

North Wales Dragonfly Newsletter No. 51. 15th May 2011.

Hi all,



Vagrant Emperor incursion

This newsletter has been put out to broadcast what should turn out to be the first *Anax ephippiger* (Vagrant Emperor) to be seen in North Wales. Steve Holmes and Marion Barlow reported a male Vagrant Emperor at Nant Pond on Bardsey Island on the 21st April. Although not yet officially sanctioned by the Odonata Records Committee, I feel confident enough in Steve and Marion's description to make the provisional announcement in order to draw attention to the possibility of there being more to be seen in North Wales in the near future. Their observations were made over a 5 hour period in which the insect made frequent visits to the pond but, sadly, no photos were taken and they didn't pass on the information to the Bardsey bird observatory staff, so that more people could have witnessed the event, until after leaving the island. The dragonfly description can be summarised as:

Small, dark-looking emperor-type dragonfly with distinctly blue basal segments to abdomen; eyes brown, pterostigma elongated and 'golden' tinge to the hindwing.

The brown eyes should rule out *Anax parthenope* (Lesser Emperor) and the only dragonfly which could be flying this early in the year would be *Brachytron pratense* (Hairy Hawker) but none have been seen on Bardsey and the species is not likely to be mistaken for Vagrant Emperor in any case.



Male *Anax ephippiger* hawking over a Swaziland lake, Nov 2009. Photo A. Brandon

Adrian Parr informs me that to date 35 observations of Vagrant Emperor, ranging from possible to definite, have been made between the 9th January and 11th May from as far afield as Cornwall and Kent to the Outer Hebrides and the Orkneys Isles. More may yet turn up anywhere so please keep a look out.

It seems to me that a good place to find Vagrant Emperor is along our coast. In April 2001 I witnessed several Vagrant Emperors hawking for insects at the coastal end of the Bocquer Valley in Majorca. When I returned the following day with a camera there were none to be seen and I concluded that they had moved off across the sea to the Spanish mainland. Similarly, all the 2009 North Wales observations of adult migrant *Sympetrum fonscolombii* (Red-veined Darter) were along our coast. So, if you get a chance, please visit some sunny, sheltered coastal sites in the next week. You never know your luck.

Early emergence continued

Ian Hawkins observed a Broad-bodied Chaser at his garden pond at Llanfairpwllgwyngyll on Anglesey on the 21st April. This beats the previous earliest record held by Dafydd Roberts at Gors y Gedol, Mochras, Merioneth of the 27th April 2007. My own earliest is 30th April 2007 when several were emerging from my garden pond at Rowen. Alan T Williams photographed this immature male Broad-Bodied Chaser in his garden near Llanwnda on 1st May.



Immature male *Libellula depressa*, Llanwnda 1st May 2011. Photo Alan T Williams

On the 11th May Dick Eastwood visited Llyn Tecwyn Isaf and, in addition to the common damselfly species, got two *Libellula quadrimaculata* (Four-spotted Chaser), four Hairy Hawkers and three teneral *O. coerulescens* (Keeled Skimmer). This is the earliest observation of the latter species for North Wales. The previous earliest

sighting was C. Middle's count of 427 adults at Cors Geirch on 22 May 1999! This may reflect the infrequency of observers to the sites for the species so early rather than an actual earlier emergence for the species this year.

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