

# The current status of Dragonflies and Damselflies in Nottinghamshire

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## Introduction

Just over two decades ago, an article by M.C. Dennis on the status of Nottinghamshire's Dragonflies and Damselflies, was published in the popular, but short lived Nottinghamshire Naturalist magazine. The article provided a brief look at the status of the (then) twenty regularly occurring Dragonflies and Damselflies that could be found in the county with a bit of effort, in any given year.

Since then, the fortunes of the county's Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies) appears to have been relatively favourable, with most species appearing to do well in the intervening twenty years. Red-eyed Damselfly has expanded its breeding range and Small Red-eyed Damselfly was recorded for the first time as a breeding species.

Not a deal seems to have been written on Nottinghamshire's Odonata fauna since, so after several requests to provide a more up to date review, we've gathered together our own, and the many records we have been sent, in an attempt to provide a reasonably accurate assessment online.

## Nottinghamshire's Historical Odonata records

Perhaps surprisingly, both Dragonflies and Damselflies were rather poorly represented in J.W. Carr's '*The Invertebrate Fauna of Nottinghamshire*' Nottingham: J.& H. Bell Ltd. in 1916, and there are few records of even the commoner species.

A total of 14 species were listed as occurring in Nottinghamshire by Carr, including *Calopteryx virgo* **Beautiful Demoiselle** (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Cordulegaster boltonii* **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** (Donovan, 1807) which seem to have been lost to the county's Odonata fauna more than a century ago.

## A checklist of Nottinghamshire Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies)

Species shown with a red asterisk\*, are known from historical records only

### **Aeshnidae** Rambur, 1842

*Aeshna cyanea* **Southern Hawker** (Muller, 1764)  
*Aeshna grandis* **Brown Hawker** (Linnaeus, 1758)  
*Aeshna juncea* **Common Hawker** (Linnaeus, 1758)  
*Aeshna mixta* **Migrant Hawker** Latreille, 1805  
*Anax imperator* **Emperor Dragonfly** Leach, 1815  
*Anax parthenope* **Lesser Emperor Dragonfly** (Selys, 1839)  
*Brachytron pratense* **Hairy Dragonfly** (Muller, 1764)

### **Calopterygidae** Selys, 1850

*Calopteryx splendens* **Banded Demoiselle** (Harris, 1782)  
*Calopteryx virgo* **Beautiful Demoiselle** (Linnaeus, 1758) \*

### **Coenagrionidae** Kirby, 1890

*Coenagrion puella* **Azure Damselfly** (Linnaeus, 1758)  
*Coenagrion pulchellum* **Variable Damselfly** (Vander Linden, 1825)  
*Enallagma cyathigerum* **Common Blue Damselfly** (Charpentier, 1840)  
*Erythromma najas* **Red-eyed Damselfly** (Hansemann, 1823)  
*Erythromma viridulum* **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (Charpentier, 1840)  
*Ischnura elegans* **Blue-tailed Damselfly** (Vander Linden, 1820)  
*Pyrrhosoma nymphula* **Large Red Damselfly** (Sulzer, 1776)

## **Cordulegastridae** Calvert, 1893

*Cordulegaster boltonii* **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** (Donovan, 1807) \*

## **Lestidae** Calvert, 1901

*Lestes sponsa* **Emerald Damselfly** (Hansemann, 1823)

## **Libellulidae** Rambur, 1842

*Libellula depressa* **Broad-bodied Chaser** Linnaeus, 1758

*Libellula quadrimaculata* **Four-spotted Chaser** Linnaeus, 1758

*Orthetrum cancellatum* **Black-tailed Skimmer** (Linnaeus, 1758)

*Sympetrum danae* **Black Darter** (Sulzer, 1776)

*Sympetrum flaveolum* **Yellow-winged Darter** (Linnaeus, 1758)

*Sympetrum fonscolombii* **Red-veined Darter** (Selys, 1840)

*Sympetrum sanguineum* **Ruddy Darter** (Muller, 1764)

*Sympetrum striolatum* **Common Darter** (Charpentier, 1840)

## **Platycnemididae** Burmeister, 1839

*Platycnemis pennipes* **White-legged Damselfly** (Pallas, 1771)

## **Contributors of records/sources**

The distribution maps have been built from the Odonata records relating to VC56 (Nottinghamshire) which we have received from the following list of individual contributors and organisations. A special mention must go to the NBGRC, who provided us with a large number of records.

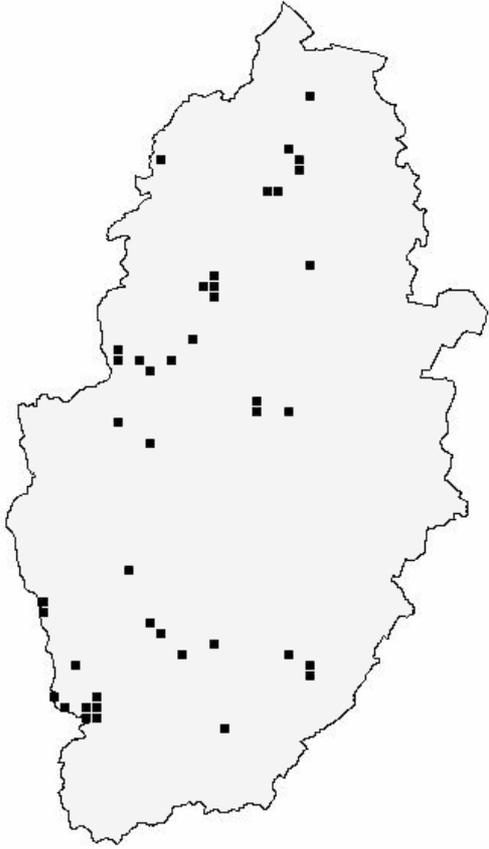
Alan and Pauline Bradford. Bob Merritt. Brian Wetton. Darren Matthews. David Hursthouse. David Yates. Ian Hunt. Keith and Belinda Lugg. Lound Moth Group. Mark Dennis (Colwick Park Bird Reports 1993-2001). Mark Dennis and Michael Walker (The Nottinghamshire Naturalist Magazine 1997-1999). Martin Gray. Martin Harvey. Martin Warne. Meg Skinner. Michael Craven. NBN Atlas (Dragonfly records from the British Dragonfly Society's Dragonfly Recording Network for the period up to 2014). Nottingham Biological and Geological Record Centre (NBGRC). Natural England - Invertebrate Site Register 2006. Netherfield Wildlife Group. Nottingham City Council. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. Paul Naylor. Peter Kirby (Bentinck Tip & Void Invertebrate survey 2007). Phil Cadman. Richard Rogers. Sherwood Forest Trust (2008 Oak Tree Heath invertebrate survey). Steve Horne. Stuart Warrington (The National Trust Clumber Park invertebrate records). Trevor and Dilys Pendleton. Wil Heeney.



