



Skimmer

Yorkshire Branch Magazine 2008

yorkshire branch
of The British Dragonfly Society

www.yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

11th October 2008, at the Discovery Centre, Leeds

Leeds Museum Discovery Centre, Carlisle Road, Hunslet, Leeds, LS10 1LB

Tel: 0113 214 1548

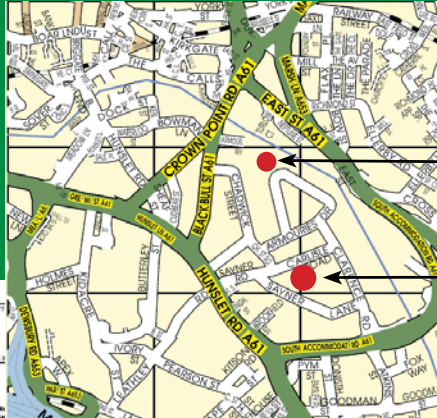
(Doors open at 1pm to view exhibits, AGM at 2pm)

(£1 for refreshments)

A64(M)
Leeds Town Centre

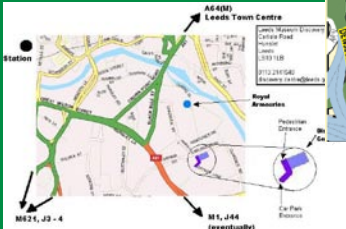
How to find the Leeds Museum Discovery Centre

Train Station



Royal Armouries

Discovery Centre
Car Park
Entrance from Sayner Lane
Pedestrian
Entrance from Carlisle Road



M621, J3-4

M1, J44
(eventually)

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Notes from the Chair

Tom Hubball

As I write this, it's thick with frost outside and the coming season still seems a long way off. However, I'm only too aware that it will only be a couple of months before the first damselflies will start to emerge and our year is up and running. Of course, by the time you read this, the first damselfly sightings will only be weeks or even days away.

As you know by now, our former Branch Secretary, David Miller is leaving Yorkshire for pastures new and I would just like to restate how grateful I am for all his support over the past few years and would like to wish him well in his new life in the Midlands.

I would also like to take this opportunity to officially welcome and introduce you all to Paul Dinsdale, who has agreed to become the new Branch Secretary. Paul brings with him a wealth of experience of being on committees to this role and is eager to face the challenge of driving our Branch onto greater things in the year ahead.

On a downside, Branch membership renewals have once again fallen to a new low. So if you want to renew for 2008 and you haven't already done so, please can you forward your payment to me by the end of May. Any members who have not renewed by then will be taken off the Branch membership list.

At this point, I would like to ask all of you to consider how many clubs or societies offer annual membership for such a low price with single membership kept at £3 a year and joint/family membership at £5. These prices are surely an unbelievable bargain in this day and age and I urge everyone to try and sign up at least one new member this coming year.

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March Indoor Meeting - 2008

1 Attendees -

Tom Hubball, David Miller, Steve Warrillow, Paul Ashton, Keith Gittens, Laura Taylor, Paul and Helen Dinsdale, Melanie Fryer and Fiona Plane

2. Minutes from last meeting

These were read by the members and approved

3. Secretary

Paul Dinsdale has volunteered to take on the role as Branch Secretary and has been co-opted in that role until his position can be ratified at the AGM later in the year.

4. Membership Report

23 Life Members 37 Annual Members of whom 16 have renewed their membership so far. TH reminded the members that annual subscriptions are now due as they from January to December. PA will put a reminder on the website.

5. Treasurer's Report

SW said we have £298.48 in the bank, but this figure was inaccurate because he was given a number of subscription cheques from TH prior to the meeting.

6. Skimmer Articles

Skimmer is going to be slimmer if no-one will write anything to put in it! KG said that he would forward an article to DM.

7. Records

Has anyone got any more 2007 records? We've received roughly 2400 records so far (with well over 1000 from VC61 alone) from approx 60 people, three quarters of whom aren't branch members. . . .this also equates roughly three quarters of Branch members who haven't submitted records to us.

So if there is one thing you must do in 2008 it is to send in a record to your VC recorder and for the recorders to try and coerce those non-members who do submit records to join our Branch, although I admit that this is not always possible.

Peter Mill is busy typing up all the historic records he's got.

8. Website redesign progress

TH apologises for not getting much content to Paul at the moment. SW has mentioned the Branch and its website on BCB radio in a recent broadcast interview.

9. 2007 Field Trips - see later in this issue

10. 2008 Field Trips

We received an email from Mike Averill (BDS Field Meetings Organiser).

Field meetings and other events are an important way to raise awareness of dragonflies and their environment.

In this day and age, with such an emphasis on health and safety issues, the Trustees of our society felt it was necessary to review the policies of the BDS. Although a Risk Assessment Form for field trips has existed for several years, it has not been widely used. In order to safeguard yourself and those attending your event, we now feel that completing such a form is an essential part of every field meeting. To this end a revised form has been produced for you, so that completing the risk assessment for any site is as simple as possible. The main purpose of a risk assessment is to highlight the potential problems and take action to minimise the risks. In many cases simply warning people about the terrain or other hazards on the site will be sufficient. We have tried to include as many possibilities as we can on the form, so that you need only identify those that apply and delete the rest. However, if the site has any particular risk that is not covered by the form (e.g. it is an active quarry or there are tree clearance operations on site), then please add the risk and what actions are needed to minimise it.

