

Shropshire (VC40) Dragonfly Summary



Spring 2021
Sue Rees Evans

Well spring is nearly upon us and hopefully 2021 will bring sunshine and ultimately a return to freedom (!) and the ability to roam around our beautiful county recording dragonflies. Amidst all the changes in recent times Vicky has started a new job and as a result has moved beyond the county boundary of Shropshire. I wish her the best of luck in future ecological endeavours and would like to say a big thank you for looking after the dragonfly records for the past few years.



Small Red-eyed Damselfly *E. viridulum* male seen resting on lily pad at Dudmaston Photo: M. Garbutt

Having stepped back from County Recorder duties for a short spell I'm now very pleased to return to this role. This time next year I will write a full **Shropshire Dragonfly News** as before so we can all catch up in more detail on the dragon and damselfly comings and goings and see how our new resident species **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** is faring. In the meantime I just wanted to bring you up to speed on my return as County Recorder, share with you Vicky's report from last year and highlight those species to keep an

eye out for in 2021. With more people than ever using iRecord to submit records I also wanted to highlight a few useful pointers so we are able to glean as much information as possible from your records. Above all I would like to assure you that we still very much want your records please whenever restrictions allow us to venture out! Knowing as much as we can about our wildlife allows us to evidence changes that are happening and therefore puts us in a far stronger position to try and do something about it.



The **Shropshire Dragonflies Website** is still very much up and running and I will again be updating the species maps and also introducing a couple of new species to look out for on the 'coming soon' pages. These are the **Willow Emerald** *Chalcolestes viridis* and the **Southern Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna affinis*. Both are 'Shropshire long shots' but have been recorded as close as Warwickshire and Gloucestershire respectively so far better to be aware of them.

The **Shropshire Dragonfly Watch** flight season blog also continues to thrive enabling us all to stay informed of the comings and goings throughout the year. Please continue to send in your fabulous photos as it's great to see a good range of species especially when we are individually limited to our own local habitats.

<http://www.shropshiredragonflies.co.uk>

Flight Season 2020

Vicky Fletcher

2020 was an obviously strange year in terms of recording with the start of the flight season smack bang in the middle of lockdown 1! However, the warm weather and ponds within local exercise distance for many recorders meant we got **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* recorded on the wing on April 17th, same day as last year (earliest ever record is 8th April). This was followed by **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* and **White-Faced Darter** *Leucorrhinia dubia* both seen at Whixall Moss on 22nd April. Again, same day as last year and pretty early!

Despite all the restrictions, the summer of 2020 was no worse than 2019 for records. Last year was a low one with the dull weather and excessive rain; receiving about 50% of the usual records but 2020 was no worse so thank you all for using your daily exercise for recording purposes! 2020 saw a total of **28** species recorded where normally, 27 species are recorded in Shropshire.

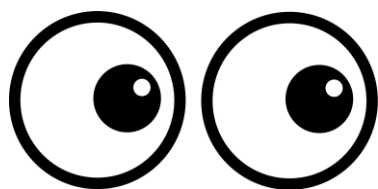
We had a strange encounter of a white-faced kind! A female White-faced Darter was recorded on garden furniture in Woore. Usually only recorded at Whixall Moss in Shropshire, this may well be a random odd record though it is some distance from Whixall Moss and this species is not known for its dispersal capabilities. The search is on for suitable (probably unknown) breeding habitat for this species on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border.

The **Small Red Eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma viridulum*, confirmed breeding in Shropshire only last year, was confirmed breeding again on the Dudmaston estate and also spotted on Whixall Moss – no evidence of breeding here but a clear expansion of range.

Another exciting discovery was a Downy Emerald on the Llangollen Canal near Ellesmere. This is far from the few known sites in Shropshire which are largely on meres near Shrewsbury. Exciting news if this was more than a ‘one off’ sighting and they had established themselves on a water body in NW Shropshire.

