

British Dragonfly Society

Sussex Group

Autumn Newsletter 2009

No 23



West Sussex Small Red Damselfly Sites Doubled In A Day!!



It's incredible what a good bit of timing can do in terms of recording some of our rarest and most elusive species in Sussex. It just goes to show how important it is to have people out managing and surveying our important wildlife sites, with their keen local knowledge at the ready and their eyes peeled. It also goes to show how eternally unpredictable wildlife is, and how it never reads the text books! This fantastic little specimen was the chance find of a National Trust warden and our very own John Luck, who were visiting the National Trust site at Black Down. Little did they know that their visit would yield such a treasure and that they would double the known Sussex sites for this local rarity in just one day! Congratulations folks, and a fantastic photo to prove it.

Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

Trust the Small Red Dragons

Five years ago I suggested to the National Trust's Regional Nature Conservation Adviser, whom I knew from our Reigate days, that it might be mutually beneficial if I were to look at various National Trust properties and advise which species of dragonflies were present. He agreed that this was indeed a good idea and supplied me with a list of properties in Sussex with waterbodies on them likely to attract dragonflies.

I have thus visited a number of very interesting sites over the intervening years, very much on an ad hoc basis as it was left to me to decide where to visit. This time after an hour's classroom tuition, a group of 12 of us arrived at the first set of pools at Black Down. It was typical dragonfly weather, of course - 100% cloud with brief flurries of rain! At the main Boggy Pool we saw absolutely nothing so we headed off to other ponds nearby. All of a sudden, Matt had waved his net in the air and asked me if I had a container....a very small one. I produced one of my moth-pots, not realising the significance of *very small* until a moment later when I saw that he had caught a Small Red Damselfly. Great gods! Our rarest damselfly, first shot.



Small Red Damsel at Black Down in July 2009

I had wondered how this species with a poor dispersal record could reach Black Down, but clearly it has. Although Thursley is just a few miles away, it does suggest that the species may be present even nearer - Marley or Linchmere Common perhaps. Although the photos aren't as good as I'd like, I think they are in focus enough to authenticate the record! Fortunately for us the weather gradually improved until by the time we had finished it was hot sunshine. We managed to find nine species in total, although no more Small Red Damsel jewels! Surprisingly there were also no Keeled Skimmers, although I am anticipating finding it on our forthcoming field trip.

This record of the Small Red is incredibly significant, but the good news is that it may only be the tip of an iceberg. The National Trust have realised that not all their dragonfly records have been getting to the Sussex Dragonfly Society and are now in the process of sending all their site records of flora and fauna to the Biodiversity Records Centre. Exciting times. A keen team of NT wardens have also attended the dragonfly training day, from locations throughout the County plus volunteers from the Haslemere Natural History Society, and news will appear on their website if you want to hear more.

John Luck

Watch the Birdie, I mean Dragon!

**A first hand account of how Golf really isn't a good
walk spoiled!**

Some modern golf courses are too heavily gardened, and too comprehensively sprayed with pesticides and fertilizers to be of value to any but the most resilient species of our native wildlife. Luckily this is not true of many of our older, more sympathetically managed courses, of which one is the Cooden Beach Golf Club, where nature has been allowed to mingle with leisure.



In early June, John Luck and I were fortunate enough to play a round at Cooden Beach Golf Club in East Sussex near Bexhill (Grid ref. TQ 7006). Although the golf wasn't great, the weather was clear and sunny and the course quiet, which gave us a bit of spare time to hunt for dragonflies.

Half the holes on the Cooden course have ponds, and there are reed-filled dykes everywhere. The first big pond is on the 4th and, despite a fairly strong easterly wind, there was plenty to see. Most notably there were about 9 or 10 Four-Spotted Chasers which seemed to be spending the afternoon fighting and mating. There was also a rather splendid male Emperor, the first one of the season for me. As well as the Anisopterans there were plenty of Damselflies about, including a rather spectacular male 'Red-Eyed' sunbathing on a leaf of pond weed (*Potamogeton* sp.) and several others, mostly Blue-tailed.



Continued

By the tee on the 5th there is a pond which has become rather overgrown but even here we found blue-tailed, Azure and the Variable Damselfly. After 15 minutes we continued our game. The 5th fairway crosses a deep, reed-fringed dyke and as we walked over the small footbridge a Hairy Dragonfly flew beneath us.



Beside the fairly shallow pond on the 6th, which is some 20 metres in diameter, we saw large red damselfly, a breeding pair of Variable Damselflies, Blue-tailed, Common Blue and one paler blue Zygopteran which John identified as a 'White-legged' Damselfly. There are phragmites fringed dykes on either side of the 6th fairway which are virtually undisturbed except by the occasional errant golf ball and which provide excellent habitats for our immature dragons.

The 8th hole is usually one of the best for Odonatids, having three ponds and hundreds of yards of dykes, but by the time we reached it the cold easterly wind was strong and the ponds and dykes were all a little too exposed. This was also the case for the 9th, 10th and 11th and although each of them is well supplied with both ponds and dykes the weather precluded any further finds.

Unlike most golf courses Cooden has 20 holes rather than 18. The extra two were added in the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee and these 2 holes (known predictably as the 'Jubilee Holes') are particular havens for wildlife. Beside the first is a small 'reservoir' some 70 metres long and 20 wide and as these extra holes are seldom used for golf they are a great place for watching dragons. Since John's visit I have seen all the usual Zygopterans here as well as the Emperor, Black-tailed Skimmers, Hairy Dragonflies, Four-spotted Chasers, Broad-Bodied Chasers, Ruddy Darters and even a Red-Veined Darter. It really is a wildlife haven and is a fantastic spot to visit should you ever want to add a bit of variety to your habitual dragonfly spotting spots.