Please be aware that if an incident or accident occurs and a risk assessment has not been completed, you may be held personally responsible. It is for this reason that we, the BDS, have done what we can to make the task as straightforward as possible for you. Please do not be put off leading BDS events just because there is a little paperwork to be done. Accompanying the Risk Assessment Form is a set of 'Notes for BDS Leaders'. If you have been running events for several years, then you may well have seen an earlier version of this document and the ideas inside it won't be new to you anyway. However, you might come across a suggestion or point you hadn't thought of before, and for new Leaders there are lots of helpful hints to make your event run smoothly and effectively. In particular please note that the BDS insurance will only cover those events we know about and advertise in advance, either in Dragonfly News or on the BDS website. **You should also be aware that it is now BDS policy that all children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.**

Please don't be put off by the forms, give me a ring if you are at all concerned about leading a meeting.

We've also received an email from Pip Seccombe who is the recorder for Doncaster Naturalists Society requesting assistance with recording at Marshall's limestone quarry near Stainton. Marshall's are very keen to work with and increase the biodiversity of the site and wondered whether any members would be willing to come with us during the coming summer specifically to look at the dragonflies.

Colin Brett, is a Yorkshire Branch member from the Doncaster area and has offered to help but would appreciate some support if possible.

Any volunteers? Speak to Tom Hubball tel. 01535 678334 or email vc63dragonfly@blueyonder.co.uk

Steve Warrillow received a letter from York Open Spaces Group asking if we would like to attend any of their events that they have arranged for 2008. Steve will be doing 3 weekends. If anybody else wants to help they can of course! The dates are:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Saturday 31st May | - Hob Moor Annual Celebration | 2pm - 4.30pm |
| Sunday 13th July | - Rowantree Park 87th Birthday Party | 2pm - 5pm |
| Saturday 19th July | - Clifton Backies Annual Celebration | Midday - 3pm |

Please contact Steve Warrillow for details.

2008 Branch Field Trips -

Please note: Not all field trips this year are Saturday and start times vary

Sunday 1st June 2008

River Colne Project - Identification Session and Walk -10.00am

Meet by the bridge over the River Colne on West Slaithwaite Road, off A62 near Marsden - Grid Ref: SE064130
We will be providing a group of River Colne Project volunteers with identification tips and advice as we walk around some ponds close to the River Colne and Calder and Hebble Navigation Huddersfield Narrow Canal. For further information about the River Colne Project, please check out their website <http://www.rivercolneproject.org.uk>

Sunday 8th June 2008

Toad holes beck and Bees Urban Nature reserve -10.30am

We will be visiting two reserves today, Toad Holes Beck at Low Moor, Bradford and Bees Urban Nature Reserve at Bradford University. We are hoping to see the commoner species of damselfly and there will be opportunity for pond dipping. Please bring your own net .

To gain access to Toad Holes Beck, come off M62 at Junction 26 and take the Bradford Road (runs up side of golf course and M606) continue up Bradford Road until you reach a pub on the right hand side. Go past the pub and then turn right, going under the motorway. Continue left past the school and drive up Mill Carr Hill Road. At the top of the hill turn left onto Boy Lane then left again onto Rockhill Lane. At the end turn left down Wharfedale Road and follow this road onto Merrydale Road. Go under the motorway then turn left down Furnace Road to the end. We will meet there as I think there is some limited parking here. We will then follow the public footpath to the site. (If you need a map, try West Yorkshire Street Atlas page 95 A5)

Saturday 14th June 2008

Chartley Moss at 11.00am.

To search for White-faced Darters. Grid Ref: SK022289

Meet at north side of A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter road (approx 7 miles east of Stafford)

'Yorkshire Branch Away day' to Chartley Moss – Tim Benyon has managed to fit us in for Saturday 14th June. The max number is 12 (or 13 at a push), so can all interested Branch members let Tom Hubball know asap, otherwise it will be put out to other BDS members.

Meet at SK022289 - wide grass verge on north side A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter road about 7 miles east of Stafford.

Bring wellies, packed lunch, binoculars, camera, nets if wanted, sorry no dogs and don't forget something dry to sit on like a plastic sheet and a walking stick/pole is useful.

Saturday 28th June 2008

Potteric Carr at 10.00am. A6182, off Junction 3 of M18 near Doncaster. Grid Ref: SE599003.

We have been asked by John Hancox at Potteric Carr to survey a newly acquired part of the Reserve. Parking and entry to the YWT Reserve will be free to members who attend.

Saturday 5th July 2008

Billy Wood Nature Day at Town Close Hills aka Billy Wood, Kippax nr Leeds. Grid Ref: SE407304

Organised by Leeds Countryside Rangers and the Friends of Billy Wood. Unfortunately, no start time as yet and the event is not dragonfly specific but it's a great opportunity to promote our Branch and the BDS. See Friends of Billy Wood website for further details; <http://www.fobw.leedslearning.org>.

Sunday 6th July 2008

Spurn Point at 10.30am. Grid Ref: TA410159

Take the A1033 Withemsea road and take a right fork in Patrington onto the B1445 to Easington. From here, unclassified roads lead to Kinseal and Spurn. We haven't been to Spurn for some time. Target species for this trip will be Red-veined Darter.

Sunday 27th July 2008

Fen Bog at 10.30am. Grid Ref: SE857982

Fen bog is situated on the A169 Pickering to Whitby road, approx 10.5 miles north of Pickering.

Park on the track near the reserve entrance approx. 2.5 miles beyond the Hole of Horcum, to the left of the A169.

Key species for this site are Keeled Skimmer, Beautiful Demoiselle and Golden-ringed Dragonfly. We will also include a short walk, albeit on difficult ground, to investigate a nearby pool for other moorland species. Contact Keith Gittens on 07968 840623.

Saturday 16th August 2008

Foxglove Covert at 10.00am.

Catterick Garrison. Turn off A1 at Catterick and follow A6136. Access to Reserve via Cambrai Lines front gate Grid Ref: SE160971 http://www.foxglovecovert.org.uk/pdf/Foxglove_LNR_Map.pdf

Guided walk around this Local Nature Reserve. Hot and cold vending machine refreshments are available at the Field Centre.