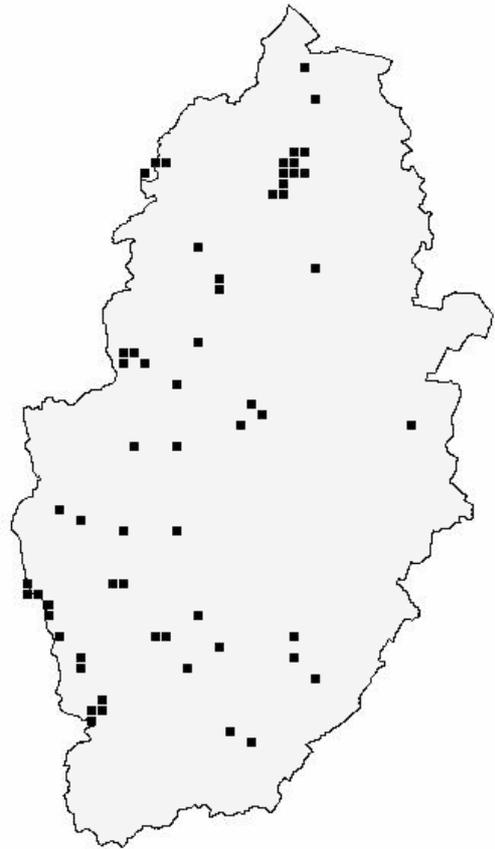
## **Distribution maps**

Brief species accounts and distribution maps are provided for 25 of the 27 species of Dragonflies and Damselflies known to occur (or have occurred) within VC56 Nottinghamshire. The maps are built on post-1970 records, so we have not produced maps for Beautiful Demoiselle and Golden-ringed Dragonfly, both of which have not occurred in the Nottinghamshire for many years.

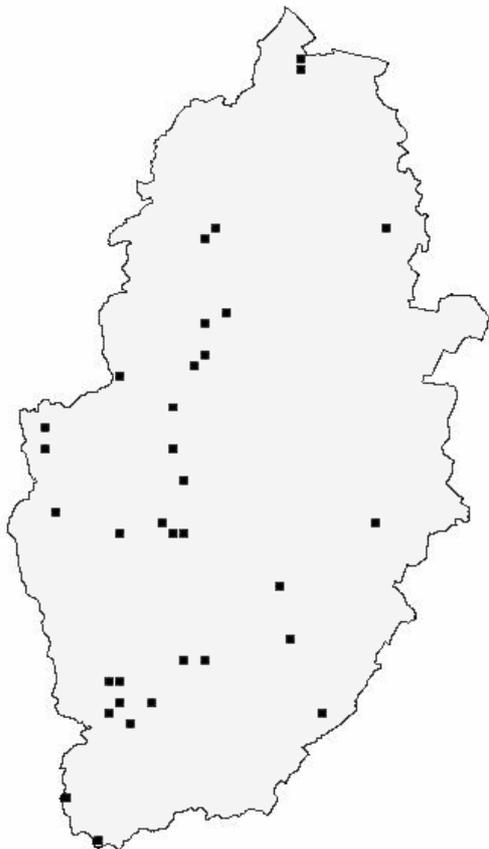
**Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea***



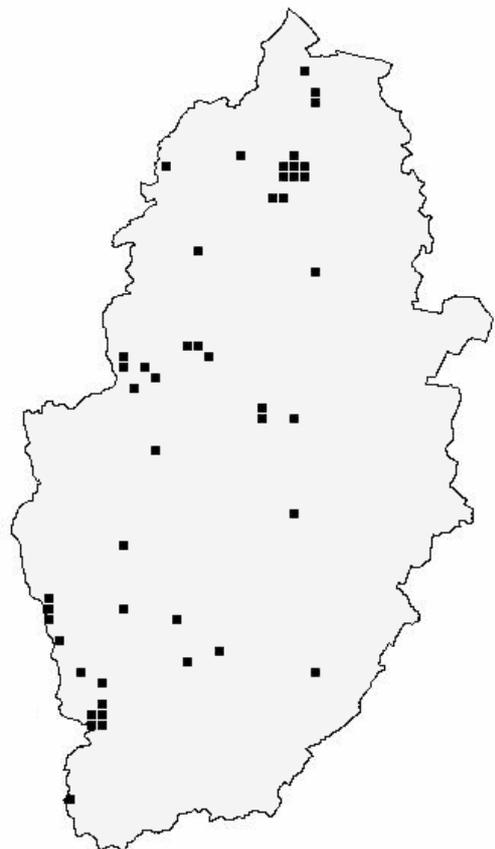
**Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis***



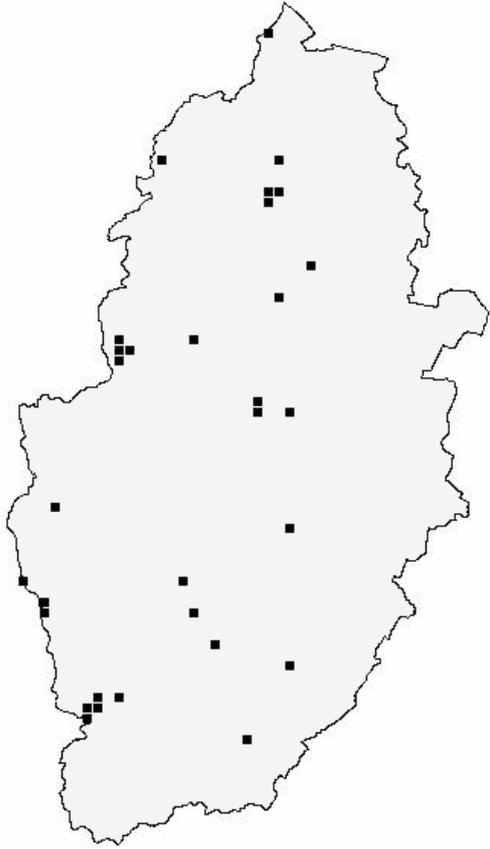
**Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea***



