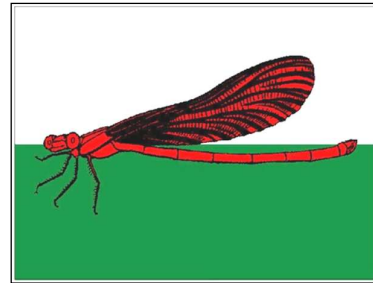


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**North Wales
Dragonfly
Newsletter
No. 107**

31st July 2026



**Odonata news and events from across the vice counties of
Anglesey, Merionethshire, Caernarvonshire, Denbighshire and Flintshire**

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facility  on the Cofnod home page: <https://www.cofnod.org.uk>



Hi all,

The unprecedented northwards movement of some Odonata species in response to human-induced Climate Change has led me to put out more newsletters than normal lately to alert folks to what species they might expect now and in the future. Interesting times but the implications are also extremely worrying for the future of all wildlife and us humans too. It's not just that species are on the move but habitats are changing. Yesterday I visited the Gwern Engen bog lake in the Sychnant Pass, Conwy and found it virtually dry. I've been recording dragonflies there for 25 years and never seen the like. It was always a great and accessible place to see our moorland species and I was expecting the Small Red Damsel *Ceriagrion tenellum* to eventually turn up there. And the drought is related, of course, to the dreadful scorched south side of Sychnant Pass recently.

Small Redeye must have flooded across North Wales largely undetected

There is a growing list of new local sightings, especially this Summer, at widely dispersed ponds and lakes with emergent vegetation where Small Redeye *Erythromma viridulum* is being found in abundance. On the 16th July, John Oates discovered good numbers at several Valley Wetlands lakes, west Anglesey, including mating pairs [Llyn Cerrig-bach SH30607658; Valley Wetlands west SH30717682; Valley Wetlands east SH30867669]. A friend of Eddie Urbanski referred to "plague proportions" in reference to these Valley Wetlands occurrences.



Male Small Redeye, Valley Wetlands, 16th July 2026. Photo copyright John Oates.

The very latest discovery was made by Eddie Urbanski on the 24th July at the Bryn Cethin Bach fishing lakes [SH30632919] near Abersoch, along the Lleyn. So, how much farther south has the Small Redeye reached?

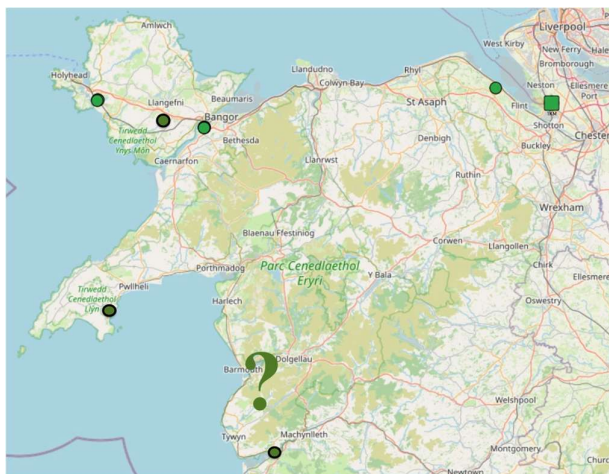


Male Small Redeye, Bryn Cethin Bach fishing lakes, Abersoch, 26 July 2026. Photo copyright Eddie Urbanski.

In the last two days I have visited ponds and lakes close to the coast on either side of Conwy, from Abergwyngregyn to Rhuddlan, in the hope of finding the species without success. So, thanks for being so observant John and Eddie.

I have just heard from Lynn Gander, Ceredigion Dragonfly Recorder, that two Small Redeyes have been seen this week at RSPB Ynys Hir Reserve west of Machynlleth so I would be amazed if they haven't already reached Merionethshire across the Dyfi Estuary in North Wales.

