

Skimmer

Yorkshire Branch Magazine 2014



www.yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk

Notes from the Chair

After the summer of 2012, it seemed like summer 2013 was never going to arrive, winter extending its grip well into spring. In the end however, we did see something of a better summer and more chances to be out looking for dragonflies, although of the events I was involved with on a weekend, it sometimes did not seem like it.

The highlight of the year for me was the opportunity to investigate some of the ponds on the MOD ranges at Caterick Garrison. While the day was somewhat changeable, we did record dragonflies at new sites, including an attractive small reservoir built specially for the purpose of supplying water to wash the militaries tanks after exercises!!

There continues to be a good demand for our local group to be involved in wildlife based events at a wide variety of locations, I am keen that we should be, as this is a good opportunity to promote dragonflies and their conservation. There is however a need for additional manpower, so if anyone would be willing to help at events, please contact me.

By the time you read this article, the dragonfly season will be fast approaching, as will the publication of the new BDS atlas, so don't forget to order your copy. The new atlas is now due for publication in May of this year. It will give an insight into current distribution of dragonflies and their habitats across the UK.

While records are no longer needed for the atlas, gathering records and information about sites continues to be a priority of the BDS. A new initiative is being launched this spring – Dragonfly Watch, so keep an eye out for details.

There are more ways than ever to send in your records - either on the BDS or BTO websites, or through specific recording websites, such as iRecord and Living Record and of course via your nearest Yorkshire recorder.

Don't forget our social media sites, to keep up to date with who's finding what, or if you need help with ID. As ever, good luck dragonfly hunting.

Keith Gittens

Request from the Editor

This magazine is produced for the members, containing articles by the members. Please consider writing just one article during the year for inclusion in the next edition. If the subject interests you, it will be of interest to other members of the group. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue. Hope you've enjoyed the read. Paul Ashton.

Minutes of the AGM/ Indoor Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting of the Yorkshire Branch of the British Dragonfly Society held on the 11th January 2014 at the Leeds Discovery Centre

Attendees – Keith Gittens (Chair), John Hume (Sec.), June Baker (Treasurer), Paul Ashton, Brian Smith, Peter Hinks, Peter Mill, Mike Bloomfield, Bill Hall

Apologies for absence – Hilary and Bob Crick, Paul Adams, Chris Abbott, Richard Shillaker, Tom Hubball, Jill Lucas, Pat and Ken Limb

Minutes of the meeting of 16th February 2013 – Taken as read

Matters arising – Nothing specifically to be discussed as most points would be dealt with later in the proceedings.

Chairman's Report – Keith welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the cancellation of the October meeting, due primarily to him and June moving house. He gave a summary of the 2013 dragonfly season, saying that it had been a cold start, but a good summer and overall was a better season than 2012.

There had been a good demand for the YBDS at events, including dragonfly training sessions, dragonfly talks and bio-blitz. Events had taken place at Barnsley, Foxglove Covert, Stillingfleet, Nunnington Hall and Harrogate. It looked as though there would be similar interest for us to attend events in 2014. Over 2012 – 13 donations and payments for attending events had meant that Keith had been able to donate £220 to the BDS whilst £100 had been put into the branch's funds. The largest single contribution was £100 from Pondnet for holding a training day at Strensall Common.

2013 was the BDS's 30th Anniversary; this had been celebrated locally with cakes on the outing to Cropton Forest. Keith had attended the BDS Members Day and Recorders Day, both of which had had a number of good presentations. The recorders day focusing on software developed by the Biological Records Centre, known as "iRecord". Recording locally was slightly down on previous years, but there were now more ways than ever for getting records to the VC recorders. The Website, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter all had shown a high level of activity, while the Branch's own magazine 'Skimmer' had an improved look, with better quality printing courtesy of John.

Secretary's Report – John gave a rundown of the current membership compared to 2012.

New Members 11 (2 joint 9 individual)

Lapsed Members = 7 (3 Joint 4 individual) Membership is therefore up for 2012.

Treasurer's Report – June gave the financial balance sheet for 1st Jan – 31st Dec 2013.

There was a brief discussion about increasing the ways for members to pay the annual subscription, including the setting up of standing orders. However it was decided to stay with the current method of John asking for cheques/cash payment.

Election Chairman and Secretary – Keith said that both he and John had served their 2 years as chairman and secretary respectively, and that by the rules of the constitution they needed to formally stand down. However they were both willing to remain in their respective posts and were duly re-elected. Peter

Mill proposed, Paul Ashton seconded.

Reports on Summer Field Trips and Events 2013 - See page 5

Events for 2014 – Suggestions included:

Leven Canal – 7th/8th June

Walton Colliery – 13th July arranged by Tom in conjunction with their Public Open day

Jugger Howe and surrounding area 27th July meeting in the large lay-by on the A170

Oakhill 10th August – this to be in conjunction with Friends of Oakhill

Vale of Pickering Carrs – John to liaise with Tim Burkinshaw on sites and dates

Skimmer, Website and Social Media – Paul Ashton said that he had already had 3 articles submitted for 'Skimmer' but could do with a few more. Articles to be submitted by the end of Feb. John said that he would include a further appeal when he emailed out membership requests. John also agreed to print out the magazine.

Paul said that the website had been updated with new species descriptions and photos, and better links and distribution maps. The Flickr account had 21 members who had submitted 767 photographs. Twitter had 89 members and Facebook 91 members.

Records and Recording – Keith appealed for all 2013 records to be sent in to VC recorders as soon as possible.

