

British Dragonfly Society

Annual Report 2013



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For the year ended 31 March 2013





British Dragonfly Society

Registered Charity No 800196

Patron

Sir David Attenborough OM CH FRS

Charity's principal address

23 Bowker Way, Whittlesey, Peterborough PE7 1PY

Trustees and Committee Members as at 31st March 2013

| Trustee | Position |
|-----------------|--|
| Dr P Taylor | Chairman |
| Vacancy | Vice-Chairman |
| Mr H G Curry | Hon. Secretary |
| Mr B Walker | Hon. Treasurer |
| Mr D Smallshire | Convenor of Dragonfly Conservation Group |
| Mr M Parfitt | |
| Mr A Nelson | |

Bankers

The Bankers of the Society are Lloyds TSB.

Cover photos (Henry Curry)

Front: A Red-veined Darter enjoys the sunshine

Back: Willow Emerald Damselfly in Norfolk



1. About the Society

Aims

The aims of the Society are to promote and encourage the study, conservation and understanding of Odonata and their natural habitats, especially in the United Kingdom, and to raise public awareness of dragonflies. The British Dragonfly Society is a non-profit making Society with no political affiliations or stance.

Study and conservation

Within the BDS there are two main inter-linked areas of interest, dragonfly recording and dragonfly conservation. The first of these consists of a dedicated group of individual enthusiasts each collecting and supplying records to a Dragonfly Recording Network of Vice County Recorders. The purpose of these records is not simply to document what is present, but also to inform the second main area of interest, that of dragonfly conservation. Records help us to understand the value of a site and added notes about population size and breeding behaviour allow us to assess the importance of an area for species survival. Dragonflies are good indicators of the health of a habitat, so any variation in distribution or population size can indicate changes on a wider environmental scale. Education and training are important weapons in conservation. People need to appreciate something in order to want to preserve it, so providing information to an ever widening audience is an important job for the BDS.

We aim to share the knowledge gained with as many as possible of those whose job it is to take care of the environment. This is achieved both through direct contact and through public events, other meetings and publicity in the national press and social media.

Meetings

We hold one main indoor meeting a year in the late Autumn, the Members' Day, which also includes the Annual General Meeting. Here members and guest speakers, usually including a guest speaker from outside the UK, show digital presentations, slides, videos and film on various odonatological subjects. These meetings are not confined to members of the Society and guests are welcomed at all of our meetings. We also hold an annual Recorders' Day at the start of the season where information is shared and Vice-County Recorders can discuss the previous season's results and plan activities for the coming year. All members of the Society and any interested members of the public are welcome to attend. Through publicising the existence and work of the Society we aim to become the obvious and automatic source of information and advice on all odonatological matters in the UK.

Another way of sharing knowledge is by organising field meetings, training courses and displays in as many different parts of the country as possible – many such meetings or events take place every year throughout England, Wales and Scotland.



2. Governance

Constitution

A Constitution and By-Laws provide rules for the governance and conduct of the Society, and a series of Policy Documents are in place for the guidance of Trustees, Voluntary Officers and Staff. All these documents are periodically reviewed and updated as necessary.

Trustees

The Board of Trustees meets at least twice a year. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the four ordinary members are elected for a period of four years. The Secretary, Treasurer, and the Convenor of the Dragonfly Conservation Group are appointed by the Trustees for a period of four years and are then *ex-officio* members of the Board. The four ordinary members retire in rotation and are not immediately eligible for re-election as an ordinary Trustee.

3. Message from the Chairman

Our Chief Executive applied to Trusts and Foundations to support our BDS work but unfortunately this yielded only one donation from about two hundred approaches made over the course of a year. A Corporate Membership scheme was also developed later, but this has not produced any corporate members. Our ordinary membership, after the price increase in April 2012, has also remained at about the same level as before.

The Chief Executive resigned at the end of October 2012. The Trustees agreed to a three month notice period and he left the BDS at the end of January 2013. Taking into account several factors, including our current finances and the difficulties we are experiencing obtaining further funds, Trustees have decided not to appoint another Chief Executive at the present time.

I would like to extend my thanks to our dedicated band of volunteer Trustees and Officers who continue to put in a huge amount of time and effort in the service of dragonflies, the Society would cease to function without their wonderful enthusiasm. But I am concerned as it is extremely difficult to secure Trustees, especially those with specialist skills.

4. Progress

Grants

BDS continues to be supported in-kind by the hosting agreement with Natural England at Telford.

