

# Shropshire (VC40) Dragonfly Newsletter



**Spring 2012**  
**Sue McLamb**

## Introduction

Welcome to my first Shropshire newsletter and what better way to start than with a huge **THANK YOU** to all of you who got out and about recording in 2011 and sent in the records. On being given the role as County Recorder last February I was informed to probably expect about 100 records, so it's great to report that I received just under 900 records! Approximately 350 of these were new records from previous years and the remainder were all from the 2011 field season. It's a really great start and fills me with much optimism as I look at the under recorded areas we need to try and target before publication of the BDS National Atlas- more on that later!

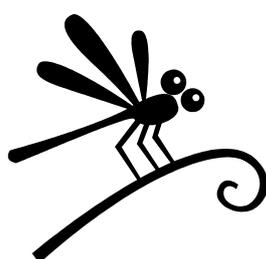
## Flight Season 2011

The 2011 season got off to a flying start (sorry) not unusually with Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) being recorded on 20<sup>th</sup> April by Pete Boardman at Preston Montford (SJ4314). The last record of the season was Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) incredibly also recorded at Preston Montford on 11<sup>th</sup> October again by Pete Boardman. In the table below I have listed first and last dates for the species recorded in Shropshire, but it should always be borne in mind that these are directly influenced by recorder effort and the sites visited. Due to limited records from last year a comparison with 2010 flight periods is meaningless, but hopefully as recording continues we can draw some valid conclusions from recent records.

Having said that, of particular interest are those species recorded in April this year. Comparison with all records in the VC40 database has shown that this year we had the earliest recorded sightings ever in Shropshire for Large Red Damselfly, Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*), Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*), Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*) and Common Club-tail (*Gomphus vulgatissimus*). Of these 5 species only 2 have been previously recorded in April. Large Red Damselfly is frequently recorded towards the end of April and the earliest record prior to 2011 was 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2007. Common Club-tail is not often recorded so early however 1 previous record does exist on 29<sup>th</sup> April, again notably in 2007. The remaining 3 species have no previous records in April, all usually being recorded from May onwards. If my memory serves me well April, 2011 was exceptionally warm which may well account for all these 'earliest sightings' and indeed Adrian Parr (2011) suggests in his British Wildlife dragonfly report that the good weather may have moved the flight periods forward.

## First and Last Recorded Sightings 2011

Species	Common Name	Date of first record	Date of last record
<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Banded Demoiselle	11 <sup>th</sup> May	23 <sup>rd</sup> August
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle	29 <sup>th</sup> April	2 <sup>nd</sup> July
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Emerald Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> June	1 <sup>st</sup> September
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Azure Damselfly	30 <sup>th</sup> April	16 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	Variable Damselfly	28 <sup>th</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Red-eyed Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damselfly	20 <sup>th</sup> April	2 <sup>nd</sup> August
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Blue Damselfly	6 <sup>th</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> September
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Blue-tailed Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> May	23 <sup>rd</sup> August
<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	13 <sup>th</sup> June	9 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	White-legged Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> May	21 <sup>st</sup> August
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Southern Hawker	2 <sup>nd</sup> July	11 <sup>th</sup> October
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Brown Hawker	26 <sup>th</sup> June	27 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Common Hawker	26 <sup>th</sup> June	29 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Migrant Hawker	5 <sup>th</sup> August	2 <sup>nd</sup> October
<i>Anax imperator</i>	Emperor Dragonfly	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	21 <sup>st</sup> August
<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>	Common Club-tail	28 <sup>th</sup> April	26 <sup>th</sup> May
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	18 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> August
<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Downy Emerald	26 <sup>th</sup> June	26 <sup>th</sup> June
<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>	White-faced Darter	3 <sup>rd</sup> May	11 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied chaser	28 <sup>th</sup> April	3 <sup>rd</sup> July
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser	1 <sup>st</sup> May	31 <sup>st</sup> July
<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Black-tailed Simmer	26 <sup>th</sup> June	27 <sup>th</sup> July
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Keeled Skimmer	27 <sup>th</sup> June	1 <sup>st</sup> September
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Black Darter	24 <sup>th</sup> June	29 <sup>th</sup> September
<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Ruddy Darter	1 <sup>st</sup> August	1 <sup>st</sup> October
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter	4 <sup>th</sup> July	7 <sup>th</sup> October



## Species

Throughout the season 27 species were recorded comprising 16 dragonfly and 11 damselfly species. In general whilst records of Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*), Large Red Damselfly, Blue tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*), Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), and Azure Damselfly were typically numerous, other species were barely represented such as Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) and Variable Damselfly (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) each with only 3 records. Also of concern is 1 solitary record of Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) made at Berrington Pool (SJ524071). Previous recent records of this species consist of 2 in 2009 and 1 in 2008 all made at Berrington Pool.

