

New Forest Biodiversity Conference March 2025

‘The Dragonflies of the New Forest’: Forty Years on

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It has been 40 years since the publication of ‘The Dragonflies of the New Forest’ by Noelle and Tony Welstead, a small booklet that described all the species of dragonfly and damselfly breeding in the New Forest at that time, citing their status and providing a baseline for further Odonata recording in the Forest. This illustrated talk provides an overview of the changes over the last four decades and looks at some of the nationally rare/scarce dragonfly and damselfly species in the New Forest and their habitat requirements. It will indicate why the Forest is a key area for Odonata, which includes one of the largest populations of the rare and legally protected Southern Damselfly in Europe. The latest occupancy trends will be discussed, including the loss of one species and the decline of several others in the Forest and how this compares to national trends. Range expansion in response to our changing and warming climate and arrival of species relatively new to Britain is described. Threats to the Forest’s freshwater habitats and species are highlighted and some predictions for additional species in the future will be offered.