11. BDS News

National Dragonfly Week is 21st - 29th June (National Insect Week is 23rd - 29th June)

Peter Mill informed TH that the Dragonfly Conservation Group will be meeting next week and the BDS Trustees will be meeting the following week.

12. Next Meeting

Discovery Centre, Leeds - See the inside front cover for details.

13. AOB

AES / RES Exhibition at York

Received from AES "Unfortunately there will not be a northern exhibition in 2008. Having run the exhibition for two years it has not reached a breakeven point and it's not economically viable for our small Society to sustain. We have not ruled out the possibility of running a northern exhibition in the future and are keeping the matter under review."

Castle Howard has an Arboretum and is now developing an Education Programme and asked if would like to contribute with a exhibition panels, leaflets and talks. KG to get back to them.

North Yorkshire National Parks are doing an Ecological Survey. Looking into monitoring Golden Ring Dragonfly, Black Darter and Banded Damoiselle.

Many thanks for Cliffe Castle for allowing us to hold our meeting and for the use of their facilities.

Late News

After this meeting we were approached by the curator of Cliffe Castle to hold a number of talks, possibly during Dragonfly Week to encourage more people to take a more active part in watching and preserving these fantastic creatures.

999 – Try 112 instead.

Tom Hubball

What number do you call if you need an ambulance in Greece on holiday? What number do you call on your mobile if you are involved in a road accident in Sweden, or if there's a fire in your apartment in Prague? What is the best number to use from your mobile when you need to contact the emergency services but you are in an area with a poor signal strength for your network?

112 is the single emergency telephone number for the European Union and on all GSM mobile networks across the world. 112 was originally set up as a number which could be used by people who travel abroad, as they would only have to remember one number, wherever they go. As with 999, all calls made to 112 are free of charge.

EU Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding says "We must end the days when this 112 emergency number is one of Europe's best kept secrets".

Also, if you don't know where you are or cannot describe exactly where you are, the Emergency Services can use the signal from several masts to triangulate your position.

Don't forget that using a mobile phone in an area with a weak signal will use much more power trying to maintain the signal, so to conserve power and to save yourself from annoying your fellow field trip attendees, please turn your mobile off when on a field trip.

Review of the Field Meetings - 2007

Tom Hubball

May 26th Campsall Country Park

Seven members turned up to try and see Hairy Dragonfly at one of the only sites in Yorkshire where it has been recently recorded. When we arrived at Clay Pond, we were met by Bob Merritt who had contacted me previously to say that he would be surveying the site as part of his forthcoming Yorkshire and Humber water beetle atlas. He waded straight into the water with his net to see what he could find and the Yorkshire Branch members split into two groups to investigate the site from the bank side. The first group, myself included, hurried around one edge of the pond collecting damselfly exuviae and recording as we quickly made progress around the majority of the pond. The other group followed at a more leisurely pace and they were rewarded with a sighting of a pair of adult Hairy Dragonfly, which due to the increasing cloud cover, proved to be the only sighting of adults that day as they disappeared before the first group could retrace their steps to see them. Meanwhile, Bob had managed to find two Hairy Dragonfly larvae and everyone was able to see how they compared to the Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer and Brown Hawker larvae that he had already collected in his tray.



The combined group then continued around the rest of the site before returning to their cars for a late lunch and to compare numbers and species seen. The total list was a pair of Azure Damselfly, fifteen Common Blue Damselfly, including two pairs 'in cop', seven Blue-tailed Damselfly, two Large Red Damselfly, ten Four-Spotted Chaser, including one in the process of emerging from its larval skin and two pairs in tandem, not forgetting of course the pair of Hairy Dragonfly seen by the second group.

As the weather had now turned decidedly overcast, two members and myself decided to head to Broomfleet Washlands to see if we could find any Variable Damselfly, which had been reported from that site the year before, as this was potentially a new species for Yorkshire*. There was a slight drizzle in the air when we arrived and with cameras in hand we proceeded quickly along the footpath to the ponds. Despite the unpromising weather we were delighted to easily find over twenty Variable Damselfly, along with a couple of Azure Damselfly for comparison, as well as twenty Blue-tailed Damselfly, a couple of Four-spotted Chaser and a female Broad Bodied Chaser, all of which proved to be excellent photographic subjects. This rounded off a rather special day nicely and we headed off home contented with what we had managed to find.

*We have since been informed by Bruce Copley that a Variable Damselfly had been 'found' at Fairburn Ings back in May 2005. It appears that the individual had been in collision with one of the Wardens car's and had lodged itself onto the windscreen wiper. The following day, Bruce confirmed the identification and it was released, seemingly unharmed by the experience, onto the Reserve. Unfortunately, we do not know where the Warden had driven on that day, so we cannot be sure that this damselfly was of a Yorkshire origin.

June 3rd Letchmire Pastures

This was a joint event organised with Leeds Countryside Rangers to promote the site. Unfortunately, the weather was rather blustery and although only one family turned up, we managed to find thirteen Azure Damselflies, six Blue-tailed Damselflies and five Black-tailed Skimmers. Despite the poor turn-out, which can solely be blamed on the weather, similar events will no doubt be arranged in the future as this is a good opportunity to promote both the Branch and improve local authority contacts.



