

North Wales Dragonflies Newsletters

1. 8 May 07

Hi all,

Your name has been added to the list if you have shown interest in the dragonflies and damselflies of North Wales (i.e. VCs Anglesey, Merionethshire, Caernarvonshire, Denbyshire and Flintshire) over the last few years. Some of you are already actively engaged in sending me records. The intention is to use the list, which currently stands at 62 contacts, as a means of disseminating the occasional news about odonates in North Wales. If you want your name removed or you change your e-mail address sometime in the future (assuming, of course, that it is correct in the first place), please let me know. If you know of others who might wish to join the list I would be very pleased to add their names.

The British Dragonfly Society is planning to publish a new atlas of British dragonflies and damselflies by 2012 or 2013 and my aim is to get as many reliable North Wales records, both my own and those sent in by others, before then. In particular, I would like to fill in the obvious gaps in the records. For this reason I have attached a map of all North Wales records of all species of dragonfly and damselfly (currently standing at 33 species) that have been validated and passed through the NBN Gateway prior to January 2007. Those under-recorded areas can clearly be seen from the map. Open tetrad circles denote records dating prior to 2000 (some even dating back to the 19C). Filled in circles denote records from 2000 to the present. The grid is at 10 km. These accepted records fall mainly into three large groupings, namely my own 'North Wales Dragonflies', the 'CCW Dragonflies' entered by Adrian Fowles, and the Monks Wood data that happen to fall within North Wales entered by Steve Cham. There are also some smaller batches such as the Migrant Dragonflies entered by Adrian Parr and the results of Andy Harmer's Wrexham Pond Surveys entered by myself.

We live in exciting but worrying times. The odonates are responding dramatically to our warming climate with new species arriving in Britain and the well established species changing their ranges and expanding towards the north and west. These changes can be seen even from our North Wales records. The big news so far this year is the extraordinarily early emergence of a number of species. Before the end of April six species locally around the Conwy Valley were already on the wing and a similar scene was repeated nationally.

***Brachytron pratense* (Hairy Hawker or Dragonfly)** was on the wing at the start of May and it may be worth asking people to keep a special look out. It has long been common in central Anglesey (see attached map) but there are new records coming in from widely scattered areas (the latest from the Mawddach estuary near Dolgellau sent in by Ian Standen is not yet included on the map). I think it is probably far more common and widely distributed than our records would suggest and it is likely to be one of those species which is undergoing range expansion. If you see a relatively small, thin-bodied hawker dragonfly with pale blue and black abdomen and green and brown thorax flying around from May into June it is probably the male of this species (see attached photo). Other larger hawkers (they all rest with bodies hanging vertically) are not typically on the wing until July, but who know what to expect this year!

The distribution plots are only as reliable as the quality of records coming in and being validated and if you wish to send me records I would ask you either to be absolutely certain of the identifications or send me a photograph, no matter how poor quality it may be. You should aim for the amount of detail in the new RA83 form that can be downloaded from the British Dragonfly Soc. website (<http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/frameset.htm?home&home>).

The minimum information for each record should include: your name, date of record, species name (either scientific or English), locality name, six figure grid reference (in addition to the two letter prefix) and number of individuals present. Information on habitat and breeding, such as how many copulating pairs or ovipositing females there are, would also be most welcome. Finding **exuviae**, or discarded larval or nymphal skins, is very important in knowing for certain that a species is successfully breeding in a given water body but this inevitably introduces extra problems of identification. You can send me the records directly by post on the RA83 forms or on an excel spreadsheet or, if they are just miscellaneous records, in an e-mail.

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2. 25 May 07

Hi all,

1. 'Dragonflies in Focus'

This is the name of the programme that will culminate in a new dragonfly atlas in 2013. It is being co-ordinated by Graham French of the British Dragonfly Society (Graham.French@naturalengland.org.uk). The aims of the programme are:

- To develop a sustainable system for gathering, managing and using information about the status of dragonflies in the UK;
- To provide access to authoritative and reliable information on dragonflies, in particular through the National Biodiversity Network (NBN);
- To put dragonflies more securely 'on the map' in the UK, through increased involvement of the British Dragonfly Society's membership and of the broader public;
- To produce a new revised Atlas of UK Dragonflies (which can be used as a focal point for the above developments);

which will be achieved by:

- Developing the recording and monitoring programme,
- Improving the scope and quality of records,
- Developing, in partnership with local organisations, a national system for collating and managing dragonfly records,
- Increasing participation by volunteers in a range of surveillance activities,
- Sharing information with other organisations via the NBN Gateway,
- Producing clear, achievable end-products, within a realistic time scale.

Graham has sent me a list of 10 km-squares for North Wales (see attached file) with the species of odonate so far recorded from each. It includes an appeal to record species not highlighted (i.e. recorded since 2000) or record in under-recorded squares. Please note that the under-recorded areas are mainly in Merionethshire and south Denbighshire. Please send records to me.

2. Odonate databases

If you know of any database containing dragonfly and damselfly records I would be pleased to learn about them.

3. Early emergence

The extremely early emergence of species continues. Just some examples I have are:

Gomphus vulgatissimus (Club-tailed Dragonfly): Neil Friswell reported them emerging in numbers along R. Dee at Holt on 2 May.

Calopteryx splendens (Banded Demoiselle): out with above on 2 May.

Brachytron pratense (Hairy Hawker): Les Colley saw one flying at Cors Erddreiniog on 21st April.

Anax cyanea (Southern Hawker): a single emerged from my garden pond on 22nd May. Normally it doesn't start to emerge until 2nd week of June.

Anax juncea (Common or Moorland Hawker): a single emerged from my garden pond yesterday, 24th May. Normally it doesn't start to emerge until 2nd week of June.

4. Exuviae identification

If you find dragonfly (not damselfly) exuviae and you want them identified please send them to me in a 35 mm film container or something similar.