The recent discoveries of strong colonies from the Burton Mere Wetlands to at least Abersoch since July 2024 (see map and also newsletters numbers 102,105 &106) would suggest that the species has been breeding undetected along the lowland North Wales coastal fringe for a number of years prior to that year. It seems we just don't have the required numbers of dedicated recorders here, compared to most English vice counties, to detect colonization and range expansion of new arrivals.



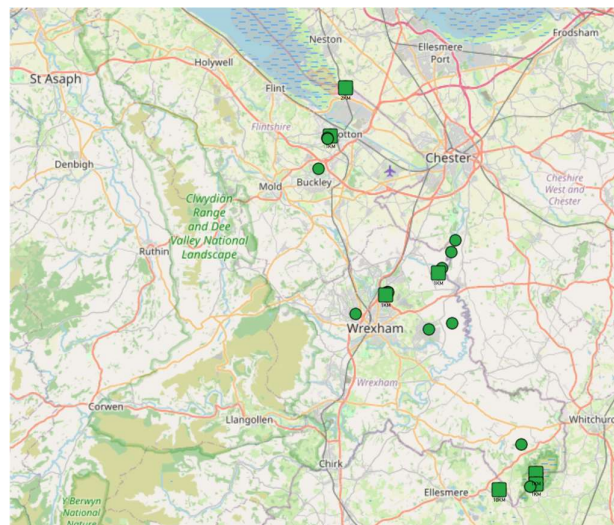
Currently known distribution of Small Redeye in North Wales modified from the Cofnod database generated version.



2025 distribution of Small Redeye across Britain taken from the NBN Atlas.

It is interesting to compare the dispersal pattern of the Small Redeye with that of its sister damsel species, the Large Redeye *Erythromma najas*. The Small Redeye's 1999 British arrival was in Essex. It then underwent a rapid and well-monitored spread northwards and westwards at an average rate of about 36.5 km per year, being detected in Cheshire by 2015 and in Shropshire by 2019. After crossing our border with Cheshire at Burton Mere Wetlands (not sure when but likely before the first records by Sheelagh Halsey, Roger Halsey and Graham Jones in 2024), the Small Redeye has to have dispersed along our coast at a remarkable speed, certainly reaching Parc Menai before 2024 (as recorded by Jonni Price that year).

Compare this with the Large Redeye that has been present in southern Britain for at least 200 years! It was first detected in North Wales at Fenns and Bettisfield mosses [SJ4836] by 'LCES' in July 1970 and subsequently it hasn't strayed far from our eastern border (see map). The farthest west it has been seen is at Brookhill Nature Reserve, Buckley [SJ281653] (where I recorded it in July 2006) and also at Wepre Park [SJ292693] (Emma Broad in July 2010 and David Winnard in June 2018); all these being only some 5 miles from the border near Chester. Both species occur at Burton Mere Wetlands.



Known distribution of Large Redeye in North Wales generated from the Cofnod database.

It is not easy to explain the difference in dispersal patterns as both species inhabit similar still or slow-flowing freshwaters, like lakes, ponds and canals, with floating vegetation.

However, Small Redeye shows a higher tolerance for brackish conditions, utilizes a broader range of micro-habitats, including grazing marsh ditches and algal mats, and sits further out from banks, seldom visiting them (The dragonflies of Sussex, Belden et al, 2004). There is also a preference for submerged vegetation where it breaks the water's surface as with Hornwort, the milfoils and algal mats. Moreover, the Large Redeye seems to prefer larger bodies of water with floating waterlily or pondweeds, the males defending individual leaves territorially. Given its dispersal along our lowland fringe, I suspect that the Small Redeye's higher tolerance of brackish conditions may be a crucial factor in its rapid range expansion here. It's preference for colonising coastal areas may be deduced from the NBN Atlas map shown above.

It is very important, though, not to assume Small Redeye when we see a blue and black damselfly with red eyes sitting on floating vegetation a good distance from our eastern border. Please check out for both species and crucially take a photograph, it doesn't have to be perfect. And, if you live down in Merionethshire, why not check out suitable sites around the coast there whilst Small Redeye is still on the wing.



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