewes
- 3 Female Golden-Ringed Dragonfly
- 4 Scarce Chaser
- 5 29
- 6 Broad-bodied Chaser
- 7 W J Lucas
- 8 Small Red Damselfly
- 9 Club-tailed Dragonfly
- 10 Pevensey levels

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 do get in touch.

Contacts

Core Group

County recorder: Graeme Lyons — graemelyons@sussexwt.org.uk
Chairman: Phil Belden - Hobhouse, 47 Arundel Street, Brighton BN2 5TH
Editor: Fran Southgate- fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk
Sussex BRC: Penny Green - 01273 497521; pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk
Website: Victoria Hume — victoriahume@sussexwt.org.uk

Other useful Contacts

Wildcall – Free advice on all wildlife issues. 01273 494777
British Dragonfly Society - bdssecretary@dragonflysoc.org.uk
Booth Museum - boothmuseum@brighton-hove.gov.uk. 01273 292777
Pond Conservation Trust — www.pondconservation.org.uk
Sussex Ouse Conservation Society — www.sussex-ouse.org.uk
Sussex Wildlife Trust — www.sussexwt.org.uk
Sussex Otters and Rivers 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 Otters and Rivers Project, 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 to download as a pdf file at :-

www.naturalengland.twoten.com/naturalenglandshop/docs/NE21dragonflies.pdf

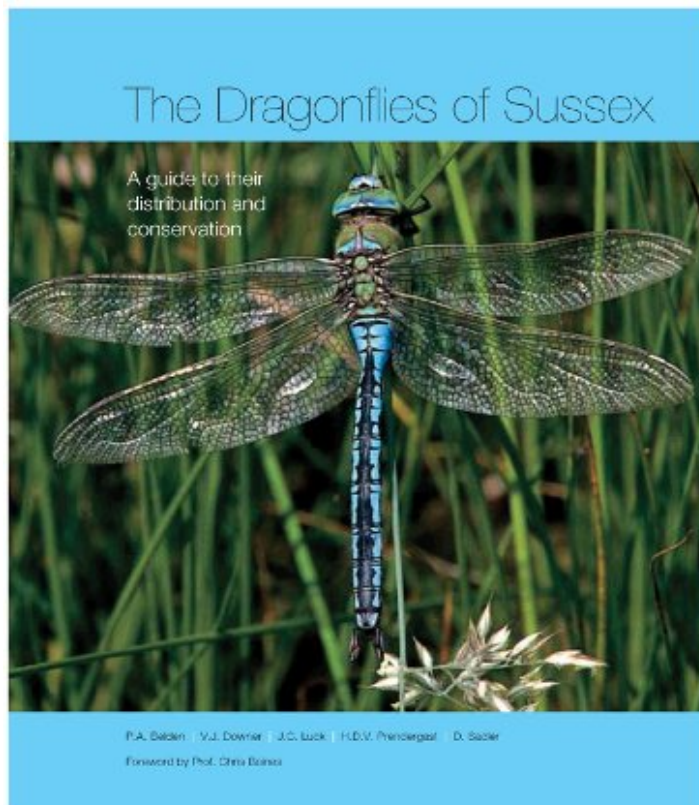
Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain & Ireland. S Brooks & R Lewington.

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

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.