June 24th Rodley and Denso Marston Nature Reserves

After the washout in 2006, six members turned up on a rather cool, overcast day to see what Rodley Nature Reserve had to offer. Blue-tailed and Azure damselflies were present over most of the ponds, although numbers were few. A single female Broad-bodied Chaser made her presence known briefly and two male Banded Demoiselles were loitering by the riverbank. An immature Common Darter was disturbed from tall vegetation in between the river and the ponds. We returned to the on-site tea room for refreshments and as rain seemed imminent, only three of us decided to continue onto Denso Marston Nature

Reserve. By the time we had got back to the cars, the rain started to fall and by the time we reached Denso Marstons, it was torrential. We were met by Steve Warrillow, Yorkshire Branch Treasurer and Warden of Denso Marston NR and we decided that we might as well have a quick scout around the Reserve now that we were there and to our amazement we managed to find a single Azure Damselfly braving the downpour and a Brown Hawker sitting out the rainstorm on a reed. One of the members rushed back to their car to retrieve their camera and managed to get a few good shots of the Brown Hawker despite the rain.

July 14th Farnham Gravel Pit

Four members arrived at the Reserve Car Park in cool, blustery and partly overcast conditions and proceeded on foot to the infamous carpeted hide, where we were met by a member of Harrogate and District Naturalists called Brian and the Reserve Warden, June Atkinson. June lead us around the reserve at a leisurely pace and was very informative about the flora and fauna of the site. At one point we had to make a quick dash back to the hide to dodge a passing shower and we took this opportunity to have a bit of lunch and a spot of bird watching before venturing out again. The windy conditions meant that a lot of the larger species of dragonfly, which should have been present, were markedly absent, including the hoped for Lesser Emperors and the recent heavy rains would also have had a notable effect on this species in particular. However, we did manage to see two species of dragonfly, namely three Common Darters by a small pond, close to the hide and a solitary Brown Hawker, which was patrolling the birch trees on the far side of the gravel pit. The remaining four species were plentiful, Common Blue and Blue-tailed damselflies, two Azure



Photographs on this page Courtesy of Jason Gregory

Damselflies and approximately eight Emerald damselflies. We also managed to see six species of butterfly and three species of day-flying moths, including Five and Six Spot Burnet moths.

By the time it was time to leave, the sun had come out and the wind had begun to drop... typical!

August 19th Oak Road Lake, Hull

The severe flooding earlier in the summer nearly put this trip in doubt and with heavy rain forecast for the weekend, it appeared that the same thing might happen again.

However, despite the rain three members turned up and we waited for the downpour to abate. As the rain eased to a steady drizzle, a Migrant Hawker came into view above the trees bordering the car park, a welcoming sign of things to come.

As the drizzle became lighter we set out on a circuit of the lake were surprised to find several Small Red-eyed Damselflies sitting out the inclement weather on the shrubs surrounding the far side of the lake at a height five to seven foot above the ground, thereby providing ideal photographic subjects. A very welcome bonus on such a wet day. Also seen around the lake were a handful of Common Blue and Blue-tailed damselflies, four Common Darters, two Brown Hawkers and another Migrant Hawker. As we completed the circuit, the sun suddenly appeared and so did all the Small Red-eyed Damselflies as they flew from the surrounding bushes to the centre of the lake and about 30 were seen patrolling the surface of the water. Another walk around the lake, inspecting the vegetation, produced no further sightings.



Small Red-eyed Damselflies at Oak Road Lake, Hull, Paul Ashton

September 1st Tumble Ings

The weather was once again disappointing and only two members attended the final field trip of the season. A steady wind and overcast conditions promised little but how wrong we were. We proceeded along the footpath on the northern edge of the wood spotting several species hawking along the woodland ride, including Common, Southern, Migrant and Brown Hawkers and a few Common Darters. We arrived at and surveyed the stream where Golden-ringed Dragonfly usually patrol but unfortunately, it proved a fruitless search and we continued up the hill. On this western footpath, we saw more hawkers of various species, over thirty Common Darters and a couple of Black Darters. When we reached the main southern path, we stopped and looked at the large ponds where we found fifty or so Emerald Damselflies and approximately thirty Common Blue Damselflies, some pairs of each species either in tandem or 'in cop'. A female Southern Hawker even tried to oviposit on my boot.

We found out, from a regular visitor to the site whom we met on our walk, that we had 'missed' the Golden-ringed Dragonfly by a couple of weeks. However, this did little to dampen the feeling we had after seeing so many species on such an unpromising day.

Species list for Yorkshire

Latin Name

Calopteryx virgo
Calopteryx splendens
Lestes sponsa
Lestes dryas
Pyrrhosoma nymphula
Erythromma najas
Erythromma viridulum
Coenagrion puella
Enallagma cyathigerum
Ischnura elegans
Ceriagrion tenellum
Coenagrion pulchellum
Aeshna juncea
Aeshna mixta
Aeshna cyanaea
Aeshna grandis
Aeshna isosceles
Anax imperator
Anax parthenope
Hemianax ephippiger
Brachytron pratense
Cordulegaster boltonii
Cordulia aenea
Libellula quadrimaculata
Libellula fulva
Libellula depressa
Orthetrum cancellatum
Orthetrum coerulescens
Sympetrum striolatum
Sympetrum fonscolombii
Sympetrum flaveolum
Sympetrum sanguineum
Sympetrum danae
Sympetrum vulgatum
Leucorrhinia dubia

Common Name

Beautiful Demoiselle
 Banded Demoiselle
 Emerald Damselfly
 Scarce Emerald Damselfly
 Large Red Damselfly
 Red-eyed Damselfly
 Small Red-eyed Damselfly
 Azure Damselfly
 Common Blue Damselfly
 Blue-tailed Damselfly
 Small Red Damselfly
 Variable Damselfly
 Common Hawker
 Migrant Hawker
 Southern Hawker
 Brown Hawker
 Norfolk Hawker
 Emperor Dragonfly
 Lesser Emperor
 Vagrant Emperor
 Hairy Dragonfly
 Golden-ringed Dragonfly
 Downy Emerald
 Four-spotted Chaser
 Scarce Chaser
 Broad-bodied Chaser
 Black-tailed Skimmer
 Keeled Skimmer
 Common Darter
 Red-veined Darter
 Yellow-winged Darter
 Ruddy Darter
 Black Darter
 Vagrant Darter
 White-faced Darter