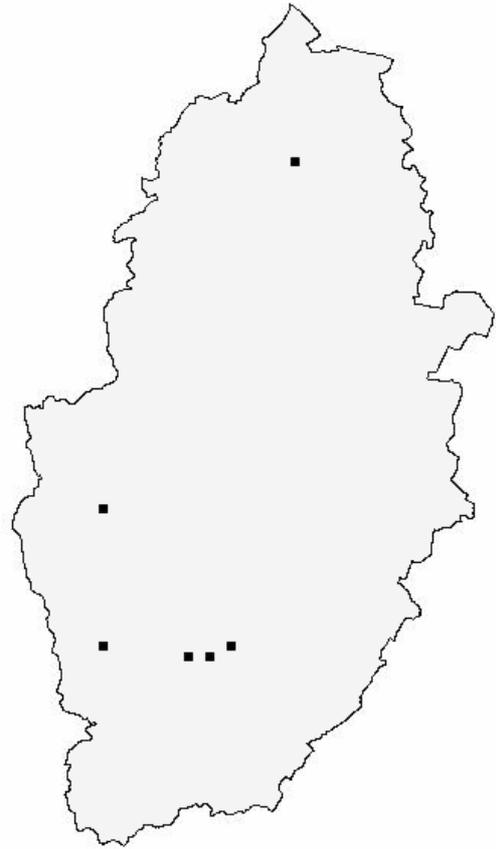
**Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta***



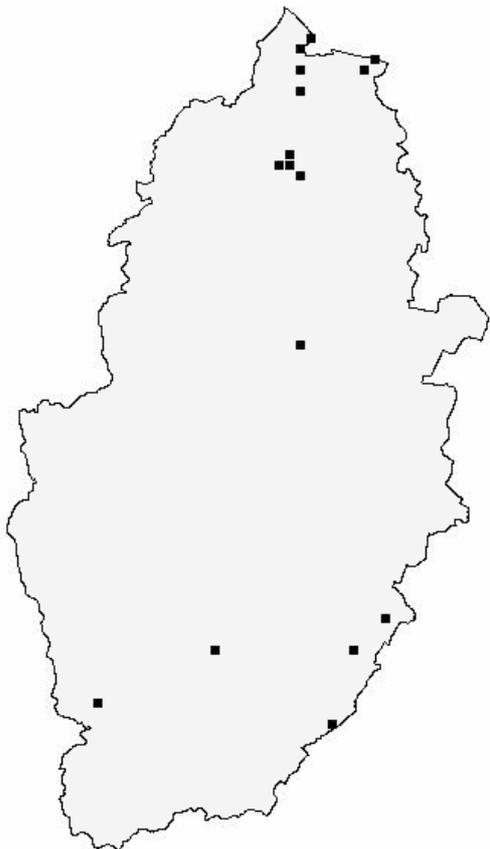
**Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator***



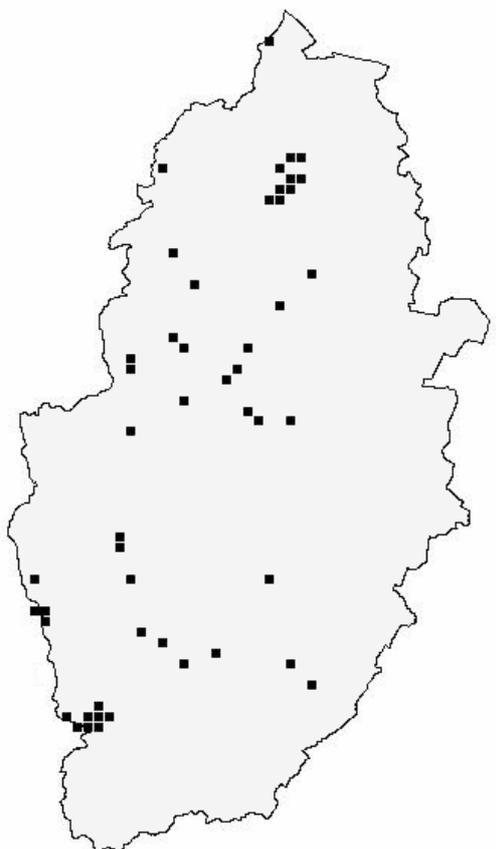
**Lesser Emperor Dragonfly *Anax parthenope***



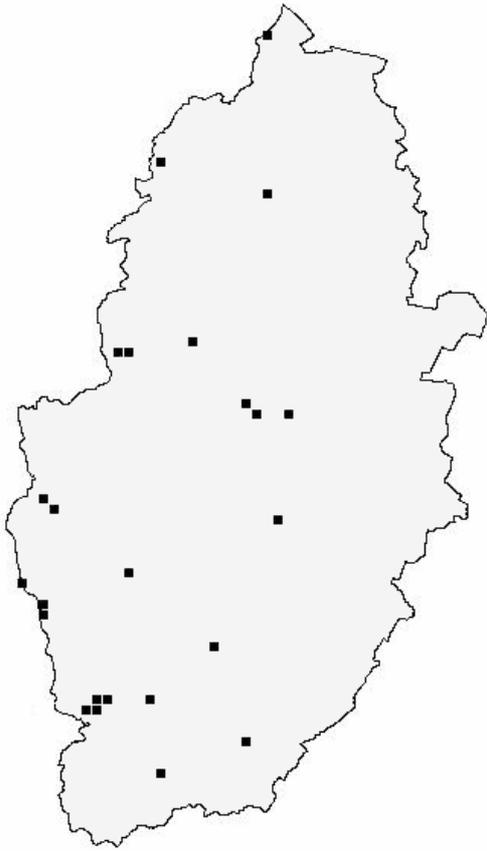
**Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense***



