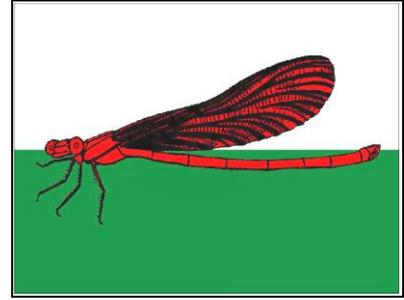


Y Fursen

**North Wales
Dragonfly
Newsletter
No. 97**

23rd October 2018



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



Hi all,

Invasion of Vagrant Emperor

For the past week or so there has been a northwards migration of *Anax ephippiger* (Vagrant Emperor) into Britain. Several individuals made landfall in Cornwall and a likely North Walean occurrence was noted by Darren Wozencroft whilst visiting the Abersoch area from Yorkshire. Last Thursday he flushed what must have been a female on rough ground with heathland pools, about 50 m south of Ty n-rhos cottage, Mynydd Cilan [SH293241]. He was unable to get a photograph unfortunately so the record is unconfirmed. His description is: "First seen when flushed a short distance noticed a large-ish dragon compared with a Common Darter alongside but difficult to pick-up against the grass despite good light. Unfortunately flushed again before I could locate it and watched it fly overhead within 2m, noting a plain straw yellow thorax and overall yellow/brown impression underneath. Viewed through binoculars as it flew away (and side-on) the shape of the abdomen was thin and dark at the bottom 20% giving it a slightly clubbed appearance. In flight against the grass the thorax and abdomen looked yellow-ish ochre colour but with a few darker markings that I couldn't make out well. As it tried to land against the gorse there was a faint brown-ish wash to the abdomen. Again it landed out of sight but this time wasn't relocated. It wasn't a Common Darter or Keeled Skimmer - these can be ruled out on size alone. Although it wasn't huge it was noticeably larger than those species. It's not a hawkler [i.e. *Aeshna* sps] or a female Emperor as I am really familiar with those too, shame I didn't see it a bit better."

I managed to get down to Mynydd Cilan yesterday afternoon whilst there was a fair amount of sun but a chilly northerly wind. I got a brief glimpse of what might have been the blighter as it flew away from me after I flushed it out [at SH29312404]. At least it was a smallish 'flyer' dragonfly and the only other odonate species on the wing was *Sympetrum striolatum* (Common Darter).

English names for our Odonata species continued

After I sent out the last newsletter I received this immediate rebuttal from friend Duncan Brown of Waunfawr, formerly of the CCW, for my promotion of the worldwide use of scientific names over English names for Odonata, sorry dragonfly species. I should have mentioned Welsh names too of course but as far as I know Duncan isn't suggesting for

one moment that these should be used universally. I am also a trifle unclear about the use of the term vernacular, which I had avoided using for deliberately coined words when there wasn't one already in use in a language. The usual definition of vernacular is 'the language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people of a country or region.' If a name is deliberately invented for use by a particular group of people is it vernacular? Also the people of mixed nationality I go on overseas trips with who use the scientific names for clarity are typically interested amateurs like myself, not professional scientists. Anyway, I don't look on dragonflies as mine, or even ours, they are theirs. We can destroy them easily enough but we cannot create them and I'm sure, at least I hope they will be flying around on this planet well after we have departed.

"Allan

I wonder whether you might like to publish this response to your comments (below) in the recent Y Fursen bulletin. I couldn't let them pass I'm afraid.

Best regards,

Duncan

'I was questioned recently by a dragonfly recorder as to why I used a certain English name in a newsletter for a damsel 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.....'

As someone who has spent over half a lifetime collecting, coining and standardising Welsh names for our more familiar groups of fauna and flora (NOT every species on the planet by the way) I really must take issue with your rationale with regard to English vernacular names, and your promotion of Latin names at their expense to facilitate wider ("universal" is your word) understanding. Universal, I would say, only between you and your fellow experts! A very exclusive argument?

The argument anyway is well worn and familiar, promulgated, in my experience, only by the many experts in their field, such as the ones who, like yourself, I have had the pleasure and privilege of knowing over the years. Your dragonflies are not "your" dragonflies at all - they are OUR dragonflies, and one of the reasons they are not embraced by a wider non-expert public is that they have had no name that people can relate to. You cannot love something for which you have no name in your mother tongue - gardeners notwithstanding! That simple notion is what has driven me over the past half century! And I have seen every sign that it works as far as Welsh is concerned in terms of engaging a wider more lay constituency. I suspect that you have borne witness to this yourself to some extent when we have consulted you.

So please dear scientists - by all means use the Latin names (which we can all enjoy of course because they too have a meaning and a history) but do not preclude the vernacular. We are living in troubling times and by all accounts witnessing a third mass extinction over geological time. If ever we needed a public sympathetic to our wildlife and aware of

its richness and complexity, it is now. Lead the way by all means, (that's what you're for!) but do please indulge our well-meant and non-expert ways. Your beloved dragonflies depend on us too - in ways that you may not yet have considered!"