Good hunting,

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3. 8th June 2007

Hi all,

See the message below from Kate Williamson about training. Close-focusing bins are recommended. If you know of anybody who may be interested please pass it on. Tutors will include Les Colley, Stephen Coker from Pembrokeshire and me.

Allan Brandon
North Wales Dragonfly Recorder

"If anyone is interested in attending a workshop on dragonflies and damselflies, on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th June, please let me know. The workshop is free, non-residential and open to people of different experience. The aim is to have talks and group site visits on the Saturday and then split into survey teams for the Sunday and visit different areas. Venue is Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog and you will need suitable outdoor clothing and packed lunch. Binoculars are useful if you have them, as are any field guides or keys you may have.

Cheers

Kate Williamson

Cyd-lynydd Bioamrywiaeth

Biodiversity Co-ordinator

01766 772255

07900 267547"

4. 9th June 07 (not sent)

Dear All,

Apologies for the mass emailing, but the call comes from a major supporter of the BDS, Natural England. They are conducting a survey of gardeners - about their garden and the features and wildlife in it. We have been asked to circulate it, so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to complete it.

The link is:

<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/breathingPlaces.asp>

Natural England request that once you have completed it for yourself, you forward this link on to your own contacts.

This is a large exercise, linked with the Breathing Places campaign, so you may have already seen it. It only took me half a minute, so please help.

Many thanks,
Katharine

Katharine Parkes

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c/o Natural England (West Midlands)
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5. 13th June 07

Platycnemis pennipes (White-legged Damsel or Blue Featherleg) moves onto the Dee.

Platycnemis pennipes inhabits streams and rivers (and also nearby ponds etc.) but in Britain breeding populations have been confined to the southern half of England. Our only north Wales records have been from Fenns Moss where there have been unusual sightings between 1992 and 2004. But now things stand to change dramatically with the discovery this month of established breeding populations along the Dee from **Farndon bypass bridge** [SJ 411 533] upriver to **Aldford** [SJ 412 591]. The species was first picked up by Harry Davies when he photographed a single teneral female at Farndon **Bridge** [SJ 413 542] on the 1st June (see <http://www.brocross.com/dfly/dfly.htm> for more details).

If it hasn't already done so, the species could soon be expected to move into river systems in Flintshire and Denbighshire so please keep a look out.

Good hunting,

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6. 22nd June 07

I've added a few more people to the list. If anybody has any objection please let me know.

Arfon Branch of the NWWT has arranged a field meeting to Cors Bodgynydd and adjacent areas for those wishing to be introduced to odonates. If anybody is interested in attending please contact Kate Gibbs on 01248 681936 or geoffkate.gibbs@care4free.net

Saturday July 28th, 10.30 - 4.30

Dragon and damselflies around the Conway Valley

An introduction to this exciting group of insects. Visiting sites at Cors Bodgynydd and Trefriw, finishing with tea in a Rowen garden. Leader: Allan Brandon. Suggested donation £3, please book with Kate. Meet at Cyffty Mine car park (SH 773588) Car sharing and waterproof footwear suggested.

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7. 9th July 2007

Red-veined Darters in north Wales

We have more exciting news early this month with Andy Harmer's netting of a final instar nymph of *Sympetrum fonscolombii* (Red-veined Darter) at a pond just outside Mold. The species is southern European in distribution but vagrants are being found more frequently farther north across Europe in the warmer months. Iris Cotgrove found one at Criccieth in June 2002 and Steven Stansfield discovered a female on Bardsey Island last September. Breeding populations have been sustained for a few years at, for example Kenfig in south Wales, but in north Wales there has only been one other known breeding attempt. This was evidenced by the netting of a mature nymph by Ian Wallace (of Liverpool Museum) at a pond at Point of Ayr Colliery (now the BHC gas terminal) in February 2001.

The significance of Andy's discovery is that the species could, and probably is, breeding at more ponds in our area and the adults may be seen on the wing later in the summer, assuming of course that we get one this year. So please be on the look out for Red-veined Darters in the next month or two.

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8. 10th July 2007

I have some sad news. Graham French, Dragonflies in Focus Officer at the British Dragonfly Society, is leaving his post at the end of September. He is based at Natural England, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury and has been extremely helpful to me in getting records into the system. So we need a replacement soon that will see the three year DIF programme through to the completion of the atlas. If anybody is suitably qualified and interested I have attached the job description above. The closing date is 7th August.

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9. 25th September 2007

There is no startling news to report for the 2007 season so far. With being away quite a bit my own recording has been wanting. I have received relatively few records from others so far but many thanks to those who have already sent in records. I may as well get in a plea to send me records!

I have compiled a table (see below) of the nomenclature that has been used for those species of odonates so far recorded from North Wales. There have been a number of changes made to the English names in recent popular publications. Quite a few of the traditional names, those used for example by the British Dragonfly Society and in Brooks & Lewington (1997), are considered less appropriate by many people, including myself. The newer names are more meaningful as well as being shorter and snappier. Publications which use the newer names include Dijkstra & Lewington (2006) and Silsby (2001). Some of the main changes that have been made are:

- i. The use of 'damsel' instead of 'damsselfly'.
- ii. To avoid the confusion of 'emerald damselflies' and 'emerald dragonflies' the term 'spreadwings' is used for the former and 'emeralds' for the latter. For example, Common Spreadwing and Downy Emerald.
- iii. The blue and black damselflies are now called 'bluets' following the N. American practice. For example, Variable Bluet.
- iv. Those colloquial names that are descriptive, e.g. Ruddy Darter and Downy Emerald, are retained. However, the traditional names of several species refer to a relative abundance or general range in the UK and these become meaningless on a European scale. For example, the Common Hawker has never been common over large parts of England and it is now called the Moorland Hawker after its typical habitat across northern Europe. Similarly, the Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly is really quite common over large parts of Europe and is now called the Small Bluetail. Two anomalies are that the Common Bluet and the Common Spreadwing are used even though both are absent from parts of southern Europe.