Reclassification of Status list for Yorkshire's Dragonflies – Tom Hubball had asked for the status of some species to be re-considered, in particular *Erythromma* species. Peter Mill thought that some of the wording was confusing and Paul Ashton agreed to look into this.

Carrs Project with Tim Burkinshaw – John explained that he had had an email from Tim Burkinshaw, the Wetland Carrs Project Officer for Scarborough Borough Council, detailing some of the work that he hoped to accomplish on the Carrs, this could include a detailed dragonfly survey if someone could be found to undertake it. John said that he did have someone in mind and that he would contact Tim for further details.

BDS News – Keith mentioned that the new BDS Atlas would be published around May and that there was a pre-publication offer of £25. Dragonfly week would be 5th -13th July. Recorders Day would be 29th March. He also reported that Pam Taylor had stepped down as BDS Chairman and the post was currently vacant.

AOB – John said that he had finally managed to copy all of the dragonfly slides that had originally come from Brian Lucas. These had been put into a 'Dropbox' file on the internet but he was unsure of how, or who, they should be distributed to. He agreed to discuss it with Jill Lucas.

Paul Ashton said that he still had some copies of his Dragonflies of South East Yorkshire available for sale. Also he had some leaflets publicising a new book on the Insects of Britain and Ireland. Mike wanted to know if the Forestry Commission had plans about creating new ponds when they had clear felled an area. John agreed to talk to Brain Walker, ex wildlife officer for the FC, about this.

Date of next meeting – It was agreed that 11th October was the best date for the next meeting. The venue to be decided at a later date.

Field Trips and Events – 2013 Summary

Broomfleet Washlands 2nd June

A joint meeting with Cleveland Nats. Total of 13 attending. While plenty of Variable Damselflies were seen, the second target species Hairy Dragonfly was only seen once.

Stillingfleet Lodge Gardens Wildlife Day 15th June

Involved a number of local wildlife groups. Very steady through put of people. Pond on site only produced Azure Damselflies.

Rabbit Ings 29th June

There were 5 people in attendance. Weather was sunny but cool. Plenty of Azure, Blue-tailed and Common Blue Damselflies (no Variables) and a few over-ripe Large Reds. Emperors were seen sunning themselves and in the warmer periods, there was a lot of breeding activity from Broad-bodied and Four-spotted Chasers.

Tranmere Bogs/ Cropton Forest 20th July

While the weather either side of this event had been sunny, the day in question was cool, cloudy and generally not good for dragonfly hunting, which was a shame, as the total turn out for the event was 25, members of Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Naturalists swelling the ranks.

The event was not a total failure however, soon after the start of the walk, we discovered Golden-ringed Dragonflies patrolling the beck and everyone enjoyed good views of a female ovipositing in the fine gravel of the river bed. Small numbers of a few other species were seen and an *Aeshna* larva was caught for closer inspection.

As the event took place in "Dragonfly Week", at lunchtime we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the BDS by enjoying a slice of delicious cake.

Flamborough Head 27th July

Joint meeting with Scarborough Field Naturalists Society to look at some ponds created on the headland by Richard Baines. A fine day but few sightings of dragonflies, those seen included Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor and a Common Darter. John was disappointed that Richard only showed us one site, as there were others in the area.

Foxglove Covert Bio-blitz 20/21st July

Successful event with many species recorded. Golden-ringed Dragonfly was recorded for the first time on the reserve.

Foxglove Covert/Catterick Ranges Safari 3rd August

An opportunity to explore ponds on the tank ranges. Another cloudy day but some *Odonata* were seen.

Foxglove Covert 17th August

Joint meeting with Cleveland Nats. The chances of seeing dragonflies seemed slight following a very discouraging weather forecast of rain and wind for the day of this meeting. As a result the attendance was low at around seven, although there was the welcome presence of a young member who had joined the BDS just a few days earlier.

In fact the forecast turned out to be inaccurate, the day was largely dry, so that sightings were made of Blue-tailed Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly, Common Darter and a very settled, obliging (cool?) female Southern Hawker, which allowed many members of the group to obtain very close-up photographs.

Insect festival York 7th July

This had been a great success for the organisers with hundreds of people attending. The society gained one new member on the day, £37 was raised in funds from children making pipe cleaner dragonflies. Some of this money was ploughed back in to more pipe cleaner materials and covering parking expenses.

Events and Field Trips 2014

Please note: Check the website for the latest status and updates on planned field trips.

Remember to bring a packed lunch, stout footwear and waterproof clothing.

Young persons under the age of 18 are welcome to attend all meetings. However, as the Yorkshire Branch of the BDS has no member registered under the Children's Act, their parent or guardian must accompany them. The leader of an event should also be consulted in advance if children wish to attend.

Leven Canal

Saturday, 7th June, 10:30am (Date to be confirmed)

Leader/Contact Details – Paul Ashton 01430 803005 email vc61@erdragonflies.co.uk

Meet at Sandholme Bridge across the canal. Park on Carr Lane and walk along Sandholme Lane to the bridge.

Requirements - Bring packed lunch, binoculars and wear appropriate footwear. Getting to the best part of the canal will involve 2 miles walking as a minimum. We will cover around 4 miles in total.

National Dragonfly Week

Saturday 5th July to Sunday 13th July

Walton Colliery Nature Park

Saturday, 13th July, 10.30am to 1:30pm

Leader/Contact Details – Tom Hubball 01535 678334 after 6pm or email vc63dragonfly@blueyonder.co.uk

Meet at Shay Lane Car Park, which is between Walton and Crofton.

