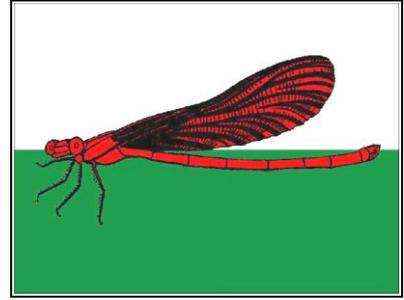


Y Fursen

**North Wales
Dragonfly
Newsletter
No. 95**

4th July 2018



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



Hi all,

A perfect dragonfly summer! I hope you're seeing plenty of activity of the various life stages to pass on as records to Cofnod. I've used some photos in this newsletter that the photographers would admit are of poor quality. But they were the best they could take in the circumstances. I include them to show that one doesn't have to submit tip-top quality photos for species to be identified with certainty. Please don't be shy in sending sub-standard images when you submit records to Cofnod (preferably) or me as the five vice counties North Wales recorder. This applies to any species but especially so with rare or more localised species.

Ruddy Darter turns up at Conwy Water Gardens

Hugh Ranson, dragonfly enthusiast from California, visits his former home area around Conwy occasionally. He was at Gwern Engen, Sychnant Pass, on the 25th and 26th June and managed to get 12 species, a full compliment for the rock basin bog pool including *Sympetrum danae* (Black Darter) and *Orthetrum coerulescens* (Keeled Skimmer). The unprecedented weather is certainly bringing the adults out. On the 1st July he visited Conwy Water Gardens and sent me a photograph of what he thought was *Sympetrum sanguineum* (Ruddy Darter). I am always suspicious of sightings of this species west of the Clwydian Hills as the photos sent in invariably turn out to be *S. striolatum* (Common Darter) but this one was correctly identified. Notice the entirely black legs, the waisted or clubbed abdomen that is boldly marked with black, and the red frons. The dark line extends down between the frons and the eyes too but there are two black mites that make this difficult to see. All these features distinguish it from Common Darter. It was still perched at the NE corner of the wildlife pond adjacent to the Afon Gyffin yesterday [SH76567273]. If you go there, other than Mondays, please pull out as many Himalayan Balsam as you can, we have permission!



Male *Sympetrum sanguineum* at Conwy Water Gardens on 3rd July 2018. Photo A. Brandon

Although common throughout England, Ruddy Darter is only normally found in the extreme east of North Wales. The question is: is this individual part of a recent westerly migration possibly brought on by the hot weather, or is it a freak occurrence? The species is known to migrate and scattered, unconfirmed records across North Wales during 1997-1999 may have been due to one such migration caused by heat waves during the summers of 1996 and 1997. In 1998 it was even reported as breeding on Bardsey. Of this period, Adrian Parr, BDS Migrants Officer, reports: 'As a species with strong resident populations - at least where most recorders are concentrated - migrations of *S. sanguineum* can be hard to pick up. However, going back through my records I see that in 1996 there did appear to be a small influx into Cornwall during late August/September, while in 1997 there was some evidence for a degree of immigration along the east coast of England (at least) during August and early September; 1998 on the other hand didn't have that much of note. The years of 1996 and especially 1997 also saw the start of the species' push into the far north of England. Thus I'd certainly say that your analysis of the situation sounds highly plausible. It's curious how *S. sanguineum* has such a tenuous foothold in NW Wales and also Devon/Cornwall, when they are quite widespread further west in Ireland.'

An alternative explanation for the appearance of one individual at Conwy Water Gardens is that it bred in the pond vegetation that is sold there as some of this may have been sourced in England. It will be interesting to see if further reports of the species west of the Clwydian Hills come to light in the ensuing weeks. Please keep a look out

Large Redeye abundant at Wepre Country Park

David Winnard, a recent Queensferry resident, visited Wepre Country Park [SJ292682] on the 12th June. He and his wife counted at least 120 adult *Erythromma najas* (Large

Redeye) – ‘the lily pads were alive with them’. The species had first been discovered there in 2010 by Emma Broad when she found a couple of adults. Like the Ruddy Darter above this species is confined to a strip along the eastern edge of Flintshire and Denbighshire for no obvious reason. Wepre Park is the most northerly part of this strip.



An adult male *Erythromma najas* at Wepre CP on the 12th June 2018. Photo David Winnard.

Several new sites for Small Bluetail found

This summer has been unprecedented for the number of new sites discovered for *Ischnura pumilio* (Small Bluetail). The last newsletter, No. 94, highlighted Andrew Graham’s discovery on the 19th May at Glaslyn Marshes between Minffordd and Porthmadog. On 6th June Cheshire residents Andy and Angela Goodwin visited Cwrt Forest, Bronaber, along the trackway leading up to Roman Steps. A short distance west of the forest entrance gate scantily vegetated roadside pools [SH675298] on both side of the track had five *Libellula depressa* (Broad-bodied Chaser), a single *Cordulegaster boltonii* (Common Goldenring) and two male Small Bluetails. This site is so remote from any previously known records of *I. pumilio*.



Male *Ischnura pumilio*, roadside track towards Roman Steps. 6th July 2018. Photo Andy Goodwin.