Earliest English names for British Odonata species

Whilst on the theme of English common name usage for our dragons and damsels it is very timely that Richard Gabb has sent me this intriguing communication.

"During the earlier days of the BDS when I was County Recorder for Cheshire I was very fortunate to have experienced a few notable dragonfly events. These included witnessing the first proven emergence of the Azure Hawker (*Aeshna caerulea*) in Scotland on the banks of Loch Maree when the literature at the time only mentioned the probability of breeding taking place in 'high mountain lochans'. This was followed by the exciting find of the first adult Common Clubtail (Club-tailed Dragonfly; *Gomphus vulgatissimus*) on the Cheshire bank of the River Dee, as described in the last newsletter. Perhaps however the most significant moment (which I was totally ignorant of at the time) was my discovery of the earliest known vernacular names in English for dragonflies. This is described below in a re-print of the article written for the BDS journal at the time. On its publication I suddenly became aware of the significance of my find as prior to this it had been thought that Cynthia Longfield was the first to devise and popularise common names for our damselflies and dragonflies in the 1930's. Since then there has been further correspondence on the paper. It has been pointed out that the 'Dorchester' Nymph was a mis-copying of Doncaster Nymph when indeed the Small Whiteface (White-faced Darter; *Leucorrhinia dubia*) was to be found on the moors above that city. Much more recently a research paper has been written in a Swedish University contrasting the sociological origins of the earliest common names given to the same species in several countries in Europe with those in England. The premise being that those on the Continent were established by members of the academic, scientific communities whereas from my list it might be imagined that they derive from the amateur, landed gentry who had read and travelled widely – Sphinx and Sylph being good indicators of this."

Extract from Journal of the British Dragonfly Society, 1988, Vol. 4, No. 1.

English names for dragonflies

R. Gabb

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The English names listed in Tables 1 and 2 may be of interest in view of Dr. Allen Davies's proposals for a revision of the current English names which he made at the 1986 BDS Indoor Meeting at Oxford University. The names were noted whilst I researched Cheshire dragonfly records in the Grosvenor Museum at Chester. The specimens in the museum cabinets are captioned with labels which appear to have been taken from some form of publication but it has not been possible to determine whether these were cut from a printed list or from book plate titles.

The use of the term 'nymph' for the adults of both the genera *Sympetrum* and *Leucorrhinia* suggests an early date for the work since the word has passed out of current usage except for larvae. Such names as the Yellow-striped Elf and the Midsummer Fairy are very attractive. The list poses some interesting questions. Could *Leucorrhinia dubia* have been found near Dorchester? Was *Orthetrum cancellatum* originally discovered in Croydon? Sheerness, Hastings and Hull certainly seem likely points of immigration but were the continental *Lestes* species to be found this side of the Channel?

Table 1. Resident species.

	Museum Captions	Current Nomenclature	
	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Common Sphinx	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>
	<i>Anax formosus</i>	Wood Sphinx	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>
	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Grand Sphinx	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>
	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Marsh Sphinx	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>
	<i>Aeshna borealis</i>	Northern Sphinx	<i>Aeshna caerulea</i>
	<i>Aeshna rufescens</i>	Southern Sphinx	<i>Anaciaeschna isosceles</i>
	<i>Anax imperator</i>	Superb Sphinx	<i>Anax imperator</i>
	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	Meadow Sphinx	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>
	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Yellow-striped Elf	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>
	<i>Cordulegaster annulatus</i>	Adders Dart	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>
	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Beautiful Emerald	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>
	<i>Somatochlora arctica</i>	Arctic Emerald	<i>Somatochlora arctica</i>
	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>	Elegant Emerald	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>
	<i>Platetrum depressum</i>	Flat-bodied Dragonfly	<i>Libellula depressa</i>
	<i>Libellula fulva</i>	Fen Dragonfly	<i>Libellula fulva</i>
	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four Spot Dragonfly	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>
	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Croydon Dragonfly	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>
	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Cobalt-blue Dragonfly	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>
	<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	Dorchester Nymph	<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>
	<i>Sympetrum scoticum</i>	Scottish Nymph	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>
	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Red Nymph	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>
	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Nymph	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>
	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Blue-banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>
	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Steel-blue Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>
	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Meadow Sylph	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>
	<i>Lestes nympha</i>	Wood Sylph	<i>Lestes dryas</i>
	<i>Agrion mercuriale</i>	Fork-spotted Fay	<i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>
	<i>Agrion puella</i>	Azure-blue Fay	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>
	<i>Agrion pulchellum</i>	Beautiful Fay	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>
	<i>Agrion cyathigerum</i>	Heart-spotted Fay	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>
	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Blue-tipped Fay	<i>Erythromma najas</i>
	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Elegant Fay	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>
	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Forest Fay	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>
	<i>Pyrhosoma tenellum</i>	Fen Fay	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>
	<i>Pyrhosoma minimum</i>	Crimson Fay	<i>Pyrhosoma nymphula</i>
	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	Midsummer Fairy	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>

Table 2. Extinct or immigrant species.

