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Hi all,



As you may have noticed, we've had more than our fair share of wet weather and few people have been out and about recording even if the dragonflies and damselflies were on the wing.

Common Clubtail and Demoiselles on the Dee

Emma Broad and Rob Strachan went along the Dee at Holt [SJ4153] on the 20th May and saw a couple of adults, a live nymph and 15 or so empty cases in a short distance down stream of the bridge. Emma also saw one individual farther north in the Poulton area. By a sheer coincidence, Les Colley and I were out above and below the bridge at Holt on the following day (21st May) and disturbed about 15 teneral adults resting on the dense bank side vegetation and also found one emerging from its exuvia. There were a few Large Red Damselflies, quite a number of Banded Demoiselle and, surprisingly, a male and female Beautiful Demoiselle just downstream from the bridge. I have no other records of this latter species on the Dee from the Holt area.



Teneral male *Gomphus vulgatissimus*, River Dee, Holt, 21 May 2009. Note the angular base to the hind wings.



Teneral female *Gomphus vulgatissimus*, River Dee, Holt, 21 May 2009. Note the rounded base to the hind wings.

I've never seen, or met anybody else who has seen, a mature Clubtail returning to the Dee to breed. Please let me know if you have.

Southern Hawker

This breeds commonly in garden ponds and Bryan Dickinson found 3 exuviae floating on his pond at Mynydd Llandygai, Bangor on the 13 May, presumably knocked down by the incessant rain. He found another 31(!) on the 21 May. Some of the exuviae are remarkably small for the species. Bryan hasn't seen any adults flying yet though.

Variable Damselfly in the Valley Wetlands RSPB Reserve

Ian Simms has sent in records for the species on the 11th May at Plas Bog (along with Common Bluetails) and on the 12th May at Llyn Dinam (along with Common Bluetails and 5 Hairy Hawker).

Dragonflies face uncertain future

I know it's not North Wales news but you may be interested in reading the following depressing article by Matt Walker.

Dragonflies face uncertain future

Matt Walker
Editor, Earth News 15 My 2009



The Malaysian dragonfly *Pseudagrion microcephalum*. (K. Wilson)

At least one in ten species of dragonfly and damselfly are threatened with extinction, according to the first world survey of their numbers.

The figure may be an underestimate as so little is known about many species.

However, the news is not all bad. The survey published in *Biological Conservation* is the first to assess the vulnerability of any insect group on a global scale.

And it suggests the extinction risk faced by insects has been exaggerated.

Viola Clausnitzer led an international team of conservation scientists from Germany, Australia, Japan, Russia and the UK among others. They reviewed the status of a random sample of

1500 of the 5680 dragonflies and damselflies known to science.

The team assessed the population and distribution of each species according to the Red List criteria set down by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

They found that more than half of the species should be categorised as Least Concern, which means they likely remain widespread globally, or are not threatened even if they live in a restricted range.

But one in 10 species is threatened, meaning it is categorised as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.

PROPORTION OF THREATENED SPECIES

31% of amphibians
20% of mammals
12% of birds
10% of dragonflies and damselflies

"It's fair to say that is an underestimate," says Clausnitzer, as too little data exists to accurately assess the status of 35 per cent of the species. Dragonflies and damselflies, which belong to the insect order known as the Odonata, are susceptible because the larvae of each species live in water. So pollution and changes to habitat, such as forest degradation, which affect water courses can have an impact.



The Pemba Featherleg (*Platycnemis pembipes*) a fragile damselfly first discovered in 2001. The species inhabits a single stream in Tanzania and is listed as Critically Endangered. (V. Clausnitzer)

Indeed, because of their sensitivity to water and habitat quality, dragonflies are frequently used to assess environmental health. With their striking colours and behaviour they can be used as indicator species. "If they disappear you've got something wrong with your habitat," says Clausnitzer.

Those species most at risk tend to live in south east Asia and Australia.

In south east Asia, a large number of species are endemic to islands such as the Philippines or within Indonesia, and cannot escape detrimental impacts on their habitat.

In Australia, climate change is having an especially strong impact on freshwater systems. The survey is the first to assess the global health of any order of insects. Compared to vertebrates, the dragonflies and damselflies are not doing badly.

ALREADY EXTINCT

Two species of Odonata are known to have gone extinct
Both lived on islands
Sympetrum dilatatum once lived on Saint Helena
Megalagrion jugorum once lived on Maui in the Hawaiian islands

"Amphibians are more threatened than dragonflies in general," says Clausnitzer. Amphibians are being particularly afflicted by the deadly chytrid fungus. "Another difference is that adult dragonflies are more mobile. If one site is destroyed they still have the chance to fly to another site, which frogs don't have."

They also seem less to be less threatened than the mammals, but at a similar level of risk as birds.

"We were a bit surprised that the dragonflies are not that bad off," says Clausnitzer.

"There is a big discussion going on about invertebrates and

extinction rates in insects, and this discussion is not based on any real figures. It is all estimations," she adds.

In general, conservationists have feared that a much higher proportion of insect species face extinction.

However, Clausnitzer cautions that much more research needs to be done to be sure, and different groups of insects might face very different challenges.

For instance, while the reliance of dragonflies and damselflies on

water makes them susceptible, says Clausnitzer "dragonflies are the strongest fliers in the insect kingdom. So you might get a very different picture if you take less capable fliers."



Only males of Klugi's Threadtail (Protoneura klugi) were known from two locations in Amazonian Peru. The species is listed as Data deficient. (R. W. Garrison)



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