Status in Yorkshire

Scarce Resident Breeder
 Common Resident Breeder
 Common Resident Breeder
 Rare Vagrant
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Scarce Resident Breeder
 New for 2006
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Aberrant Vagrant
 Scarce Resident Breeder*
 Common Resident Breeder
 Common Resident Breeder
 Common Resident Breeder
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Aberrant Vagrant
 Uncommon Resident Breeder
 Scarce Migrant
 Rare Migrant
 Scarce Resident Breeder
 Scarce Resident Breeder
 Rare Vagrant
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Scarce Ex-Resident
 Common Resident Breeder
 Uncommon Resident Breeder
 Scarce Resident Breeder
 Abundant Resident Breeder
 Scarce Resident Breeder
 Scarce Migrant
 Common Resident Breeder
 Common Resident Breeder
 Rare Migrant
 Scarce Ex-Resident

Key

Abundant - Occurs in all suitable habitats.

Common - Occurs in nearly all suitable habitats, with some areas sparsely used.

Uncommon - Occurs regularly, but uses little of the suitable habitat.

Scarce - Occurs regularly, but in very small numbers.

Rare - Beyond its normal geographic range, only recorded once or twice a decade.

Aberrant - Far from its normal range. Confirmed sighting but further observations unlikely.

Resident Breeder - Present throughout the year.

Migrant - Non-resident - typical migrant species (confirmed breeding may have been recorded).

Vagrant - Lone non-resident adult recorded

Ex-Resident - Historic resident/migrant not recorded for many years

*New Species added to the Yorkshire List

Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum* has been added to the Yorkshire list following its discovery at Broomfleet Washlands (see 26th May 2007 Field Trip Report)

Odonata Ova

M Jill Lucas

Throughout one's life, one learns how to do all sorts of things, some useful and practical, others possibly neither useful nor practical. Which category obtaining eggs from a dragonfly comes into I do not know.

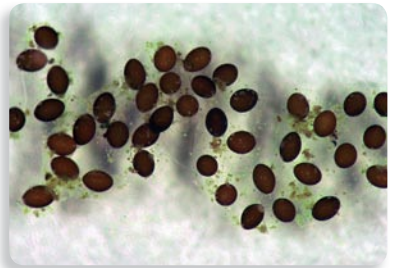
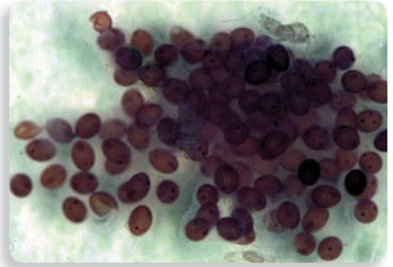
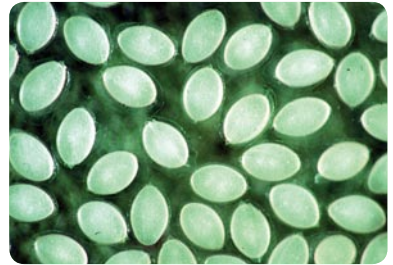
On August 23rd. 2003, some members of the Yorkshire Branch of the British Dragonfly Society went to Spurn and whilst there had a demonstration from Peter Mill on how to obtain eggs from *Sympetrum striolatum* Common Darter. I was given some to bring home. When I suggested to Brian (who was not on the excursion) that he might like to photograph a prolarva emerging from the ovum, his reply was the usual one that I get when I ask him to do something he considers impossible - "Don't talk daft, I can't do that".

A plastic box, containing the ova and water from the pond at Spurn, was left on the window bottom in the lounge. This faces south, but due to the slope of the garden does not get too much sun, so a stable temperature was maintained. When first laid the ova were a creamy white, but over a few days turned dark brown. (cf Cham, 2006). At lunchtime, thirteen days and hourly inspections of the ova later, just as I was dishing up lunch, a cry came demanding that I stop everything, the eggs were hatching and my help with the photography was required. All but three of the ova hatched successfully during the afternoon of the same day.

Photography completed we sat back and waited for the developed film to be returned. When the slides were viewed, joy was tempered by, and you are never going to believe this, the fact that the water from Spurn was dirty and thus spoilt the images!!! Having decided that the impossible was now possible we had to obtain more ova, this time to photograph in clean water. So on September 15th. 2003, in search of a pregnant female, we went to Cromwell Bottom, a local nature reserve, armed with a jar containing bottled, still water from the supermarket, a net and the usual paraphernalia without which naturalists do not appear to be able to function. In reality, to find the insects either in tandem or in copula. We managed to find and catch a pair in the act so to speak. Showing no embarrassment whatsoever they copulate anywhere suitable, for example in vegetation or unsuitably, a public footpath where the local populace are walking. They then search for a place where the female can oviposit, generally remaining in tandem whilst she does so.

When the male with a little help from Brian, detached himself, the female was encouraged to dip using Peter's method of holding the female and gently dipping the tip of her abdomen on to the water surface. The conditions were exactly as previously described and thirteen days later, the ova began to hatch, photographs were taken and this time the results met with qualified approval from Brian.

*Above murky water, mud and slime
An ovigerous Darter thinks now's the time
To feel with its abdomen's tip
If here is the place to oviposit.*



Photographs, courtesy of Brian Lucas

Reference

Cham, S. 2006. Development and hatching of eggs of Common Darter, *Sympetrum striolatum* (Charpentier) Journal of the British Dragonfly Society. Vol.22:No.2 p.36.