C Bindon. 2009

A rare view of a Red Veined Darter at the Golf Course



Scarce Chasings!

On a fine Sussex day I drove to Sherman Bridge on the Cuckmere and started off in a Southerly direction. I'm sure you'll agree that one of the pleasures of watching dragonflies is donning your shorts in the warm sunshine and romping along beside a stream! Not so when the vegetation is head high and full of nettles, thistles and bristly ox-tongue. Ouch! However I am privileged to have access to this private land and so should not complain too much. Anyway, all discomfort aside I soon found a Scarce Chaser quietly perched up and a second one on returning to the bridge. I then moved on North of Sherman Bridge and found several other specimens perched in the vegetation.



The pictures are a little overexposed as a result of getting a bit carried away with attempting to get in-flight shots. They do however really illustrate a point of interest, which is the differing mating marks on Seg 5 from several matings (SC1, 2, 3 and 5) (See Image above) Overall I saw at least 10 males North of Long Bridge, and both North and South of Sherman Bridge. Given that they weren't flying and I only saw those where I disturbed vegetation on the West side of the river, there may well have been considerable numbers nearby, although I only walked about 1/2 km upstream.



Over to the Ouse, which is something of a mystery. I have been to Barcombe Mills on 10-15 occasions since early May and found absolutely nothing. Considering the substantial emergence, last year, I do not have an explanation as to why there should be a clean sheet this year. Apart from the fact that they take two years to emerge and if 2006 was the first mating season (reference two sightings late in the season) and 2008 was the first emergence then the next emergence will be 2010. However it does seem unlikely that they will all emerge after two years. Surely some will emerge after one year and some after three years. Anyway, if they were going to emerge this year they

would have appeared by this point since West Sussex sightings were well underway in early May and the Cuckmere male was quite an old specimen, which must have emerged by mid May. Curious indeed!

John Luck

The curious case of the disappearance of the Ouse Scarce Chaser



In fact, what more can we say, other than, having found the Scarce Chaser in good numbers last year for the first time on the Ouse, they have now apparently disappeared without a trace. No Scarce Chasers were found over several different visits this year to the catchment. What has happened to the larvae?

...I have a theory! Given the proximity of most of the sightings to a weir, perhaps larvae have been washed downstream and are no longer to be found in the same places, Hopefully David Chelmick and I will be checking to see if larvae are present in early next Spring and will be able to solve this particular little mystery for you all Mesdames et Messieurs!!

J Luck

Diamonds are forever but Emeralds are nicer to find



Brilliant Emerald Dragonfly © M Bloss

On a sunny Sunday 21st of June I went for a walk around Barcombe Mills hopefully to photograph some Scarce chasers and White-legged Damselflies which the group saw last year. Standing by the wooden footbridge a dark looking dragonfly landed on some vegetation. Assuming this to be a Hairy Dragonfly I quickly took four shots then looked through my binoculars and to my surprise realised it was an Emerald. As fast as I could I managed to take two more shots before the dragonfly flew off. It was rather strange not to see any Scarce Chasers that day considering how many the group saw at this site last year but to see and photograph a stationary Brilliant Emerald was a fantastic bonus.

A close encounter with the blue eyed hook tail!

Once again I've been lucky enough to visit the Cevennes in France. I know it isn't Sussex, but it's good to learn more about our near neighbouring countries in case more of their dragonfly fauna decide to pop over the Channel one day.



You never know, you might want to prepare yourself as they look like they have some ferocious beasts!

This picture is meant to show what incredible eyes dragonflies have. Imagine facing up to this when you are a lowly flying insect!

Also at the other end are some serious claspers which we've zoomed into just to give you the full effect!



Images © J Luck

All in all a formidable predator if you're the size of a small insect but rather stunning to look at on the wing.

Emerald Dawn

The Emeralds (family Corduliidae) are amongst the hardest dragonflies to study; they are secretive, fly very rapidly and normally only settle out of the view of the observer. For these reasons much of their life history is little understood. Indeed, in South America, some observers think that the Emeralds only fly at dawn! Whether this is a comment on the fauna or the lethargy of neotropical entomologists is not abundantly clear however!

In the western Palearctic there are 11 species of Emerald of which only four have been bred in UK. In Southern Britain we only have two species regularly present: the Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) and the Brilliant Emerald (*Somatochlora metallica*). Both have an essentially northern distribution in the Palearctic region and often occur together on wooded ponds, lakes, canals and sluggish rivers.

In UK the Downy Emerald is widespread albeit rather local throughout southern Britain with a few colonies in Scotland. The Brilliant Emerald is much rarer and restricted to the High Weald and heaths of Surrey, Sussex, Berks and Hampshire. There are no records outside of these areas apart from north of the border where, unusually there are a few Scottish colonies. To give you a better idea of suitable habitat this view of Tilgate Park near Crawley shows the narrow top end where both Emeralds occur especially around the Bogbean in the foreground.



