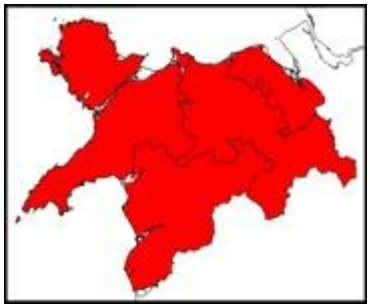

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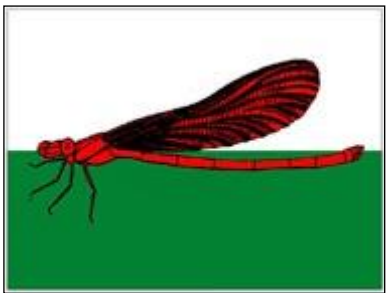

12th August 2024

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

Hi all,

A new species for North Wales!

Last Wednesday I was verifying Odonata records submitted to iRecord, the national recording scheme. Jonni Price of RSPB Conwy had entered a species list for a Parc Menai pond on the 23rd July which, surprisingly, included Large Redeye (*Erythromma najas*), but without a photo. As this species has only ever been recorded before from the extreme east of North Wales close to the Cheshire and Shropshire borders, my reaction was to classify the record as "Not accepted – unable to verify". Jonni, to his credit, lost no time in e-mailing me to say he was adamant that he had seen the species so I immediately contacted Richard Gallon of Cofnod, whose office is nearby the pond, to see if he could offer any help.

Richard visited the site on Friday and his long-distance shots were adequate enough to confirm the presence of a population of *Erythromma* on surface plants well out from the pond's margin. Richard and I then went to the pond independently on sunny Saturday and to our astonishment we both confirmed the presence of a strong breeding population of Small Redeye, *E. viridulum*. Richard took excellent shots of the damsels on the floating vegetation with his powerful long-range lens and I mostly waited patiently for the males to visit the marginal bushes to sun themselves at close range (see photos).

This species was thought to have been knocking on the door of North Wales for some years, as it had reached Cheshire by 2015 and Shropshire by 2019 in its steady, closely monitored range expansion northwards and westwards across England since its first appearance in Essex in 1999. This expansion is likely Climate Change driven. It had seemed though, as with its larger close relative *E. najas*, that it was reluctant to move westwards into North Wales for some unexplained reason. So, the question is - has Small Redeye been present for a number of years along the low-lying coastal belt of North Wales, keeping below the radar and avoiding detection? And could this be due to the relatively low density of dragonfly recorders in our 5 VCs compared to most English VCs? Or, has the species somehow skipped over the intervening 75 or more kilometres of ground? Maybe it arrived at Parc Menai as eggs or larvae on introduced vegetation. Richard is not aware of this but has been informed of introduced fish. Could damsel larvae have arrived in their water?

Anyway, no matter how the Small Redeye got to Parc Menai, very well done Jonni on making the discovery and thanks you Richard for help in confirming the species of Redeye.

Male *Erythromma viridulum* resting on dogwood, Parc Menai. Note the extensive blue below segments S2-3 and 8 and relatively short wings. Photo Allan Brandon 10th August 2024.

Tandem *Erythromma viridulum* on yellow water-lily, Parc Menai pond [SH54206980]. Photo Richard Gallon, 10th August 2024.

Erythromma viridulum ovipositing in surface hornwort, Parc Menai. Photo Allan Brandon, 10th August 2024.

The pond with Small Redeye [SH542698] is the largest of several artificial water bodies associated with the development of the Parc Menai Business Park. It is now mature with a good submerged/surface crop of hornwort (see photo) and, close to the rotten wooden observation platform, floating yellow water-lily. There is a cobble beach and marginal shrubs such as dogwood. The Small Redeye mostly carries out its breeding activity well away from the margins of the pond on the surface hornwort (see photos). The males can be seen on yellow water-lily and floating fallen leaves but they also come to rest on marginal vegetation such as the dogwood shrubs.

Parc Menai pond. Note the surface hornwort in the centre of the pond. Photo Allan Brandon, 10th August 2024.

We should now keep an eye on other ponds in the lowland fringe of North Wales and across Anglesey that have copious surface vegetation like the one at Parc Menai. I would find it incredible if the Small Redeye is not present elsewhere in our region. Its main flight period is June to August but it has been seen in May and September.

Other odonate species present (see photos) were Blue Emperor (*Anax imperator*), Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*), Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*), and Common Bluetail (*Ischnura elegans*). I saw no bluets but Jonni Price also recorded Azure Bluet (*Coenagrion puella*) and Common Bluet (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) on the 3rd July.

Orthetrum cancellatum wheel copulation. The species is common on the cobble beach at the Parc Menai pond. Photo Allan Brandon 10th August 2024. The first North Wales record of this species was in 2000 from Shotton. It has since spread throughout our region.

Anax imperator male on dogwood. Photo Allan Brandon 10th August 2024.

Aeshna mixta male on purple loosestrife. Photo Allan Brandon 10th August 2024.

Update on Clubtail sighting on the Afon Ogwen floodplain in June 2023 (See North Wales Dragonfly Newsletter No. 101).
Several visits to the small stream were made by Mark Hughes, Tim Wallis, both of nearby Tregarth, and myself during June and July this year without finding any gomphids. My belief now is that in July 2023 three people saw just one male of what I have no doubt was a clubtail dragonly, very likely a Common Clubtail (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*). Somehow it probably found its way from the Afon Dee system and came across a likely breeding stream where it was forlornly looking for a female without success until it died. But who knows?

I'd like to thank Mike McCarthy of Llanwryst and Mark Hughes and Tim Wallis for their help in seeking out this Gomphid.

Sending in records
Please endeavour to send your records online to Cofnod, iRecord or iNaturalist so they can be saved for posterity. A photograph, no matter how poor, would greatly help in verifying the species.

Allan

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