Plate 1 Freshly laid eggs clearly showing the gelatinous layer surrounding each egg.

Plate 2, 3 and 4 emerging prolarva.

Bulgaria – *Dragonflies and other things*

Keith Gittens

After hankering to go on the Quest for Nature trip to Bulgaria for 3 years, in 2007 I finally took the plunge. The trip lasted 10 days, from the 14th to 23rd July and included 5 different hotel stops to enable us to see all that was planned. The focus of the trip was dragonflies and butterflies with a supporting cast of birds, reptiles, amphibians and flowers. The leader of the trip was Dan Powel, wildlife artist and author with two Bulgarian specialists Milen Marinov for dragonflies and 'and Stoyan Beshkov for butterflies.

After landing at Sofia, we headed for the Sredna Gora Mountains and the historic town of Koprivshitsa, around 50 miles to the east of Sofia.

Here we spent a full day exploring the local streams and rivers and found the first of 3 different Corduleagaster we were to see on the trip, *C. heros* (Balkan Golden-ringed Dragonfly), in some ways once you've seen one golden-ringed you've seen them all, but it was interesting to look at the finer points and hone your ID skills on anal appendages! This was the start of what was to become a list of some 50 species of dragonfly in total for the trip, some of which were familiar while others were totally new to me. Bulgaria's dragonfly population is influenced from 3 directions – Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean creating an interesting mix.

Most of the tour was spent in the south of Bulgaria and this is where we headed on the second day, to the Eastern Rhodope Mountains and the mainly Turkish populated town of Krumovgrad. On the way a stop at the river Marica, produced three Gomphids, *Onychogomphus forcipatus*, *Gomphus flavipes* and *Ophiogomphus cecelia*, the latter last recorded on the river 10 years ago, thus causing a lot of excitement.

The hotel at Krumovgrad is worthy of mention, an old communist hotel, where some things worked (the basics), some things no longer did, a wet room where you could have a shower while on the loo and a dark and scary lift which most of the group would not use! It was however clean, comfy, unpretentious and the most memorable.

The following couple of days produced some great finds and fortunately the species we were to see preferred shade to full sun, which was great for the party as the temperatures were touching 40 degrees plus. *Callaeschna microstigma* (affectionately known as Shady Hawker) and *Somatochlora meridionalis* we found along shady streams. The latter replaces *Somatochlora metallica* in this part of the world and is extremely similar, the female having the distinctive vulvar scale and flicking up of the tip of the abdomen while ovipositing.

A day later at another site, after some searching we also found the second Golden-ringed, *C. picta* (Turkish GRD). On the stretch of shady stream we were watching, on a good day Milen has recorded over 70 individuals fly up stream, on this day we struggled to find one, however we were kept amused by a lone Shady Hawker and a Grass Snake swimming up stream!



Moving on to the heights and the cool of the ski resort of Pamporovo, we picked up our first sighting of *Anax ephippiger* along the way. This dragonfly discovered by myself while having sloped off for a pee, produced some argument over its true ID as it was flying some feet above our heads and would not come low enough to be netted much to everyone's frustration. Milen did however confirm the ID, the very large eyes make the dragonfly look top heavy and light markings at the tip of the abdomen were just visible in flight, but the overall impression of the dragonfly is brown. As immatures they do not show the violet blue saddle, the early summer heat had meant this species was flying earlier than normal.

Our stop high in the mountains took us to the Trigrad Gorge, fantastic scenery, fish and chips Bulgarian style and the Apollo Butterfly. On the dragonfly front some more familiar species *Aeschna cyanea*, *Libellula quadrimaculata*, *Cordulia aenea* and *Coenagrion hastulatum*, the latter at its most southerly outpost. This was the closest we got to a Scottish loch type habitat although it was commented that the scenery was more like the Canadian Rocky's.

Moving on again we stopped at Dospat. The hotel here had fantastic views to the Greek border and in the early morning Crossbills and Sombre Tit could be seen foraging from our hotel balcony. Near here we saw species of dragonfly that could cope with sites that dry out, *Lestes dryas* and *Sympetrum flaveolum*.

In total we saw 6 species of emerald damselfly and 7 species of sympetrum on the trip and these included both willow emeralds and the pretty Banded Darter *Sympetrum pedemontanum*.

As we headed in to the Pirin Mountains and our final hotel at Melnik we stopped at the largest peat bog in Bulgaria and found our third Golden-ringed, *C. bidentata* (Two-toothed GRD). Melnik is renowned for its wine growing and the old town is picturesque, a pleasant last stop before the return to Sofia and home.



The final bit of dragonflying produced a good range of species including two new ones for our trip, *Sympetrum depressiusculum* and *Anax parthenope*. Most female hawker dragonflies oviposit alone, but *A. parthenope* remain in tandem while ovipositing and this we were able to observe.

In all a very full 10 days and this article only really scratches the surface of a trip full of wildlife, so go on indulge yourself, no need to feel guilty as profits from this trip go to help Bulgarian wildlife projects and the BDS.