### Missing In Action...

Those previously recorded 'missing species' are Yellow-winged Darter (*Sympetrum flaveolum*), Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) and Scarce Chaser (*Libellula fulva*).



Yellow-winged Darter has not been recorded in Shropshire since the mid 1990's when there was reportedly a large invasion(!) into the UK (Smallshire & Swash, 2010). Although breeding took place the populations have not been sustained. Yellow-winged Darter is known to be an 'irregular immigrant' and with some individuals being recorded in the UK in 2006 it is always worth bearing in mind.

Hairy Dragonfly has only 2 relatively recent records from the year 2000. The sightings were in very close proximity in south Shropshire at Malpass Wood (SO703767) and Neenshill Coppice at Wyre Forest (SO705767), though I suspect there may be a duplication here of the same record. This is one of those species (unlike the Yellow-winged Darter!) that is probably really in VC40 if we can just be in the right place at the right time. It's the first hawker dragonfly on the wing in mid-May and is a fan of clean waters, lush surrounding vegetation and nearby shelter (Brooks, 2004). It would be great to get some new recorded sightings in 2012.

Scarce Chaser has only 1 record ever made in VC40 at Attingham Park in June 2008 by John Balcombe. A further unconfirmed record from a different location was received this year so this is definitely a species to look out for. It would certainly be interesting to know if Scarce Chaser is still present on the River Severn at Attingham Park (SJ5509).

### New / Rediscovered Populations



Notably Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*) has reappeared in Shropshire. Male and female individuals were recorded by Jim Almond at Titterstone Clee (SO5977) which is where the species was last recorded in 2006. In addition more than 10 Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies

were seen for the first time at Bromfield Quarry (SO484775) by Ian Cheeseborough.

These quarry sites are typical habitat for this species which seems to favour disturbed habitat areas with bare substrate and little vegetation (Brooks, 2004).

Shropshire can also boast 2 thriving Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*) populations. In addition to the well established population at Cramer Gutter (SO6479), adults and larvae have again been recorded in good numbers on the Long Mynd (SO4197). They were first recorded at this site very much off the beaten track in 2010 and this is very encouraging evidence that this population is persisting. It is quite likely that we have more Keeled Skimmer sites in Shropshire waiting to be discovered- they just happen to be very boggy and miles from anywhere! I await your records...



## Sites

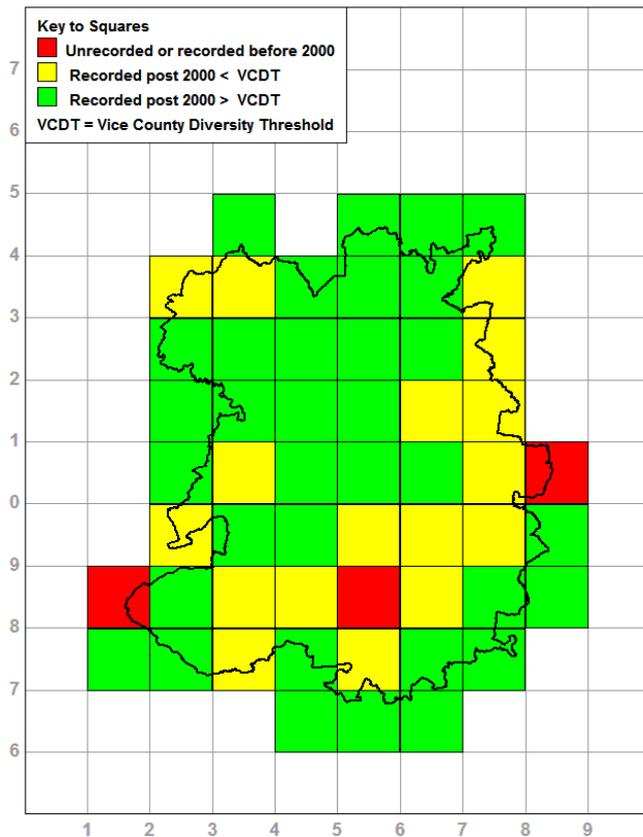
In addition to analysing the species recorded in 2011 it has been interesting to look in detail at the sites where the records are made. The most species rich site (based on 2011 records only) is Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses (SJ43) where 16 species were recorded. This site is well known to support White-faced Darter (*Leucorrhinia dubia*) and a host of other dragonfly and damselfly species. A regular transect also ensures a good number of records are made at this site every year. Berrington Pool was the second most species rich site where 14 species were recorded. This pool is well known for the diversity of Odonate species that it supports and has already been mentioned as the only location where Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) and indeed Variable Damselfly (*Coenagrion pulchellum*) have been recorded in 2011.

