

DRAGONFLY REPORT 2010

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2010 started a new decade and a new tranche of records. The year recorded the usual 21 resident species, all recorded at Breeding level by Ovipositing with the exception of Scarce Chaser which was however seen as Emerging. However there were no migrants or colonists as in some previous years. Between the years 2006 & 2009 the migrant Red-veined Darter was recorded from two or three sites and as breeding at one of these sites, but sadly there was no sign of them in 2010. However there were several new migrant species not far away on the coasts of the Thames Estuary and a photograph of a Southern Migrant Hawker by our own Martin Palmer appeared on the cover of the British Dragonfly Society magazine, so with Climate Change, such species could be in Bedfordshire in two hours or so! It should be noted that we do not classify the Small Red-eyed Damselfly any longer as a migrant, but now as a Bedfordshire resident. The weather for the summer months of the year were generally cooler than in 2009, with a wet August and overnight frosts starting in October and snow falling in November. The dragonfly year started as usual with a Large Red Damselfly on the 17th April and finished on the 19th November with again the usual Common Darter, both dates being within a few days of the 2009 dates. During the year we received 2081 (2007) records from 71 (88) people. The figures in brackets are for the 2009 year. So we had more records, but from fewer people than in 2009. The least recorded species in the county was the Scarce Chaser with just 10 records, followed by the White-legged Damselfly with 21 records and then the Downy Emerald with 22 records. Our most common species was the aptly named Common Darter with 200 records. The Large Red Damselfly by comparison had 189 records. A number of BNHS Field Meetings and public Dragonfly Walks were held during the year, involving a large number of people, during which almost all the county species were seen.

Species notes

Demoiselles

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*

A common and widespread species of running water, allowing close observation and highly visible due to the male's wing colouration.

105 records obtained. Large site counts reported with numbers of 100, 200 & 354. Records from 10x10Km squares and 54x1Km squares.

Emerald damselflies

Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*

A scarce, shy but widespread species, that usually only occurs in small numbers at any location. Listed as a species of Local Concern.

Only 56 records for the year.

White-legged damselflies

White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*

A scarce, shy but widespread species, that seems to be spreading into still water sites. Listed as a species of Local Concern.

In 2010 this species had a poor year with only 21 records obtained from 7x10Km squares and 10x1Km squares. In 2009 there were 29 records. For 2010 it was our second scarcest species, below Downy Emerald, but the county coverage is much wider.

Red damselflies and blue damselflies

Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

A common and widespread species. Always the first species flying in the spring and frequently breeding in garden ponds.

The second most common species with 189 records from 13x10 Km squares and 47x1Km squares.

Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*

A common and widespread species, found in most habitats.

181 records obtained. Records from 12x10Km squares and 51x1Km squares.

Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*

A common and widespread species, found in most habitats.

169 records. At the July BNHS meeting at Willington, the group witnessed a female Common Blue Damselfly Ovipositing 10cm under water, where she crawled about various plants depositing eggs for five minutes, after which time the group had to move on.

Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*

Perhaps our most widespread species, found in almost any habitat including small garden ponds and tolerant of some pollution and disturbance.

An odd situation evolved for the Blue-tailed Damselfly in 2010. In 2009 we had 144 records from 29th April to the 16th November and in 2010 we had a few more records, at 152, but from 28th April to only the 7th September. However the main point is that the Blue-tailed Damselfly was recorded in very low numbers at most sites, although no reason is obvious as other species emerging at similar times did not show a similar decline. In 2009 the species was seen 14 times in the group size D, but in 2010 they were seen just four times at this group size and most records were for just ones and twos.

Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*

An uncommon species, usually occurring only in small numbers at specific habitats.

86 records obtained.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum*

A species first recorded in Britain in 1999 and in Bedfordshire in 2001, as it colonised from Europe.

Now established as a resident species, breeding each year, but only 25 records were obtained from 7x10Km squares and 10x1Km squares, so our fourth scarcest species.

Hawkers

Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*

Listed as Nationally Scarce and a species of Local Concern. An early emerging species that lives in small colonies.

29 records. A report by RM of a dragonfly of this species eating a large Red Damselfly at Ledburn Pit, Leighton Buzzard.

Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*

A common and widespread species, emerging later in the year and lasting well into autumn.

100 records.

Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*

A common and widespread species, frequent at garden ponds and flying late into the autumn.

130 records. Nigel Willits reported an incident when a female Southern Hawker while flying among marginal pond vegetation, got a wing caught on a bramble

thorn. Despite a strenuous struggle she was unable to free herself and Nigel had to lend a hand to extract her.

Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*

A common and widespread species that is easy to identify by its brown wings. 137 records, perhaps a high number compared to the other two Hawker species, due to its ease of identification.

Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*

A widespread species preferring larger lakes, and fairly easy to observe. 104 records.

Emeralds

Downy Emerald *Cordulia aenea*

Listed as a Nationally scarce species and of Local Concern, occurring only in a restricted area in the west of the county.

Now the third scarcest species with 22 records from only 1x10Km square and 4x1Km squares. In 2009 there were only 6 records and was listed as the scarcest species in the county, so the colony may be increasing, although more observers know when and where to look for this species. As an early season flying species, it can be finished before some observers get out in the field!

Chasers, skimmers and darters

Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

A common and widespread species.

135 records. Another easy to identify species, even when flying, due to the obvious wing spots.

Scarce Chaser *Libellula fulva*

Classified as Nationally and Locally Rare occurring in only a short section of the Ouse in the NE of the county.

This was our scarcest species in 2010, with only 10 records, all from just 1x10Km square and from 4x1Km squares. The species is found in only a five Kilometer length of the River Great Ouse, from the county boundary south, to the confluence with the River Ivel. In 2009 there were also just 10 records, so the populations seem to be stable.

Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*

An earlier flying and widespread species, but not very common and only as low numbers together.

Only 77 records, but this species is only seen together in low numbers. The highest number recorded together was just three.

Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*

A common and widespread species.

57 records, a rather low number for this easy to observe species.

Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

The most common and widespread species, generally emerging last and lasting well into autumn.

This was the most common species in 2010 with 200 records from 14x1Km squares and 61x1Km squares.

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*

A late emerging and widespread species.

96 records.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to the 71 people and the four groups listed below that have supplied the records that make this report possible. Special thanks go to Richard Bashford and Ian Dawson at the RSPB for sending on the wealth of records from that site. Thank you to all the recorders that submitted their records via the BNHS website during the year, as this makes our end of year workload so much more tolerable. Please try to get all records to the Recorders by the end of November each year, as this allows us to get our Report out in good time. Digital photographs of unusual species and interesting events are always most welcome and are useful when enquiring about an unidentified species.

All the records obtained have been archived in the Bedfordshire Biological Record Centre, the British Dragonfly Society National Database and with the National Biological Network.

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