

British
Dragonfly
Society



Keeled Skimmer Credit: Keith Noble

2022 Wales County Dragonfly Recorder Reports

VC35 Monmouthshire

By Steve Preddy

Lesser Emperor (*Anax parthenope*) is a dragonfly which is in the process of colonising Britain. It is gradually spreading west, and Monmouthshire's first record was back in 2006 at Lamby Lake (although this site is in the Cardiff local authority area, it falls within the Monmouthshire recording area). Andy Karran, the finder, has written an account of this county first, which is on the British Dragonfly Society's website [here](#).

Until recently there was only one further record, at Ynys y Fro Farm reservoirs in 2018, but our third occurred in 2022, also at Ynys y Fro. Both of these were found by Darryl Spittle, who has kindly supplied details, and I'll add these to the website soon as well.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma viridulum*) is another species which is colonising Britain. Our first Monmouthshire records occurred as recently as 2017 and Tara Okon had the honour of finding the first of these, at Uskmouth. Tara has written an article documenting her find, and this is also on the website [here](#).

Several more sites have been added in the years since, but 2022 has been a notable year for them, with many new sites being found, including some in the northeast and northwest of the county. **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** is now more common here than its close relative **Red-eyed Damselfly (*E. najas*)** and we can expect more new sites to be located in 2023; it may well become one of our most common damselflies before too long.

Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) is a species which is well established on the Gwent Levels, but until last year there had been no sufficiently well-documented records away from there. Tom Chinnick located one on Raglan golf course in spring 2022 and supplied an excellent set of notes which left no doubt over the identification. If you find a hawkers species early in the flight season away from the levels - and it's not an Emperor (*Anax imperator*) - please take some notes or obtain a photo: it will be interesting to find out if Tom's record was a one-off or if the species is spreading here as it has done in England.

Keeled Skimmers expanding their range.

Richard Clarke has been very busy recording dragonflies in the west of the county during 2022, and made a number of interesting finds. In particular, he's found **Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*)** at two sites west of Risca, several kilometres south of their county stronghold. Because of its specialist habitat requirements this is a species which will always have quite a restricted distribution in Monmouthshire, but there could easily be further undiscovered sites out there: a project for 2023 for those of you who like exploring our upland areas, perhaps?

Since taking on the role of county recorder, I have been looking at many older records, to double-check the accuracy of the data, and to ensure we have information on file to support the identifications of the rarer species. This has thrown up some interesting findings. As mentioned in previous updates, Britain's only **Banded Darter** (*Sympetrum pedemontanum*) was actually over the border in Brecknockshire, and a record of a **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*) in our database was probably a data entry error. This is an ongoing process and another recent finding is that **Keeled Skimmer** is unrecorded from the Black Mountains (on either side of the county boundary). It's not all about disappearances though: the only information I had about the Lamby Lake **Keeled Skimmer** (see above) was the recorder initials "AK" so I was very pleased when I was able to track down Andy and he emailed me the excellent photo which accompanies his article. Next on the list for investigation are **Small Red Damselfly** (*Ceragrion tenellum*) and **Variable Damselfly** (*Coenagrion pulchellum*): two enigmatic species, the first of which has not been seen for many years. Look out for details about these in a future newsletter. Older records (of any species) are just as welcome as recent ones, so please do get in touch if you have records which we may not already know about.

Atlas maps

I promised some species distribution maps in the last newsletter; this is taking a little longer than expected, but I hope to be able to start adding these to the website before the beginning of this year's recording season. Watch this space.

How to contribute records

Any and all records of dragonflies in the county are welcome. The simplest and most problem-free way to contribute your records is to enter them into [iRecord](#), but if you'd prefer a different method, please get in touch.

Can you spread the word?

There are now over 100 people on the distribution list for these email updates, but anyone with an interest in the dragonflies of the county is welcome to join. If you know of someone who would like to receive these emails, please put them in touch.



Keeled Skimmer by Keith Noble

VC 42 Breconshire

By Keith Noble

The first sighting was of a **Large Red Damselfly** at The Cwm, Llanwrthwl on 17 April by Richard Knight, who submitted 40 records of 11 species there. The last was a Common Darter on 29 November at Sarnau Pools, where Mike Tompkinson noted 14 species. In all, 28 people provided 203 records of 23 species.

Llangorse Lake was the best-recorded site. Four of the 18 species noted there were seen nowhere else in the county: **Variable Damselfly** in hundreds from 10 May into early June; three adult **Hairy Dragonfly** in May; **Red-eyed Damselfly**, up to 6, also during early summer; **Ruddy Darter**, only single males, in mid-July. **Scarce Chaser**, which was seen here in 2020 and 2021 was not recorded in 2022.