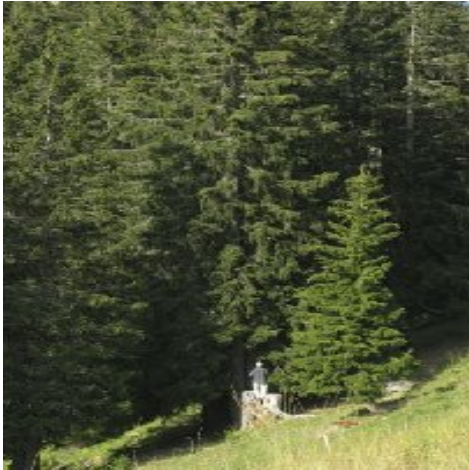
The two species are difficult to tell apart. However, when the adult insects hover, which they do frequently, it is often possible to see the yellow on the nose of the Brilliant Emerald. Of course, these comments are all very well but in heat of instant observation of a fast moving insect such features are often impossible to see. If you have a digital camera try some flight shots when the insects are hovering. These may be out of focus and probably won't win any prizes but it is surprising what you can learn from bad digital pics – I've got hundreds!

Both species do settle however, but usually high up and concealed in trees, often Alders. If you do want to find settled insects it is often a good plan to wait by emergent vegetation in case the males decide to stay low; you could be rewarded by a great view (and picture). Another useful tip from Dave Sadler is that the Downy Emerald often tires of its early morning patrolling at around 11:00 am and patience can be rewarded by the sight of the settled insect.

In all Emeralds the females of the species are incredibly hard to locate, they keep well away from the water until they are ready to mate when they are soon whisked away by a male high into nearby trees where their green iridescence renders them almost invisible.

Emerald Dawn Continued

To give you some idea of how inaccessible they can be these pictures show the author standing on a tree trunk in Switzerland observing copulation of the Brilliant Emerald; the colouration of the mating pair shows just how well they are concealed.



Females of Emeralds have what is known as a vulvar scale at the end of the abdomen which helps with egg laying. In the Downy Emerald this is an inconspicuous organ used only for distribution the eggs in shallow water. However, females of the Brilliant Emerald have a spectacular and diagnostic vulvar scale that can be clearly seen (the white projection at the end of the abdomen) on the newly emerged insect below.

After mating the females keep away from the water waiting until the end of the day or until the males have left to lay their eggs. In forty years of studying dragonflies I have only ever observed the Brilliant Emerald ovipositing on two occasions; most recently was in mid August 2009. I was sitting by a lake near Ashdown Forest at about 16:45. The day had turned dull; it was still and quite warm. A female emerald flew down looked suspiciously at me and then proceeded to drop to the bank of the lake amongst the trees to a patch of sphagnum moss and immediately started to swing her abdomen into the sphagnum laying her eggs. She repeated this a number of times then moved to a different stretch of sphagnum before disappearing back into the trees after about two minutes. To give an idea of the habitat for egg laying of the Brilliant Emerald, the following pictures might help.



Sphagnum moss edge into which the female BE was seen ovipositing



So why not make 2010 an Emerald year? You have more chance in Sussex than anywhere else. Find a suitable lake, buy yourself a comfortable deck chair and armed with your binoculars and digital camera you will have a fascinating summer watching some of our least understood and most beautiful dragonflies.

David Chelmick

Why Dragons need Stepping Stones in the Landscape

Patterns of movement and dispersal in an endangered damselfly and the consequences for its management. Abstract

Rouquette, James R. and Thompson, David J. (2007). *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 44(3), pp. 692–701.

Coenagrion mercuriale (Southern Damselfly) is one of Europe's rarest and most threatened damselflies. It is listed in the European Community (EC) Habitats and Species Directive and is the only odonate currently given priority status in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Information regarding patterns of movement and dispersal in this species is required to guide conservation and management programmes. Management is currently geared towards habitat restoration of isolated sub-populations, with little attention paid to the population in the landscape context. There are no known populations of *C. mercuriale* in Sussex, but they are found nearby in the New Forest.

A multisite mark-release-recapture project was carried out in the valley of the River Itchen recently in Hampshire to determine the extent of movement and the factors affecting movement of mature adults of this endangered damselfly. A total of 8708 individuals were marked.

The species was extremely sedentary, dispersing only to areas of continuous habitat. The net distance of movement in an individual's lifetime was only 31.9 metres and 66% of individuals moved less than 50 m in their lifetime. Movements of greater than 500 m were rare and the longest recorded movement was 1.79 km. It's probably the most sedentary odonate studied in the UK.

The highest recapture rates and the lowest movement distances were recorded at the most isolated site. Individuals travelled further on their first than on subsequent moves. There was no consistent effect of age or sex on distance moved and there was strong evidence that individuals moved further if they were in a low-density population.

Coenagrion mercuriale, along with many other invertebrate species of conservation concern, lives in a management-dependent mid-successional habitat. However, the species is not able to migrate very far at all. Furthermore, patterns of movement and dispersal are strongly affected by landscape structure and population density. This means that it is unable to recolonize isolated sites and requires 'stepping stone' habitats to improve its chances of survival in the medium to long term. The long-term survival of *C. mercuriale* and other invertebrate species requires a landscape approach to management, with connectivity an important part of management planning.



Southern Damselfly © D Chelmick



EYE — D Corner No 5

Emerald Dragonflies

The Emeralds (family Corduliidae) are amongst the hardest dragonflies to study; they are secretive, fly very rapidly and normally only settle out of the view of the observer. In Southern Britain we need concern ourselves with only two species:

the Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) and

the Brilliant Emerald (*Somatochlora metallica*).