The Welsh names are modified from Jones (1985) following advice from Duncan Brown and Einir Thomas, mostly via Adrian Fowles. I hope I haven't made too many mistakes in copying these out.

The use of English names for odonates in Ireland (Nelson & Thompson, 2004) is a law unto itself.

The publications referred to are:

Brooks, S & Lewington, R. 1997. Field guide to the dragonflies and damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland. (British Wildlife Publishing: Hook.)

Dijkstra, K-D B & Lewington, R. 2006. Field guide to the dragonflies of Britain and Europe. (British Wildlife Publishing: Gillingham.)

Jones, J R E. 1985. Urdd Odonata. Y naturiathr (j. (in Welsh) of Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd), Vol. 13, pp. 22-24.

Nelson, B & Thompson, R. 2004. The natural history of Ireland's dragonflies. (The National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland: Belfast.)

Spilsby, J. 2001. Dragonflies of the world. (The Natural History Museum & CSIRO: Collingwood, Australia.)

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Heirarchy (English/Welsh)	Scientific names	Traditional English names	Newer English names (if any)	Welsh names
Order/Urdd	Odonata	dragonflies& damselflies	odonates	gwesynnod & mursennod
Suborder/Is-Urdd	Zygoptera	damselflies	damsels	mursennod (singular: mursen)
Superfamily/Uwch-deulu	Calopterygoidea		broad wings	
Family/Teulu	Calopterygidae	demoiselles		agrion
	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle		Agrion Dywyll
	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Banded Demoiselle		Agrion Wych
Superfamily/Uwch-deulu	Lestoidea		open wings	
Family/Teulu	Lestidae		reedlings	
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Lestinae	emerald damselflies	spreadwings	
	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Emerald Damselfly	Common Spreadwing	Lestes Werdd
Superfamily/Uwch-deulu	Coenagrionoidea		closed wings	
Family/Teulu	Coenagrionidae	red and blue/black damselflies	pond damsels	
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Coenagrioninae			
	<i>Pyrhosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damselfly	Large Red Damsel	Mursen Fawr Goch
	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Red-eyed Damselfly	Large Redeye	Mursen Lygatgoch
	<i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>	Southern Damselfly	Mercury Bluet	Coenagrion Benfro
	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Azure Damselfly	Azure Bluet	Coenagrion Gyffredin
	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	Variable Damselfly	Variable Bluet	Coenagrion Amrywiol
	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Blue Damselfly	Common Bluet	Mursen Las Gyffredin
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Ischnurinae	blue-tailed damselflies	blue-tailed damsels	
	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	Small Bluetail	Ischnura Brin
	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Blue-tailed Damselfly	Common Bluetail	Ischnura Cyffredin
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Pseudagrioninae		sprites	
	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>	Small Red Damselfly	Small Red Damsel	Mursen Fach Goch
Family/Teulu	Platycnemididae		brook damsels	
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Platycnemidinae	white-legged damselflies	featherlegs	
	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	White-legged Damselfly	Blue Featherleg	Mursen Goeswen
Suborder/Is-Urdd	Anisoptera	dragonflies		gwesynnod (singular: gwesyn)
Superfamily/Uwch-deulu	Aeshnoidea		angle wings	
Family/Teulu	Aeshnidae	hawker dragonflies	hawkers	gwesynnod
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Aeshninae			
	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Common Hawker	Moorland Hawker	Gwas-neidr Glas
	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Migrant Hawker		Gwas-neidr Tramor
	<i>Aeshna cyanaea</i>	Southern Hawker	Blue Hawker	Gwas-neidr Llachar
	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Brown Hawker		Gwas-neidr Brown
	<i>Anax imperator</i>	Emperor Dragonfly	Blue Emperor	Yr Ymerawdr
	<i>Anax parthenope</i>	Lesser Emperor		yr Ymerawdr Bach
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Brachytroninae			
	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	Hairy Dragonfly	Hairy Hawker	Gwesyn Blewog
Family/Teulu	Gomphidae	club-tailed dragonflies	clubtails	

Subfamily/Is-deulu	Gomphinae			
	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Club-tailed Dragonfly	Common Clubtail	Gwesyn Cnwpgwt
Superfamily/ Uwch-deulu	Cordulegastroidea		golden rings	
Family/Teulu	Cordulegastridae		goldenrings	
	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Common Goldenring	Gwesyn Eurdorch
Superfamily/ Uwch-deulu	Libelluloidea		dippers	
Family/Teulu	Corduliidae	emerald dragonflies	emeralds	
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Corduliinae			
	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Downy Emerald		Gwyrddwesyn Blewog
Family/Teulu	Libellulidae		perchers	
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Leucorrhininae	white-faced darters	whitefaces	
	<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	White-faced Darter	Small Whiteface	Picellwr Wynepwyn
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Libellulinae	chasers & skimmers		
	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser		Picellwr Pedwar-nod
	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied Chaser		Picellwr Boliog
	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Black-tailed Skimmer		Orthetrum Llinell-duu
	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Keeled Skimmer		Orthetrum Rhesog
Subfamily/Is-deulu	Sympetrinae	darters		
	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter		Picellwr Cyffredin
	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	Red-veined Darter		Picellwr Wythiengoch
	<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i>	Yellow-winged Darter		Picellwr Asgell Aur
	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Ruddy Darter		Picellwr Rhudd
	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Black Darter		Picellwr Du
	<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>	Vagrant Darter	Moustached Darter	Picellwr Crwydrol

10. 10 October 2007.

Oh, great. Now photographing or netting dragonflies could be seen as a "security incident". See this article in today's Washington Post:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2007/10/08/ST2007100801459.html>

11. 27 November 2007.

Hi all,

End of another season! I'd like to make a last call for you to send any 2007 records that haven't yet been sent to me please. Also, if you have any digital photos of odonates with date and location it would be great if you could send them in. There is a good chance they would be OK for a record.