Roadside pools with *Ischnura pumilio* along the road leading to Roman Steps. The Rhinogs are in the distance. 6th July 2018. Photo Andy Goodwin.

Then on the 7th and 12th June Eddie Urbanski with Nigel Brown came across 3 males of the species at a shallow, reedy vehicle rut [SH2933724156], close to the house Ty'n-

Rhos (seen in the photo), on Cilan Headland along the Lley. Although known from several localities on the Lley it has never before been recorded from Cilan Headland.



Ischnura pumilio male, reedy pool, Cilan Headland. 12 June 2018. Photo Eddie Urbanski.



Vehicle rut pool and linear reedy wet area close to Ty'n-Rhos, Cilan Headland. 12 June 2018.
Photo Eddie Urbanski.

On 29th June 2018 Eddie with Rhys Jones found 4 Small Bluetails in a recently opened ditch [SH312365] at Cors Geirch NNR. The species is well established at Cors Geirch.

BDS Dragonfly Challenge 2018

Eleanor Colver, BDS Conservation Officer is appealing for people to take part in this project. She writes:

‘Good morning everyone,

I hope you are all well, and enjoying the Dragonfly season.

This is a brief reminder that this July the BDS is launching the Dragonfly Challenge 2018. The aim of this project is to introduce members of the public to Dragonflies and the basics of biological recording. Participants taking part will be asked to try and find as many of the 6 Challenge species (Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Four-spotted Chaser, Southern Hawker and Common Darter) as possible within July. These species were carefully selected to give people as equal a chance as possible in finding at least some species, no matter where they live in Britain. However, we hope the Challenge will inspire some members of the public to get out and explore different areas and habitats to complete the Challenge.

The project web page is now up and running:

<https://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/dragonfly-challenge>

Resources are now available via the web page to download. These include materials for schools, kids, adults, and nature reserve staff. Members of the public can also sign up to the Dragonfly Challenge e-newsletter.

Twitter: #DragonflyChallenge2018 Facebook page: @challengedragonfly

We would be very grateful if you could assist us in promoting the project. . .

- To friends and family interested in learning more about Dragonflies
- On social media
- On your own websites
- Via your local groups
- At events and field meetings

We hope this will prove to be a fun activity that will introduce a new audience to Dragonflies’

White-legged Damselfly (Blue Featherlegs, *Platycnemis pennipes*) Investigaton

Eleanor Colver also writes: ‘Similar to the Clubtail Count the White-legged Damselfly Investigation is a great project for beginners as it has a focus on one species. This year the project is focusing on: promoting awareness of White-legged Damselflies within the biological recording community and general public, setting up 1km survey squares along river systems in parallel with the Clubtail Count, and identifying core areas for long term monitoring. Please encourage your volunteers to venture beyond their usual patches in hunt of potential breeding sites! I will be monitoring the emergence of the first White-legged Damselflies of the year so please send your first sightings my way.’

In North Wales we only know of the species along the Dee near Holt and the canal at Fenn’s Moss. Perhaps it now occurs in other areas?

Launch of the Gaint Clubtail Sculpture!

Extract from 9th May addition of BDS News-in-Brief: ‘On Thursday 3rd May the BDS, along with the North Wales Wildlife Trust, launched the incredible, giant Common Clubtail Sculpture in Holt, Wrexham, alongside the river Dee, the northern-most river to hold this iconic species.

We were joined at the launch by Holt Town Council and all the students from Holt Primary School, who loved climbing all over the sculpture, learning more about dragonflies and getting their very own Clubtail exuvia to take home! BBC Radio Wales also joined us on the day, with a broadcast of the event featuring in Good Morning Wales on Friday 4th May.

The car-sized sculpture was commissioned from Rich Jones, Heat and Beat Artist Blacksmith, with the intention of alerting more people, both in the local area and further afield, to the existence of this stunning dragonfly. We also want to use the sculpture to raise awareness of the species' vulnerability to unsympathetic river management and pollution.

We hope that the sculpture will also encourage more people to take part in our citizen science survey, Clubtail Count, allowing us to better map and understand Common Clubtail populations in the UK and giving us more power to protect them.’



From left to right: Jonny Hulson (North Wales Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes Officer), Rich Jones (Heat and Beat Artist Blacksmith), David Kitching (former Cheshire CDR) Genevieve Dalley (Conservation Officer), Richard Gabb (entomologist - found the first ever Clubtail record for the Dee) and Iwan Edwards (Education and Community Officer).

Advert: Odonatours

This is a company set up by Phil Benstead in Sweden to provide dragonfly-focussed trips to far off places, usually in the tropics: <http://odonatours.com>

I have been with Phil on a number of occasions including trips to Morocco, Madagascar and Brazil. I got back from a trip to north Vietnam just two weeks ago in which we tracked down 204 species of Odonata with a few probably new to Science. The UK has one species of gomphid, north Vietnam has 70! The trip was led by energetic Dutchman Tom Kompier. He also led an equally successful trip to REGUA, Brazil in 2015 and has already written the field guide to the Odonata of that region. He is currently working on one for Vietnam. I would highly recommend these trips if you wish to wallow in the biodiversity afforded by the rain forests of the World led by experienced Natural Historians.



Sweaty Tom, me and Phil with the karst limestone mountains as a backdrop. 15 June 2018.

Allan

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