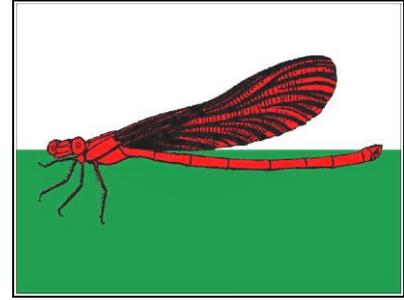


NORTH WALES DRAGONFLY NEWSLETTER No. 65

6th August 2012



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



Hi all,

All the resident North Wales species will now be on the wing except the early emerging Hairy Hawker, Common Clubtail and Downy Emerald. So if we get a sunny day I would encourage you to go outdoors and do some recording or take some photos! Much better exercise than watching the Olympics!

New records for 10 km squares (hectads)

Jan Miller photographed an emergent male *Aeshna juncea* (Common or Moorland Hawker) at her new pond at Whitford, Holywell on the 3rd July 2012, making a new post-1999 record for hectad SJ17. Being in a Carboniferous Limestone area her ponds are probably base-rich so the species is unusual for that area as it typically frequents acidic moorland standing water bodies. On the 23rd July and the 29th July she went on to collect respectively 9 and 11 exuviae of this species at the same pond.

Paul Triggs reported he saw a male *Calopteryx virgo* (Beautiful Demoiselle) at Shotton Steelworks reserve on the 30th July, which is a new post-1999 record for tetrad SJ27. As there are no suitable fast-flowing streams in the area the individual was probably just passing through.

Isobelle Griffith entered a record into the Cofnod database for *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* (Large Red Damselfly) which she observed at Aberdyfi Common on the 12th July. This is a new record for under-recorded tetrad SN59.

Tetrad SH51 finally yields up some dragonflies: this comprises two small areas of land straddling the Mawddach estuary and was the last tetrad in North Wales not to have any species of Odonata recorded. On the 4th August it finally produced two species. I observed a male *Cordulegaster boltonii* (Common Goldenring) and *Sympetrum striolatum* (Common Darter) along a streamlet [SH593197] running through boggy ground south-west of Egryn Abbey.

New Small Red Damselfly locality in Merionethshire

A new site for *Ceriagrion tenellum* has turned up at Werngron, south-east of Harlech. The privately owned yellow water lily lake is apparently without sphagnum, not the usual

habitat for the species, but I observed copulation there on the 4th August. It is only 1 km south-west of Llyn Dinas where I found the species last year. I

Variable Azure Bluet in Snowdonia

Having just satisfactorily sorted out the melanistic Snowdonian *Enallagma cyathigerum* that could be mistaken for a *Coenagrion pulchellum*, Sue Loose noticed this individual at a lovely Llanrhychwyn pond only 1.5 km to the NE. The occasion was the joint BDS/North Wales Wildlife Trust field meeting (see below).



Detail showing the 2nd abdominal segment (marked like *Coenagrion pulchellum*), and the continuous antehumeral stripes and pronotum which are as *C. puella*.
Llanrhychwyn pond, 22 July 2012. Photo A. Brandon.



Unusual male *Coenagrion puella*. Llanrhychwyn pond, 22 July 2012. Photo A. Brandon.
Apart from the 2nd segment of the abdomen it is typical of its species.

The individual has the typical S2 abdominal segment mark of *pulchellum* whereas the hind margin of the pronotum and the black marks on the rest of the abdomen point to *puella*. The shape of the pronotum, i.e. the black, margined blue plate between the main thorax and the head, is a species-diagnostic feature. In this particular case it is typical of *C. puella* in being shallowly lobed; in *C. pulchellum* the hind margin is deeply lobed. The unbroken ante-humeral stripes are, of course, common on many male *pulchellum*. The pond contains a healthy population of *cyathigerum* and *puella* but *pulchellum* has never been seen there. I did a re-check on the 23rd July and counted 20+ normally marked *puella*.



Male *Coenagrion puella*, Llanrhychwyn pond, 22 July 2012. Photo A. Brandon.
A better view of the pronotum.

