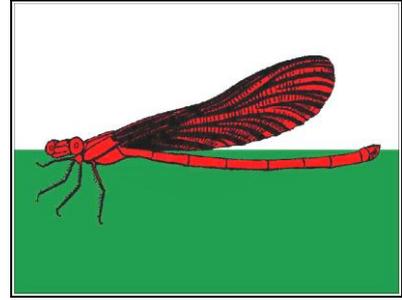


Y Fursen

**North Wales
Dragonfly
Newsletter
No. 77**

31st July 2014



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



Hi all,

Continued spread of Black-tailed Skimmer

As we may learn from the new British and Irish atlas, the Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*) has been extending its range northwards and westwards and first seems to have entered North Wales at the turn of the millenium. Since then it has been consolidating its territory and has been recorded from scattered sites across the region, but never in huge numbers and more often than not as single exploratory males. It still turns up at new localities, particularly around the coast, where it will tolerate slightly brackish conditions. On the 8th July, Steve Stansfield reported that the island's first individual was observed on the 23rd June and captured on camera by Ben Porter (Bardsey Blog: <http://bbfo.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-max=2014-07-08T16:41:00%2B01:00&max-results=20&start=4&by-date=false>). The photo of the male is far below Ben's usual extremely high standards but the uniqueness of the occurrence didn't go without notice and Ben did the right thing in firing off a shot for the record. Steve also noted that there were far more records of Blue Emperors (*Anax imperator*) on Bardsey this year than in previously years. Ben has superb blog photos of this species for the 18th July.

On the 24th July, Rhion Pritchard also saw a single male Black-tailed Skimmer at the coastal Morfa Madryn reserve, Llanfairfechan. This is another new locality for the species.

Swch Maes Gwyn bog, a new site for Small Bluetail

Away from Anglesey and The Lleyn, there were only two known populations of Small Bluetail (*Ischnura pumilio*) in North Wales, both in Snowdonia. The best known, discovered by Mike Howe in 1994, is at Llyn Tyn y Mynydd, part of NWWT's Cors Bodgynydd reserve in the Gwyddy Forest (see *NWD Newsletter No. 44 for 9th June 2010*). The other is at a small pond in Lordship Forest, Llanuwchllyn, mid-Merionethshire, found serendipitously in 2009 by Andrew Graham while looking for Variable Bluet (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) (see *NWD Newsletter No 33 for 17th June 2009*). Now there is a third, notified to me by Simon Hugheston-Roberts a week ago. On the 5th July Simon and Les Colley visited heathland Swch Maes Gwyn, along the Nebo – Pentrefoelas road. The flat, peat-filled glacial lake hollow is within the Mynydd Hiraethog SSSI and lies just outside the Snowdonia National Park boundary. Simon states that Les

confirmed Small Bluetail by netting the only two males (one in tandem with a female) seen along 'old field drains' at the edge of the bog [SH85245379] but unfortunately no photos were taken. I would never doubt Les's identification as he is a very experienced dragonfly recorder but I thought I'd pay a visit as soon as possible to substantiate the record. I couldn't manage a trip until the 28th July, which is near the end of *pumilio*'s flight period, so I knew by then the prospects of finding any were slim. The roadside site turned out to comprise shallow, branching, meandering runnels with *Potamogeton*, cutting through the peat bog that held cotton grass, *Sphagnum*, sundew and cranberry (see photo). The area also provides magnificent views of Snowdonia to the west.



Swch Maes Gwyn *pumilio* runnels, 28th July 2014.
Notice proximity to road. Photo A. Brandon.

The runnels had plenty of dragonfly activity with Common Spreadwing or Emerald Damsel (*Lestes sponsa*), Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*), Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*) and Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*). There were numerous ovipositing females of the latter (see below). One male Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*) was unexpectedly seen in this habitat.



Ovipositing *Aeshna juncea*, Swch Maes Gwyn runnels, 28th July 2014. Photo A Brandon.

On the point of ending a prolonged search I was rewarded with one male Small Bluetail. It was flying quite quickly and for good distances along the runnels, occasionally resting on vegetation to allow me to snap off distant shots with my fully zoomed Lumix FZ200 (see below). It's flight seemed purposeful and my guess is that it was looking for a mate, probably forlornly so late in the flight season.



Male *Ischnura pumilio*, Swch Maes Gwyn runnel, 28th July 2014. Photo A. Brandon.

These three populations are extremely isolated and there surely must be many overlooked sites in intervening areas across Snowdonia since the Swch Maes Gwyn habitat is common in the area. What is surprising is that more sites didn't turn up in the last few years during the intensive surveys for the new atlas.