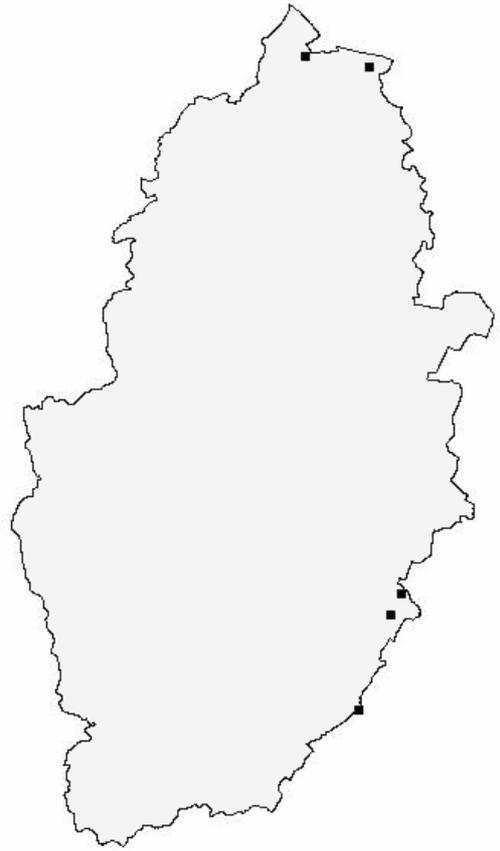
**Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens***



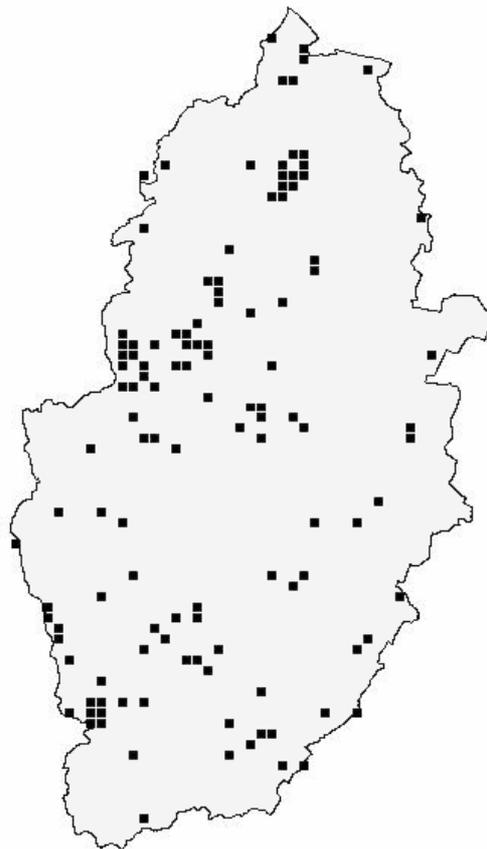
**Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella***



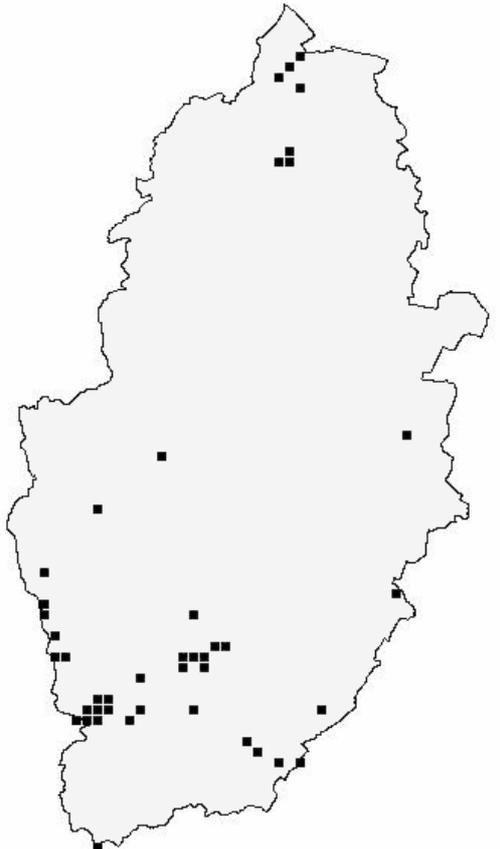
**Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum***



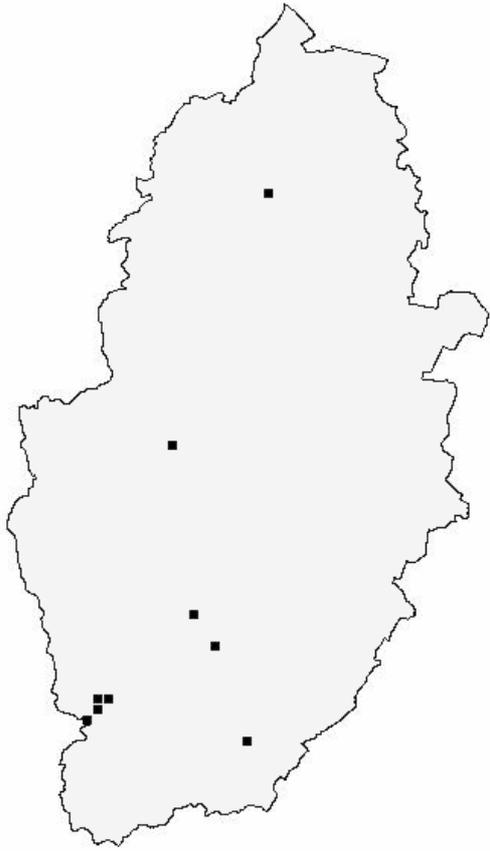
**Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum***



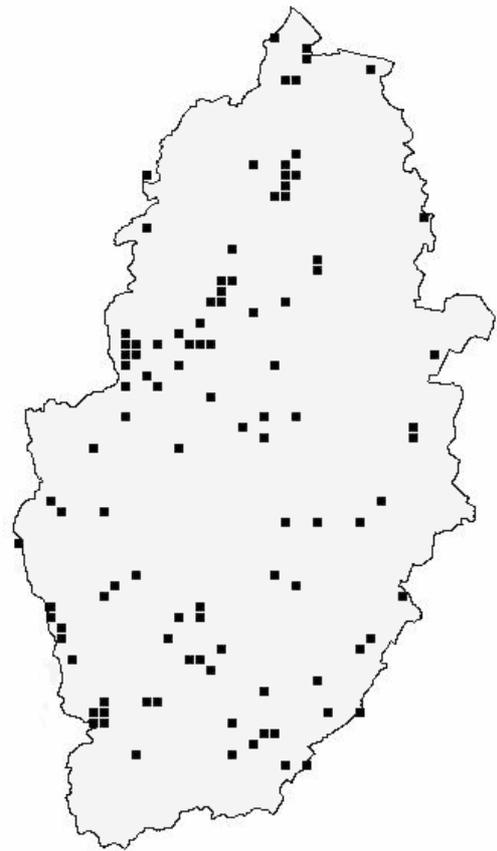
**Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas***



