

2009 Dragonfly and Damselfly (Odonata) Summary Radnorshire - Vice County (VC) 43 [Version 2]

A very big thank you and well done to ALL contributors - regulars and newcomers alike - for the 2009 Radnorshire Odonata records! I am just waiting for detailed records from one final stalwart, before completing the 2009 spreadsheet and e-mailing it out. Meanwhile, here is a summary of the season's events and highlights of the species recorded. To aid communication, I've also included a map of Radnorshire (courtesy of Powys BIS) overlaid with a grid of 10km Ordnance Survey (O.S.) squares.

Introduction

Over the previous few seasons, we had averaged 215 records per season for VC 43, provided by up to 9 individual recorders in any given year. For the 2009 season, I'm delighted to announce there were 25 contributors, providing almost 500 separate records. This is a brilliant result and will make a significant contribution to the UK Dragonfly Atlas update, now at the end of year 2 of its 5-year recording programme.

The Dragonfly Atlas is based on 10km O.S. squares (as shown in the accompanying map) and the British Dragonfly Society's vision is, by the end of the 5 years, for every 10km square to be represented to some degree in terms of recording effort.

Species notes and notable species

In terms of the number of species recorded in 2009, between us we saw 23 altogether - 14 species of Dragonfly and 9 species of Damselfly. This tally represented all the 'usual suspects' for Radnorshire apart from the **Ruddy darter** (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) for which there were no sightings in 2009. (Typically we only see one or two at most in a season and can't yet prove whether it is actually breeding in VC 43).

Excitingly, the list did include one new species for Radnorshire - a single male **Red veined darter** (*Sympetrum fonscolombii*) seen by the eagle-eyed Pete and Ginny Clarke, near Llowes. I would guess this individual came over with that massive influx of Painted Lady butterflies during the early summer. Several also turned up in Brecknock at that time.

Anna Bransden provided the season's only records of **Scarce Blue-tailed damselfly** (*Ischnura pumilo*), at pools near Llandeilo and on the Begwns - both sightings in 10km square SO14 in the south of the Vice County.

The **Brown hawker** (*Aeshna grandis*) has established itself as a regular in the Vice County, with 17 records this year. One of Carole Taylor's sightings was taking an interest in the re-modelled lake in Llandrindod; and Janice & Richard Vincett noted at least one adult patrolling the same stretch of the River Elan near Rhayader for several weeks.

The number of **Keeled skimmer** (*Orthetrum coerulescens*) records has recovered over the past couple of seasons from only one individual seen in 2007 to 10 records in 2009. This species favours the upland boggy flushes (often with surprisingly little open water). All of this year's records were from the extreme west of the county, mainly via the Elan Valley Rangers team but also from Stephen and Anne Coker, visitors from Pembrokeshire.

Stephen and Anne's **Keeled skimmer** forays were particularly useful as they discovered discarded larval cases (*exuviae*) at 2 sites near Pont ar Elan, thereby providing the first definite proof of breeding in VC 43. At the same location, they also made sightings of **White legged damselfly** (*Platycnemis pennipes*) - this was very unusual as the species is normally found on the lower-lying slower-moving stretches of the River Wye and its tributaries.

On such a stretch of the River Wye, near Hay during the literary festival, I was pleased to net and photograph a newly hatched **Common Club Tail** (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*). Only just in VC 43, this record was the first for several years. We have tantalisingly few records for this species, all of them in square SO24 and it's a personal ambition to see if we can record (the not so) **Common Club Tail** in at least one more square for the Atlas update.

Also right on the edge of Radnorshire and representing the only record for 2009, Vanessa Elphick's sightings of **Migrant hawkler** (*Aeshna mixta*) near Burfa bog in square SO26 were a very welcome addition to the list. The species had not been recorded since 2007 (one individual seen at Stanner Rocks NNR in square SO25); but I have a feeling that the species may be under-recorded as it can be mistaken for the slightly larger **Common hawkler** (*Aeshna juncea*).

Notable events and specific surveys

On the 2nd August, Powys Biodiversity Information Service and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership sponsored a Dragonfly Identification workshop which I led and delivered. The course was fully subscribed with 10 attendees and consisted of an indoor session in the morning followed by a field visit after lunch to Llyn Gwyn, near Rhayader. This is an excellent site supporting 18 species of Odonata to date. On the day, we recorded 11 species, including one of only three records in 2009 for **Black-tailed skimmer** (*Orthetrum cancellatum*).