North-westward range expansion of the Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) in north Wales.

The Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) male is one of our most beautiful dragonflies with its blue eyes and green and black thorax and abdomen, the latter tipped with bright blue. The species is widespread and common throughout virtually all the southern half of Britain where it breeds in lowland woodland ponds, lakes and canals and is common at urban garden ponds. However, a look at its distribution map in Steve Brooks's book, published in 1997, shows that, although widely distributed across Wales, the species was apparently then absent in the north-west over an area covering western Denbighshire and the whole of Caernarvonshire and Anglesey. Since 2000 there appears to have been a partial expansion in its range north-westwards into this area in the similar manner to that of our Emperor (*Anax imperator*), the Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*) and Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*).

There had been a smattering of Southern Hawker records for south-west Merionethshire, mostly from the late 1980s but one from as early as 1956. There was also a group of records for the relative lowland of north-west of Merioneth and adjoining part of Caernarvonshire dating from 1968 into the 1990s. Records are still coming from this area. For example, during a dragonfly training course at Plas tan y Bwlch in June this year Andrew Graham, Becky Groves and Bryan Dickinson found five exuviae around an ornamental pond within the grounds. But, except for one record for the Llanrwst area (Llyn y Parc, F T Vallins, 1952) and one for the Llandudno area (Marl Hall Woods SSSI, Anon, 1972), there had been an absence of records for the species from the large area of western Denbighshire, Caernarvonshire, and Anglesey prior to 2000. As this area includes some of the most densely recorded parts of North Wales it is very likely that the former absence of the species there was real.

I moved into the Conwy area in 2003 and was surprised to immediately record successful breeding of the species at many localities in the Conwy valley area, from the Sychnant Pass in the north to the Gwydyr Forest in the south, with regular observations continuing up to 2007. For example, the species is happily breeding in my garden pond at Rowen. Ian Standen has also sent in records for the Gwydyr Forest area during 2005 and 2006. We still haven't had any records from west Denbighshire and the Snowdonian hills and the higher altitude there probably accounts for this. The species just doesn't get up into the hills unlike our fairly recently arrived Emperor. We now have two records of Southern Hawker from the western side of the hills; John Bratton observed one in 2001 at Cwm-y-glo in the Seiont valley, to the east of Caernarfon, and Bryan Dickinson had one in his garden in the Ogwen valley near Bethesda in 2006. But we still didn't have anything from Anglesey until Geoff Radford sent me pictures recently of emerging males at his garden pond in Llandegfan near Menai Bridge taken in 2005. Ten emerged that year and 3 or 4 in 2006. John Bratton reports that Hugh Knott has also seen the species at his garden pond at Menai Bridge (record pending) and Les Colley noted a 2007 Anglesey appearance (record pending). So the species has been breeding in Anglesey since at least 2005. With all those potential lowland ponds to colonise it is odd that there have been so few sightings up until now.

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12. 21st December 2007

Hi all,

The short write-up of the occurrence of Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) in the north-west counties has prompted some more good observations for Anglesey in addition to Geoff Radford's 2005 photos of emergence at Llandegfan. Included in the updated CCW records sent in by Adrian Fowles are Mike Howe's records for Cors Goch (1996, 2003 and 2005) and Cors Erddreiniog (2003) and 2006 records from Yr Efail (near Mariandyrys NR) by Adrian Fowles and Ms V J Monaghan. Hugh Knott sent in photos of a male emerging from his garden pond in Menai Bridge in 1993 where previously he had seen a female ovipositing. So, with two years in the larval stage, the species must have been breeding in eastern Anglesey at least as early as 1991! So why have there been so few records of Southern Hawker coming from the VC when it is one of the most recorded parts of North Wales?

Have a good Christmas etc.

Allan

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No. 13. 1st February 2008

Hi all,

Below is the contribution I recently sent off for the Darter publication of the BDS. It's just a summary of news from North Wales for 2007 to go alongside similar reports from other regions.

I have never seen Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) in North Wales since I arrived here in 2001. Post-2000 records (see attached) indicate that it is confined to the Wrexham area and most of these eastern records relate to nymphs netted during the Wrexham pond surveys carried out by Andy Harmer. The few records of adults farther west mostly date to the 1997-1998 period when it was breeding on Bardsey. If anyone has any North Wales sightings of the species, especially backed up by photographs, would you please let me know. I'm hoping that I get the same positive response that I got with Southern Hawker on Anglesey.

If you have any news that you want me to add to this newsletter in 2008 or if you know of others who want to be added to the list please let me know. Don't forget that if you want any dragonfly exuviae identified send them in. Proof of successful breeding in the form of pre-flight emergence or exuviae is far more important than sightings of adults.

North Wales Dragonflies 2007

The 2007 season got off to an exceptionally early start with at least 6 species on the wing by the end of April. One species I was hoping we would get more distribution information on is the Hairy Dragonfly but sadly none were seen outside Anglesey where it is reasonably common. Les Colley saw the first on the 21st April at Cors Erddreiniog. In May, Hugh Knott observed a freshly emerged individual at a limestone quarry pool just outside Benllech [SH 5126 8194] and in June another was seen in flight along the river between Llyn Maelog and the sea [SH 3212 7261].

On the 14th May Bryan Formestone was surprised by sightings of Club-tailed Dragonfly close to the River Alyn near Gresford. One was seen at Hoseley Hall [SJ 364 544] and three at Marford Quarry [SJ 358 560]. These could conceivably be dispersed from the well-known breeding colony along the River Dee, three or four miles to the east, or they could now be breeding on the River Alyn itself. I am hoping to monitor the Alyn next May to check for the emergence of this species.

The White-legged Damselfly is now breeding along the River Dee at Farndon! There have been several sightings on the English side of the river this year and Les Hall observed two teneral &/or females on the Welsh side above the Farndon bypass bridge [SJ 411 533] on 2nd June. Perhaps we are going to see a further range expansion into North Wales in the future.