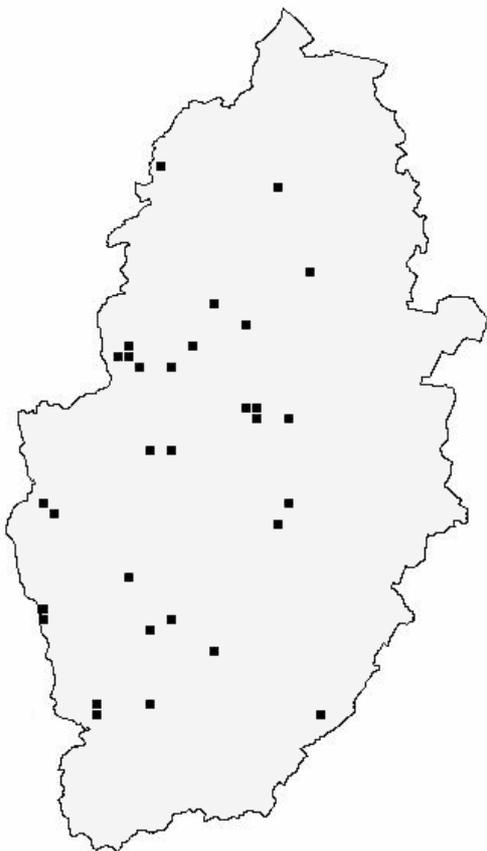
**Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum***



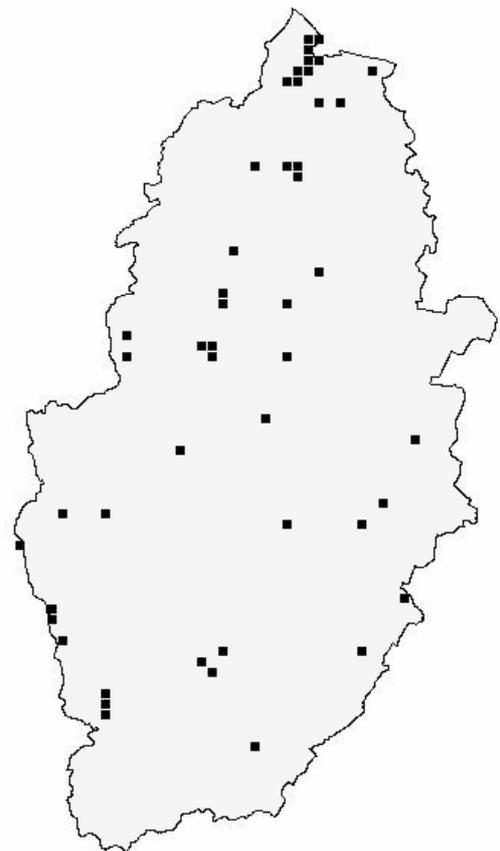
**Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans***



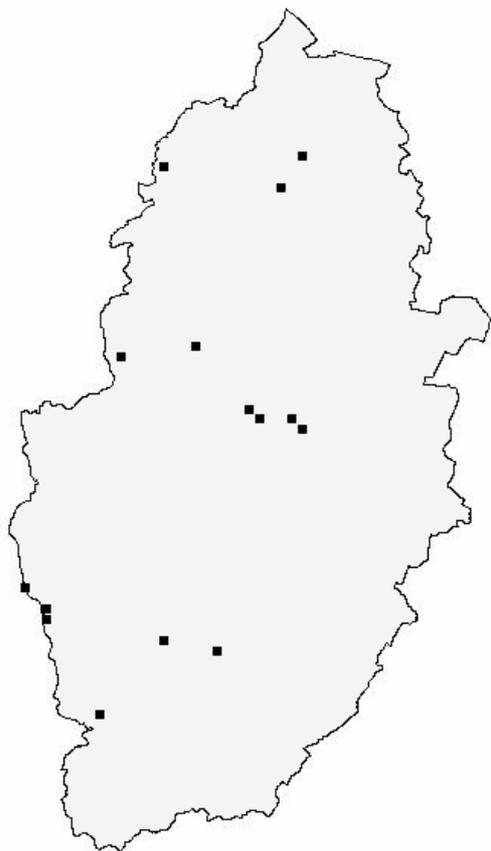
**Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula***



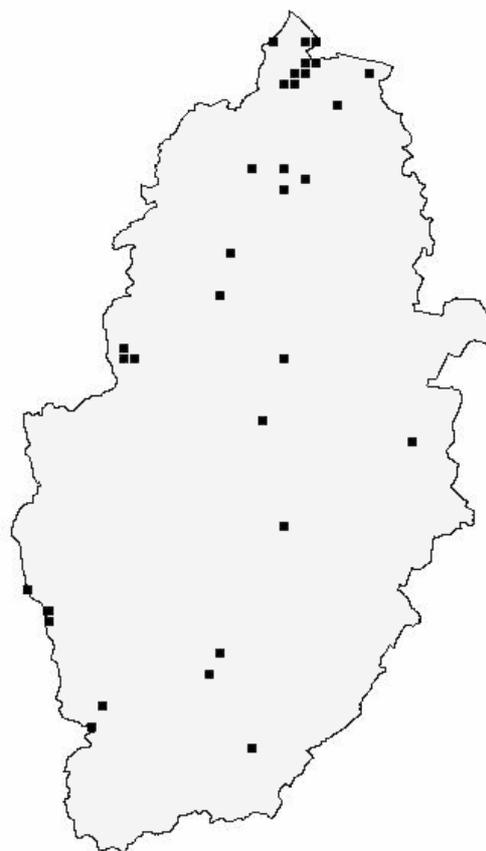
**Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa***



