

A Shropshire Dragonfly Summary for 2019

Vicky Fletcher

A promising start to the year with a reasonably early start. **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* was the first species on the wing on April 17th (earliest ever record is 8th April). This was followed by the earliest ever **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* and **White-Faced Darter** *Leucorrhinia dubia* both seen at Whixall Moss on 22nd April.

However, after the promising start, the summer of 2019 was a low one for records with the dull weather and excessive rain. We received about 50% of the usual records. 2019 saw a total of 26 species recorded. Normally, 27 species are recorded in Shropshire each year and this is without the two new exciting species (discussed further below) for the county.

There were unusually late dragon records too; **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* and **Black Darter** *Sympetrum danae* were seen on 10th November at Whixall Moss!

Perhaps the best news for Shropshire in 2019 was some exciting new species. Firstly, there was a sighting of the **Lesser Emperor** *Anax parthenope* at Alderford lake on 8th July. There has only been one other record in Shropshire from 2016. It was not breeding but is a definite record. Also, the **Small Red Eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma viridulum* was confirmed breeding in Shropshire (full details in article attached below). It was first seen in Enville, near Shropshire in July – will it enter the county? YESSSS!! This species was seen breeding at Stokesay castle 24th July and on the Dudmaston estate on 7th August and also near Albrighton on 15th August. Let's see how quickly it spreads through Shropshire!! It is clearly expanding its range from the east.

There were also a few unconfirmed sightings of **Red Veined Darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii* in Shropshire, further bolstered by the fact that it was also seen in neighbouring counties... Also, there were very early hawkers seen on Whixall Moss. These are likely to be the **Hairy Dragonfly** *Brachytron pratense*, very rare in Shropshire so watch this space!!

So despite the rain and low numbers of records in general – it was a pretty exciting year for Shropshire in terms of new species! Let's watch this space (or county) next year! The **Shropshire Dragonflies Website** kept recorders in touch with the comings and goings of 2019 via the flight season blog.....definitely worth a look from April onwards!

<http://shropshiredragonflies.co.uk>

A new Odonate arrival in Shropshire!

Sue Rees Evans (written for Shropshire Entomology News 2019)

I'm aware that the last Shropshire Entomology newsletter listed no fewer than 24 Dipteran species new to the county, but even so I'm very pleased to announce 1 whole new species of Odonata. I highlighted the possible arrival of small red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* (Charpentier, 1840) when I became VCR in 2011 and finally (just 8 years later!) it has come to pass.



Fig.1 *E. viridulum* copulating pair seen at Stokesay Castle- the first Shropshire record. Photo: B. Pugh

In mid July Dave Jackson (Staffordshire dragonfly VCR) reported sightings near Enville (SO8286) - only a couple of km from our south west county border. I alerted people via the Shropshire Dragonfly Watch blog and finally the first Shropshire record came from Bob Pugh on 24th July, not near the borders, but further into the county at Stokesay Castle (Fig.1). Bob Kemp kindly double checked and confirmed the identification and also visited Enville, again confirming good numbers were present. On 5th August further Shropshire records of numerous individuals came from Meurig Garbutt at Dudmaston (Fig.2). Mick Richardson then subsequently saw 10+ individuals at Green Pond (SJ807037) near Albrighton on 13th August (Fig.3).



Fig.2 *E. viridulum* male seen resting on lily pad at Dudmaston - behavior more typical of *E. najas*.
Photo: M. Garbutt



Fig.3 *E. viridulum* male photographed at Green Pond, Albrighton. Photo: M. Richardson

E. viridulum was first recorded in Britain on the Essex coast in 1999 (Smallshire & Swash, 2018) and has since expanded north and west. In 2012 this species was recorded in Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire (Twissel, Reeve & Averill, 2012) and for the first time in Wales at the Penclacwydd WWT Reserve in Carmarthenshire (Parr, 2012). The first Cheshire records were made in 2015 (Perrin, 2015) which explains why this species has been so eagerly anticipated.

It will now be interesting to see if *E. viridulum* expands throughout Shropshire and whether the copulating pairs seen in 2019 result in successful breeding. Please do keep a close eye on red-eyed damselflies from July 2020 and keep us posted. The key features to split between *E. viridulum* and the fairly common Red-eyed Damselfly *E. najas* (Hansemann, 1823) are as follows:

Males:

Small Red-eyed Damselfly - The blue colouration on the abdomen extends onto the sides of segment 2 from the thorax and onto segment 8 from segment 9. In addition a black X mark can just about be seen on the dorsal surface of segment 10. When at rest the wings extend just beyond the join between segments 6 and 7 (Figs 1,2 & 3).

Red-eyed Damselfly - In contrast the wings of the Red eyed Damselfly extend further down the abdomen upon which there is far less blue colouration. Segments 1, 9 and 10 are blue, but this does not spread onto segments 2 or 8. In addition there is no black X mark seen on the dorsal surface of segment 10.

Females:

Small Red-eyed Damselfly - Most noticeably the antehumeral (shoulder) stripes are complete (Fig. 1). The top of abdominal segment 10 has yellow green or blue coloration extending to the top and down the sides of segment 9. Hind margin of pronotum is rounded (Smallshire & Swash, 2018).

Red-eyed Damselfly – Antehumeral stripes are narrow, short or broken and dorsal surface of abdomen dark with blue just visible between segments. Pronotum is deeply lobed.

References

Parr, A. (2012) Wildlife Reports: Dragonflies. **British Wildlife**, 24(2): 124-126

Perrin, V. (2015) Wildlife Reports: Dragonflies. **British Wildlife**, 27(1): 48

Smallshire, D. and Swash, A. (2018) **Britain's Dragonflies. A field guide to the damselflies and dragonflies of Britain and Ireland.** 4th ed. Hampshire: Wild Guides

Twissell, I., Reeve, P. and Averill, M. (2012) Vice County Reports: Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. **Darter Magazine: British Dragonfly Society**, 29:13-15