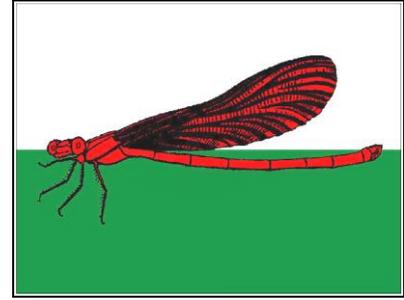


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**North Wales  
Dragonfly  
Newsletter  
No. 96**

6th August 2018



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



Hi all,

**English names for our Odonata species**

I was questioned recently by a dragonfly recorder as to why I used a certain English name in a newsletter for a damselfly which wasn't the one used in her book of UK dragonflies. The answer, if you didn't already know, is that there are now two sets of English names for British Odonata species. As a regular overseas traveller I always adhere to scientific names wherever possible as these are universal and I always encourage their use in these newsletters. I must admit though that this can lead to some amusement in discussions with European colleagues over the correct pronunciation of the scientific names of some genera and species. I personally don't understand the push to give every species on the planet an English name. One look at Gardeners' World is proof that people relish using scientific names for plants so why not animals too. When I have to use English names I have adopted the European names proposed by Dutchman Klaas-Douwe B Dijkstra (conveniently KD for short) in his book of 2006 'Field guide to the dragonflies of Britain and Europe' that is richly illustrated by Richard Lewington. This is not because I am a Remainer. This system of English names is now in keeping with those widely used across the rest of the World. One benefit of this system is that it avoids the need to constantly repeat 'dragonfly' or 'damselfly' in the name. After all we don't call, for instance, a Red Admiral a Red Admiral Butterfly, a Robin a Robin Bird, or a Purple Thorn a Purple Thorn Moth. But that is what the traditional English nomenclature demands.

Unfortunately, this nomenclature is still in use by the British Dragonfly Society and some quite recent books on British dragonfly species. KD's nomenclature endeavours to be descriptive of some conspicuous anatomical feature of the species. So his European system has avoided prefixes in the names involving degree of abundance such as 'Common' and 'Scarce' except for the few that have European-wide significance, e.g. Common Spreadwing (*Lestes sponsa*) or Common Bluethroat (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). And it gets rid of daft names like Norfolk Hawker used traditionally because Norfolk was the only place where *Aeshna isosceles* was to be found in Britain, even though this is no longer true. As the species is widely distributed across Europe the name Green-eyed Hawker is deemed more appropriate. The table below lists the scientific European and traditional English names for our North Walean species. Migrants indicated by \*.

<i>Scientific name</i>	<b>European English name</b>	<b>Traditional English name</b>
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle	Beautiful Demoiselle
<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Banded Demoiselle	Banded Demoiselle
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Common Spreadwing	Emerald Damselfly
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Common Bluetail	Blue-tailed Damselfly
<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Small Bluetail	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Azure Bluet	Azure Damselfly
<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	Variable Bluet	Variable Damselfly
<i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>	Mercury Bluet	Southern Damselfly
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Bluet	Common Blue Damselfly
<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Large Redeye	Red-eyed Damselfly
<i>Pyrrosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damsel	Large Red Damselfly
<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>	Small Red Damsel	Small Red Damselfly
<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	Blue Featherleg	White-legged Damselfly
<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	Hairy Hawker	Hairy Dragonfly
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Migrant Hawker	Migrant Hawker
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Blue Hawker	Southern Hawker
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Moorland Hawker	Common Hawker
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Brown Hawker	Brown Hawker
<i>Anax imperator</i>	Blue Emperor	Emperor Dragonfly
<i>Anax ephippiger</i> *	Vagrant Emperor	Vagrant Emperor
<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Common Clubtail	Club-tailed Dragonfly
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Common Goldenring	Golden-ringed Dragonfly
<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Downy Emerald	Downy Emerald
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied Chaser	Broad-bodied Chaser
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser	Four-spotted Chaser
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Keeled Skimmer	Keeled Skimmer
<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Black-tailed Skimmer	Black-tailed Skimmer
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter	Common Darter
<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Ruddy Darter	Ruddy Darter
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Black Darter	Black Darter
<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i> *	Red-veined Darter	Red-veined Darter
<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i> *	Yellow-winged Darter	Yellow-winged Darter
<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i> *	Moustached Darter	Vagrant Darter
<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	Small Whiteface	White-faced Darter

