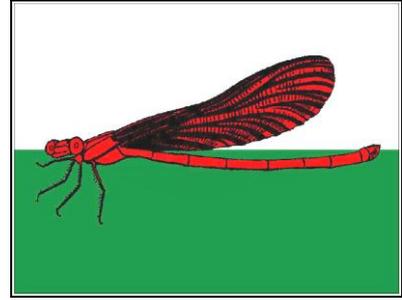


NORTH WALES DRAGONFLY NEWSLETTER No. 64

13th July 2012



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



Hi all,

It certainly felt like the wettest and dullest May and June on record and the miserably frustrating weather still carries on into July thanks to the position of the jet stream. With my own recording therefore well down on previous years it is good to get an increasing number of photographs sent in for confirmation of identifications. Those highlighted below proved to be of species either completely new to a hectad or not recorded there since before 2000. I wish to stress though that while these new hectad observations are invaluable for the British and Irish atlas that is due out in 2014, records are still welcome from anywhere and all records should still be accompanied by 8-figure grid references if possible. If a species is observed at numerous places along a river that crosses several 1 km squares then perhaps a 4-figure grid reference providing a 1 km resolution would suffice. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed photos or records.

New records for 10 km squares (hectads)

Mike Potts photographed *P. nymphula* (Large Red Damsel) at his garden pond in Rhos on Sea on the 28th May which is a new record for hectad SH88.

Carl Legg sent me a photograph of a dragonfly for identification taken at his garden pond at Bryn Ffynnon, Garnfadryn, western Lleyon on the 18th June. It proved to be an emergent female *Aeshna juncea* (Common or Moorland Hawker) and a first for hectad SH23.

Allan Guilfoyle sent in a photo of an immature male *Libellula depressa* (Broad-bodied Chaser) taken on the 25th June along Broad Oak Farm brook, Broughton which is a new record for hectad SJ36.

John Hicks photographed a male *Aeshna cyanea* (Southern Hawker) emerging from his garden pond at Tal-y-bont south of Harlech on the 5th July which proved to be a new species record for hectad SH52.

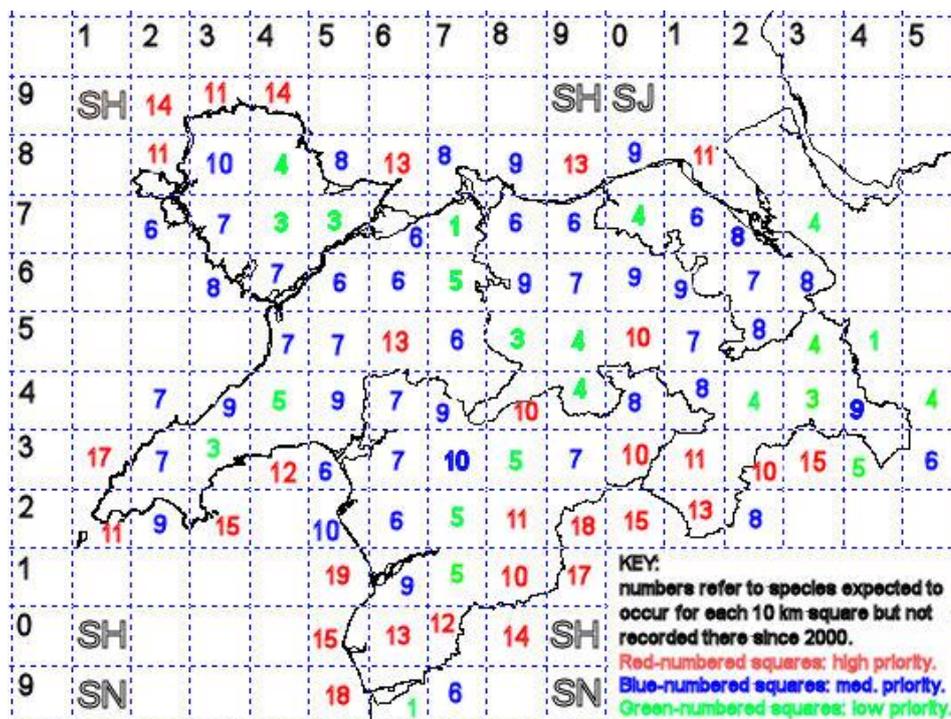
During a walk along the Afon Elwy Barbara Owsianka found *Calopteryx virgo* (Beautiful Demoiselle) at several places along the stretch between Llangernyw and Llanfairtalhaearn on the 20th June. This provides post-2000 records for hectads SH 86 and SH96.



Emergent male *Aeshna cyanea*, Tal-y-bont on the 5th July 2012. Photo John Hicks.