	Museum Captions	Current Nomenclature	
	<i>Cordulia curtisii</i>	New Forest Emerald	<i>Oxygastra curtisii</i>
	<i>Onychogomphus forcipatus</i>	Forcipated Elf	<i>Onychogomphus forcipatus</i>
	<i>Gomphus flavipes</i>	Hastings Elf	<i>Gomphus flavipes</i>
	<i>Leucorrhinia pectoralis</i>	Sheerness Nymph	<i>Leucorrhinia pectoralis</i>
	<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i>	Graceful Nymph	<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i>
	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	London Nymph	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>
	<i>Sympetrum meridionale</i>	English Nymph	<i>Sympetrum meridionale</i>
	<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>	Hull Nymph	<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>
	<i>Lestes virens</i>	New Forest Sylph	<i>Lestes virens</i>
	<i>Lestes barbara</i>	Irish Sylph	<i>Lestes barbarus</i>
	<i>Lestes viridis</i>	Scarce Sylph	<i>Lestes viridis</i>

I would welcome any correspondence which might throw light upon the origin and dates of these names.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Fiona MacKenzie for arranging access to the Grosvenor Museum collection.

I think 'Fay' may possibly be an abbreviation for 'Fairy'.

Further to The remarkable discovery of *Gomphus* along the River Dee

Bryan Formestone has added this fascinating adjunct to Richard Gabb's account of the discovery of *Gomphus* along the Dee in the last newsletter:

“I can tell you that the bus driver who found '*Gomphus*' trapped in his windscreen wipers was Phillip Formstone, my nephew. He was travelling from Oswestry to Welshpool when he found the dragonfly. He brought the insect to me for ID, and this was my first sighting of Club-tailed Dragonfly.”

Another colony of Small Redeye for Cheshire!

According to the August issue of the BDS e-newsletter by Genevieve Dalley a new colony of *Erythromma viridulum* has been discovered near Winsford in Cheshire! The first for that county was reported only a few kilometres to the east by Andrew Goodwin at Warmingham Flash [SJ718624] on the 18th August 2015

(<http://www.brocross.com/dfly/news/2015/aug.htm> - see Newsletter No. 87). After colonizing and advancing across England at a pace in recent years could its advance be slowing as it approaches the Welsh borders?

Other recent sightings of migrant dragons outside North Wales

These recent sightings obtained from the above BDS newsletter are pertinent to our region. They signify migrations from the south and the two species could easily turn up in North Wales so keep a look out.

Anax parthenope (Lesser Emperor): one was spotted at Blashford Lakes, Hampshire, on the 26th July, while another was seen at The Barn Owl Centre, Gloucester, on the 22nd July and a third at Bovey Basin, Devon, on the 22nd July also.

Aeshna affinis (Southern Migrant Hawker): as well as the usual sightings in Essex and Kent, one was spotted at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, on the 24th July.

Dragonflies are adapting to Climate Change

This has been extracted from the September BDS e-Newsletter by Genevieve Dalley. New research published in the journal Molecular Ecology has revealed that Swedish Damselflies are evolving rapidly to cope with Climate Change. The scientists, led by Rachael Dudaniec of Australia's Macquarie University, have discovered multiple genetic changes in *Ischnura elegans* (Common Bluetail), including genes associated with tolerance to heat shock, salinity and mate selection. They concluded that the species is rapidly adapting to climate change, and identified environmental thresholds beyond which climate change influences natural selection on the damselflies. This is allowing the species to rapidly expand northwards. The team say this research will give us an important insight into how different species adapt to climate change, allowing us to direct conservation action to the species which most need it.

Rhuddlan LNR is obviously the place to go

Several of our North Wales recorders go to Rhuddlan LNR to get good photos of dragonflies. Here are some excellent ones recently sent to me.

Simon Hughes was fortunate indeed to witness this rare aeshnid encounter of two different species, a male *Aeshna mixta* (Migrant Hawker) with a female *Aeshna cyanea* (Southern Hawker). I'm sure he always has his camera at the ready so as to share these events with others.



Mixed aeshnids in tandem. A male *Aeshna mixta* tries it on with a female *A. cyanea*. Rhuddlan LNR, 10th September 2018. Photo Simon Hughes.

And a shot from someone we know who always has his camera at the ready!



Male *Aeshna mixta* in flight. Rhuddlan LNR, 7 September 2018. Photo Les Starling.

And not to be outdone, a shot of very possibly the same individual from another excellent wildlife photographer!



Male *Aeshna mixta* in flight. Rhuddlan LNR, 7 September 2018. Photo Eifion Griffiths.

Please remember 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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