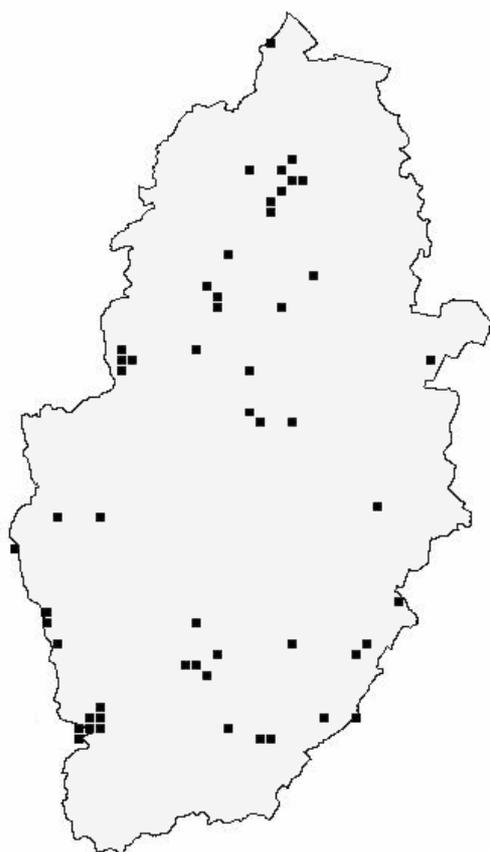
**Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa***



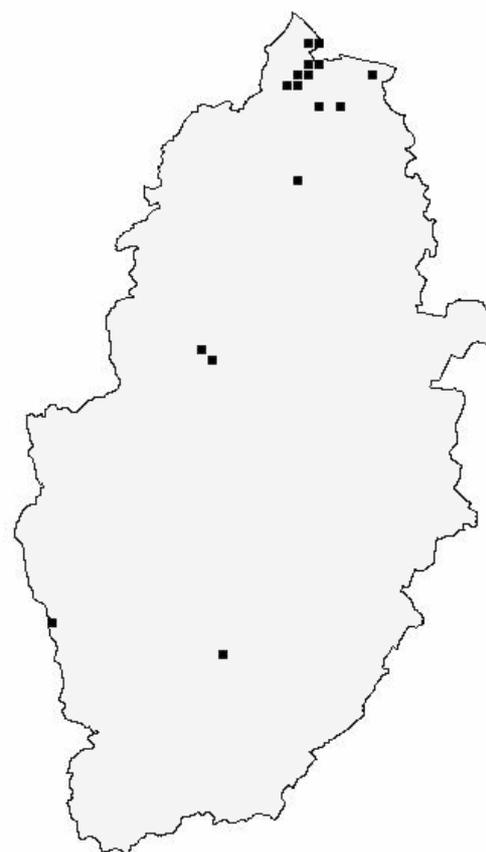
**Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata***



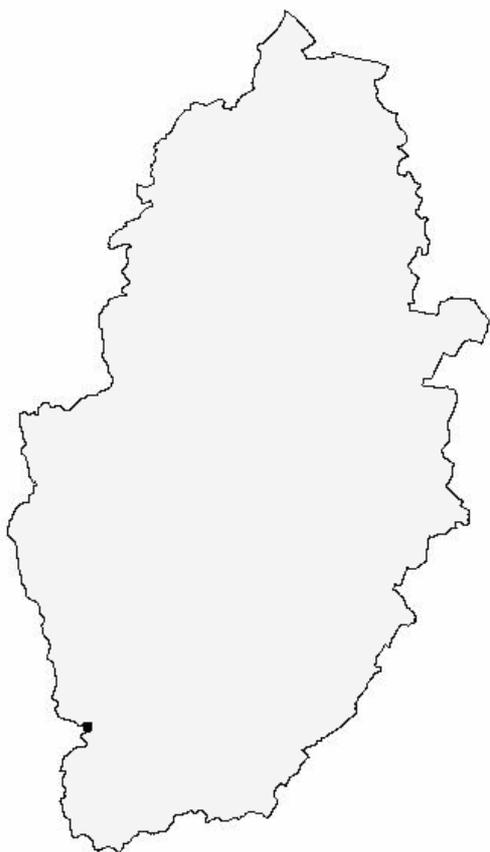
**Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum***



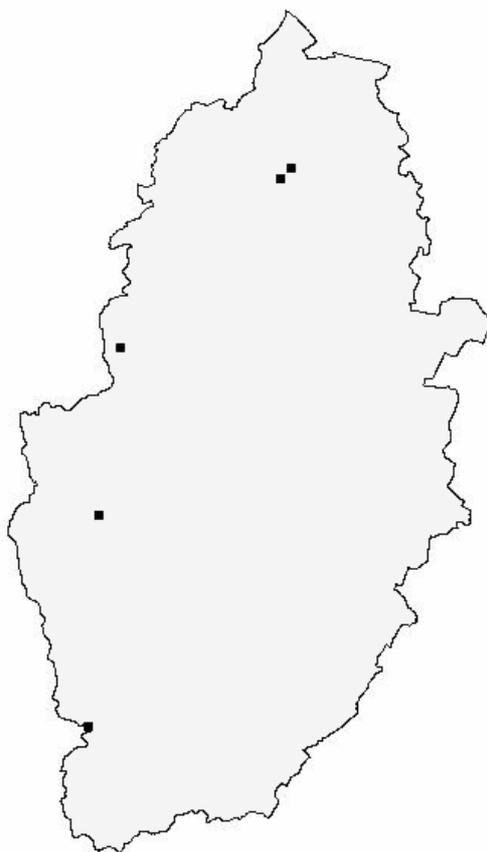
**Black Darter *Sympetrum danae***



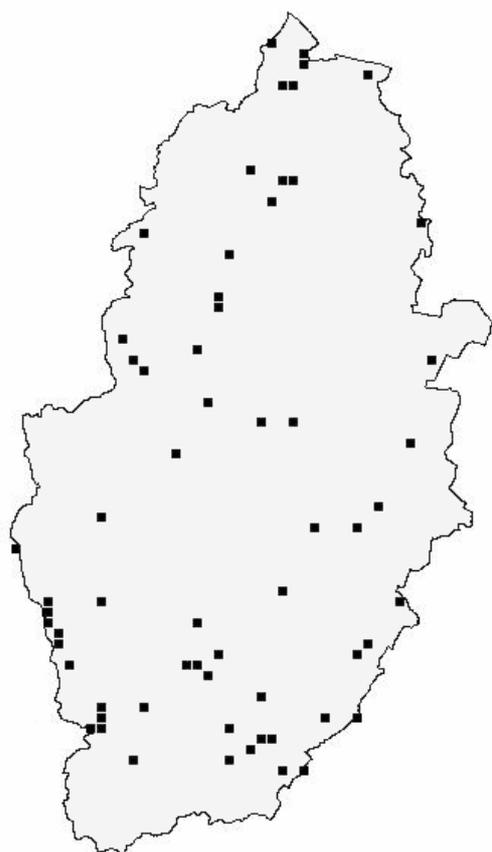
**Yellow-winged Darter *Sympetrum flaveolum***