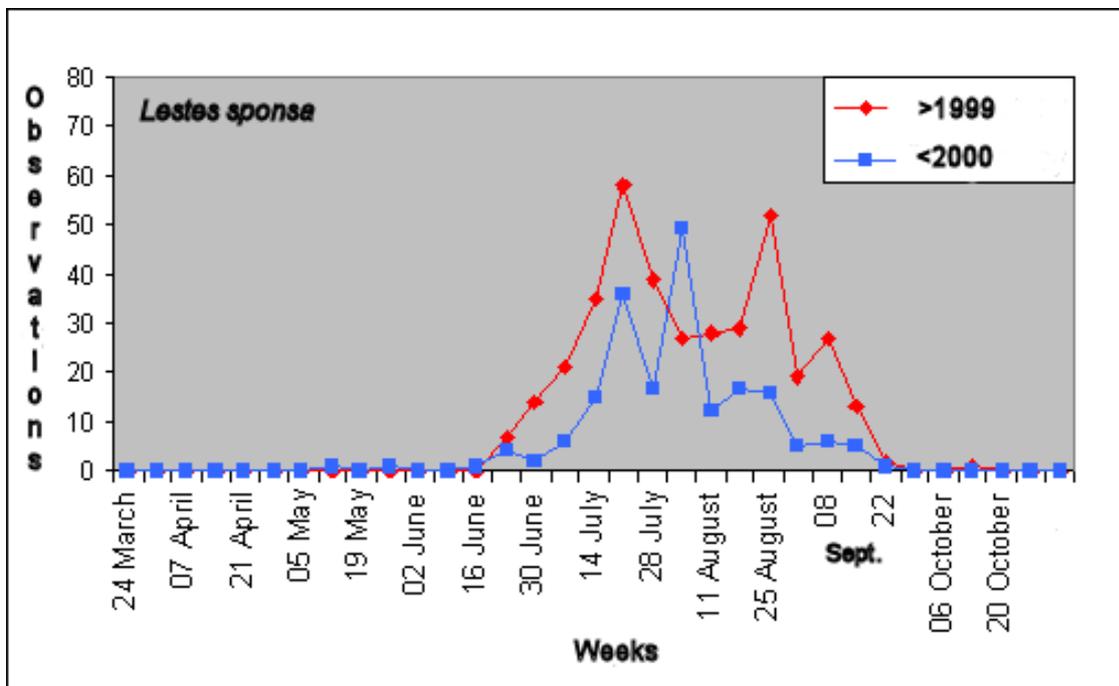
Current state of hectad coverage in North Wales

The map shows the present position as regards number of species still missing from the North Wales hectads. The squares with red numbers are the target areas for atlas recording.



Possible late emergence of *Lestes sponsa* (Common Spreadwing)

I was out in the Gwydyr Forest on the 12th July during a rare sunny day and witnessed the mass emergence of *Lestes sponsa* (Common Spreadwing or Emerald Damselfly). This is always the last damselfly to emerge and this was my first sighting of adults this year which seems late. The species is missing from many hectads and I had previously searched unsuccessfully for it recently at several places. Last year I witnessed this emergence event on the 30th June and I wonder if the continual rainy weather has delayed its emergence this year. The chart compares the dates the species was observed against the number of observations for post-1999 records (in red) and pre-2000 records (in blue). It seems that the species is on the wing in numbers about 2 weeks early in post-1999 records than earlier records. Also it shows that in recent years it is usually on the wing before the end of June and the late emergence this year is more like the pre-2000 period. If you saw *Lestes* emerging earlier this year would you please let me know.



Variable Bluet at Pandy Pool, Newborough Forest

I visited Pandy Pool, Newborough Forest on the 24th June in the hope of finding Small Red Damselfly since it had been reported that *Sphagnum* occurred there. I didn't find it but came across a single *Coenagrion pulchellum* (Variable Bluet). This was last reported from there by Les Colley in 1979 but the species is also found at nearby Llyn Rhos Ddu some 1.5 km to the south-east.

Ian's Gwydyr chimera bluet: an update

I trawled my thoughts on Ian Standen's interesting discovery featured in the last newsletter around various BDS vice county recorders. Paul Ashton (VC 61 Recorder) immediately responded by agreeing to my identification and reported that he had found numerous examples of Common Bluets in Scotland that had more extensive black markings than in the typical form, especially marks on abdominal segment 8. He sent me a photo of a male that has this feature as well as somewhat restricted antehumeral stripes. Brian Nelson of the Ulster Museum, Belfast, also supported the species identification and

added that, though not mentioned in field guides, such melanism is common amongst individuals in western Ireland as well as Scotland. He describes the markings on segment 8 as resembling the heads of viking axes, and states that some individuals can also have black on segment 9 and lateral extensions to the spot on segment 2. On page 134 of 'The natural history of Ireland's dragonflies' (published 2004) he pictures a melanistic male and states that the 'frequency of these darker males appears to increase from east to west and with increasing altitude, so it may be related to climate or the water chemistry.' He further reported by e-mail that the extent of the dark markings at a single site is very variable but he doesn't recall seeing one quite as extreme as the Snowdonian example featured here. The variability suggests to him that, whatever causes it, the melanism is something related to that individual and has a physiological rather than genetic cause and probably acts on the individual rather than the whole population at a site.