On the 30th June a late stage Red-veined Darter nymph was netted by Andy Harmer at a pond [SJ 207 662] at the Rhydymwyn Nature Reserve near Mold. Flying adults were eagerly awaited later in the year but, sadly, none were observed. This is only the second breeding record from North Wales, the first evidenced by a nymph collected by Ian Wallace from a pond at the former Point of Ayr Colliery in 2001.

Until November this year I was unaware of any records of Southern Hawker from Anglesey and I for one had thought that the species had not yet reached there. Following a short article I

wrote about this, Hugh Knott sent in photos of a male emerging from his garden pond in Menai Bridge as early as 1993 where previously he had seen a female ovipositing. Similarly, Geoff Radford sent in photos, taken in 2005, of emergent males at his Llandegfan garden pond. Moreover, the newly updated CCW data includes Mike Howe's records for Cors Goch NNR (1996, 2003 and 2005) and Cors Erddreiniog NNR (2003) and 2006 records from Yr Efail (near Mariandyrys NR) by Adrian Fowles and Ms V J Monaghan. So, with two years as a nymph, the species must have been breeding in eastern Anglesey since at least as early as 1991! So why have there been so few records of Southern Hawker coming from the VC when it is one of the best recorded VCs in North Wales?

There has been a steady growth in odonate recorders across North Wales over the last few years but most sightings are still being sent to me as ad hoc e-mail records. This year I started the 'Newsletter for North Wales Dragonflies', sent out occasionally by e-mail to about 80 North Walian aficionados notifying them of any relevant developments in the sub-Principality. In June we held the first training course for dragonfly identification, organised by Kate Williamson, at Snowdonian National Park's Plas tan y Bwlch training centre.

In December Adrian Fowles sent me a 2001-2006 update of the Countryside Council for Wales's odonate records. These are mostly for Wales but are also for other parts of Britain. Along with my own 'North Wales Dragonflies' for 2007, these 'CCW Dragonflies' have been sent off to Steve Prentice for entering on to the NBN Gateway.

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No. 14. 11th February 2008

The new distribution maps with data up to the end of 2007 season are not yet available. Stephen Prentice is currently having trouble with Recorder 6, a not uncommon problem it seems.

I would like to point out an oversight in the last newsletter regarding *Brachytron pratense* (Hairy Hawker). I stated that there were no new 2007 records outside Anglesey but forgot to mention the netting on the 30th June 2007 of an adult at the Wrexham Industrial Estate by Andrew Graham and his wife. The species has got to be more widespread than the map indicates (attached incorporates records up to June 2007) and I would like to encourage recorders to keep a special look out in late April and May for *Brachytron*.

Note that an electronic version of the new Odonata Recording Card RA83 can be got from: <http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/docs/RA831.pdf>

I send a special thank you to all those who contributed records during 2007. The following contributors, in no particular order, sent records directly to me (I hope I haven't missed anybody out): Andrew Graham, Duncan Brown, Bryan Formestone, Ian Standen, Paul Day, Paul Triggs, John Lawton Roberts, Neil Friswell, James Robertson, Les Colley, Julian Weldrick, Geoff Gibbs, Kate Gibbs, Dave Walters, Chris Slaney, Chris Wynne, Harry Davies, Red Lidford, Les Hall, Kelvin Jones, John Bratton, Rob Strachan, Andy Harmer, Rhys Jenkins, Debbie Evans, Richard & Sheila Perry, Ann-Marie Furse, Becky Groves, Donna Warren, Brian Roberts, Geoff Radford, Kate Williamson, Dafydd Roberts, Hugh Knott, Bill & Mandi Taylor, Joan Daniels and Ian Hawkins.

In addition the following contributed records while on the Plas Tan y Bwlch training course in June 2007: John Bratton, Roy Tapping, Viv Archer, Allan Brandon, Val Bradley, David Wilkinson, Andrew Graham, Becky Groves, Bryan Dickinson, Lin Gander, Rhys Jenkins, Huw Jenkins, Stephen & Anne Coker, Kate Williamson, Debbie Felin, Rob Strachan, Dafyd Robert, Bryn Griffiths.

The following observers have entered records through Cofnod during 2006 and 2007: Kate Williamson, Huw Jones, Becky Groves, Bill Taylor, Bryn Griffiths, Chris Hall, Rob Strachan, Sally Moralee, Emma Broad, Oliver Prys-Jones, Stewart Johnson & Mark Mitchell. **Please note that Cofnod now encourage records to be sent directly to the county recorders.**

Last, but not least, Adrian Fowles sent in a valuable set of CCW odonate records updated from Nov 2000.

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No. 15. 2nd May 2008

Hi all,

We're now passed the start of another flying season but, after an amazingly early start last year, it has been back to normal as regards emergence times so far. My first record was of Large Red Damselfly emerging from my garden pond on the 29th April and I haven't heard of any other species flying yet in North Wales.

'Dragonflies in Focus'

The British Dragonfly Society officially launched 'Dragonflies in Focus' at a meeting of VC recorders in Milton Keynes in April. This involves four seasons of intensive field recording culminating in a new British and Irish atlas in 2013 (see below and the British Dragonfly website for further details). A bilingual flyer is under preparation, the Welsh translation kindly supplied by Rhys Jones. I'll send out an electronic version when I receive it and hope in due course to get a batch of hard copies. Incidentally, if you know of anybody who would be willing to translate the 'Dragonflies in Focus' pages on the British Dragonfly website I would be pleased to hear of it.

Training and field events in North Wales 2008

So far we have:

1. We are hoping to get an odonate identification training day organised for July at Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre.
2. The Anglesey Branch of NWWT have organised a dragonfly day on 6th July at Malltraeth Marsh starting at 1030 hrs. Leaders are Ian Hawkins and yours truly. Other events will be listed in future newsletters.
3. Emma Broad (emma.broad@wrexham.gov.uk, 01978 292514) is interested in getting people together to do a Common Clubtail survey of the Dee and possibly Alyn during mid-May.