For Sat-Navs the post code is WF2 6PR

Jugger Howe

Sunday 27th July. 10:30am

Leader/Contact Details – John Hume contact 01723 376615 or jhume@hotmail.com.

Meet at 10.30am in the large layby off the A171 NZ945002.

There will be one steep climb into and out of Jugger Howe.

Oakhill Nature Reserve, Goole

Sunday, 10th August, Dragonfly Watch – 10:00am to 1:00pm

Grid Reference: SE729232

Leave the motorway at junction 36 and head towards Goole on the A614, this is Rawcliffe Rd. Take the second road on the right (New Potter Grange Road) go all the way to the end of the road until you reach a blue barrier gate with no entry signs, this will be open during events.

Go through the barrier gate and follow the track round to a small car park.

www.oakhillnature.org

Corfu, Dragonflies and Wildlife, September 2013

Brian Smith

We have been going to Corfu since 1985 and love taking pictures of the wildlife there, including dragonflies and damselflies, so when we went there this year we kept a record of what we saw, so we could write an article for the Skimmer magazine.

When we arrived at the villa near Aghios Georgios north, the first thing we saw as we got out of the car was a Hummingbird Hawk-moth feeding on the flowering shrubs, so out came the camera, as usual, managed to take some good pictures. After unpacking we sat on the terrace overlooking the garden and the valley, with a glass of kokino krassi (red wine), watching the Spotted Flycatchers, Sardinian Warblers, Swallows, including Red-rumped, House Martins, Swifts and others, which soon went quiet when the Buzzards came flying around the villa.

Later on I went for a walk around the garden and the adjoining land, there was a dyke running between the driveway and the veg garden and Yellow-veined Skimmers were flying and landing on the plants, I estimated about 12 of them. At the end of the driveway, along the path, there were some brambles and thistles, with some Common Darters flying around, plus a lot of butterflies, Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, all sorts of Fritillaries, including the Cardinal, lots of blues, mainly Long-tailed and Lungs Short-tailed. During our stay we saw 20 different species of butterflies around the villa, plus a few different Lizards, Small Brown, Dalmation Alyroides and the largest one, the Balkan Green. There were also some Slow Worms around the villa and on the road, which went through the olive groves behind the villa. I had to pick them up and put them in the grass so they did not get squashed by cars.



Yellow-veined Skimmer



Violet Dropwing

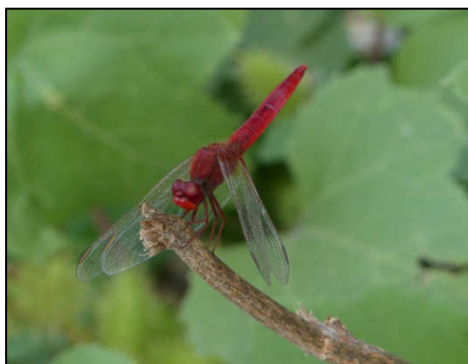
The next evening we went to the Two Stars Taverna at San Stefanos, but before we went into the tavern, Lorraine suggested a walk round the village and fortunately as we walked over a drain which ran under the road we saw some Violet Dropwings on the plants just below us, males and females, so out came the camera and I got some good pictures (never go anywhere without a camera).

The next day we took a ride to Aghios Spiridion, at the top of the island, which has a lake and a few smaller ponds and drains. We had a good day, lots of wildlife and we managed to see Red-veined and Southern Darters, a really nice area.

One of my favourite places is a river near Valanio, where we usually see Beautiful and Banded Demoiselles, plus Clubtails. We didn't see any this time, but we did see Blue Featherlegs and Common Darters, plus lots of butterflies.



Blue Featherlegs



Broad Scarlet



Willow Emerald Damselfly

Walking to the beach from the villa is a two kilometre walk, where you see lots of wildlife, especially where the stream runs at the side of the path. We often saw the Willow Emerald Damselflies in the reeds and bamboo, which grows alongside the stream, plus Darters, Migrant Hawkers, Violet Dropwings, Broad Scarlet and others, which we could not see clearly enough to recognise.

After a few days, we took a walk to Arrilas, as we know the area really well, about a 20 kilometre round trip, well worth it, as we managed to see different Darters, including the Broad Scarlet and a Keeled Skimmer, plus lots of birds and butterflies.

Later in the holiday we drove to the south of the island for two days to Alikes, where we saw lots of birds including Little and Great Egrets, Kentish Plovers, different Sandpipers and Flamingoes, plus Common and Red-veined Darter, and Blue-tailed Damselfly.

On the way back to the villa we stopped at Gordios for a snack, whilst sat in the taverna we saw a wooden bridge crossing a stream, so we had a walk onto the bridge and saw Lesser Emperor Dragonflies flying around, plus some were mating right in front of us in the greenery, so out came the camera and managed to get some more good pictures. There were also Blue-tailed Damselflies on the reeds, we also saw a Mole Cricket nymph crossing the path.



Emperor



Lesser

After leaving we decided to stop near the golf course in the Ropa Valley, as there are lots of drainage dykes in the area, we saw a few different Dragonflies but only managed to i.d. the Migrant Hawker. We had seen Norfolk Hawkers there last year. We also saw the Willow Emerald and Blue-tailed Damselflies. Also in the drains were a lot of snakes trying to catch frogs which I also filmed, and there were lots of birds, Flycatchers, Finches, Hoopoe and Serin and others, a really nice area.