Unfortunately you need to get quite close to the Emeralds to be able to properly identify them. In particular try and look at 1) the frons (nose), 2) the anal appendages, 3) in flight adult coloration, 4) Flight times & 5) Behavioural differences.

1) Frons



Downy with completely dark frons (nose)



Brilliant with yellow side markings on frons

2) Anal appendages

The anal appendages of the males are clearly different.



Downy - appendages blunt & outward pointing



Brilliant – appendages pointed & turned inwards

In flight the abdomen of the Brilliant Emerald also always looks more obviously pointed at the end

Emerald ID Continued

3) Adult coloration

Identification problems start as the adults mature and are usually only seen in flight. However the Downy Emerald (below left) appears quite dull in coloration compared to the more iridescent green coloration and yellow nose of the Brilliant (below right).



Downy Emerald © Steve Cham



Brilliant Emerald with yellow nose

A word of caution however, the Downy Emerald does start life with brighter colours but quickly loses its iridescence and appears uniformly dull whilst the Brilliant Emerald retains its metallic sheen.

4) Flight times

Accepted wisdom is that the Downy Emerald flies earlier in the year and is over by the time the Brilliant Emerald is present. Such wisdom should be viewed with extreme caution as the Downy Emerald can emerge in late April, with the Brilliant Emerald is not far behind commencing in mid May

5) Behavioural differences

The Downy Emerald generally flies a low regular beat around the perimeter of a lake hovering frequently and seeing off rivals. The Brilliant Emerald is more laid back in its approach, flying irregularly along banks but often maintaining territory by hovering for long periods in sunspots far from the bank. Downy Emerald is often an early riser and if weather conditions permit will be one of the first dragonflies to appear, whereas the Brilliant Emerald is hardly about before mid morning.

In the UK records for the Downy Emerald after 1st August are unusual whilst the Brilliant Emerald can be seen to the end of August here. In Europe there are records up to late September but it is uncertain whether this happens in the UK.

A word of caution

Identification problems become even more complex as the insects age.



Spot the Difference!
Downy (left) and Brilliant (right). Only the yellow on the frons and the anal appendages separate the two!



Emerald ID Continued

Confused – well let's summarise what we can to separate these two species!

| ID Feature | Downy Emerald | Brilliant Emerald |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Head (Frons) | Dark | Yellow on sides |
| Eye colour | Dull but can be bright green | Bright green (unreliable feature) |
| Thorax | Dull and dark with little iridescence | Green and usually very metallic except in very old insects |
| Abdomen | Dull and dark except in very young insects | Metallic green but becoming dark with age |
| Anal appendages | Blunt and out curving | Pointed and incurving |
| Flight season (UK) | May-July | June - August |
| Behaviour | Regular low beat around perimeter | Irregular beat hovering in sunspots |

So — best of luck with the observations. If all else fails, take a photo and we'll do our best to identify the image for you!



Downy Emerald © S Smith

Sussex Dragonfly Field Trips 2009

Wonderful Warnham Welcome

14th June 2009. Walk Leader, Phil Belden.

For two dozen lucky people, this field trip was the business. It was a great day, with hot and sunny weather and the occasional helpful cloud to settle down the flying beasts; and, most importantly – no wind. We ended the day with an impressive tally of 17 species of dragonfly and damselfly spotted (and we also had our eyes pleasantly distracted by moths and butterflies and other wildlife).

We were spoilt by a few perks that come the way of organised events like this. Firstly, we had the guiding expertise of the warden of this Local Nature Reserve, Sam Bayley – he knows his natural history and unlocks the doors for us visitors to discover the jewels of the area; he's also a very engaging chap. Secondly, there was the site itself, with its series of dipping platform ponds, which gave us "armchair tv watching", except that we were observing the real thing! Just to be really OTT, there was even a café and toilets to make this a gold-plated luxury field trip. This is not going to set a precedent or standard for future excursions though!

It is worth noting a few high points of the day. We had all three *Libellula* (Chaser) dragonflies in close proximity, to provide an easy identification lesson. We were allowed into a newly acquired brick pit east of Southwater Country Park; after Sam had unlocked the gate, we entered a meadow and were treated to clouds of "flying matchsticks" or White-legged Damselflies.

The icing on the cake, which made this the stuff of legends and a story to dine out on for years to come, was the antics of a Brilliant Emerald Dragonfly. We'd just caught sight of one at the back of one of the little Warnham ponds and we carefully stood or sat along the edge (thoughtfully tiered with railway sleeper steps) in the hope we might get a decent glimpse of this elusive insect. I explained, with trepidation, the key ID features, as I was worried that I'd fail miserably as the Emeralds (Downy and Brilliant) are probably the worst two dragonflies to identify, because on most occasions all you see is a flash of dark green at the far end of a lake and that's it. So I foolishly plod-



ded on, mentioning the yellow face of the Brilliant Emerald (on the frons), of a dragonfly that lurks in the far distance where you can't possibly pick out such detail. This little charmer proved otherwise. He came to say hello and perform for his audience. He flew along the gathered ranks, so we could easily observe his brilliant metallic green body, so much more vivid than the darker Downy. He then flew directly towards us and hovered in front of us, face on. A few inches away, the yellow between the eyes was all too obvious. He stayed as long as we all needed to absorb the essential ID features. I'm not making this up – ask anyone who came on the day. Magical and memorable – brilliant!