Send in records

So we need as many records as possible in the next few years. The distribution plots are only as reliable as the quality of records coming in and being verified and validated and if you wish to send me records I would ask you either to be absolutely certain of the identifications or send me a photograph, no matter how poor quality it may be. You should aim for the amount of detail in the RA83 form that can be downloaded from the British Dragonfly Soc. website (<http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/frameset.htm?home&home>). The minimum information for each record should include: your name, date of record, species name (either scientific or English), locality name, six figure grid reference (in addition to the two letter prefix) and number of individuals present. Information on habitat and breeding, such as how many copulating pairs or ovipositing females there are, would also be most welcome. Finding **exuviae**, or discarded larval or nymphal skins, is **very important** in knowing for certain that a species is successfully breeding in a given water body but this inevitably introduces extra problems of identification. Send them to me if you have problems. Please send records directly to me either by post on the RA83 forms or on an excel spreadsheet or, if they are just miscellaneous records, in an e-mail. Please do not send records direct to Cofnod as this involves me in extra work and can lead to duplication of records. I verify Cofnod odonate records and all North Wales records finish up with them each year anyway.

More details of 'Dragonflies in Focus'

This is the name of the programme that will culminate in a new dragonfly atlas in 2013. It is being co-ordinated by Steve Prentice of the British Dragonfly Society (01743 282019' stephen.prentice@naturalengland.org.uk, c/o Natural England (West Midlands), Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY4 4TW). The aims of the programme are:

- To develop a sustainable system for gathering, managing and using information about the status of dragonflies in the UK;
- To provide access to authoritative and reliable information on dragonflies, in particular through the National Biodiversity Network (NBN);
- To put dragonflies more securely 'on the map' in the UK, through increased involvement of the British Dragonfly Society's membership and of the broader public;
- To produce a new revised Atlas of UK Dragonflies (which can be used as a focal point for the above developments);

which will be achieved by:

- Developing the recording and monitoring programme,
- Improving the scope and quality of records,
- Developing, in partnership with local organisations, a national system for collating and managing dragonfly records,
- Increasing participation by volunteers in a range of surveillance activities,
- Sharing information with other organisations via the NBN Gateway,
- Producing clear, achievable end-products, within a realistic time scale.

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No 16. 11th May 08

Hi all,

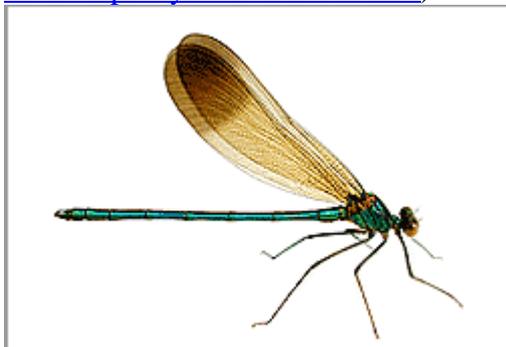


More species continue to emerge. I have now had Large Red Damsel, Common Bluetail, Common Bluet and Azure Bluet from my garden pond. Also I found my first dragonfly, Hairy Hawker, flying at Cors Goch on the 10th May. No other records have yet been received.

Training and field events in North Wales.

The latest details are:

1. Emma Broad (01978 292514; emma.broad@wrexham.gov.uk) is interested in getting people together to do a Common Clubtail survey of the Dee and possibly Alyn on either Monday 19th or Thursday 22nd May.
2. The Anglesey Branch of NWWT have organised a dragonfly day on 6th July at Malltraeth Marsh starting at 1030 hrs. Leaders are Ian Hawkins and yours truly. Please contact Penny or Geoff Radford (01248 713022; geoff.radford@which.net).
3. A dragonfly workshop on odonate identification is to be held at Pensychnant Nature Conservation Centre on Saturday 12th July. Starts at 10 am. After lunch we will be visiting the nearby bog lake of Gwern Engen to try and identify the critters. Depending on numbers interested and if the weather is promising for Sunday 13th July we could go to Cors Bodgynydd in the Gwydyr forest and a nearby Llanrhychwyn lake to continue the training. Please contact either me or Julian Thompson (01492 592595; Julian@pensychnant.fsnet.co.uk).



As usual, please keep a special look out for Hairy Hawker (*Brachytron pratense*) in the next few weeks.

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No 17. 25th May 08

Hi all,



There are some good records being sent in, more than at the same time in previous years which is very encouraging. Quite a number of species are on the wing but apart from *Brachytron* I have no reports of any aeshnids flying so far. Some news on species:

Cordulia aenea

On the 24th May I visited beautiful Llyn Tecwyn Isaf [SH 629 370], Merionethshire, to see how the species is faring at our only known locality. (I don't know who first discovered the species here.) I was rewarded with at least 7 individuals flying. Most were sunning themselves in long grass sheltered from the wind and I was able to take photos of 3 including a fully mature male with green eyes.



Mature male *C. aenea*, Llyn Tecwyn Isaf, 24th May 2008.
Note the green eyes of mature adult.



Immature male *C. aenea*, Llyn Tecwyn Isaf, 24th May 2008

The fate of the species here is uncertain as the lake has no protection and appears to have been stocked with carp for the benefit of anglers. Adrian Fowles has informed me that the species may now be extinct at South Wales's only known site in Glamorgan following a similar introduction of carp.

Brachytron pratense

There have been several sightings at new localities indicating that it may be more widespread than suggested by previous records although most of records are still confined to Anglesey and the Wrexham area.

On the 14th May Debbie Evans photographed one on the coast at Llanfairyneubw [SH 297 770], Anglesey. Although a new locality there are records dating from the 1987-1989 period at the nearby Valley lakes to the east. Farther east Ian Hawkins saw a copulating pair on the 13th May at Cors Crugyll, Bryngwran [SH 335 765], another new locality. He also saw the species flying on the 14th and 15th May at two places on the Malltraeth Marsh RSPB Reserve, a previously known site for the species.