Photographs, courtesy of Keith Gittens

First and last Odonata sightings - 2007

Species	First	Location	County	last	Location	County
Beautiful Demoiselle	14-Jul-07	River Hertford	VC61	10-Aug-07	Ganton	VC61
Banded Demoiselle	29-Apr-07	Farnley GP	VC64	10-Sep-07	Potteric Carr	VC 63
Emerald Damselfly	11-Jun-07	North Cave Wetlands	VC61	5-Oct-07	Lake Gomire	VC62
Large Red Damselfly	14-Apr-07	Fairburn Ings	VC63	8-Aug-07	Timble Ings	VC64
Red-eyed Damselfly	12-May-07	Tophill Low	VC61	22-Aug-07	Pocklington Canal	VC61
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	5-Aug-07	Spurn	VC61	27-Aug-07	Spurn	VC61
Azure Damselfly	28-Apr-07	Tophill Low	VC61	1-Sep-07	Fley Dams	VC61
Variable Damselfly	20-May-07	Oxmarldyke Marr	VC61	23-Jun-07	Broomfeet Washlands	VC61
Common Blue Damselfly	28-Apr-07	Tophill Low	VC61	16-Sep-07	Rodley NR	VC64
Blue-tailed Damselfly	28-Apr-07	Tophill Low	VC61	23-Sep-07	Reighton Ponds	VC61
Hairy Dragonfly	24-May-07	Potteric Carr	VC63	5-Jun-07	Potteric Carr	VC63
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	11-Jun-07	Skipton	VC64	8-Aug-07	Darley	VC64
Common Hawker	1-Jul-07	Potteric Carr	VC63	18-Oct-07	Timble Ings	VC64
Migrant Hawker	11-Jul-07	Saltmarshe Delph	VC61	6-Nov-07	Skipwith Common	VC61
Southern Hawker	10-Jun-07	Potteric Carr	VC63	20-Oct-07	Tophill Low	VC61
Brown Hawker	3-Jun-07	Langton	VC61	6-Oct-07	Yearsley Lower Fish Pond	VC62
Emperor Dragonfly	26-May-07	Reighton Ponds	VC61	29-Sep-07	Rodley NR	VC64
Lesser Emperor	31-Jul-07	Farnley GP	VC64	4-Aug-07	Farnley GP	VC64
Four-spotted Chaser	28-Apr-07	Tophill Low	VC61	17-Aug-07	Fley	VC61
Broad-bodied Chaser	30-Apr-07	Potteric Carr	VC63	16-Sep-07	Farnley GP	VC64
Black-tailed Skimmer	21-May-07	Spurn	VC61	21-Sep-07	Tophill Low	VC61
Common Darter	8-Jun-07	Spurn	VC61	18-Nov-07	Otley GP	VC64
Red-veined Darter	10-Jun-07	Spurn	VC61	27-Aug-07	Spurn	VC61
Ruddy Darter	17-Jun-07	Skipwith Common	VC61	30-Oct-07	Fairburn Ings	VC63
Black Darter	17-Jun-07	Skipwith Common	VC61	6-Nov-07	Skipwith Common	VC61

Male-male tandem in the Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)

Ian Rowland and Richard Shillaker

While on holiday in Ireland in 2007, IR observed and photographed the following unusual behaviour involving male Banded Demoiselles on the River Slaney at Tullow, County Carlow, around mid-afternoon on 27 July. The weather was generally good. Fewer than a dozen Banded Demoiselles were observed, along with a small number of Beautiful Demoiselles (*Calopteryx virgo*).

On two or three occasions IR noted what appeared to be two male Banded Demoiselles in tandem. Only a single pair was noted at any one time, and it was not possible to tell if the same individuals were always involved. The pair in view spent most of the time in flight (which made photography a little difficult), but did eventually settle on low vegetation (see photos). The leading male made repeated attempts to 'encourage' his partner into the wheel position but this was resisted and shortly afterwards the two separated.

RS has consulted a few experienced dragonfly watchers who have confirmed that these photographs show two males in tandem. It should be noted however that male-like females have been reported for this species. Miller (1995) notes that in Southern Italy, high density populations of Banded Demoiselles may contain up to 25% of male-like females.*

RS also sought an explanation for the apparent male-male tandem. One theory offered was that if there were only a few individuals about (which would seem to be the case here and hence would eliminate this coupling being part of a mating frenzy), it is possible that the lead male was so sexually primed that it was trying to mate with anything that came along and that the other individual was 'old and tired'.

There are several reports of male-male tandem in the published dragonfly literature but this behaviour would appear to be rare. Corbett (1999) lists records of male-male tandem of conspecifics for 16 species among seven genera (including one unnamed species of *Calopteryx*) and heterospecific couplings in eight species among four genera.

Corbett proposes that the frequency of these and other anomalous tandems (eg male species A with female species B) probably varies according to the species and whether it is territorial or not, intensity of sex drive (which may be greater after a spell of poor weather), density of males and temporal pattern of arrival of females at water. Brooks (2002) also proposes that such anomalous mating attempts occur during periods of high population density, "when the mating urge of frustrated males is at its peak".

Corbett considers that it is likely that many male-male tandem formations between conspecifics are short-lived and hence seldom witnessed. He notes that Miller (1987) observed that most initial tandems formed by *Ischnura elegans* in the early morning in the Carmargue were male-male tandems that lasted only a few seconds.

A heterospecific tandem coupling lasting about ten minutes has been observed between a male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*) in the leading 'male' position and a male Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*), (see Paine 1992), with the puella occasionally arching his abdomen towards the pumilio. After they separated the puella attacked the pumilio extremely viciously about the head. RS assumes that the arching of the abdomen by puella during tandem was an attempt to dislodge pumilio rather than representing female-like behaviour.

Further published records of male-male tandems are provided by Ross (2000) and Sweitzer and Schutz (2000)

Ross reports one instance of male-male coupling (tandem) between two species of *Enallagma* at a lake in Mecosta County, Michigan, USA (Ross notes that this genus is not included in Corbett's list).

In another US study, Sweitzer and Schutz recorded male-male tandem in the libellulid *Perithemis tenera*, on just 13 occasions in well over 1000 hours of observation. They propose two possible explanations for male-male tandems: misdirected mating attempts and mate guarding. For their own observations of *P. tenera*, they provide a convincing argument in support of mate guarding (male territory resident grabs an intruding male behind the head and flies off with him).