Smiling face of a Brilliant Emerald! © D Chelmick

Phil Belden

The Wildlife of Constantia Manor

Sunday 5th July

Walk leader: John Luck

We had a rather good field trip this year to this private nature reserve at Isfield near Lewes. A massive 25 people (including the landowner) attended and produced some great records of early Small Red-Eyed Damselflies, An |Emperor was caught on film (albeit at high speed!) eating a mating pair of Black-tailed Skimmers in flight (see below) which was a sight to behold, and a total of 15 or more species were seen. Not that we worry about numbers...quality always above quantity. Some absolute gems for those who came out for the day though. Twenty species have now been seen on this site including Southern Hawker seen by the landowner last year. I anticipate adding Brilliant Emerald on next visit and maybe Hairy Dragon, next year. Other than that apart from a stray Scarce Chaser visit from the Ouse or a migrant we'll have reached a full house.



Emperor Dragonfly eating Black-tailed Skimmers in flight! Picture © Nick Lear



Top left: Four-spotted Chaser; Top right: Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Bottom left: Emerald Damsel © M Bloss. All seen at Constantia field trip.

Sightings from Constantia Manor Field trip

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------|------|
| Beautiful Demoiselle | 10+ | Brown Hawker | |
| Banded Demoiselle | 20+ | Emperor Dragonfly | 3 |
| Emerald Damselfly | | Four-spotted Chaser | 100+ |
| White-legged Damselfly | | Black-tailed Skimmer | 40+ |
| Large Red Damselfly | 10 | Common Darter | |
| Red-eyed Damselfly | | Ruddy Darter | |
| Small Red-eyed Damselfly | 5 | Common Blue Damselfly | 500+ |
| Azure Damselfly | 20 | Blue-tailed Damselfly | 5 |

Field trips Continued

Dart over to Black Down

Saturday 1st August + One for Luck!

Walk leader: John Luck

This site was such a good one that we ended up doing two field trips, following some slightly precarious weather on the first event. For our first trip on August 1st, four brave souls turned up to spot hardy, weather-worn dragonflies. We managed a two hour tour around and just finished before the heavens opened. Although the field trip yielded only one partly emerged Southern Hawker, and not much else, those who attended very much enjoyed seeing this gem of a nature reserve.

The second field trip was a little easier on the waterproofs and so on August 8th, four different dragonfly spotters arrived to chance their luck. This was by far and away a much better dragonfly day, we saw eight species: Black Darter, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Four-spotted Chaser, Southern Hawker, Emperor, Common Darter, Large Red Damselflies and Azure Damselflies. The highlight being three Golden-ringed Dragonflies at Discovery Pool, which flew close enough to touch and perched up beautifully to allow all those present to obtain photos. Discovery Pool so named because Small Red damselfly was discovered there earlier this year.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly perched at Black Down © D Mitchell

Do you have dragonfly walks or talks in Sussex that you would like to advertise in this Newsletter? If so, contact our editor for more details. All our events are free but please feel free to make a donation towards dragonfly and wetland conservation in Sussex.

Sussex Dragonfly Society Newsletter

First and Last

A summary of this year's late starters?

A walk around Ashdown Forest in the afternoon at this time of year can be decidedly productive with Common Darter, a late male Keeled Skimmer and a male Southern Hawker all seen still flying. The male Southern Hawker circled around us and the pond then again around us and brushed hard into my shoulder, before perching on nearby bracken for a minute, then zooming off on more important business. Best of all was an ovipositing Golden-ringed Dragonfly. I've never before seen a female GRD, our longest dragonfly and guess what I didn't take my camera, so no pictures for the newsletter I'm afraid. We watched it for a full five minutes stabbing her ovipositor into the muddy stream bed and even more vigorously into a potamogeton until she flew right beside us watching her from the bridge before circling up into the trees and away.



Ovipositing Southern Hawker



Immature male Common Darter

There were more ovipositing females to be seen however, even at this late stage. This time, on a field trip to Lavington, two separate Southern Hawkers were seen. The first allowed us to approach to an inch away and was laying for the whole 15 minutes we were there (see picture); the second very edgy, stopping only briefly around a pool to lay and even attempted to land on my left leg...fortunately painless! Not far away an immature male Common Darter perched on the footpath, showing us that the dragons have by no means retreated into their dens just yet! (Images © J Luck)

New to Recording Dragonflies?

Here's a few tips to help you get started. A basic dragonfly record has 5 parts to it:

1. Your name and contact details
2. The date you made your sighting
3. The name of the site you were at
4. An OS Grid Reference for the site (Guide on how to do this to follow very shortly)
5. What you saw

Other information that can be recorded, and is useful to us, includes the type of habitat, the weather, the altitude of the site and breeding behaviour. Please send your records to penny-green@sussexwt.org.uk or graemelyons@sussexwt.org.uk

News



The Sussex Pond Survey & Million Pond Project

The Sussex Dragonfly Society has donated £250 towards the Sussex Pond Project being headed up by our dedicated volunteer, Bev Wadge. If you are interested in helping to survey, map and restore some of our Sussex ponds then please contact Bev at ponds@sussexwt.org.uk



New BDS Damselfly Guide Available Now

The New BDS Field Guide to Damselfly larvae and exuviae has gone to the printers and is now available at the Dragonfly centre opening at Wicken Fen next month, or from the BDS Shop. The book costs a reasonable £7.50 and p&p is free for a limited period. See flyer at the back of this Newsletter for more details.