Our partnership agreement with the Environment Agency yielded £10,000 for 2013-14 in early March. This was hoped for, but in doubt, due to EA budget restrictions. The Letter



of Agreement to release the funds was completed by us and accepted by Alastair Driver (EA) in just three hours!

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) will merge with EA (Wales) and Forestry Commission (Wales) to become Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on April 1st 2013. We claimed £6,973 against a possible £7,500 in February for the first nine months (Apr-Dec 2012) of our three-year grant and were paid this amount in March.

Scottish Natural Heritage is still considering our application for 2013-2015. SNH say it is unlikely that our new grant will start before 1st May 2013. This will cause a one month gap in our finances, They require financial information and a Volunteer Development Policy for the final report.

Significant Donations

The BDS received a donation of £500 from 'The Panton Trust' in February. This was in response to the CE's fundraising efforts in November and adds to the £1,500 received from the R. G. Hills Charitable Trust in April.

Publicity / Social Media

The social media 'Facebook' has averaged 8 posts per month this year with just over 900 people visiting the site in its busiest period in February. Up to 650 people have seen individual posts. We acknowledge that these type of posts get the greatest attention and expect interest to increase. 'Twitter' has averaged 6-7 posts per month this year and we now have 1,335 followers.

The Large Red Damselfly photo competition for the Scottish postcard attracted 31 entries via the BDS Flickr page. We now have 55 members in the 'BDS Pool' and there are 180 photos posted outside of the competition entries.

The BDS website goes from strength to strength and has received regular news updates since the beginning of the year.

An interview with the BDS was requested by 'Garden and Green'. They were already showing interviews by WWT and Bumblebee Conservation Trust, among others. We answered their questions and supplied suitable photographs.

Our Conservation Officer wrote a two-page spread for the book 'Going, Going, Gone'. The BDS logo and web address will be displayed; the first edition of this book, in 2006, featuring the Australian species *Hemiphysalis mirabilis* (and compiled by our former Conservation Officer Caroline Daguet), apparently sold in its thousands worldwide. The species chosen this time is a European one, the Greek Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma elisabethae*.

We have achieved two significant press releases. In February, the winning Large Red



Damselfly photograph was shown in The Times and on websites including Wildlife Extra. More recently a press release about achieving one million dragonfly records has been sent out with a Scottish-focused version being sent to newspapers there. BTO and BRC also 'Tweeted' this news.

Strategy

This was progressed by our BDS CE mainly through a large number of funding applications to Trusts, Foundations and other organisations. A Corporate Membership leaflet was launched and over 150 companies approached at the time of writing, and a Legacy leaflet has been produced. Trustees have been given monthly written updates of progress.

In the current financial year, the BDS has been supported by the hosting agreement with Natural England at Telford (worth £15,000), through a partnership agreement with the Environment Agency (£10,000) and through grants from the Countryside Council For Wales (up to £10,000) and Scottish Natural Heritage (up to £9,000). There has also been a one-off donation of £1,500 from the R. G. Hills Charitable Trust. There remains a significant shortfall in funding to cover core costs and we are increasingly having to utilise our reserve funds.

Recording

Our own online recording system, Living Record and the BTO hosted Garden Birdwatch and Birdtrack schemes are all providing ways for our members and the recording public to enter records electronically. These records are then verified by VCRs and validated by the NBN Record Cleaner rules before becoming part of the main Dragonfly Recording Network database. Birdtrack alone has contributed 5,000 new dragonfly records we would otherwise have missed from our atlas project.

Dragonfly Week 2012

This was launched with a Dragonfly Day at Rodley Nature Reserve, West Yorkshire on Saturday 9th June. There were various themed wildlife walks, pond-dipping, a huge dragonfly sculpture made out of natural and recycled materials, and many other art and craft activities for all ages, plus display boards, a BDS shop, refreshments in the Visitor Centre and many volunteers on hand throughout the reserve from the BDS Yorkshire branch, Rodley Trustees and national BDS.

At Wicken Fen, a second **Dragonfly Day** was held on Sunday 29th July. This event was a partnership day hosted by the National Trust and organised jointly with The Dragonfly Project.

Identification enquiries

To allow our Conservation Officer to concentrate on more conservation-related matters, a dedicated ID enquiry email address was set-up in July 2012. There is identification help on our BDS website, but observers who are still uncertain about what they saw or



photographed can send details via email. Not all enquiries have been from the UK. Several have related to European species and a few have been for sightings from as far away as North America. In 14 months there have been almost 500 enquiries.