I have never seen such a *pulchellum*-like variant of *puella* before and wondered how common it is. Pam Taylor, the BDS President and Norfolk VC Recorder, agrees with my conclusions and reports that '*I have very occasionally seen individuals marked like this at Upton Fen where both C.puella and C.pulchellum occur in good numbers. I always look for both the broken ante-humerals and the S2 mark before thinking Variable. The key point of course is the pronotum. I've always believed that structural features are a much better guide to species than colour, because colour certainly can vary! Although I've found colour variations in damselflies, I've never to my knowledge found structural features midway between C.puella and C.pulchellum, so I don't believe hybrid Coenagrions exist in the UK.*'

If any lesson can be drawn from the two recent Snowdonia *pulchellum*-look alike discoveries it is that due caution should be exercised in verifying *pulchellum* records in areas where the species is not expected to occur. I am more than ever convinced that the old record of Variable Bluet found by R P Bray in 1974 at Llynnau Bodgynydd [SH7659] (see newsletter No. 44 for the 9th June 2010) was an unusual Common Bluet or Azure Bluet.

More news of melanistic Common Bluets

After publicising the occurrence of Ian Standen's melanistic Common Bluet from the Gwydyr Forest I have had reports of others being found. Matt Latham found this male at nearby Llyn Bodgynydd last month.



Somewhat melanistic male *Enallagma cyathigerum* with unusual black marks on S2 and S8. Llyn Bodgynydd, July 2012. Photo Matt Latham.



Similarly marked male *Enallagma cyathigerum* from Pembrokeshire with marks also on S9. Photo Stephen Coker.

Stephen Coker sent a photo of a similar male from Pembrokeshire and Dave Smallshire one from La Brenne, France he saw in June. Juliette Dinning took this photo of a melanistic female with discontinuous antehumeral stripes in Glen Affric, Scotland, in June. This happens to be the same area from where Paul Ashton had already taken a photo of a melanistic male in 2009 (see Newsletter No. 64).



Melanistic female *Enallagma cyathigerum* with discontinuous antehumeral stripes, Glen Affric, Scotland, June 2012. Photo Juliette Dinning.

So far there is nothing as extreme as Ian's find and these melanistic forms don't seem to be confined to the Celtic fringe although they may be more common there.

Forthcoming dragonfly events

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.

Snowdonian dragons and damsels: Field trip to the Gwydyr Forest, Sunday 22nd July. *Joint meeting of the Mold NWWT Group and British Dragonfly Society.*

Eight people, including myself, arrived at Cors Bodgynydd, all but one members of the NWWT and two of these also members of BDS. One other individual came all the way from Derby. The weather was forecast sunny but all morning a small standing cloud frustratingly blocked the sun from shining on the bog and we had to wait until after lunch for the sun to track round sufficiently. With more reliable sunshine there was much more odonate activity in the afternoon. We first visited Llyn Bodgynydd Bach, a small mining reservoir, second the adjacent mine bog and third Llyn Tynymynydd at the eastern end of the bog. Nine species were seen and netted including Black Darter and Common Spreadwing (both emerging in large numbers), Keeled Skimmer and common damsels. At

the llyn we found two male Scarce Bluetail damsels and I was able to demonstrate how it differs from the Common Bluetail. We finally drove a short distance to Mr Metcalf's lovely private pond at Llynrhychwyn where we added the tenth species of the day, Common Darter. Here also were vast numbers of Common Spreadwing emerging. We failed to find Common Goldenring at either the adjoining river or the small feeder stream to Llyn Bodgynydd Bach.

Some topical species



Female *Lestes sponsa*, Cors Bodgynydd. 27th July 2012. Photo Peter Heywood.



Male *Sympetrum danae*, Cors Bodgynydd. 27th July 2012. Photo Peter Heywood.



Female *Sympetrum danae* on Bog Asphodel, Cors Bodgynydd. 27th July 2012. Photo Peter Heywood.



Male *Anax imperator*, Pentre Mawr Park lakes, Abergele.
5th August 2012. Photo Mike Nesbitt

Allan

Dr Allan Brandon
North Wales Dragonfly Recorder
Bryn Heilyn, Rowen, Conwy LL32 8YT.
allanrowenconwy@antispam.sky.com