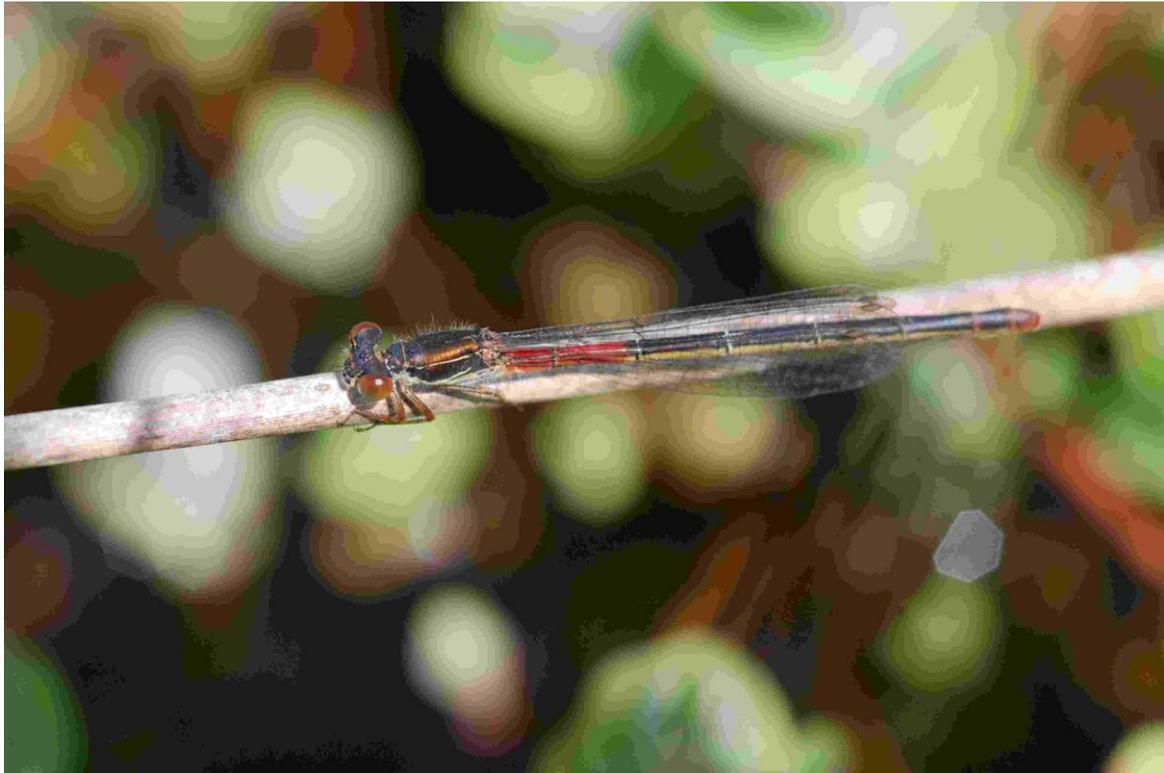
Ponds were dug a few years ago towards the centre of the bog and these have matured very well. I saw numerous Common Bluet (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), Common Spreadwing, Black Darter and Common Hawker and a further male Common Darter. There was also a territorial male Blue Emperor, a species that is now expected on all mountain tarns. This is remarkable considering that, like the Black-tailed Skimmer, it was first recorded in North Wales just before 2000.



Swch Maes Gwyn pond, 28th July 2014. Photo A. Brandon.

Small Red Damsel revisited at Llyn Dinas

Julian Thompson sent in a list of species he had come across whilst visiting Llyn Dinas [SH611292], near Llanbedr, Harlech on the 22nd July. He confirmed the presence of Small Red Damsel (*Ceragrion tenellum*), first discovered there in 2011.



Female *Ceriagrion tenellum* form *typica*, Llyn Dinas, 22nd July 2014. (Photo Julian Thompson).

He also noted Blue Emperor, Common Hawker, Black Darter, Common Bluet and Common Spreadwing. (The latter is referred to in most UK books as Common Emerald Damselfly but in KD's European book he changes the name to fit in with World usage for species of the genus *Lestes* that hold their wings open and also to avoid any confusion with the Emerald dragonflies, mainly of the genera *Cordulia* and *Somatochlora*. If you think this is unlikely, I was verifying records sent into Cofnod last month by a local recorder and had to question records of Emerald Dragonfly that had been incorrectly submitted in mistake for Emerald Damselfly!).

End of dragonfly courses in Wales

Over the last two years Claire Install of the British Dragonfly Society and I have been conducting dragonfly courses throughout Wales as part of the NRW grant to BDS. The penultimate course was held at Pensychnant on the 23rd July attended by 17 participants. Like the others, and judging by the feedback, it was a great success and we were blessed with an idyllic sunny afternoon to explore for dragonflies at Gwern Engen bog lake following the usual powerpoint course (see below).



Demonstrating the diagnostic parts of a male *Aeshna juncea* at Gwern Engen on the 23rd July. Photo Claire Install.

We did our last course on the 30th July at Dinefwr, Llandeilo, with 18 enthusiasts, mainly from the National Trust, the Gwent and Camarthenshire wildlife trusts and RSPB (see below). We had an equally sunny afternoon to explore the lakes and oxbows of the Afon Towy floodplain.



Attendees at the Dinefwr course, 30th July. Claire and me on right.

Allan

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