Steve Cham (*pers. comm.*) has provided us with examples of male-male tandem. He remembers seeing a male Banded Demoiselle trying to form tandem with a female Scarce Chaser (*Libellula fulva*). He has also seen Common Blue Damselflies (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) in male-male couplings, as well as Ruddy Darters (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) in male-male couplings.

It is known that the eyes of female hawkers can bear copulation marks as a result of the front of the female's head being grasped by the lower anal claspers of a male during tandem (Miller 1995). Thus it is understandable that evidence for male-male tandem in hawkers can also be provided by the presence of copulation marks on the eye of a male

Anomalous tandems can involve more than two individuals, as described for instance by Radford (1989). According to Miller (1995) "It is not uncommon to see males attacking tandem pairs. In the ensuing melee, a triple tandem is occasionally formed, with the intruder clasping the first male. Even a string of four insects coupled together in this way has been reported. Clearly males show no great discrimination in forming tandems, and they lack the tactile recognition mechanisms of females."

The lack of discrimination would appear to apply both to inter-individual behaviour/communication and to the anatomical features that permit linkage of two individuals in tandem. In the case of the male-male tandem photographed by IR it is notable that it occurred in *Calopteryx splendens*, a species with a known pre-tandem courtship display (with the wings serving an important role in intersexual communication, see Corbett, 1999).



Banded Demoiselle photos courtesy of Ian Rowland

Finally, it is interesting to note that when discussing Coenagrionid damselflies Sherratt and Forbes (2001) propose that attempts to form male-male tandem (as with male-female interactions) are likely to involve a risk of injury. They report that males have been observed to land on the wings of females and cause them to become splayed; in addition females have been seen to bite males. The authors argue that gender-related differences in colouration in Coenagrionid damselflies, which are non-territorial and do not engage in courtship displays, have evolved primarily as a form of warning to prevent unprofitable male-male mating attempts (to avoid the costs of harassing, and being harassed by, other males).

Acknowledgements:

RS would like to thank the experts he has consulted and in particular Tom Hubball for his advice and comments.

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Footnote

* We presume that Miller was referring to the following publication by De Marchi, but we can not confirm because we have not obtained a copy:

De Marchi G (1990) Precopulatory reproductive isolation and wing colour dimorphism in *Calopteryx splendens* in Southern Italy (Zygoptera: Calopterygidae) Odonatologica 19: 243-250.

VICE COUNTY RECORDERS

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VC63	Tom Hubball	01535 678334
VC64	Helen Dinsdale	01535 653041
VC65	Tom Hubball	01535 678334

Five Ways To Get More Involved

If Skimmer and the notifications of the Branch meetings are the only time you ever hear about what we do, have you ever thought about how you could get more out of your membership? Getting involved with Branch affairs doesn't have to be formal or long term, so here are five simple ways in which you can take advantage of what the Yorkshire Branch of the BDS has to offer.

1. Submit a record

In your garden, your local park, a nature reserve or even at work, there are lots of possible opportunities for seeing dragonflies but many of them are not submitted to your local BDS Recorder. If you have access to the internet, why not visit the sightings page on the branch website <http://www.yorkshiredragonflies.org.uk/> and have a look what's been seen. Please note however that you should also submit the record to the Recorder at the end of the season as well.

So if you only do one thing to help...please get those sightings noted down and let your recorder know

2. Come along on a field trip

Baffled about identifying all those different species or want to find out where to find the rarer ones are located, then the best way to find out is to come along on one of the Branch's many field trips – we usually hold at least five a year. The field trips are lead by friendly, knowledgeable leaders, who'll make you feel welcome whether you are a novice or an expert. See the list of upcoming field trips in this edition of Skimmer or visit the Branch website.

3. Spread the word

Help our conservation message go further by talking about what we do, either informally with your friends and neighbours or by arranging a talk with a local natural history or community group. If you don't feel that you're able to do it yourself, you can always ask the Chairman if he knows someone who can do it...although he would need plenty of notice. You could even try writing a piece about dragonflies for your local paper or community website.

4. Help with local surveys

Don't like going far afield? Make a big difference to our knowledge of the county by helping with targeted recording in your area – many 1km, 2km and even 10km squares get very few records, so even one or two visits a year can be a great help. Contact your local recorder to see how a handful of visits a year to particular areas can increase our knowledge of what's about.

5. Get involved with a local site

Nearly all of you will have a favourite local site that you visit often, either specifically to watch dragonflies or even walk the dog. Think about the little things that you could do to help safeguard and improve the site; by submitting records to your local recorder so they know about the site; by letting the landowner know what you've seen and how special the site is; help with the management of the site or even setting up a 'friends of' group to help care for it.

I spotted the following in an article published in the Royal Horticultural Society journal 'The Garden', January 2008, about our changing climate and insects that could turn up in UK gardens in future. This dragonfly was one of three non pest species listed, the other two being the Praying Mantis and the European Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon subsp. gorganus*). The article stated:

'Western Clubtail Dragonfly (*Gomphus pulchellus*): a native of southwest Europe, this insect spread north and east during the 20th century.

Although several dragonflies regularly migrate to Britain and occasionally become established, they are usually lake, river or stream species; this one breeds in any pool including garden ponds.'

So perhaps it's worth expanding our identification skills to cover more of the species in Dijkstra's Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe...just in case. Interestingly, this yellow-legged species is listed as a potential vagrant in Britain's Dragonflies (WILDGuides publication).

Richard Shillaker

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Membership for the group runs from January 1st to December 31st each year. Anyone joining the group up to October will receive all the newsletters and magazine for that year. Anyone joining between October and December will get the following year's membership.

We produce the Skimmer Magazine and we are always on the look out for articles/pictures etc. If you would like to contribute to the Skimmer, please contact Paul Dinsdale at the above address.