Neil Friswell patrolled a 2 km stretch of the Dee upstream of Holt, Denbyshire on the 19th May and, along with 40 *Gomphus*, found a female *Brachytron* close to where he recorded one on the 16th May in 2006. Bryan Formstone saw his first ever Denbighshire individual at Hem House Open Ponds [SJ 397 544], Holt on the 24th May.

On the 24th May I saw two flying at Llyn Tecwyn Isaf in Merioneth and photographed one at Pen Llyn [SH 564 374] west of Portmadoc, the latter another new locality.



Male *B. pratense* at Pen Llyn, 24th May 2008.

Gomphus vulgatissimus

Emma Broad collected 14 exuviae and saw 2 adults, one emerging, along the Dee just above the Alyn confluence [around SJ 403 551] on the 19th May. Niel Friswell's success upstream of Holt on the same day has already been mentioned.



G. vulgatissimus emerging along the Dee, 19th May 2008. (Photo Emma Broad.)

Emma, Sarah, Neil and Julian Weldrick carried out a larger survey of the Dee for the species on the 22nd May. Emma and Sarah found 30 exuviae between Holt and just downriver of the Alyn confluence. Neil went farther upriver [SJ 41 47], along the stretch downriver of the Afon Clywedog confluence. He found much of the river there too fast-flowing but was rewarded at a slower section with four *Gomphus* exuviae. Exuviae were also found in this stretch during a 2005 survey and this is the farthest upriver that proof of breeding has been found.

On the 23rd May I checked out the Afon Alyn from Alyn Waters Country Park downriver to just above Ithells Bridge [at SJ 386 563]. Like Emma, who had walked from the Dee up almost as far as Ithells Bridge on the previous day, I found the river too fast-flowing and gravel-bottomed for the species but it was suitable for *Calopteryx virgo* which was flying along much of the stretch I visited. So it seems likely that the *Gomphus* seen by Bryan Formstone in 2007 at Marford Quarry and on the 21st May this year at Hoseley Hall [SJ 364 544], originally suspected to have emerged from the adjacent Afon Alyn, had in fact dispersed from the Dee over some distance.

The status of the species along the Afon Clywedog is uncertain. On the 21st May Peter Heywood saw a male flying at the Wrexham Industrial Estate near to where, on the 2nd May last year [at SJ 382 489], Neil Friswell had reported a sighting but these individuals could be from the Dee. Peter also reports *C. virgo* in the vicinity (a new site record) indicating that the Clewedog may be too fast-flowing for *Gomphus*. However farther upriver along the Gefeiliau Brook tributary at Sontley Moor [SJ 33 47] Rob Whitehead in 1988 twice witnessed the species copulating even though Mike Howe had *C. virgo* flying here in 1997.

Coenagrion pulchellum

We have extremely few records of the Variable Bluet outside Anglesey. In 1993 Stephen and Ann Coker discovered the species at Pen Llyn (Llyn Garreg Wen) [SH 553 374], west of Portmadoch. John Bratton also found the species there in 2004. I visited there on the 24th May and found the species thriving. The lake is pretty inaccessible and I saw the damselfly on the grassy slope to the south of the lake where I managed some photos.



Copulating *C. pulchellum*, Pen Llyn, 24th May 2008. Note that this particular male does not have the restricted antehumeral stripes and resembles *C. puella* but for the thickened and stemmed U-shape on the 2nd thoracic segment.



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No. 17 Correction 26th May 08

Hi all,

Sorry I erroneously put an immature *C. aenea* photo in the newsletter instead of a female. Oops. Can anybody identify the lady below. She seems to be taking dragonfly training too seriously!



Allan

No 18. 11th June 08

Hi all,



Dragonflies in Focus Project

Steve Prentice, BDS Dragonflies in Focus Officer, has sent me updated 10 km square species lists for the 5 North Wales vice counties. These lists were created so that it may be possible to see at a glance which squares have been under-recorded since 1999. For each 10 km square there is a list of species last recorded there before 2000 and alongside it a list of species recorded from 2000 onwards so that they may be compared. I have attached the list files for the 5 vice counties. The intention is to get as much 2000-onwards coverage of species for each 10 km square as possible for the planned 2013 British Dragonfly Atlas. So it would be great if individuals could adopt one or more of the 10 km squares that have been poorly covered since 1999, or which are missing some species so that these could be targeted to gain a more complete coverage. Please let me know if you are willing to help. Of course this type of recording is specifically geared to the planned atlas and is not intended to replace ongoing recording at as many water bodies as possible across North Wales.



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No 19. 24th June 08

Hi all,



This is just a few topical notes on records of selected species.

***Gomphus vulgatissimus* (Common Clubtail or Club-tailed Dragonfly)**

I forgot to add that I received the first ever Flintshire record of the species. Peter Smith photographed a teneral female in his Higher Kinnerton garden on 28th May this year. He suggests it must have flown from the Alun rather than the Dee, as the Dee is c. 8 km to the west. I have not checked the Alun as far upstream as west of Higher Kinnerton to see what the conditions are like there.