On 16 July Llangorse Lake was recognised as the first Dragonfly Hotspot in Wales with the unveiling of an information board. BDS and supporting organisations ran lake-dipping and other activities. The Hotspot was also the subject of a recorded talk at the BDS Annual Meeting in November. A guided walk followed in August and other events are planned for 2023.

Golden-ringed Dragonfly was the subject of 24 records, more than for any other species. Most recorders submit just one or a few sightings online and **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** is easily recognised on walks in the hills. On Mynydd Illtyd the hot summer caused pools and even the Camlais stream to dry up. This is a good site for **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** but none were recorded this year.

On our rivers there were only two records of **Banded Demoiselle**, and seven of **Beautiful Demoiselle**. **White-legged Damselfly** was seen in June at Llanstephan on the Wye. **Common Clubtail** was not recorded.

The County Recorder wrote a Wildlife Report for British Wildlife magazine's August edition, the first time that the Dragonfly report has focused on Wales. In summary, Dragonfly recording in Breconshire in 2022 was at rather a low level - perhaps the summer was just too hot.



Above: Common blue Damselflies by Keith Noble. Below: Common Darter by Keith Noble.



VC 43 Radnorshire

By Bob Dennison

Thank you to the 33 people who contributed to the 2022 Radnorshire dragonfly recording effort, which resulted in 326 verified records and a tantalising 'near miss'. As each season passes, I notice an increasing proportion of Odonata records coming via *iRecord*, *WiRed* or the **LERC Wales app**. I'm very comfortable with this situation as records sent via these platforms are straightforward for me to review and verify. Between us, we managed to see, photograph, and film 21 out of our 23 expected Radnorshire species, comprising of 12 Dragonfly and 9 Damselfly species.

The flight season began with two **Large Red Damselflies**, photographed by Dot Baynham at Abercamlo Bog on 24 April, and the 2022 season ended with a male **Common Darter**, recorded by Stephen Mullard at his pond near Fynnon Gynydd on 12 November.

Expecting the higher than average temperatures over the 2022 flight season to have resulted in earlier emergences and higher overall numbers of Odonata records, I was surprised to find that neither was the case. Numbers of records across most species were generally down on the previous year, including an unexpectedly low number of **Emperor Dragonfly** sightings. Surprisingly, 2022 emergence dates of the early-season species seemed to mimic exactly what had happened in 2021 when we had had an exceptionally cold spring. Again. **Large Red Damselfly** was the only early-season species to be flying in April through to mid-May, after which the first **Broad Bodied Chasers**, **Four-spotted Chasers**, **Azure Damselflies** and **Beautiful and Banded Demoiselles** started to appear.

Worryingly, for the fourth 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** (with their similar preference for slower-moving stretches of our rivers) were also limited - with only 5 sightings made in 2022. The absence of sightings for these two species is not inconsistent with the unacceptable and well-publicised condition of some of our rivers in this part of the country.

Once again there were no **Migrant Hawker** records for the Vice County, the last one having been photographed by Stephen Mullard in 2018 in southeast Radnorshire. I'm less concerned about the future of this 'generalist' species locally, though in view of widespread suitable habitat and the **Migrant Hawker's** tendency to disperse, I am surprised that the species isn't more often seen or photographed in Radnorshire.

My surprise in the paucity of sightings also applies to **Ruddy Darter** for which there was only one record in 2022. So far, it has only ever been seen here in small numbers and, more typically, in the more lowland southern and eastern parts of Radnorshire, close to the border with Herefordshire and Shropshire where the species is regularly recorded.

It was pleasing to report that two new Radnorshire sites for **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** featured in the 2022 records. A mature male was photographed by

Martyn Moore at a shallow pool in the north of Radnorshire, and a small breeding population was discovered at a spring-fed shallow pool within an area of Rhos pasture in the west of Radnorshire.

A tantalising but instructive 'dragonfly near miss' happened to me in early June. With about 90% certainty, I was buzzed at close quarters in my own garden by a **Downy Emerald**. For the whole of Wales, I know of just three well-separated and localised sites for the species – so **Downy Emerald** was not a species I expected to see. It flew around me for a few seconds then disappeared. It has not been recorded before in Radnorshire and there was no time to get a photo. I'm unaware of any suitable habitat in the vicinity; the closest known breeding site is almost 30 km away in Montgomeryshire. So my sighting won't go on record, but it does serve to remind me how important dispersal and colonization are for Odonata survival!

À propos of which, I will continue to monitor the westward spread of **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** and **Willow Emerald Damselfly** in anticipation of their arrival into mid-Wales in the not too distant future!



Sympetrum danae by Bob Dennison



Scarce Blue-tailed (Ischnura pumilio) by Martyn Moore.



Teneral male S striolatum by Dot Baynham



County Dragonfly Record Contact Details

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

www.british-dragonflies.org.uk