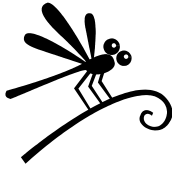
Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*, very rare in Shropshire, was also spotted in the Wyre forest.

So despite the rain and low numbers of records in general – it was a pretty good year for Shropshire in terms of new species in new locations! Let’s watch this space (or county) next year!



Be on the look out in 2021:

So clearly last year amidst so many strange events, there were also a few strange dragonfly sightings concerning **White-faced Darter**, **Downy Emerald** and **Hairy Dragonfly**. At time of writing we are still in lockdown, but hopefully as the year progresses and the dragons and damselflies emerge we will have greater opportunities to look out for such unusual sightings. I will give a broader update on species in the full newsletter, but it is also worth noting that **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** has not been recorded in Shropshire since 2016. In addition **Red-veined Darter** and **Lesser Emperor** were again recorded at a number of UK sites during 2020 and so should also be borne in mind as possibilities here in Shropshire.



Recording tips:

Full details regarding the submission of records are on the website, but essentially recorders are now using spreadsheets or iRecord.

Spreadsheets: Spreadsheets can be sent to me at the end of the flight season, but please do notify me of important sightings as and when they happen so we can potentially verify any important finds and make others aware on the blog...particularly important if we have for example an influx of rare migrants. An exemplar spreadsheet can be downloaded from the website.

iRecord: More and more recorders are now using **iRecord** to enter dragonfly records and indeed the BDS are encouraging people to do so. If you do use iRecord then please use the specific **Dragonfly Recording Form** developed by the BDS which allows you to specify life stage. This can be found by looking under Record >Activities >search for British Dragonfly Society and click the gold star to add it to your activities. You can also enter records (that go to iRecord) via the BDS website however it is far better to create your own account on iRecord and enter them directly as you then have access to all your records and numerous other facilities on the site.

*Whether using iRecord or a spreadsheet please also declare if the list is a **complete list** ie. all species visibly present at a location. This requires ticking a further box when entering records and **if sending your own spreadsheet then please add a new 'complete list' column and tick where appropriate.** This allows the BDS to do more robust trend analysis which is important given the climatic changes we are seeing.*



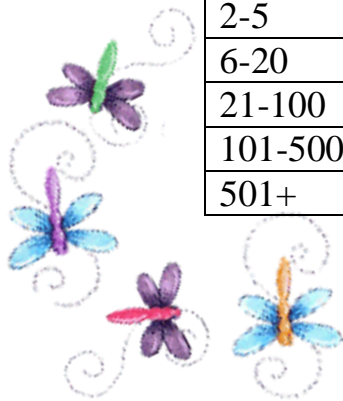
How often do you record? The BDS website has detailed information on the different levels of dragonfly recording and how the resultant data can be used. The levels range from **casual ad hoc records** to **complete lists** to actually **adopting a local site** whereby you carry out complete lists at a named location two or three times between May and September over successive years. If you visit a site several times a year and would be interested in 'adopting' it then please do get in touch. All levels of recording are welcomed and the records always gratefully received.

Dragonfly Abundance: In recent years many recorders have reported a lack of abundance of individuals in areas that not so long ago were teeming with activity. Presence or absence data alone gives us no real idea how populations of species are faring. We could say for example that Shropshire has on average 27 Odonata species recorded each year. With an influx of rare migrants in some years this can increase with 34 species having been recorded at one time or another. With a warming climate these migrants are more likely and so a simple species list may give the impression that dragon and damselflies are thriving. Is it however very possible that the overall numbers of each species are declining and worse still we get used to that being the normal state of affairs. The reason for this rambling is that abundance scores accompanying your records would be really useful going forward. Even listing 1 individual tells us more than 'present' (usually represented as +). The old abundance codes A-F



are still usable, but ideally please put one of the following preferred values instead:

Preferred Value	Old Abundance Score
<i>n</i> (ie.exact number)	
1	A
2-5	B
6-20	C
21-100	D
101-500	E
501+	F



Happy Recording!