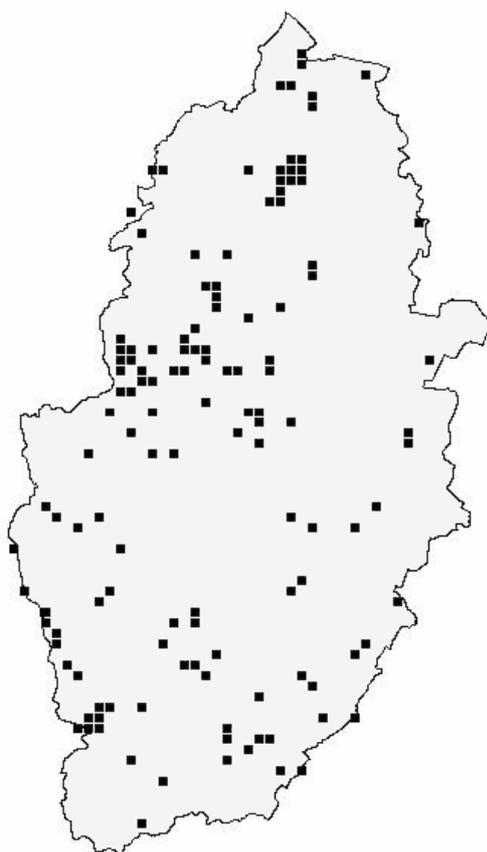
**Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii***



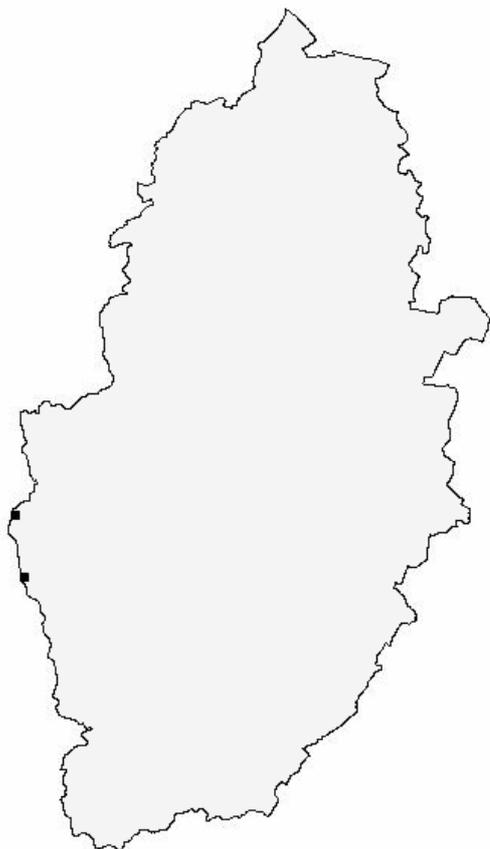
**Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum***



**Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum***



## White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*



## Species accounts

### **Aeshnidae** Rambur, 1842

#### *Aeshna cyanea* **Southern Hawker** (Muller, 1764)

Generally widespread in most parts of the county. Often occurs well away from water, including gardens.

#### *Aeshna grandis* **Brown Hawker** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Common and widespread throughout Nottinghamshire. Often recorded along woodland rides and edges, well away from water. This is the only UK Hawker with a brown suffusion to the wings.

#### *Aeshna juncea* **Common Hawker** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Often described as being a Dragonfly of moorland, Common Hawker was described by Dennis in 1997 as being 'rare and local' in Nottinghamshire, with its stronghold being in the Idle Valley Carrlands in the very north of the county. There are recent records from the Budby South Forest and Clumber Park areas, with a string of records from heathland sites lying on Sherwood Sandstone.

The NBN Atlas lists a large number of Nottinghamshire records, effectively giving it the same distribution as Southern Hawker, but its status has probably changed very little since 1997, so many of these records possibly relate to misidentifications.

#### *Aeshna mixta* **Migrant Hawker** Latreille, 1805

Common and widespread over the whole of the county and will often be the commonest of the four *Aeshnas* at large water bodies. This is another Hawker, prone to occurring well away from the nearest water and will turn up along woodland rides and over well-planted gardens in the late Summer

#### *Anax imperator* **Emperor Dragonfly** Leach, 1815

Geographically, this Dragonfly is regular at Gravel Pits and large ponds throughout Nottinghamshire and is perhaps made a little more noticeable than the other four regular Hawkers, through its large size and the male's distinctive blue/green colouration.



**Top photographs** - Southern Hawker (left) and Migrant Hawker. **Middle** - Blue-tailed Damselfly (left) and Large Red Damselfly. **Bottom** - Four-spotted Chaser (left) and Black-tailed Skimmer.

*Anax parthenope* **Lesser Emperor Dragonfly** (Selys, 1839)

A rare migrant to the county, with at least six records since 1998.

Nottinghamshire's first record of Lesser Emperor came from Holme Pierrepont on 20/06/98 (Critchley, A.). Two years later, one was recorded at Colwick CP on 13/08/00 (Dennis, M.C.), with one at Netherfield Ash Lagoons on 16/07/02 (Woodward, R.). 2006 saw records from Lound GP on 18/07/06 (Hursthouse, D.), before another was found at Annesley Pit Top on 28/07/06 (Naylor, P.). The most recent record appears to be from Martin's Pond at Wollaton on 19/07/10 (Shields, T.).

*Brachytron pratense* **Hairy Dragonfly** (Muller, 1764)

This is still a rare Nottinghamshire Dragonfly and despite being recorded occasionally from sites in the south of the county, it is still largely confined to the Idle Valley NR, Gringley Carr and Misson Carr.

**Calopterygidae** Selys, 1850

*Calopteryx splendens* **Banded Demoiselle** (Harris, 1782)

Widespread and common in most parts of the county, most often found alongside slow-moving rivers with lush bankside vegetation. However, we have occasionally recorded wandering males in more unusual locations; including one flying through a supermarket car park in New Ollerton.

*Calopteryx virgo* **Beautiful Demoiselle** (Linnaeus, 1758) \*

J.W. Carr lists just a single record along Rainworth Water near Mansfield, possibly in the Harlow Wood to Rainworth area. This may be the county's only reliable record, as two recent records on the NBN Atlas from Wilford Clay Pit in 1978 and Barton-in-Fabis in 2013, have no observer or recorder associated to them and are probably best ignored.