National News



New SDS Website

The switchover to the new web hosting environment is now complete. All features of the site are now working correctly - as far as we know! If you find any pages which return errors please let us know. Latest changes include updates to the information on the Key Sites pages and several new photos of Southern Emerald Damselfly and Willow Emerald Damselfly.

Our New Dragonfly Centre is open

Thanks to everyone who joined our celebrations on Sunday July 26th as TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham opened the new Dragonfly Centre at the National Trust Nature Reserve at Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire. There were excellent speeches at the official opening, reminding us of the importance of conserving dragonflies and how much can be achieved by working in partnership. Chris then led a walk round the reserve, which culminated in a visit from a Brown Hawker to wow the crowds!

The Dragonfly Centre aims to show people that dragonflies are fascinating, beautiful and in trouble, and that everyone can help. The Centre is based in a newly renovated cottage. Inside there are displays and interpretation material with information about dragonflies and the BDS. Outside, the cottage is surrounded by a garden which has not one, but two ponds created especially for us to our own designs, to show visitors how they can help dragonflies in their own gardens. The centre will open as often as possible throughout the summer, and perhaps by appointment at other times. Admission to the Centre is free but there are admission charges for the National Trust Reserve.

National News Continued

New Conservation Officer

A sincere welcome to Claire Install our new BDS Conservation Officer. She's just started in the office and we'll hear more from her soon.

From Waste to Wildlife

The BDS is supporting a sculpture competition organised by Gloucestershire County Council and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at their Slimbridge reserve. The competition requires school children to make dragonfly sculptures from recycled materials and celebrates the dragonfly pond recently dug at the site.

New report on the threat of extinction faced by Odonata

A recent survey published in Biological Conservation concludes that, although many species of Odonata are at risk of extinction, the overall risk of extinction faced by insects may be exaggerated. A summary of the conclusions can be found on the BBC Earth News page. The full article is not available to the general public without payment.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly at Black Down 2009 — © D Mitchell

Meet the Committee . .

And the new Sussex dragonfly recorder, Graeme Lyons

I have worked for Sussex Wildlife Trust as their in-house ecologist since April 2008. I am responsible for planning and implementing monitoring strategies on the 34 nature reserves managed by the Trust. My work is both varied and challenging and I am thrilled to be back in Sussex after a seven year absence. Monitoring chalk-grassland on the Downs, territory mapping birds at Woods Mill, a deadwood beetles survey at Ebernoe Common and tracking livestock by an automated GPS system are just a few of my on-going projects. Prior to this role I worked for the RSPB in a similar position for seven years learning a great deal about habitat restorations and more importantly how to set up repeatable, standardised monitoring strategies for virtually all taxonomic groups. I spend much of the summer months carrying out field-work, making this time of year always very busy for me. During the winter months my work is much less intensive as I write reports based upon the summer's work. It is in this quieter period that I will be able to pay much more attention to the dragonfly recorder post.

Apart from four years studying Astrophysics at Sussex Uni, I have so far dedicated my life to natural history and nature conservation, including prior to my masters. I have been an over-enthusiastic naturalist for as long as I can remember. My father was a gamekeeper, I grew up in rural Staffordshire, and I was always at home roaming the countryside. Things got serious when I was ten years old and caught the bird-watching bug when I joined my local YOC. I later moved on to plants, then moths and pretty much anything I could have a go at, all before leaving school. Since then I have always tried to take on a new group each year, some of them I stick with (such as dragonflies starting in 2001) some of them I have had to leave behind (such as lichens – I'll give them another go soon!).

Apart from Brown Hawkers and Emperors, I knew little about dragonflies until 2001 when I was volunteering for the RSPB at Dungeness. The warden at the site, Pete Akers, was very keen on dragonflies and told me to keep an eye out for a rare dragonfly, which he described in detail. I saw something similar to what he described but I did not have chance to report it for nearly a week (I don't think I was really aware of its significance then!). We rushed down to the spot where I had observed the specimen nearly a week earlier, it had been quartering up and down a reed-fringed scrape. Low and behold, it was still there, a male Lesser Emperor. So I started with a bang and have probably not seen a rarer species of Odonata since!

I look forward to spending more time this winter in the role of county recorder and to receive your records. If you want to send them directly to me then my e-mail address is graemelyons@sussexwt.org.uk



Kids Corner

Make your own Dragonfly out of a Loo roll!!

What you need:

Toilet paper roll
Glue
Scissors
Colouring pencils

Step 1

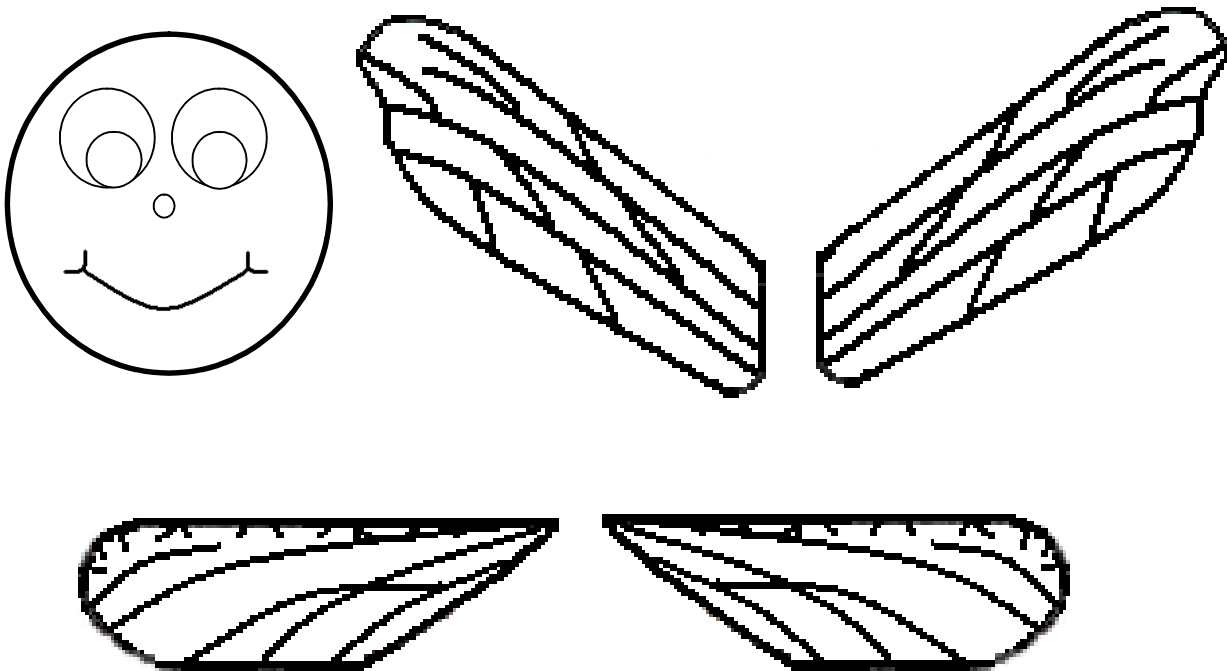
Colour and cut out the templates below

Step 2

Colour a piece of paper the size of the toilet roll, wrap it around the toilet roll and glue it in place.

Step 3

Stick the head onto the front and the wings onto the side of the toilet roll (large wings at the top and little ones at the bottom). Now you can have fun playing with your new Dragon!

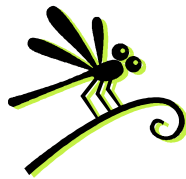


Here Be Dragons: Our Autumn Quiz on the Winged Wonders!



Questions. True or False?

- 1) The Belleville Breviary was illustrated in the Pucelle workshop between 1323-26 and the damselfly depicted on one of its pages represents the punning trademark of Jean Pucelle: *pucelle* being an old word for a maid, virgin or damsel (*demoiselle*)!
- 2) Kofan Indians in Colombia wear nose-pins decorated with the coloured wings of dragonflies.
- 3) In the UK, the earliest mention of the word dragonfly is in Bacon's *Sylvia* (1626) "The delicate coloured Dragon Flies".
- 4) In America, a superstition was that dragonflies were capable of stitching the mouths, and sometimes the eyes and ears, of lying children, scolding women and cursing men.
- 5) To the Japanese, the dragonfly (*Tombo*) is an important cultural symbol and was believed to be the spirit of the rice plant and a harbinger of rich harvests.
- 6) Akitsushimi, which means Dragonfly Island, is an alternative name for Japan.
- 7) What may be the oldest sculptured images are found on a piece of bronze apparatus which is thought to have been used, by the Japanese, as a festival instrument in the period 300-200 BC.
- 8) Ancient Egyptian art does not, as far as is known, depict odonates, nor do they apparently appear in Indian or New Zealand decorative art.
- 9) The earliest known Japanese poem dedicated to a dragonfly was composed seven hundred years ago by an emperor after he had been bitten by a gadfly which was then killed by a dragonfly.
- 10) The Samurai adopted a *mon* (heraldic crest) and the dragonfly, as an insect of victory, was a fitting *mon* for a military family.



Welcomes, Thank Yous & Goodbyes

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this year's newsletters.

Top Ten Things You Can Do To Keep Dragons Flying In Sussex

1. We have developed our own version of Species Recorder called Odonata Recorder, which can be downloaded from <http://sxbr.org.uk/odonatarecorder> . Report your sightings either on the SDS recorder, or to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre at Woods Mill
2. Take photos of unusual dragonflies you see
3. Come on our free training days and guided walks with local experts – more pairs of eyes mean we know more about what's happening with our dragonflies
4. Build a pond in your garden
5. Become a member of your local group – No charge, just send your contact details to penny-green@sussexwt.org.uk or c/o Penny Green, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD, and we'll keep you up to date with our newsletters.
6. Adopt a waterbody near you and report back to us on its dragon and damselfly fauna
7. Report the first and last times you see individual species in each year
8. Use less water! Simple as it sounds if we use less water there is less pressure on our water resources and therefore on our wetlands that these amazing insects rely on.
9. Use eco products for washing clothes and washing up — they leave less damaging residues in our waste water and so help our winged friends by reducing pollution.
10. Look out for aliens! Not little green men, but plants: Parrotsfeather, Australian swamp stonecrop, Floating Pennywort and Water fern among others. These non-native plants when released into our wetlands can reproduce rapidly and can smother ponds and ditches etc making it difficult for dragonflies and damselflies to breed and to reproduce.

Odonata Quiz Answers

Apparently they are all true !!



Golden-ringed dragonfly © John Luck

Adopting a Waterbody

It's easy!