In total we saw 23 species of Dragonflies, 3 which we have not seen before, Violet Dropwing, Yellow-veined Skimmer and the Willow Emerald Damselfly. 79 bird species, 36 butterfly species and 38 moth species.

I would recommend Corfu to anyone who is interested in dragonflies, or any wildlife, there is a lot there and it does not appear to be recorded very much.

BDS - Yorkshire Branch Website

Check out the website for the latest news, first sightings of the year, field trip diary, contact details, dragonfly locations to visit and how to submit your records.
Lost a previous issue of Skimmer! Latest editions available for download, please contact
John Hume for password.
www.yorkshiredragonflies.co.uk

Environmental DNA (eDNA): a new detection technique for aquatic species, including dragonflies

Richard Shillaker

Last summer Pond Conservation, who in September 2013 changed their name to the Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT), have been investigating whether sampling pond water for species-specific DNA is a useful technique to detect the presence of Great Crested Newts (GCN) and other pond vertebrates. The project which is funded by DEFRA has had significant input from PondNet and the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS) volunteers. The volunteers collected water samples from over 200 ponds in mainland Britain where Great Crested Newts were known to be present. Water samples were returned to FHT who then dispatched them to France for analysis.

Analysis involved detecting species-specific DNA originating from the mitochondria (not from the nucleus) within GCN cells. The mitochondrial DNA is thought to get into the water particularly as a result of the newts sloughing off skin cells. Some mitochondrial DNA may also originate from excreta. Only trace amounts of DNA will be present in pond water and so the analysis incorporates an amplification technique called polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to make it easier to detect the species-specific genes within the DNA. Because of the low quantities of DNA present in pond water and the high sensitivity of the assay, forensic-type laboratory procedures must be followed to prevent sample contamination. Account also needs to be taken of the fact that DNA will degrade (break down) when released into the environment; GCN DNA is reported to degrade within 20 days in pond water. However this does mean that a positive finding indicates the recent presence of the species.

The FHT results are most encouraging because the eDNA technique detected GCN at over 90% of the ponds where the species was known to be present. This is a very high success rate and is more successful than any other single standard method (bottle-trapping, torching or egg counting) for detecting the newts; this was demonstrated in a separate comparative investigation of the effectiveness of e-DNA and the other three standard techniques for surveying Great Crested Newts.

I am pleased to say that the water sample I provided from an East Yorkshire pond to test the eDNA technique gave a positive result. The pond I selected was part of a complex of small ponds known to contain GCN but as there had been no survey in 2013 I checked the ponds the night before I took my water sample. Using a low powered hand torch I only spotted one definite GCN, although there had been peak counts of 30 in 2012, and an amazing 162 in 1994.

Advantages of the eDNA approach are that no license is needed to do the survey, only a single day-time visit is needed (eliminates the difficulties of night-time torching) and the method is less invasive to newts than standard methods. The main disadvantage is that it does not provide a good indication of the number of newts present in a pond, although it may be possible to classify sites in terms of low, moderate or high abundance.

The eDNA technique has also been applied to detecting the presence of aquatic invertebrates including crustacea (tadpole shrimp) and dragonfly larvae (the Large White-faced Darter) in northern Europe (Thomsen *et al* 2012) and invasive New Zealand mud snails in America (Goldberg *et al* 2013).

The Large White-faced Darter (*Leucorrhinia pectoralis*), as its name implies, is larger than the White-faced Darter (*L. dubia*) that occurs in the UK. The Large White-faced Darter was selected for the eDNA study because it is listed in the EU Habitat Directive (Council of the European Union 1992) as a species requiring strict protection in its natural habitat and substantial monitoring efforts in the EU. eDNA work on this species was based on 11 ponds in Southern Sweden. The species-specific DNA technique was shown to be positive for the target species but negative for the closely related White-faced Darter and Northern White-faced Darter (*L. rubicunda*), as well as for the Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) and Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) which also occurred in the sampling area. The authors report a success rate of 82% for the eDNA method in detecting Large White-faced Darter in ponds where it was known to occur.

It will be interesting to see what conclusions and recommendations for freshwater biology, and for dragonfly monitoring and conservation in particular, result from the DEFRA-funded FHT study of Great Crested Newts.

[**Note:** DEFRA is also investigating the use of eDNA to detect non-native invasive freshwater fish (topmouth gudgeon and sunbleak) as well as two potential future invasive species (pumpkinseed and fathead minnow).]

References

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Thomsen P.F. *et al* (2012) Monitoring endangered freshwater biodiversity using environmental DNA. Molecular Ecology 21, 2565-2573. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-294X.2011.05418.x

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See page 20 for VC Recorders details

Whitefaces

Geoff Hall

In his article on 'Seeking out the Scottish Specialities' in *Skimmer* 2012, one of the species that Paul Ashton described was White-faced Darter *Leucorrhinia dubia*. This seemed to be a particularly attractive small dragonfly, which I then hoped to have the opportunity to observe and photograph at some time in the future. *Leucorrhinia*, a genus of dragonfly in the family *Libellulidae*, are commonly called Whitefaces because of their distinctive pale frons. There are 16 species worldwide.

