

British
Dragonfly
Society



Male Scarce Chaser © Mark Waldron

2020 Wales

Country Dragonfly Recorder Reports

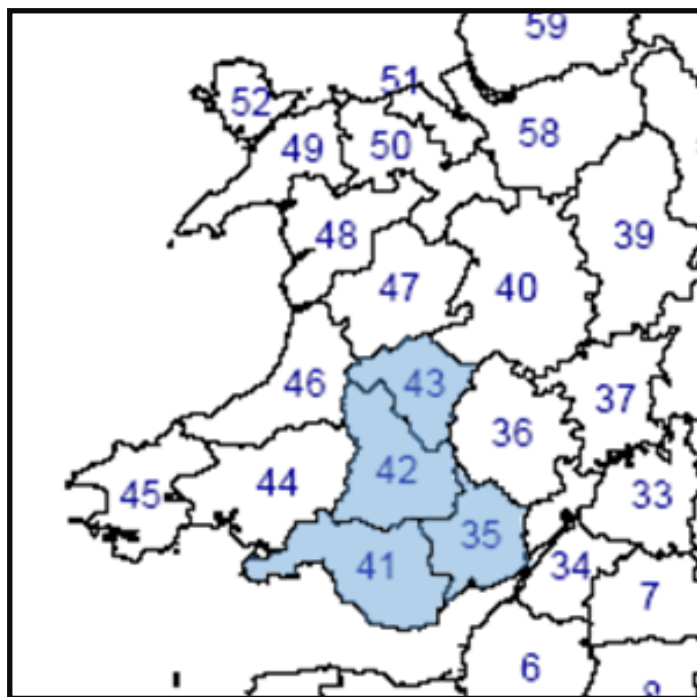
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Can be found on the BDS website under the 'About' drop down menu.

[**www.british-dragonflies.org.uk**](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk)

Edited by Eleanor Colver BDS Conservation Officer

Monmouthshire VC35 ~ by Steve Preddy

2020 was the first year of recording for our ten year dragonfly atlas project, and despite the COVID restrictions a lot of recording was done and we hope soon to be able to issue the first set of maps showing recording progress. The undoubted highlight of the year was our third record of **Vagrant Emperor**, from near Abertillery.

We launched the [Monmouthshire pages in the British Dragonfly Society website](#) this year and also issued our first email newsletter update. Other activities included developing a list of species of local conservation importance, and advising the local biological records centre on the validity of records in their dataset.

Glamorgan VC41 ~ by Mike Powell

Despite challenging circumstances during nearly the whole of the dragonfly flight period a total of 29 species were recorded in Glamorgan in 2020. A dedicated group of just a dozen recorders amassed a total of nearly 1100 records from over 95 sites.

The standout 2020 records were **Scarce Chaser** and **Southern Migrant Hawker**.

On 2 June Frank Sengpiel posted several photographs on a local Facebook Group of a dragonfly he had seen at Forest Farm nature reserve to the north of Cardiff. It was soon noticed by a very keen teenage recorder, Tate Lloyd, who correctly identified it as a **Scarce Chaser**, only the 2nd county record. Sadly, it could not be found again.

On 18 August David Bendell photographed a bright blue dragonfly at Porthkerry Country Park near Barry and sent an image to the County Recorder. It proved to be a **Southern Migrant Hawker**, again only the 2nd county record and hot on the heels of the 1st in 2019.

The Atlas gives just 3 extant sites for **Downy Emerald** in Wales with just one in the south. The Glamorgan population, at a fishing pond in Hensol Forest, has been known for over 30 years and appears stable with adults recorded most years. Occasionally, individuals are noted from another site some 3km distant. During 2020 Downy Emerald was first recorded on 6th May (the earliest ever record) at the core site and once again at the outlying site. It was also recorded at a further three new sites around Hensol Forest and rediscovered at a former site where it had not been seen for very many years. Interestingly, the three new sites are on a large golf course where pools have only been dug within the last ten years.

