

DRAGONFLIES IN SOMERSET 2013

The year started with a cold spring compared with recent years, and dragonfly emergence was comparatively late – an Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*) seen on 3rd May by Paul Newman at East Lydford being the first record of the year. Indeed, few species were on the wing until well into the second half of May. However, we were fortunate that the cold spring was followed by the first good summer since 2006; not an especially warm one, but with long spells of sunny weather through June and July which suited those species whose adults emerged in high summer. This allowed them a chance to recover from the disastrous, wet and cold summer of 2012. A mild autumn saw dragonflies on the wing well into

October, with the latest record being a Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*) on 2nd November, also seen by Paul Newman at East Lydford.

In general, damselflies and early-emerging species were present in disappointing numbers, the former probably having had few opportunities to lay eggs in the poor summer of 2012. Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*), Beautiful Demoiselle (*C. virgo*), Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrosoma nymphula*) and Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) all seemed to suffer particularly badly, with only one report of the last species. White-legged Damselfly (*Platycnemis pennipes*) was also sparsely recorded, so it was pleasing to see aro

Brue near Baltonsborough, in company with good numbers of Banded Demoiselles.

Later-emerging dragonflies did rather better, with two species in particular having good years: Golden-ringed Dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*) and Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*). The Golden-ringed was recorded more widely than for many years across its heartlands on Exmoor, the Blackdowns and especially the Quantocks. Individuals wandered down from the hills across to Taunton Vale and the Levels, with records from Taunton (Tim Spearing) and Moorlinch (Penny Allwright). In the extreme east of the county, this large and impressive dragonfly was reported by Barry Watts from Tynning Wood, following on from a record in Lower Wood the previous year. East Somerset records for this species are extremely unusual, but it is known to occur from just across the Wiltshire border, and the woodlands stretching up from Stourhead to Frome are seldom visited by

dragonfly enthusiasts.

There was a similar pattern of sightings for the much rarer and very local Keeled Skimmer. A number were reported from various sites in the Blackdown Hills by Nigel Cottle and John Burrell; one was seen on the Quantocks during a butterfly survey by Mr J. Holmes – the first time it has been recorded from the Quantocks since 1994, though doubtless it has been present there all along – and wanderers made their way to the pools at Priddy Mineries (anon) and to Moorlinch (Penny Allwright). This pattern was repeated nationally, with Keeled Skimmers doing well in their usual haunts and turning up in unexpected places across the country.

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