### **Dragonfly training day at Pensychnant, 11<sup>th</sup> August**

It was an oversight not including this in the last newsletter. I will be giving a dragonfly identification course on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August for the Snowdonia Society. The morning will be a presentation in the centre and in the afternoon we will visit Gwern Engen, the nearby bog lake to observe the critters doing their thing and catching them for close quarter scrutiny. I believe there are some places left so if you want to participate please contact Owain Thomas on 01286 685498 or [owain@snowdonia-society.org.uk](mailto:owain@snowdonia-society.org.uk) . Wellington boots essential and no dogs.

### **The remarkable discovery of *Gomphus* along the River Dee**

There has been quite a focus on the distribution of *Gomphus vulgatissimus* (Common Clubtail) in the Dee catchment in recent years culminating in the May 2017 BDS-led survey. The species was found to be thriving. But how and when was the species discovered there and by whom? I am grateful to Richard Gabb of Cheshire for supplying this lovely account (of the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018) describing the first discovery of the species along the River Dee:

‘As only the second Treasurer of the British Dragonfly Society I was privileged to sit on

the committee in the 1980's alongside the most eminent people in the world of UK Odonata. These included Norman Moore, Peter Miller and Philip Corbett. At that time I was also County Recorder for Cheshire after joining the B.D.S. as an early member. This meant that I associated with the relatively few other local aficionados and did several 'pioneering' recording trips with my counterpart from Derbyshire, Rod Dunn, and the National Recorder Robert Merritt, who lived near Chesterfield. Bob also sat on the B.D.S committee so we were quite often in correspondence. In 1985 he contacted me to say that he and his then girlfriend, Pippa Adams, had been spending their holidays searching for exuviae and adult emergence of the Club-tailed Dragonfly (in the Society's parlance) on the banks of the rivers Thames, Severn and Wye. I am unsure that it is not an apocryphal story but he told me that he had heard of a Gomphus being found dead on the radiator of a double-decker bus near Wrexham. This had set his mind racing as he realised that the rivers Severn and Dee rise not that far apart in the Welsh mountains. Could there possibly have been a transfer from the Severn to the Dee? Would I be interested in a day out to search the banks of the Dee with them just in case? So on the 6th June 1985, bowing to the senior man despite my Cheshire affiliation, we met up in Bangor-on-Dee. We began exploring the banks on the south side of the river. The Club-tailed Dragonfly unlike most other anisopterans often emerges horizontally, preferring the shallow waters at the broken down banks where cattle come to drink. Pippa was ahead of us and I will never forget the moment when she said quite quietly " I've got one". With all her experience of finding exuviae down south she was sure of her identification by its beaked 'nose'. I will not try to describe Bob's reaction to such a significant discovery and justification of his speculation - suffice to say that Pippa and I were somewhat amused at him sitting head in hands for some while on a mound in the field! As a Cheshire man you may well imagine my mixed emotions. We had travelled some way upstream so we had the trek back and drive around to the nearest point where the river met the Cheshire border. This was near Shocklach. A couple of hours of searching on the north bank produced the first Cheshire exuvia (see photo0. Of course we had not seen an adult.