Several migrant records have been detected through this system and a few new recorders recruited, especially in Scotland, and on a range of local nature reserves. Each reply is sent with a request for records to be entered online and with an advert for BDS membership. Since we began keeping note, new BDS memberships as a result of this service have averaged about one per week.

Birdfair 2012

The BDS once again shared a double stand with The Dragonfly Project. The event provided several good networking opportunities and a focus for our members to meet us. Several VCRs and Voluntary Officers (past and present) came to talk to us and a special Membership Offer attracted new members to the Society. However, it was noticeable that purse strings had tightened and donations were severely reduced compared to previous years. If funds allow, we're hoping to have a larger stand at the annual Birdfair in 2013 to promote our atlas project.

30th Anniversary of the BDS

We are looking for a larger venue for our annual Recorders Day, so that we can open the event up to more of our members, and we are co-ordinating what we hope will be at least thirty special additional dragonfly walks for beginners across the UK.

Members' Day 2013

Our 30th Birthday Members' Day will be in the fantastic setting of Oxford University's Natural History Museum. There will be talks on Oxfordshire dragonflies, BDS past & future, our *DragonflyWatch* monitoring framework, Demoiselles of Europe, conservation projects for dragonflies, promoting pond diversity and Emerald Dragonflies. There is enough flexibility in the programme to accommodate recordings from our Patron and others if they are unable to attend and wish to send a message.

Jersey Stamps

Six new stamps featuring Dragonflies and Damselflies native to Jersey will be issued by Jersey Post in July 2013. The stamps are being produced to commemorate our 30th anniversary and have been painted by natural history illustrator, Lizzie Harper. Jersey is home to several striking species that can be seen from early spring until late summer around woodland streams, ponds and reservoirs. Many of these will feature on the new stamps.

5. Dragonfly Conservation Group

New Dragonfly Atlas

The DRN database now holds over 1 million records, and final coverage of the British Isles looks good. Meetings of the Atlas group took place in November 2012 (with BRC staff) and March 2013 (editorial group). All but eight species accounts have been drafted; progress now switches to the habitat sections. CEH is progressing trend analysis, though to date the results produced are rather confusing - further work may be required.

Recorders' Day 16 March 2013

This was held in partnership with Biological Records Centre (BRC) who supplied the venue and catering free of charge. A total of 77 attendees were registered for the event. It was a great success and was well received by all. Proceedings were opened with a presentation of a signed Ruddy Darter print to a key recorder, Ingrid Twissell, to mark the one millionth record in the DRN database. This was followed by a varied programme of talks throughout the day including a number of BDS presentations, one on the forthcoming Dragonfly Atlas, *DragonflyWatch*, and Migrants & Rarities and a demonstration of iRecord at lunchtime. One particularly interesting talk that links well with our own future plans was by Dirk Maes who spoke about the use of butterfly records in Flanders being used to identify key areas for important butterfly species.

Monitoring and Data Analysis

British data were included in a pilot production of an international trend (for Banded Demoiselle) using occupancy modelling; a paper has been published. Marc Botham of the BRC (Biological Records Centre) has produced an interim report based on analysis of weekly transect data from the four years of the pilot monitoring scheme, which has now ended. The manual will be re-worked to produce a Site Monitoring Manual and volunteers encouraged to continue monitoring important sites as part of the *DragonflyWatch* recording framework.

DragonflyWatch

We produced an article on this new framework for dragonfly recording in Britain for our annual publication 'Darter' and gave a presentation at the Recorders' Conference. It sets out how records can contribute to range monitoring (basic records), national trends (Site Species Lists), Key Site identification (breeding and abundance data) and site monitoring (e.g. using transect counts). The take home message for recorders is to keep recording! This year will be treated as a pilot and *DragonflyWatch* will be launched fully in Spring 2014.

White-faced Darter translocation in Cumbria

The group commented on the year 3 report and generally agreed with the proposals for the future. Evidence of successful breeding has not yet been obtained.

6. Conservation Officer

Southern Damselfly, Pembrokeshire

Practical work to conserve habitat for this species has been successful; the CCW Senior Conservation Officer sent the following message, ‘the habitats are developing nicely and whilst finishing off SAC monitoring on Preseli we encountered good numbers of *mercuriale* in this stream despite the poor weather and seeing them nowhere else!’ . The management plan has been re-organised following comments and a final version sent out. This is a live document and will be changed / added to as lessons are learned or the situation in the Preselis changes. We put together an application for more practical work to be carried out in the Preselis and for the Conservation Officer to attend the graziers meeting. The grant application was successful and the work has been completed.