Having the opportunity for regular visits to family in California, I have spent some of my time there in recent years observing the local *odonata* and have been helped in locating sites by Kathy Biggs, and identification using her guide 'Common Dragonflies of California'. In 2012, I spent the last week of May walking with my three sons in the Lassen Volcanic National Park in Northern California. Kathy's book is illustrated by Ray Bruun, who lives just outside the Park, and he recommended a visit to a pond near Lake McCumber and close to where we were staying as a good spot for observing dragonflies. Lassen Peak has a height of 10,460ft, and because of late heavy snow cover we were only able to reach 6,470ft whilst in the Park. The pond was located at a lower level at 4,000ft, but that area also had an overnight covering of light snow for some of the time that we were there. However, this had usually burnt off by lunchtime. Ray had mentioned that one of the commoner species at the pond in early summer was Dot-tailed Whiteface *Leucorrhinia intacta*. The habitat of the Dot-tailed Whiteface is a wide variety of lakes, marshes and beaver ponds, as well as slow moving streams, all with abundant emergent vegetation. On hot, sunny days, Dot-tailed Whitefaces can be found basking in clearings on the ground or on twigs, and this was what we observed. Two visits to the pond revealed what was to be my first Whiteface, which were numerous, and one of seven North American Whiteface species, four of which occur in California. There were also other dragonfly species present, including Blue Dasher and American Emerald, and also damselflies.



Male Dot-tailed Whiteface - Martin Hall

Dot-tailed Whiteface is distinguished by the mostly black body, small black basal wing spots, black legs, and white face. Males have one yellow square-shaped spot on the dorsal side of the abdomen. Females have multiple yellow spots along the dorsal side of the abdomen, and there is also a small yellow stripe along the lateral edge in the middle of the abdomen. In both sexes, the colour on the abdomen fades as the adult ages.



Male Dot-tailed Whiteface - Martin Hall



Male Dot-tailed Whiteface - Geoff Hall



Female Dot-tailed Whiteface - Guy Hall

Blue Dasher *Pachydiplax longipennis* is one of the best known North American skimmers, and whilst also having a white frons and also being a member of family *Libellulidae* is not a 'true' Whiteface of the genus *Leucorrhinia*.



Male Blue Dasher - Robert Hall

In England, White-faced Darter *Leucorrhinia dubia* is most easily found at Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, straddling the English/Welsh border in Shropshire. I was pleased to have the opportunity to catch up with this Whiteface in June 2013, during a 2 hour stop-over at Whixall travelling back to Yorkshire from a visit to Cornwall. An online contact had suggested that when visiting I head for the Morris's Bridge Natural England and Natural Resources Wales NNR Car Park on the Llangollen canal. Whilst there I was fortunate to meet the Reserve Manager for the NNR, Peter Bowyer. Whilst White-faced Darter can be seen across the reserve, Peter kindly directed me to a small pool where he knew there were good numbers of the species present. There was also a surprise in store!



Male Blue Dasher - Martin Hall

The White-faced Darter is a small dark dragonfly, with a pale creamy white frons. The wings have small black patches at the base and dark brown pterostigma. The male has a narrow black abdomen, marked with red and orange on the dorsal and lateral segments. The thorax is black with faint red antehumeral stripes and lateral markings. The female is patterned like the male but yellow replaces the red markings. It is a marginal species of raised bog on this site, in that it appears to require shelter by scattered scrub and large bog pools with a mix of feathery bogmoss and open water. Since restoration works have begun, there has been a major increase in its numbers. It has spread into the restored commercial peat cuttings, and now has a healthy population. The Reserve's acidic and waterlogged environment allows an outstanding number of specialist bog plants and insects to thrive. In addition to White-faced Darter, there are 28 other species of dragonflies and damselflies of which 21 are either resident or regular migrants. These include species like the White-legged Damselfly, which need a more mineral rich flowing water.

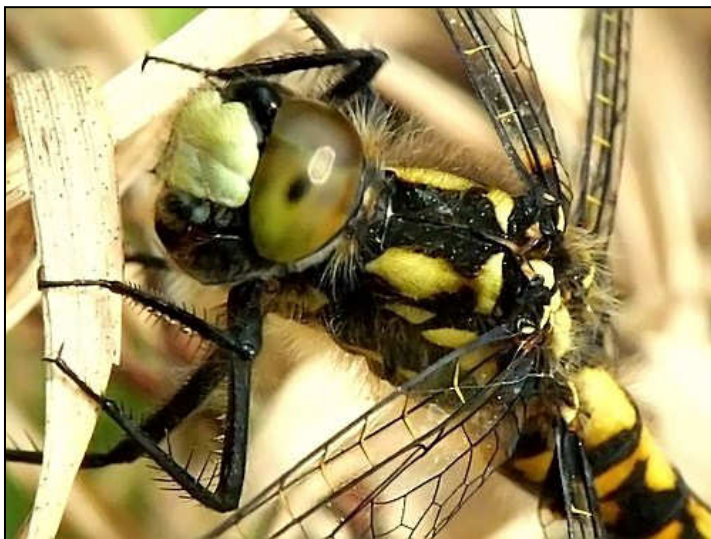
There were many male and female White-faced Darters at the very small pool I had been directed to. The males were very skittish and difficult to photograph in close-up, but there was a more obliging female. She was resting, having been in a rather vigorous wheel formation for quite some time with two males!



Male White-faced Darter - Geoff Hall



Female White-faced Darter - Geoff Hall



Female White-faced Darter - Geoff Hall

I found Whixall to be a fascinating and magical Reserve. A clue to the surprise I mentioned earlier was a plastic sheet lying on the ground by the edge of the pool. I then remembered that amongst the many other species located on the reserve, including Green Hairstreak butterfly and the dashing Hobby, was a rather more sinister species, Raft Spider *Dolomedes fimbriatus*. The plastic sheet offered a suitable means of getting close to the water surface in the hope of seeing this species, which I was fortunately able to accomplish. A specialist of peat bog habitats, Raft Spider walks on the surface of the peat cuttings

listening for insects that have fallen into the water, where it will take them from the surface. The short, velvety, water-repelling hairs covering the body and legs allow these large spiders to literally do the seemingly impossible – walk on water! Rather like a very large pond skater, they skate quickly across the surface and subdue their prey, including White-faced Darter!