50 years ago I had moved to Cheshire from Gloucestershire and as a family we regularly returned on weekends to visit parents. I used to spend some time down there hunting dragons and was put in touch with Sonia Holland who, apart from writing the Flora of Gloucestershire, doubled up as Odonata recorder. She showed me some of her treasures including amazing numbers of Small Bluetail (Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly) - *Ischnura pumilio* - on the newly reclaimed open cast coal mines in the Forest of Dean. She was pleased to accept my offer of a weekend in Cheshire where I could reciprocate and hopefully show her Small Whiteface (White-faced Dragonfly) - *Leucorrhinia dubia* - in Delamere, Cheshire. This we did and on June 7th 1986 I suggested we continue to the Dee on the slim chance we might find an adult *Gomphus*. I had previously noted a farm track leading to within a field of the river just off the Aldford to Farndon road. We drove down and parked in front of a five-barred gate to walk across the field to the river. Almost as soon as we were there we found a freshly emerged male Common Clubtail still with translucent milky wings. Such had been my doubts about finding the species I had not brought my camera with me. So, imploring Sonia to sit and keep her eyes on it I rushed back to the car, only to be confronted by a very angry farmer on his tractor unable to get by. Such was my desperate enthusiasm I overwhelmed him with my explanation, very conscious that the seconds were ticking by. He relented and I ran back very relieved to find it still there (see photo). I even had the presence of mind to photograph Sonia complete with trademark headscarf sitting on guard duty - a treasured transparency. So a year and a day since finding Cheshire's first exuvia we had found the first adult. Since then of course the species has become much more numerous along the river and the advent of digital photography has meant that the stretch near Aldford can resemble a celebrity photo shoot at prime times of the year. I do not know however if anyone has ever seen a pair in cop or even better a female ovipositing in the silt.



Common Clubtail ten ♂ *Gomphus vulgatissimus*

Heady days indeed but regarding my reference to *Ischnura pumilio* it is clear that distributional expansion is still occurring with the first confirmed finding of that species this year on the Pennine edge in Cheshire. Perhaps wind blown on the westerlies from its nearest strongholds in North Wales where I gather it has made a recent resurgence.'

RICHARD GABB. 72 CHESTER ROAD, POYNTON, CHESHIRE, SK121HA  
([www.dragonflyprime.co.uk](http://www.dragonflyprime.co.uk))'

Richard Gabb is pictured in the photo of the unveiling of the *Gomphus* sculpture featured in the last newsletter. As Richard mentioned, it would be good to know if anybody has observed ovipositing or copulation along the Dee as we do not have any records so far.

If anybody knows when and how *Cordulia* (Downy Emerald) was discovered at Llyn Tecwyn Isaf I'd love to hear about it.

### ***Coenagrion mercuriale* (Mercury Bluet) should respond to proposed management on Cors Erddreiniog.**

Mike Howe sent me this information on the 5<sup>th</sup> July:

He visited Cors Erddreiniog on the 4<sup>th</sup> July to monitor the response of *C. mercuriale* (Mercury Bluet) to recent strimming & grazing management to open up the ditch and seepage lines. There has been some improvement over the last 2-3 years, with a total of 48 males from three areas on the SSSI & NNR. This follows counts as low as the high twenties for the 2016 - 2017 period. Mike still needs to adjust the management to make the breeding areas more open. He thought they had lost the species after a period of zero management that NRW staff only just managed to rectify. Now that access is better for their staff, he will reinstate the transect and try to get weekly counts through the flight period as it's difficult to determine numbers from a one-off visit. Regular visits would also highlight management issues and allow them to react quicker. A total count of 202 in

2013 followed management intervention so if it could be got right, the population can respond quickly.

Mike states that Public access is awkward as the main population is on the privately owned Nant Isaf spring field and there is no access – it's been difficult to get NRW staff on it. The tiny population on the NNR is along a narrow ditch that is easily over-trampled if visited regularly. He wouldn't want it to be a magnet for entomologists while the population remains so small. Perhaps in future, NRW could set up a temporary fence so that visitors don't trample the ditch. So please respect this and should you want to observe and photograph *C. mercuriale* there should be appropriate sites in Pembrokeshire or the south of England.

In addition, on his visit *I. pumilio* (Small Bluetail) was recorded from three widely separated areas on Cors Erddreiniog – Nant Isaf, Cae Gwyn and the top end of Cors Nant Isaf.



Male *Calopteryx virgo*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Celli Ddu Cromlech, Anglesey. Photo Hugh Ranson.



Not yet fully pruinosed male *Orthetrum coerulescens*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Llyn Crafnant. Photo Hugh Ranson.

Just a reminder that all back copies of this newsletter can be found on the Cofnod website home page by clicking 'View all news' box and searching 'dragonfly' in 'Search news'.

### Allan

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