I'm sure that many of you get out and about in the countryside on a regular basis, and that on your way you spot the odd streak of dragonfly colour zooming across your field of vision. Well, if you would like to adopt a local pond, reservoir or stream that you visit regularly and tell us what dragonfly life you see there then it couldn't be easier.

Just complete and return the form below to Penny Green, Sussex Dragonfly Society, c/o Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD. All returns will be held in our local database so that we can provide you with support on identification. If you're not great at identifying dragonflies, never fear, you can email or send us your pictures and we'll get our experts to identify them for you!

Name

Address

Contact Tel No

E-Mail

Name of Adopted Site

OS Grid reference (where possible)



Black tailed Skimmer ©

Contacts

Core Group

County recorder: Graeme Lyons — graemelyons@sussexwt.org.uk
Chairman: Phil Belden - Hobhouse, 47 Arundel Street, Brighton BN2 5TH
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Sussex BRC: Penny Green - 01273 497521; pennygreen@sussexwt.org.uk
Website: Victoria Hume — victoriahume@sussexwt.org.uk

Other useful Contacts

Wildcall – Free advice on all wildlife issues. 01273 494777
British Dragonfly Society - bdssecretary@dragonflysoc.org.uk
Booth Museum - boothmuseum@brighton-hove.gov.uk. 01273 292777
Pond Conservation Trust — www.pondconservation.org.uk
Sussex Ouse Conservation Society — www.sussex-ouse.org.uk
Sussex Wildlife Trust — www.sussexwt.org.uk
Sussex Otters and Rivers Project — www.sussexotters.org
National Insect Week — www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk
British Dragonfly Society Shop — www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/shop.html

Donations

The Sussex Dragonfly Society is run exclusively with donations and proceeds from the sale of the Dragonflies of Sussex book. If you would like to make a donation towards dragonfly work and restoring wetlands for dragonflies then please write a cheque made out to British Dragonfly Society (Sussex Group), and send it to Sussex Otters and Rivers Project, Woods Mill, Henfield, BN5 9SD. All donations will be reserved exclusively for dragonfly and damselfly habitat enhancement work.

Useful Publications

The Natural England leaflet 'Dragonflies and Damselflies in your garden' is available to download as a pdf file at :-

www.naturalengland.twoten.com/naturalenglandshop/docs/NE21dragonflies.pdf

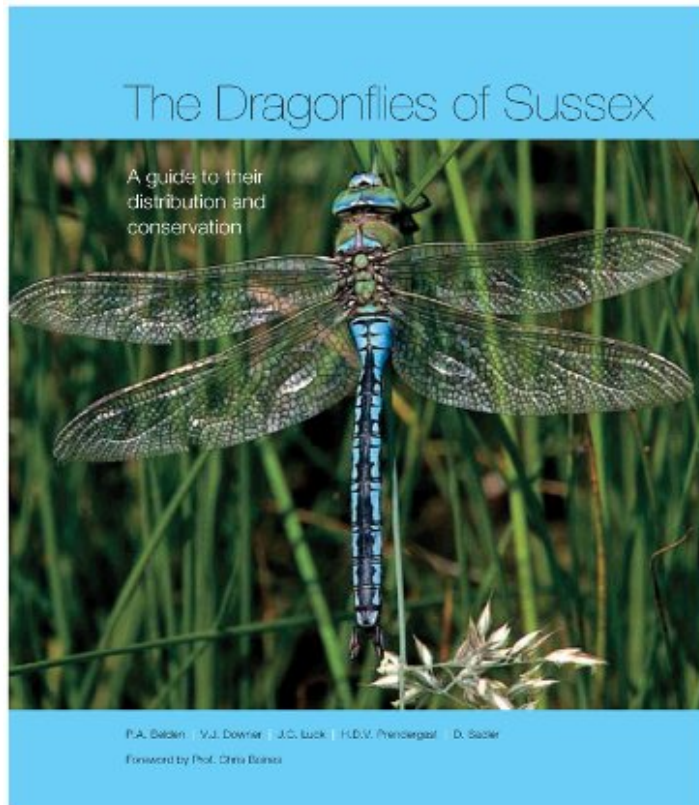
Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain & Ireland. S Brooks & R Lewington.

Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Britain. Field Studies Council

Dragonflies: New Naturalist. PS Corbet. Collins

How to encourage dragonflies and damselflies on your land — www.sussexotters.org/wildlife/dragonflies.htm

The Essential Garden Companion & Guide for Countryside Explorations THE DRAGONFLIES OF SUSSEX



The first ever published book on Sussex Dragonflies.
by Phil Belden, Vic Downer, John Luck, Hew Prendergast & Dave Sadler.

The indispensable guide to these aerobatic, highly colourful and beautiful insects.
With detailed distribution maps and notes on status, habitat and conservation, , etc.

Available from Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, Sussex BN5 9SD. (01273)
492630, or from good book shops (ISBN 0-9525549-1-7)

£7.95 or £10 including post & packaging, payable to 'Sussex Wildlife Trust'
Proceeds go to dragonfly and wetland conservation

Generously sponsored by: Environment Agency, English Nature, Southern Water, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, Chichester District Council, Horsham District Council, Wakehurst Place, Profile Security, Temple Environmental Consultants, The Wetland Trust, Gravetye Manor, Harveys Brewery.

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Published by the British Dragonfly Society.
£7.50 (plus £1.50 p&p)
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Volume 2: Damselflies (Zygoptera)



Steve Cham

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