Southern Damselfly, Hampshire

The smaller populations of Southern Damselfly in the New Forest are under threat. This information has been given to the Natural England (NE) wetland invertebrate specialist as he was compiling a report for the habitats directive. Overall, the populations are stable but there is some local decline. We contacted Des Sussex (NE) to see if these populations can be included into any Higher Level Stewardships (HLS). Since the last review, in both England and Wales, there has been a lot less recording of this species.

White-faced Darter Re-introduction Delamere

The ‘Delamere Forest White-faced Darter Reintroduction Plan’ has been received by us and we submitted a formal response to the Plan with our recommendations. The White-faced Darter steering group for the Delamere project decided to use the sphagnum method, despite our recommendations to the contrary. We remain supportive and are committed to the project.

JNCC Invitation to comment : revision of the Guidelines for the selection of Biological SSSIs

We compiled a response to this consultation and this requested a revision of the invertebrate sections, particularly Odonata, in Part 2 (formerly part c). This is because the current guidelines are poor for invertebrates and the Odonata data is out of date. We recommend the use of our Key Sites Criteria, which formalizes all of the SSSI criteria and also takes into account the viability of a population and the strength of a population based on the proof of breeding. We recommended that the guidelines should be brought up-to-date with the current Odonata Red Data List for Great Britain (2008) and also current distribution lists and Odonata records. We also endorsed Buglife’s comments on the revision of the guidelines for the selection of Biological SSSIs.

EU Invasive Species Consultation

This was a web-based multiple choice questionnaire, so there was not a lot of scope to expand upon points. We mentioned our concerns about invertebrates being brought into



the country as eggs / larvae inside plants, and used exotic dragonflies being brought into the UK inside pond plants imported for aquaria and ponds as an example.

Aviemore – Development on a Northern Damselfly Site

Planning permission was granted for a supermarket including removal of a breeding pond for Northern Damselfly. There is a condition that states "Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved detailed and costed proposals of compensatory habitat including a pond and translocation of invertebrate species from the existing pond at the site to a recipient pond or ponds shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) acting as Planning Authority." In addition, due to the level of consideration given and considerable interest of the Committee in this issue, the Committee have asked for regular updates on the translocation process to enable us to ensure this is as successful as is possible. We have agreed to work with the CNPA and the supermarket owners to ensure best practice. We are compiling costs for this work and have also put together a list of people who may be able to survey the site.

Education / Training

Our Conservation Officer delivered two training courses as part of our CCW grant at the end of February. The first was on the 21st at Newtown and the other on the 27th at Rhydymwyn Valley Reserve, near Mold. There were 19 attendees at Newport and 21 at Mold; 30 had wanted to attend the Mold course but limitations on numbers & facilities meant this had to be restricted. Feedback was very positive and many attendees were keen for a follow up in the summer.

