

2021 Wales

Country Dragonfly Recorder Reports



Female Black Darter © Keith Noble

British
Dragonfly
Society



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Male Banded Demoiselle

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www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

Edited by Eleanor Colver BDS Conservation Officer

Breconshire VC42 ~ by Keith Noble

The warm afternoon of 19 May triggered a big emergence at Llangorse Lake with hundreds of adult **Variable** and **Common Blue Damselflies**. In addition, two **Hairy Dragonflies** and a hunting party of five Hobbies were video-recorded there for Welsh Nature Week.

Llangorse Lake is the only known site in the county for **Hairy Dragonfly** which was found here in 2014 after a long absence. Usually they are seen in one or two fields on the southern edge but in 2021 they were spotted along the Llynfi outlet stream in the north-west corner: four on 13 June and two on 26 June. In addition, one was seen on 21 July, which is unusually late.

Red-eyed Damselflies have increased at Llangorse since 2017, when a single male was noted. On 13 June, 26 were present, including pairs, spread all around the Nature Trail, which allows access to the southern and western fringes of the Lake. Another recent coloniser, **Ruddy Darter**, was present between 21 July and 24 September; there were up to eight males occupying evenly spaced territories along their regular stretch at the lake.

A male **Scarce Chaser** was seen at Llangorse Lakeside on 23 July, following the first record of the species here in 2020 (two individuals). Covid restrictions and blue-green algae caused some reduction in survey coverage of the site. However, there was still the unusual finding of **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies** in a meadow that temporarily shallow-floods, on 5 July (six males and two females). Between late August and early October, **Migrant Hawkers** were abundant, and one or two **Southern** and **Brown Hawkers** were sighted.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies were present, as usual, by the Camlais stream on Mynydd Illtyd, along with **Keeled Skimmers**, **Golden-ringed Dragonflies**, and, unusually, three **Beautiful Demoiselles**. A **Brown Hawker** was recorded here on 26 July, a new species for this site. In July and August **Emperors** and **Common Hawkers** patrolled the largest of the pools at the western end, with **Four-spotted Chasers**, **Common** and **Black Darters**, and **Emerald Damselflies**.

Around the Cwm, Llanwrthwl, near our northern border with Radnorshire, 15 species were recorded, starting with a **Large Red Damselfly** on 24 April. The list also included a single **Beautiful Demoiselle** as well as **Banded Demoiselles**, males of the species wandering away from the river valleys. The last species recorded was a **Common Darter** on 21 October.



Female Ruddy Darter

© Keith Noble



Female Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly

© Keith Noble



Male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly

© Keith Noble



Blue-tailed Damselflies in copulation

© Keith Noble

Radnorshire VC43 ~ by Bob Dennison

33 people contributed to the 2021 Radnorshire dragonfly recording effort which resulted in 453 new records and a lot of excellent photographs. It was pleasing to welcome new contributors, including those who submitted records via iRecord, WiRed or the LERC Wales app.

Despite a slow start to the flight season caused by a cold April and May, recorders still managed to see and photograph 21 out of our 23 expected Radnorshire species - comprising 12 Dragonfly and 9 Damselfly species. The two earliest records of the flight season were of **Large Red Damselflies** photographed at different sites on 25 April. The season's latest record was a **Southern Hawker** patrolling a garden pond on 14 November.

After the prolonged low temperatures in April and May, it was perhaps not so surprising that **Large Red Damselfly** was the only early-season species flying in April through to late May, after which, the first **Broad Bodied Chasers**, **Four-spotted Chasers**, **Azure Damselflies** and **Beautiful Demoiselles** started to appear on the wing.

For the third season running, there were no records for **Common Clubtail** – one of four river-specialist species that we expect to see in Radnorshire. Numbers of **White-legged Damselfly** were also worryingly low compared to 2020 numbers, with only three sightings made in 2021.

With the exception of **Migrant Hawker**, for which there were again no Radnorshire records, thankfully all of our larger hawkers seemed to fare well. **Southern Hawker**, **Common** (or **Moorland**) **Hawker**, **Brown Hawker**, **Emperor Dragonfly** and **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** all scored above average sighting counts.

Thanks to Craig Robson's diligent and very welcome survey work in the uplands to the east of Builth Wells, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** sightings were significantly boosted above average. It seems this enigmatic and elusive species may have a stronghold in that part of Radnorshire. Thanks to Louise Bell, **Ruddy Darter** just made it onto the Radnorshire 2021 list, by virtue of a single record (of several individuals) seen at Evenjobb, close to the Herefordshire border.

The trend information set out in the State of Dragonflies 2021 report raises interesting questions about potential changes we might see in terms of Radnorshire's Odonata species list and future species occupancy. On the basis of the report, we might expect to see more of the **Migrant Hawker** and **Ruddy Darter** in future years.

In relation to the UK's recent colonisers, there have as yet been no Radnorshire sightings of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** and **Small Red-eyed Damselfly**, though geographical trends suggest we should perhaps look out for them in the future.

Worryingly, all six species ranked as showing the most adverse occupancy trends, are very familiar and currently widespread in this part of Wales. Radnorshire is a small, inland Welsh county, principally given over to agriculture and forestry. It has a significant proportion of acidic upland, a range of lowland & upland water bodies, and is blessed with a largely upland section of the River Wye SAC. The twin threats of climate change and agricultural diffuse pollution will continue to exercise minds in Radnorshire.



Keeled Skimmer habitat at Elan Valley in Mid Wales

© Bob Dennison



Female Black-tailed Skimmer

© Dot Baynham