A melanistic male *Enallagma cyathigerum*, Glen Affric, Scotland.
15 June 2009. Photo Paul Ashton.

Although I live in Snowdonia and see plenty of normally patterned individuals here throughout a flight season I have never come across this melanism in the Common Bluet before Ian Standen sent me those photos. Such rarity suggests that the cause, whatever that is, is localised. By analogy with the western Irish and Scottish examples, the cause may have something to do with the upland Snowdonian habitat or climate. However, the Gwydyr Forest is riddled with old lead and zinc mines and their waste tips. Might it be possible that, in the Snowdonian example at least, heavy metal contamination from mine water could have caused the aberration? It so happens that the twin reservoirs are constructed on the watershed a few metres above the local mine and lead ore-rich spoil and their waters are well-vegetated and look healthy. So the verdict is still wide open.

Discovery of Downy Emerald in Montgomeryshire

On the 8th July Anne Coker, the new Montgomeryshire VC Recorder, discovered an exuvia of *Cordulia aenea* (Downy Emerald) at the Llyn Ebyr [SN9788], about 12 km WSW of Newtown. The lake is surrounded with broad-leaved trees which is a requirement for the species. This is really exciting news as it is only the third known occurrence in Wales, the others being Llyn Tecwyn Isaf in Merionethshire and Pysgodlyn Mawr, Glamorganshire. I have searched in vein for it at other tree-lined lakes in Merionethshire and Caernarvonshire. The species is also present at Gull Pool and nearby lakes in Cheshire and there are old records from Whixall Moss in Shropshire, the last being in 1980.

The species typically emerges throughout May and continuous on the wing in June, with a few stragglers possibly still to be found in early July. So this late date for an exuvia find is very unusual and it is fortunate that it survived. There is scant possibility of seeing *Cordulia* on the wing now. This find highlights the importance of hunting for exuviae and establishing what species are successfully breeding at water bodies. For this species a good place to find them is on trees or branches emerging directly from the water as in the example from Llyn Tecwyn Isaf shown.



An alder tree used by emergent *Cordulia aenea*, Llyn Tecwyn Isaf, 21st May 2012. Photo A. Brandon.



Characteristic two dark stripes on the side of the thorax of *Cordulia aenea* exuvia from Llyn Ebyr. Photo Stephen and Anne Coker.



A spider-like *Cordulia aenea* exuvia on an emergent alder tree, Llyn Tecwyn Isaf, 21st May 2012. Photo A. Brandon. The dark stripes can be seen.

Forthcoming dragonfly events

Snowdonian dragons and damsels. Field trip to the Gwydyr Forest, Sunday 22nd July 2012. Joint meeting of the Clwyd Birders, Mold NWWT Group and British Dragonfly Society. Meet at the Mine car park [SH 773 589] at 10.15 am. Welly boots essential. Leader Allan Brandon.

Bodelwyddan Castle Bioblitz dragonfly walk. Morning of Sunday, 15th July 2012. Leader Allan Brandon.

Rhuddlan Nature Reserve dragonfly walk [SJ021779]. Afternoon of Sunday, 18th August 2012. Leader Allan Brandon. Meet 2pm at car park. Booking essential. Call 01352 610614.

A few recent photos



Male *Calopteryx virgo* at the Swallow Falls, Gwydyr Forest, 14th June 2012. Photo Dave Ackers.



Female *Calopteryx virgo* at the Swallow Falls, Gwydyr Forest, 19th June 2012. Photo Dave Ackers.



Emergent female *Aeshna cyanea*, garden pond above Ugly House, Gwydyr Forest. 30th June 2012. Photo Margaret Thomas.

A recent swarm of hawkers in Colorado

Charlotte Stafford took this photo recently of a swarm of hawkers at Calhan, Colorado. This is east of Colorado Springs, where there recently a huge fire just to the west. Dennis Paulson wrote on the 1st July: 'I wouldn't be surprised if these were driven out of the mountains by the fire and blown eastward onto the plains by a west wind. They appear all to be darners/hawkers of the genus *Aeshna*, perhaps *Aeshna interrupta*, a common species in that region. Other species might be included, but I see no trace of any other kinds of dragonflies. Huge movements (in late July) of *Aeshna* across Alberta have been reported, so perhaps such flights are regular and might not be fire-related. But they certainly are not reported very often.'



Dragonfly porno film

Isobella Rosellini has produced a series of Green Porn films about the mating behaviour of various invertebrates. Here is the dragonfly one: <http://youtu.be/lPJYkBcYbTU> but be warned!

Allan

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