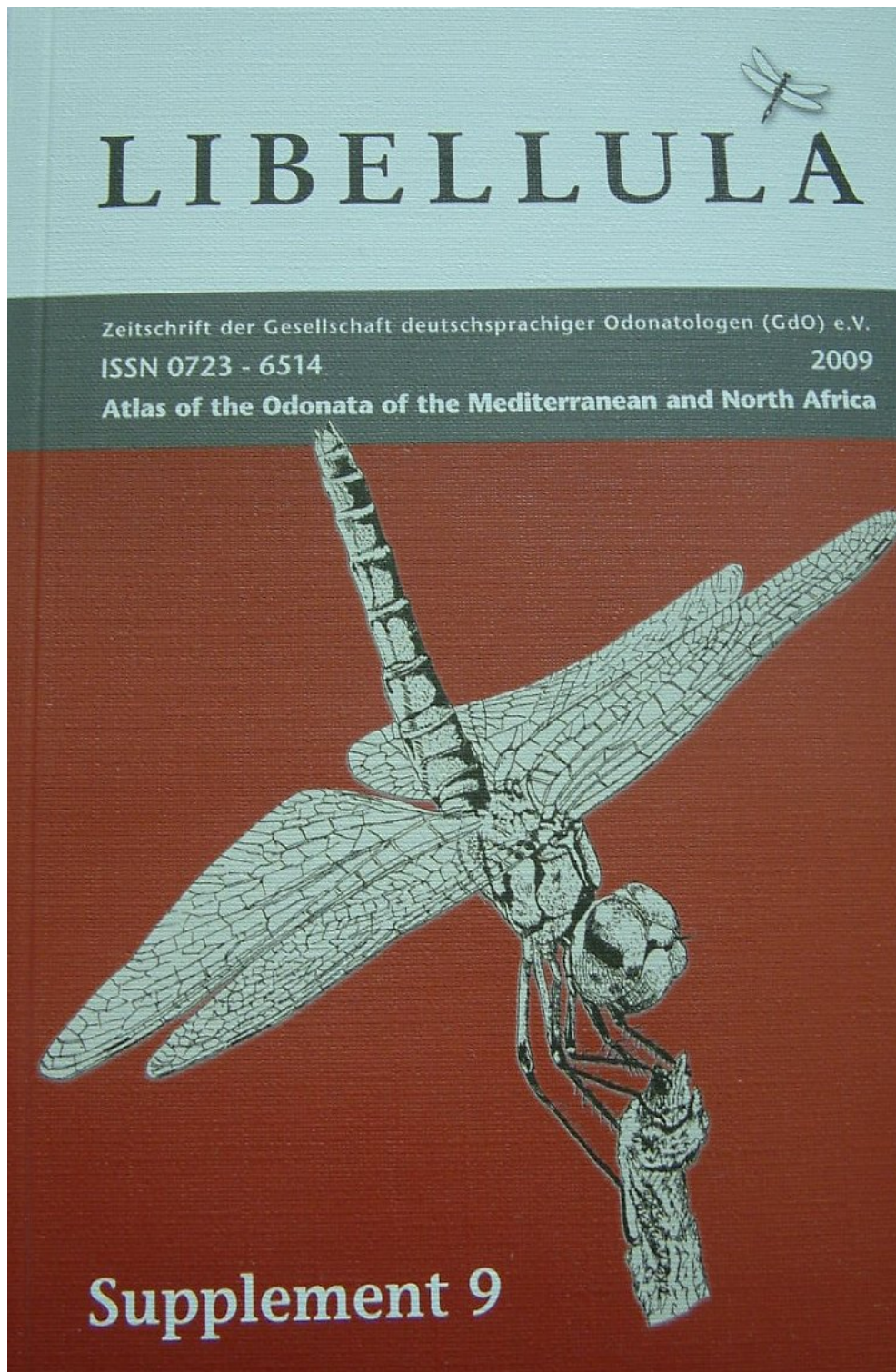
Available from Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, Sussex BN5 9SD. (01273)
492630, or from good book shops (ISBN 0-9525549-1-7)
£7.95 or £10 including post & packaging, payable to 'Sussex Wildlife Trust'
Proceeds go to dragonfly and wetland conservation

Generously sponsored by: Environment Agency, English Nature, Southern Water, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, Chichester District Council, Horsham District Council, Wakehurst Place, Profile Security, Temple Environmental Consultants, The Wetland Trust, Gravetye Manor, Harveys Brewery.

Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Atlas of the Odonata of the Mediterranean and North Africa

(Boudot, Kalkman, etc, 2009)



256 pages, 224 printed in colour and 32 in black and white, text in English

Covers all known 179 species of damselflies and dragonflies

Each species with colour photograph, information and distribution maps

In Libellula format, price £22.50 + p&p £2.50

Please send a cheque made payable to "British Dragonfly Society" to BDS Shop, 23 Bowker Way, Whittlesey, PE7 1PY