Raft Spider - Geoff Hall

To end on a rather more romantic note, Gladys Mary Coles, in her 'Kingdom of Sphagnum' section of 'The Echoing Green' collection of poetry, (Flambard Press 2001), described White-faced Darter on the Mosses thus

“and out from sheltering sphagnum,
lured by light
they come on the glass of their wings
white-faced dragonflies whose faces shine
resembling us at dusk”

This description could aptly apply to all the Whitefaces!

In 2010, with larvae in sphagnum moss collected from a donor site in North Cumbria, Cumbria Wildlife Trust began reintroducing White-faced Darter onto their Foulshaw Moss Nature Reserve, near Witherslack, in South Cumbria. Foulshaw Moss is the largest of three raised mires making up the Witherslack Mosses. The Trust is continuing to carry out significant habitat restoration work there, which aims to secure the long term future of the Moss. In 2013, Cheshire Wildlife Trust began reintroducing the White-faced Darter back into Delamere Forest, using larvae translocated from Whixall.

VC61 South-east Yorkshire Report

Paul Ashton

After a pro-longed cold spring it was no surprise that emergence dates would be pushed back for our early species, most being pushed back by as much as three weeks over recent years. Despite this slow start Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum* went on to break two records, one for the highest ever site count, and also our latest ever date on July 18th, clearly helped by the late emergence and high numbers. Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* continues to hang on in the northern limit of its current range, with no new sites noted. There were no records from Saltmarshe Delph, though recording here is difficult due to visibility, and there is no reason to suspect that it wasn't present. The surge tide in December however, could have a negative effect here, as the area was inundated by brackish water which will no doubt have an impact on some species. Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense* continues to be found in good numbers along Leven Canal, with evidence that this species is extending its range to new sites along the Humber Estuary. Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa* had a disastrous year in 2012, though this did improve in 2013 with the number of sites recording this species doubling to eight. Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta* and Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* were not as abundant as in previous years, despite the excellent summer weather, perhaps indicating a poor year for incoming migrants. The mild autumn extended the flight period of the later species to the 22nd November, a new latest date. The lack of migrants was backed up by only a single record of Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* at Spurn. Records would indicate that this species has not bred successfully since 2007 and is no longer considered to be an annual breeder, its status changing back to irregular migrant breeder. The highlight of the year was a male Keeled Skimmer *Orthetrum coerulescens* found at Spurn on 16th July, this being the second record of this species for the VC, following the first at Skipwith in 2010. Many thanks to all those that submitted their records during the year please keep up the great work.



Small Red-eyed Damselfly – Oak Road Lake, Hull – Paul Ashton

VC62 & 65 North-west and North-east Yorkshire Report

Keith Gittens

The season started late with no *Odonata* being found until 19th May, when a damaged emergent Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula* was discovered at Gilling Lakes. Looking at the condition of the individual this would have emerged a day or two earlier. A visit to Strensall Common the following day produced good numbers of emerging Large Red Damselflies *Pyrhosoma nymphula*. Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* and Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* were also recorded at Strensall.

As the weather improved both Emperor *Anax imperator* and Golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii* seemed more evident, but overall the number of records was average.

Further visits to Thorpe Perrow Arboretum this year took the total species recorded up to 14, the Millenium Pond being an excellent site.

Two recently discovered ponds on Strensall Common also proved to hold a wide variety of species even though only recently dug out, enhancing what is already an excellent site for dragonflies.

Generally then, an uneventful year but records were received from new sites in both VC62 and 65. I was pleased to receive records from some new recorders, but many thanks to all those who sent records in.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly – Wheeldale Moor – Mick Hemingway

VC63 South-west Yorkshire Report

Alistair McLean

2013 was my first season as recorder for South-west Yorkshire. It mostly consisted of setting up a new Recorder database and compiling existing datasets into it. However, the highlights of the field season for me included my first trip out to Rabbit Ings, near Royston. The site is ex-industrial, recently transformed into a country park. It has an excellent selection of *Odonata*, including Emperor, Broad-bodied & Four-spotted Chasers, which can be found frequenting many of the small ponds on the site. Later in the season, Black Darter was recorded there for the first time. Sadly, like many excellent wildlife sites, it is under threat from the proposed HS2 development.

The next highlight was the Barnsley Bio-Blitz, which for me involved a trip to the Dearne Valley RSPB reserve. The weather was perfect and a great number of dragon & damselflies were recorded, most of which were dog-fighting, ovipositing and guarding in spectacular fashion. Particularly special was the Banded Demoiselle, which is a relatively recent addition to the species list at Dearne Valley. Thanks to all those who submitted their VC63 sightings by email, post and through Living Record on the Yorkshire Dragonflies website. Sadly, there was no repeat of the Downy Emerald, recorded at Blacktoft Sands in 2012, but you can't have everything!

2014 looks like it will be a very active year for *Odonata* recording in VC63 and in the Sorby area, for which I'm also *Odonata* recorder, as we restart preparation for the long awaited Dragonflies of the Sheffield area publication. In VC63, I'm particularly interested in determining whether the Hairy Dragonfly has made it any further South of Doncaster, but as always, any records of any species would be welcome.