At the other extreme are well known sites that have this year been noticeably under recorded. Bomere (SJ5008) had only 1 Odonata record of Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma najas*) and Venus Pool (SJ5406) had just 1 record of Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*). Clearly with just 2 records from 2 sites this does not reflect the species assemblages present, rather the fact that hardly anyone is recording in these locations...which is a good link to the next section!

## BDS National Atlas

Despite much effort we still have a great deal to do in this last pre-atlas field season so that Shropshire is represented as accurately as possible in the atlas. The BDS has produced county maps to indicate the areas (red and yellow squares) most in need of recording attention. The map below illustrates the recording status for VC40 prior to this years records being submitted. This will be updated on the BDS website in due course, but is still useful to indicate the areas we need to target in 2012.

Shropshire (VC40) 10km squares July 2011



Having validated the VC40 records for 2011, the hectad SO18 on the very SW edge of Shropshire is the only square that remains red (no records!). This of course may be altered by records submitted from the neighbouring VC43 Radnorshire. The hectads SO57, SO58, SO48 and SJ30 now have species records that reach the expected diversity threshold (11 species) and should turn green once updated. In addition SJ80 will turn yellow. The remainder of the map will appear as it does here meaning that we have 16 hectads in VC40 that are still under recorded. These are mainly in the East of the County and at least half require only a few species to meet the diversity threshold. It would be fantastic if we could provide the most accurate information possible

for the atlas and a county map full of green squares would show that recorder effort has extended right throughout Shropshire. In addition please don't think records of common species are not worth sending in. All records are needed to correctly represent Shropshire in the atlas- and I for one refuse to believe SO18 doesn't have a single dragonfly or damselfly in it!

### The Last Word..

It just remains for me to say thank you again for all your recording efforts to date and for all those records that will come flooding in this year! I have yet to hear deadlines for record submissions from the BDS regarding the National Atlas, but if possible I would like to receive the records by Xmas (at the latest) then I have a fighting chance of sorting through them in time.

I will be updating the Shropshire page on the BDS website (<http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/local-groups>) in the near future and adding a list of local dragonfly events as I receive information. On this page there are also details of a Dragonfly Recording Workshop that I will be running on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2012. This is aimed at those who are relatively new to recording and should be a fun day with lots of practical ID tips and a free lunch(!) courtesy of Invertebrate Challenge.

I hope you've found this newsletter interesting and as it is my first attempt I'm open to suggestions if people would like to see different things such as distribution maps included. Please don't hesitate to contact me with records, newsletter suggestions, ID queries etc. at [mclamb1@btinternet.com](mailto:mclamb1@btinternet.com). Fingers crossed for a long and glorious summer, have a great field season and above all enjoy the dragonflies!

## **References**

Brooks, S. (2004) **Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland**. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Hook: British Wildlife Publishing.

Parr, A. (2011) Wildlife Reports: Dragonflies. **British Wildlife**, 23(2): 121-122

Smallshire, D. and Swash, A. (2010) **Britain's Dragonflies. A field guide to the damselflies and dragonflies of Britain and Ireland**. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hampshire: Wild Guides