Breconshire VC42 ~ by Keith Noble

The highlight of the limited 2020 season was the finding of two **Scarce Chasers** at Llangorse Lake, the seventh new species recorded here in seven years. On 25 June Mark Waldron photographed a dark mature female and a male with marks on the abdomen from mating. They were about 500 metres apart by the north-west corner of the lake. This area with lake edge, slow-flowing Llynfi outlet stream, drainage ditches and varied vegetation looks suitable for colonisation by the species.

Llangorse is about 60 km west of the near edge of the Worcestershire/Gloucestershire population which has been growing since 2004. Aderyn, the search engine of the Local Environmental Record Centres in Wales, shows previous records in three different parts of the country: an odd old sighting from below the Blorengie near Blaenavon, Monmouthshire in 1981, one at Dyffryn Ceidrych between Llandovery and Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire in 2011 and two on Cors Fochno near Borth on the Ceredigion coast in 2018.





Female Scarce Chaser

© Mark Waldron

Radnorshire VC43 ~ by Bob Dennison

Thank you to the 34 people who contributed to the 2020 Radnorshire dragonfly recording effort, which resulted in 319 new records. Despite the major limitations on people's movements last season, an impressive 20 out of our 23 expected species were nevertheless recorded: 12 Dragonfly and 8 Damselfly species. The flight season began with a **Large Red Damselfly** on 15 April and ended with a **Southern Hawker** on 29 October.

After the unusually sunny April and May, it was not so surprising that several species started emerging early. An adult **Broad-bodied Chaser** was recorded on 25 April; on 30 May, I found empty larval cases of **Common Darter** at our new pond; I received a photograph of a maturing **Keeled Skimmer** on 2 June; and a newly emerged **Southern Hawker** was rescued on 6 June (see photograph on the next page). All of these dates indicate emergences that are significantly earlier than normal for Radnorshire.

Absent from the Radnorshire list of usual suspects were: **Migrant Hawker**, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** and **Common Clubtail**, about which more later.

Just making it onto the Radnorshire 2020 list, by virtue of a single record in each case, were: a **Ruddy Darter** at Evenjobb, a **Black Darter** at the Colva Hills Mawn Pools, and four adult **Black-tailed Skimmers** at Ireland's Well pool.

Numbers for 2020 were generally lower than for 2019, as might be expected with such restrictions on people's mobility far from home. The species whose numbers held up, were: **Southern Hawker**; **Common Hawker**, **Azure Damselfly**, **Broad-bodied Chaser**, and **Large Red Damselfly**.

Simply based on the 2020 numbers of records, it was a mixed picture for our river species. As mentioned earlier, there were no 2020 records for **Common Clubtail**. This was also the case in 2019 and, though disappointing, might not in itself be a cause for concern. Numbers for both species of **Demoiselle**, though were a little down on 2019, were still quite healthy; and in the case of the **White-legged Damselfly** the numbers recorded were significantly higher than normal.

Indeed, as the season progressed, and in the context of BDS interest in the species, we were surprised about the numbers and locations of White-legged Damselflies being recorded. Were they dispersing more than usual? Could they be making a come-back? Later on in the season, it became apparent that a proportion of **Banded Demoiselles** similarly were turning up in new or unexpected locations, often some distance from any slow flowing water.

Were these atypical observations simply chance? Should we even be encouraged at an apparent spread of some river species? The answer on both counts could be 'possibly'. It would be hard to argue otherwise, considering the relatively small numbers of observations. But could these observations also be explained through some sort of degradation or stress to the river habitat, acting as a stimulus for increased dispersal?

For some time, the Wye Usk Foundation has expressed concerns about the deteriorating condition of some of our rivers in Mid Wales, relating to inadequate regulation over diffuse pollution and the growth in the number of intensive poultry units. In the context of reportedly high nutrient levels in our rivers in mid Wales, it would seem unreasonable to expect our four river specialists to remain unaffected.



Newly emerged male Southern hawker
© Rachel Palmer



Mature male white-legged damselfly
© Dot Baynham