Vice-county recorders

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| VC61 - Paul Ashton | vc61@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk | 01430 803005 |
| VC62 - Keith Gittens | vc62@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk | 01347 868606 |
| VC63 - Alistair McLean | vc63@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk | 0114 2782648 |
| VC64 - Tom Hubball | vc64@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk | 01535 678334 |
| VC65 - Keith Gittens | vc65@yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk | 01347 868606 |

Please submit your records to the relevant recorder as soon as possible. Ideally all records for the current years should reach the recorders by the end of December for onward transfer to the British Dragonfly Society.

VC64 Mid-west Yorkshire Report

Tom Hubball

Despite not being able to venture out much last year I was still able to persist with my dragonfly work, albeit from behind a desk. Over the course of the first half of the year I typed up over 6800 paper records. The majority of these were supplied by David Alred, the Dragonfly Recorder for the Wharfedale Naturalists Society. These records were from 1991 onwards and helped fill some gaps in VC64 for the BDS' dragonfly atlas project.

I am really looking forward to purchasing a copy (the pre-publication price of £25 inc. p&p is available until 31st March) to see what strides have been made in recording dragonflies over the years since the last atlas, which was printed in 1996. I would like to take this opportunity to publically thank David and other members of the WNS for allowing access and publication of their records. The same statement of thanks goes to Steve Worwood and the members of Harrogate and District Naturalists Society who have also allowed me to access their records over the past few years and to Peter Mill and all of the members and visitors of Rodley Nature Reserve (SE2336). Without both societies and Peter's help, coverage of VC64 would have been patchy at best. However, the greatest thanks must be reserved for anybody who takes the time to submit their sightings each year. Thank you.

There were a few interesting sightings in 2013, the first of which was a pair of Black Darters *Sympetrum danae* at Rodley Nature Reserve (SE2336) on 27th September. However, the major records of note concerned sightings of Keeled Skimmers *Orthetrum coerulescens* away from their usual sites. On 28th July I received an email, with photo, of one recorded at Timble Ings (SE156528) which is over 70 miles away from their north-east stronghold at Fen Bog (SE8598) in VC62. I therefore checked with the other Yorkshire recorders as well as contacting both Adrian Parr, the BDS Migrant Dragonfly officer, and Val Perrin to see if they had heard of any unusual sightings as well. Paul Ashton (VC61) told me that he had recorded one at Skipwith Common (SE6537) and had heard about one at Spurn (TA4012). Adrian informed me that one had been seen in Lancashire at about the same time. I was subsequently contacted

by Allen Holmes, who had made the Lancashire sighting and he told me that he had witnessed one at Grindleton, Clitheroe (SD7447) which is on the western edge of VC64. The vice-county boundary straddles the modern Yorkshire/Lancashire border near this location and Steve White, the Lancashire Dragonfly Recorder has confirmed this sighting as a first for Lancashire.



Keeled Skimmer – Timble Ings – Ian Hargreaves

New Hobby and Loving It!

Chris Bull

Last year was my first serious interest in dragonflies and I'm hooked. I recently retired from a career teaching biology and psychology and finally have the time to really indulge in all the hobbies and interests that have been largely on hold along the way. So, why dragonflies? John Bowers (YNU) gave an inspiring talk in York last May on Yorkshire dragonflies, then took us to Askham Bog for some practical experience, although it was a dull day with only a few common damselflies about. Nevertheless, I was fired up and looking forward to the next fine day. In the meantime, I joined the YDS and soon got to know where to look, including the Seamer tip ponds, close to home. There I found my first dragonflies (Common Darter and Four-spotted Chaser) and by September the tally had risen to 18 species, including the stunning Demoiselles and Golden-ringed Dragonfly. What a summer, I now can't wait for this year.

I'm a keen photographer too and they make fabulous subjects. I've also started looking out for them on holidays abroad and snapped up this strange looking one in California recently. I think it's called "Saddlebags" due to the dark wing markings that look like something attached to the abdomen. Off to Australia next and hoping to find something special there too!



Saddlebags – Chris Bull

Macro Photography without a DSLR

Paul Ashton

I've always marveled at the detailed macro photographs I've come across on the internet, usually taken with an expensive DSLR and macro lens. Another pre-requisite being the need for a tripod and focus rail, to ensure the camera was as steady as possible, and the focus pin sharp, due to the lack of depth of field. All this being equipment I could not afford. I'd looked at numerous macro filters that could be attached to the front of the lens, but virtually all reviews of these gave poor results. That was until I stumbled across the Raynox DCR-250. I only found out about this piece of equipment whilst viewing photos on Flickr, and the results looked superb. I looked it up on the internet and found it was just a simple lens that clips to the front of most cameras. I read a few reviews, with the majority being very positive. After checking out more photos on Flickr and seeing how good they were, I decided to take the plunge and buy one. At around £38 it wouldn't be too much of a wasted expense if it didn't really work out. The first time I used the lens I realized that there was going to be a bit of a learning curve. However I eventually found the right setting, which is to stop down as far as possible, only f8 on my camera. Keeping the camera steady is also another factor in achieving good results, to overcome this I set the ISO setting to Auto, this ensures that I have a fairly decent shutter speed to work with, as all shots are handheld. When working with this lens you only need to be around 10 cm away from the subject, I found that even working with a high ISO setting, there was little grain due to working close to the subject. The last big learning curve was to turn off auto-focus, and move the camera back and forth, using the LCD display to check the right focus, this last point increasing my success from less than 50% to around 90%.