**Coenagrionidae** Kirby, 1890

*Coenagrion puella* **Azure Damselfly** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Less widespread than both Common Blue and Blue-tailed Damselflies, with which it is often found. Generally prefers smaller pools and ponds, usually in discreet colonies.

*Coenagrion pulchellum* **Variable Damselfly** (Vander Linden, 1825)

Certainly one of Nottinghamshire's rarest Damselflies and restricted to just two opposing parts of the county. In the north of Nottinghamshire, it has been recorded from both the Misson and Misterton areas, yet there appear to be no records more recent than the late 1990's.

The most reliable site for Variable Damselfly, is currently along a stretch of the Grantham Canal, where it runs into Leicestershire, but it has recently been recorded from two sites near Cotham (Merritt, B.).

*Enallagma cyathigerum* **Common Blue Damselfly** (Charpentier, 1840)

Our most common Damselfly, being present anywhere throughout Nottinghamshire where there is water. Will commonly occur at garden ponds, even within urban areas.

*Erythromma najas* **Red-eyed Damselfly** (Hansemann, 1823)

Present in Nottinghamshire at just a single site prior to 1991, which the NBN Atlas presumably lists as near Trowell in 1976 (Eyre, S. and Eyre, E.). Red-eyed Damselfly has undergone a rapid range expansion in recent years, yet still remains more or less absent from the Mansfield and Sherwood Forest areas. Most known sites are in south Nottinghamshire, but it is found in the north of the county at Idle Stop, Gringley Carr and the Idle Valley NR.

*Erythromma viridulum* **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (Charpentier, 1840)

Arrived in the UK in 1999 and quickly expanded north through southern and midland counties of the UK, to reach Nottinghamshire in 2006, where it was recorded on a number of occasions from Attenborough NR (Rogers, R.). Found as far north as the Idle Valley NR in 2014, this is still an uncommon Damselfly and still largely restricted to south Nottinghamshire.

*Ischnura elegans* **Blue-tailed Damselfly** (Vander Linden, 1820)

Common and abundant throughout Nottinghamshire, wherever there is water. Commonly occur around garden ponds within urban areas.

*Pyrhosoma nymphula* **Large Red Damselfly** (Sulzer, 1776)

Widespread in most parts of the county and another Damselfly that will occur around well vegetated gardens with small ponds. Has probably undergone an increase in range, as Dennis regarded it as being 'local in the county' back in 1997.

## **Cordulegastridae** Calvert, 1893

### *Cordulegaster boltonii* **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** (Donovan, 1807) \*

Formerly recorded every year from Mansfield in the early part of the 1900's according to Carr. Now long since lost, two (single observer) records on the NBN Atlas from Girton in 1999, have to be regarded as dubious and probably misidentifications.

## **Lestidae** Calvert, 1901

### *Lestes sponsa* **Emerald Damselfly** (Hansemann, 1823)

Another common Damselfly at many Nottinghamshire sites, especially the Carrlands in the north of the county. However, it is by no means restricted in its range and will be met with along ditches and the banks of many still waters.

## **Libellulidae** Rambur, 1842

### *Libellula depressa* **Broad-bodied Chaser** Linnaeus, 1758

Fairly common and widespread over most of Nottinghamshire and probably more than is evident from the accompanying distribution map. Often recorded in small numbers at most sites.

### *Libellula quadrimaculata* **Four-spotted Chaser** Linnaeus, 1758

Widespread and relatively thinly scattered in much of Nottinghamshire. This is another species which has its stronghold in the north of the county, around the Carrs of Misson and Gringley etc.

### *Orthetrum cancellatum* **Black-tailed Skimmer** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Generally common and found at many sites throughout the county. Usually present at open waters, with bare shorelines. Probably increasing in Nottinghamshire.

### *Sympetrum danae* **Black Darter** (Sulzer, 1776)

Generally restricted to the Misson, Misterton and Gringley areas of north Nottinghamshire, where it is frequent along the Carrland ditches. Records away from here are rare, but it has been recorded from Budby South Forest, Netherfield Ash Lagoons and Bennerley Marsh.

### *Sympetrum flaveolum* **Yellow-winged Darter** (Linnaeus, 1758)

An irregular migrant to the UK and one prone to large-scale invasions such as 1995 and 2006. Yellow-winged Darter appears to have reached Nottinghamshire on just one occasion, when recorded at Attenborough NR on 18/06/95 (Wetton, B.).

### *Sympetrum fonscolombii* **Red-veined Darter** (Selys, 1840)

A scarce but almost annual migrant to the UK. There was a huge influx of Red-veined Darters into the UK in 2006, but it reached Nottinghamshire twice prior to that year, when there were earlier records from Attenborough NR on 06/07/96 (Wetton, B.), Lound GP on 16/07/02 (Hursthouse, D.) and Attenborough NR from 28/06/04 to 01/07/04 (Aitken, A. Rogers, R. and Wetton, B.).

The influx of 2006 saw a number of records from Lound GP between 03/06/06 and 23/10/06 (Hursthouse, D.). Red-veined Darters also appeared at Annesley Pit Top between 02/07/06 and 11/08/06 (Naylor, P.) and from Warsop Main Pit Top between 07/07/06 and 23/07/06 (Pendleton, T.A. and Pendleton, D.T.).

### *Sympetrum sanguineum* **Ruddy Darter** (Muller, 1764)

Less frequent than the similar looking Common Darter, but still widespread and found throughout the county, at a wide range of sites.

### *Sympetrum striolatum* **Common Darter** (Charpentier, 1840)

Often common where it occurs and found widely across Nottinghamshire. Will often be found well away from water, even at seemingly very dry sites along woodland ridges and edges and regular at garden ponds.

## **Platycnemididae** Burmeister, 1839

### *Platycnemis pennipes* **White-legged Damselfly** (Pallas, 1771)

On the Nottinghamshire list on the basis of a single observer records via the NBN Atlas from the Erewash Canal at Langley Mill on 17/10/90 and the Erewash Confluence, north-west of Selston on 28/08/97 (Ambler, E.A.).

This Damselfly occurs regularly in several areas of neighbouring Leicestershire and Rutland, but there are just four records listed for Derbyshire and apparently none from Lincolnshire.

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