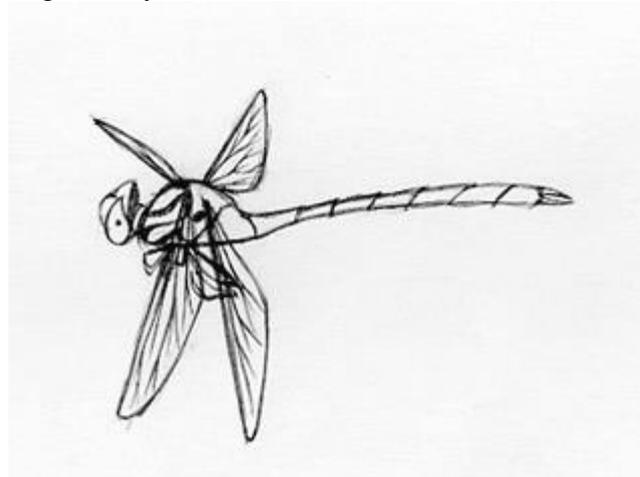
***Platynemesis pennipes* (Blue Featherleg or White-legged Damselfly)**

For the second season Blue Featherlegs has been emerging in June along the Dee in the Farndon area. Record details are on the Cheshire Dragonflies website - <http://www.brocross.com/dfly/news/2008/sight.htm>. We don't have any Welsh records yet from the left bank of the Dee this year.

***Ischnura pumilio* (Small Bluetail or Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly)**

I went down to Llyn Ystumlllyn SSSI [SH 528 385] in the Lleyon on the 16th June to search for Small Bluetail, one of our rarest odonates. It was last recorded there by A E Stubbs in 1983. I didn't find it but found *Coenagrion pulchellum* and *Brachytron pratense*, both new records for the site.

On the 23rd June I was with Ian Hawkins at Malltraeth SSSI, Anglesey, checking out possible sites for the *pumilio*, last recorded there in 1983 by A D Fox. We were successful in finding it at a tiny, shallow, turbid, spring-fed pond much trodden by cattle. About 10 individuals were counted, all males, making this one of the best sites known in North Wales. The pond is reminiscent of the *pumilio* pond at Cors Goch and I'm sure the species could be found at many similar sites in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire. There is an excellent chance to see this species as the Malltraeth pond will be included in the itinerary of the North Wales Trust's Anglesey Branch meeting on July 6th.



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No 20. 16th July 2008

Hi all,



Although the lousy summer weather continues there are some snippets of news:

***Platycnemis pennipes* (Blue Featherleg; White-legged Damselfly)**

This river damsel was eventually found on the Welsh side of the Dee this year by Neil Friswell on the 30th June. He located a male and female at Holt riverside [SJ 413 530].

The species is also cropping up at Fenn's Moss where Rob Strachan found 5 flying adults at one of the fire pools [SJ 504 376] on the 3rd June during a water vole survey. This appears to be an unlikely habitat and the species must be flying in from some nearby flowing water site. Both Rob Strachan and Joan Daniels suggest that it may breed on the adjacent canal. Joan mentions that the species gets well into the Mosses all the way along the canal, but ironically it is never seen on the canal itself. If anybody knows the answer to this riddle would they please inform me.

***Cordulegaster boltonii* (Common Goldenring; Golden-ringed Dragonfly)**

This handsome dragonfly is ubiquitous at the streams and rivers of Snowdonia but tails off eastwards across the Denbigh Moors. Rob Whitehead got the only known Flintshire occurrence at the boggy area of Fron, Cilcain [SJ 167 648] in July 1994 with the sighting of a single adult. Amazingly, the species was unconfirmed in Cheshire until Dave Kitching was sent a photo by Matt and Ron Thomas of one taken on the 23 June this year along the English side of the Dee at Crewe-by-Farndon [SJ 418 529] (<http://www.brocross.com/dfly/news/2008/june.htm>). Several Dee sightings have also been made recently on the Welsh side of the river. On 1st June 2007 Harry Davies saw one on the Dee at Holt [SJ 410 534] and on the 30th June this year Neil Friswell photographed a male in the same area [SJ 406 529] (see photo). John Lawton Roberts reported one much further upriver at Froncysyllte on 22 Aug 07 [at SJ 273 418]. These are the only records we have for *boltonii* on, or close to, the River Dee so far. Has the dragonfly taken to breeding at some places along the river, are there more recorders about these days picking up stray occurrences, or is it breeding along nearby streams?



Cordulegaster boltonii male, 30th June 2008, Holt (photo by Neil Friswell).

***Orthetrum cancellatum* (Black-tailed Skimmer)**

We have only sporadic records for Black-tailed Skimmer from across North Wales since it became a resident species here in c. 2002. Llyn Helyg remains the only confirmed breeding site. Les Colley found a male in August 2003 at Cors Erddreiniog. This year I found two males at Henmer Lake, SE Denbyshire on the 28th June and Joan Daniels reports it flourishing on the Welsh side of the border. The latest sighting of at least two was made on the 15th July by Debbie Evans at Vaynol Lake [SH 535 691], Felinheli. She managed to get a shot off before it flew away.



Orthetrum cancellatum male, 15 July 2008, Vaynol Lake (Photo by Debbie Evans)

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No 21. 3rd October 08

Hi all,



Well, the flight season did start well! The last one of these I wrote was 16th July and there has been nothing much to report since, the wind and the rain having put paid to much recording or dragonfly activity. I give a special thanks to those who continued to send in the dwindling records however. Every cloud has a silver lining and the miserable summer has allowed me to catch up with record inputting. Thanks to Steve Prentice, I've updated my system to Recorder 6 from Recorder 2002 so I can now print out distribution maps as up to date as August 18th 2008!

One new source of North Walean Odonata and other invertebrate records was communicated to me by Julian Weldrick. It's the North Wales Birding Forum's Moths, Butterflies and insects page which started in May this year. It frequently features records of dragonflies, often accompanied by photos enabling ID confirmation, sent in by birders. Several of its contributors have become more committed dragonfly recorders:

<http://www.northwalesbirding.co.uk/forum/viewforum.php?f=16&sid=a5449fa01dcaf1386a9a3f721b29421c>

We're now nearing the end of another flight season and there isn't much about but hawkers and darters though I did see a Common Goldenring and Common Bluet above Blaenau Ffestiniog on the 26 September. I'd love someone to send me a record of an adult Ruddy Darter, it's not too late.

It's a good time to ask you to please think about sending in any records you have outstanding from this or previous years so that I can input them before Christmas.



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