Large Red Damselfly – Paul Ashton



Variable Damselfly – Paul Ashton



Southern Hawker – Paul Ashton



Common Hawker – Paul Ashton

Yorkshire Branch on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr

Paul Ashton



The Yorkshire Branch can be found on Facebook, enabling everyone to discuss all things dragonfly related, post their pictures and share with others. Anybody can view the page, though if you want to post, or add pictures, you will need to request to become a member of the Facebook Group.

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/yorkshiredragonflies/>

We are also on Twitter and can be followed @BDSYorkshire

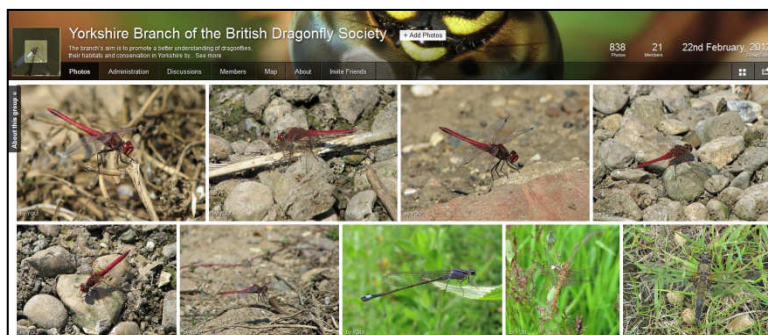
All updates to the website will be notified through Facebook and Twitter. This makes it an ideal way to keep right up to date, via mobile devices, without having to constantly check the website.

All updates to the website are also available through RSS news readers. To subscribe to these updates via one of many readers available, please use the following link:-

<http://www.erdragonflies.co.uk/yorkshire/blog/wordpress/?feed%3Drss2>

We also have a Yorkshire Branch presence on Flickr, the photo sharing site. Use the following link to browse some excellent photographs.

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/yorkshiredragonflies/>



Species list for Yorkshire

| Latin Name | Common Name | Status in Yorkshire |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Calopteryx virgo</i> | Beautiful Demoiselle | Restricted Range |
| <i>Calopteryx splendens</i> | Banded Demoiselle | Widespread |
| <i>Lestes sponsa</i> | Emerald Damselfly | Widespread |
| <i>Lestes dryas</i> | Scarce Emerald Damselfly | Ex-resident |
| <i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i> | Large Red Damselfly | Widespread |
| <i>Erythromma najas</i> | Red-eyed Damselfly | Restricted Range |
| <i>Erythromma viridulum</i> | Small Red-eyed Damselfly | Restricted Range |
| <i>Coenagrion puella</i> | Azure Damselfly | Widespread |
| <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i> | Common Blue Damselfly | Widespread |
| <i>Ischnura elegans</i> | Blue-tailed Damselfly | Widespread |
| <i>Ceragrion tenellum</i> | Small Red Damselfly | Vagrant |
| <i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i> | Variable Damselfly | Restricted Range |
| <i>Aeshna juncea</i> | Common Hawker | Widespread |
| <i>Aeshna mixta</i> | Migrant Hawker | Widespread |
| <i>Aeshna cyanea</i> | Southern Hawker | Widespread |
| <i>Aeshna grandis</i> | Brown Hawker | Widespread |
| <i>Aeshna isosceles</i> | Norfolk Hawker | Vagrant |
| <i>Anax imperator</i> | Emperor Dragonfly | Widespread |
| <i>Anax parthenope</i> | Lesser Emperor | Migrant |
| <i>Hemianax ephippiger</i> | Vagrant Emperor | Vagrant |
| <i>Brachytron pratense</i> | Hairy Dragonfly | Restricted Range |
| <i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i> | Golden-ringed Dragonfly | Restricted Range |
| <i>Cordulia aenea</i> | Downy Emerald | Vagrant |
| <i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i> | Four-spotted Chaser | Widespread |
| <i>Libellula fulva</i> | Scarce Chaser | Ex-resident |
| <i>Libellula depressa</i> | Broad-bodied Chaser | Widespread |
| <i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i> | Black-tailed Skimmer | Widespread |
| <i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i> | Keeled Skimmer | Restricted Range |
| <i>Sympetrum striolatum</i> | Common Darter | Widespread |
| <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i> | Red-veined Darter | Migrant |
| <i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i> | Yellow-winged Darter | Migrant |
| <i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i> | Ruddy Darter | Widespread |
| <i>Sympetrum danae</i> | Black Darter | Widespread |
| <i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i> | Vagrant Darter | Vagrant |
| <i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i> | White-faced Darter | Ex-resident |

Contents

| | |
|----|--|
| 2 | Notes from the Chair |
| 3 | Minutes of the AGM/Indoor Meeting |
| 5 | Field Trips and Events – 2013 Summary |
| 6 | Events and Field Trips 2014 |
| 7 | Corfu, Dragonflies and Wildlife, September 2013 |
| 10 | Environmental DNA (eDNA): a new detection technique |
| 12 | Whitefaces |
| 18 | VC61 South-east Yorkshire Report |
| 19 | VC62 & 65 North-west and North-east Yorkshire Report |
| 20 | VC63 South-west Yorkshire Report |
| 21 | VC64 Mid-west Yorkshire Report |
| 22 | New Hobby and Loving It! |
| 23 | Macro Photography without a DSLR |
| 26 | Yorkshire Branch on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr |
| 27 | Species list for Yorkshire |

Front Cover Photo: Migrant Hawker – Paul Ashton



Female Small Red-eyed Damselfly – Paul Ashton