Networking / Partnerships

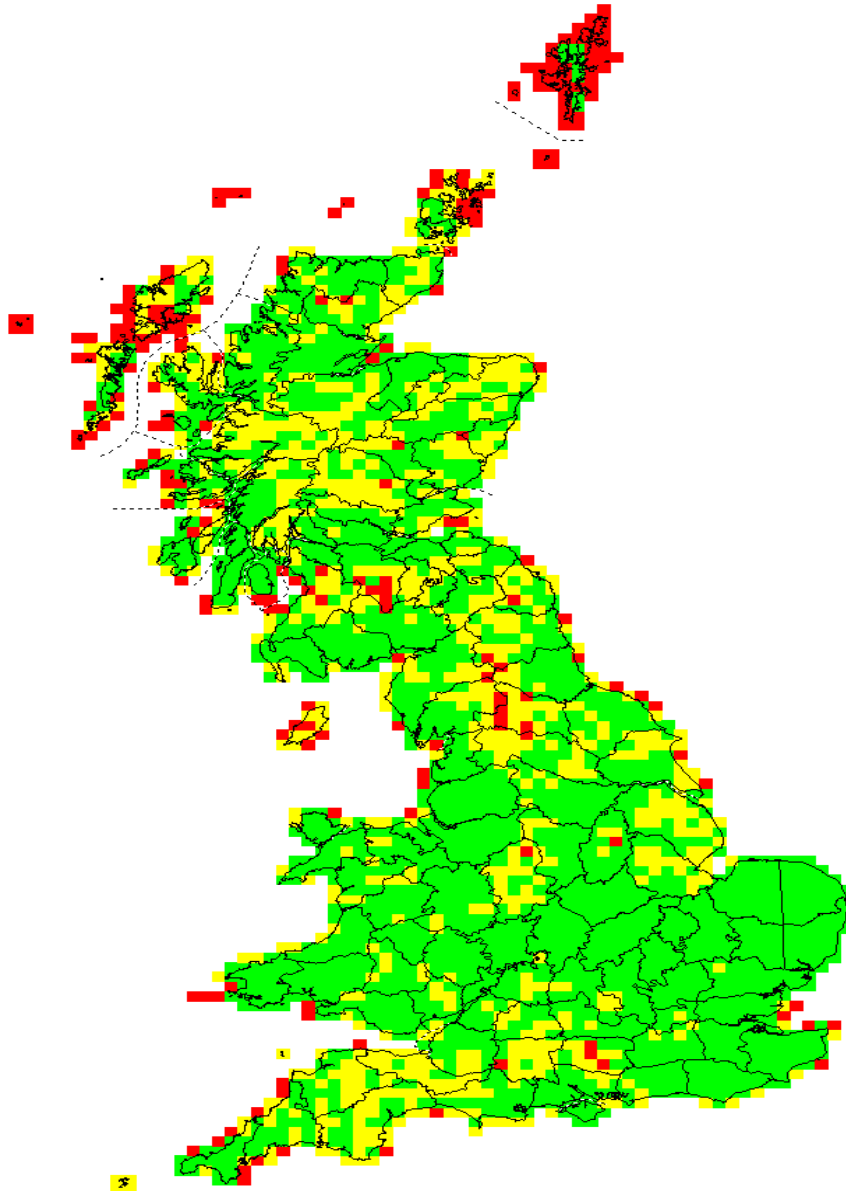
SuDS Launch

Our CO attended the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) booklet launch on 10th January at the Houses of Parliament on behalf of the BDS – we support the ideas involved, and our logo appears on the back of the booklet. In relation to this the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT) are keen to set up a partnership project with us.

Scottish Dragonflies Postcard Survey

We set up a BDS photographic competition (with the help of a volunteer on the 'Flickr' website) for our 2013 Scottish postcard survey of Large Red Damselflies. We had over 50 entries on Flickr and via e-mail. The winner was Martin Černý from the Czech Republic. The postcard has now been designed and is currently being printed.

7. Dragonflies in Focus Project



Since the start of October 2012 117,100 new records have been added to the DRN national database, held in Recorder 6. The database now contains 1,057,708 taxon records. The most significant contribution came from Eugenie Regan of the Irish National Biodiversity Data Centre who sent the up to date Dragonfly Ireland dataset.

NBN Gateway

An updated dataset containing 938,406 records was sent to the NBN in October 2012 and went live on the Gateway on 20th November. As agreed at the last DCG meeting this dataset only contains records up to the end of 2011. The 2012 records will be uploaded after the new Dragonfly Atlas is published.

Dragonflies in Focus project progress - Atlas recording progress by region:

| | Number of 10km squares | Unrecorded or recorded before 2000 | Recorded after 2000 & less than VCDT | Recorded after 2000 & more than VCDT |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| England | 1,511 | 61 | 391 | 1,059 |
| Scotland | 1,119 | 153 | 378 | 588 |
| Wales | 287 | 8 | 48 | 231 |
| Total | 2,917 | 361 | 932 | 1,624 |
| | | 8% | 28% | 64% |

8. Future Plans

The years ahead will be extremely difficult for the BDS, as it has been for many charities, in a very challenging economic climate. Despite the disappointing funding situation and setback of the resignation of our CE, we intend to consolidate our position whilst growing in the areas of social media, education and awareness, and continuing to provide our high quality consultation and conservation services, whilst limiting use of our reserve funds where possible.. A key feature of the year ahead will be publication of our Dragonfly Atlas, and we intend to use celebrations of the 30th anniversary of our founding to promote the need to grow the BDS so that future generations can continue to enjoy dragonflies in the UK for many generations to come. We will also continue to promote Monitoring and Recording, looking at further ways to make use of the remarkable dataset already amassed, and how we can continue beyond publication of the atlas with our DragonflyWatch framework.

9. Accounts

For information regarding our Accounts for this financial year please see the associated document "BDS Accounts 2012-2013".



Published by:

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