There were indicative but unconfirmed sightings of **Black-tailed skimmer** at Dick Eastwood's recently-created pond near Clyro. However, the photographic evidence sent in by Dick (and also Penny Hurt and Mike Smethurst for other locations) was definitive in determining several other species and is always a great help to Vice County Recorders.

Following a request from the British Dragonfly Society for volunteers, Ian Standen has kindly been taking part in a pilot study to develop a suitable UK methodology for repeat surveys of a given site. More complex than a normal survey, the information is intended to investigate a number of variables. The site chosen was the Cors y Llyn National Nature Reserve near Newbridge on Wye where, historically, 16 species of Odonata have been recorded. Ian has made several visits this season and I believe the exercise will continue until an acceptable survey method is agreed for the UK.

On the 22nd August, Cors y Llyn hosted what turned out to be a well-regarded event run under the auspices of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust PNR group. Led by Peter and Ginny Clarke for the moth and butterfly recording, and supported by Bronwen Jenkins and myself in terms of the Botany and Odonata interests, a dozen lucky souls were treated to a feast of wildlife under surprisingly blue skies (a rare commodity last August!). Ten species of Odonata were recorded on the day, including a male **Emperor dragonfly** (*Anax imperator*) and a couple of **Four-spotted chasers** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*). These sightings were a bit of a surprise at that late date as both species are early-summer fliers.

Finally, I must pay tribute to the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust staff who supplied a total of 66 records covering 14 species and especially for the work done on the Beacon Hill reserve by Phil Ward and Sue Buckingham. In an extensive survey of upland pools and water courses, Phil found a number of aquatic larvae (*nymphs*) and several *exuviae* thereby proving breeding at those locations of 4 species, including the **Golden ringed dragonfly** (*Cordulegaster boltonii*) which, in one unusual case, he found to be breeding in still rather than moving water.

Conclusion & thanks

Once again, a big thank you to all 2009 contributors (listed below) and to others reading this, having contributed VC43 records in past years, who may be inspired to do so again! Looking ahead to the next 3 seasons of the Atlas update, it would be fantastic if the Radnorshire contingent could maintain or even exceed that level of recording.

Looking at the Radnorshire 10km grid map, I reckon there are twenty one 10-km squares partially or wholly representing VC43. Some of these squares may be well-represented in terms of Odonata records – others may be completely blank. I am working with the staff at Powys BIS to try and establish the squares for which we have no (or very few) Odonata records, in order to inform future recording effort. It is my intention to send something out to you in the spring just before the dragons and damsels start emerging again!!

Bob Dennison

With thanks to the following 2009 contributors: Anna Bransden; Carole Taylor; Darylle Hardy; Dick Eastwood; Fiona Wase; Ian Standen; Janice and Richard Vincett; Julian Jones; Lucy Emery; Mike Smethurst; Penny Hurt; Pete & Ginny Clarke; Pete Jennings; Phil Ward; Rob Andrew; Richard Knight; Simon Breeze; Steph Adams; Stephen and Anne Coker; Sally Holtermann; Sue Buckingham; Vanessa Elphick

VC43	Radnorshire Odonata 2009 list	Species name
1	Azure Damselfly	Coenagrion puella
2	Banded Demoiselle	Calopteryx splendens
3	Beautiful Demoiselle	Calopteryx virgo
4	Black Darter	Sympetrum danae
5	Black-Tailed Skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum
6	Blue-Tailed Damselfly	Ischnura elegans
7	Broad-Bodied Chaser	Libellula depressa
8	Brown Hawker	Aeshna grandis
9	Common Blue Damselfly	Enallagma Cyathigerum
10	Common Club-tail	Gomphus vulgatissimus
11	Common Darter	Sympetrum striolatum
12	Common Hawker	Aeshna juncea
13	Red-veined Darter	Sympetrum fonscolombii
14	Emerald Damselfly	Lestes sponsa
15	Emperor Dragonfly	Anax imperator
16	Four-Spotted Chaser	Libellula quadrimaculata
17	Golden-Ringed Dragonfly	Cordulegaster boltonii
18	Keeled Skimmer	Orthetrum coerulescens
19	Large Red Damselfly	Pyrrhosoma nymphula
20	Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta
21	Scarce Blue-Tailed Damselfly	Ischnura pumilio
22	Southern Hawker	Aeshna cyanea
23	White-Legged Damselfly	Platycnemis pennipes