

Dragonflies in Bracknell Forest Borough: Final Report 2017

The 2017 Flying Season

Over the Borough as a whole, recording effort has diminished significantly in recent years, and this factor should be borne in mind when assessing the 2017 records below. The one exception is Wildmoor Heath Nature Reserve, where the county wildlife trust, BBOWT, maintains an active recording programme during the flight season. Altogether, 24 species (see Appendix) were recorded on the wing in the Borough during 2017, with evidence of breeding for 17 species.

There were good conditions at the start of the flying season, with plenty of fine sunny days in May and June, and at the start of July. Towards the middle of July the weather changed, and unsettled weather set in for some two months. Through the latter part of July, much of August and up to the autumn equinox in September conditions were far wetter and cloudier than usual, relieved only by a brief spell of hot, sunny weather towards the end of August.

Three species which have been recorded locally are classified under the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) scheme as **nationally-important**. In 2017, **Brilliant Emerald** (*Somatochlora metallica*) was reported from only one site, Mill Pond, Swinley Forest, where it was seen on two separate occasions by Dominic Mackenzie; the shortage of records of this elusive species is more likely due to lack of recording effort rather than the reduction in numbers of this species. **Small Red Damselfly** (*Ceriagrion tenellum*) was reported by Des Sussex in good numbers at Wishmoor Bottom, where Surrey Wildlife Trust have recently carried out useful conservation work. The species was also present at its strongholds of Swinley Brick Pits, Caesars Camp Pond, Wildmoor and Crowthorne Woods, and was also recorded at Mill Pond and Rapley Lake (Des Sussex) in Swinley Forest. During 2017 there were no reported sightings of **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*), which has been seen in the Borough just once, in 2012.

Five local species are classified by BDS as **locally-important**. These are: **Hairy Dragonfly** (*Brachytron pratense*), **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*), **Downy Emerald** (*Cordulia aenea*), **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** (*Cordulagaster boltonii*), and **Keeled Skimmer** (*Orthetrum coerulescens*). **Hairy Dragonfly** (*Brachytron pratense*) is now a local regular and in 2017 males were again recorded at Swinley Brick Pits and Wildmoor (Brian Crathorne). Fewer sightings of **Downy Emerald** than usual were obtained; again lack of recording effort was likely to be the main reason. The species was observed at Swinley Brick Pits, Englemere Pond (Des Sussex), and Mill Pond, Swinley Forest, (Dominic Mackenzie). **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** was recorded on ditch systems at Mill Pond (Dominic Mackenzie, John Warren) and elsewhere within Swinley Forest, at Wildmoor (Des Sussex, Vicky Potts) and also at Crowthorne Woods. Des Sussex obtained breeding evidence from netting of larvae at Wildmoor Heath and Crowthorne Woods, and he also found exuvia at Wildmoor. **Keeled Skimmer** was present in good numbers at several sites, including Wildmoor and Crowthorne Woods. There were no confirmed records for **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*) in 2017.

Amongst other species, **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (*Erythromma viridulum*) was recorded at its two regular sites: Felix Farm Trout Fishery, Binfield and Allsmoor Pond. A new site record for the species was obtained at North Lake, South Hill Park, where Peter Edwards observed a mating pair. There were no confirmed records for **White-legged Damselfly** (*Platycnemis pennipes*) in 2017. **Beautiful Demoiselle** (*Calopteryx virgo*) was recorded just once, by Des Sussex at Rapley Lake. Des Sussex also recorded **Black Darter** (*Sympetrum danae*) at Rapley Lake, where it is only occasionally seen.

Some five years have elapsed since records have been obtained at three important sites: Butter Bottom Ponds, Crowthorne, the ponds at Wellington College and those at RMA, Sandhurst. These are all sites requiring a permit for access; they are all important for the range of species they support. All three sites have in the past provided records for **Brilliant Emerald** (*Somatochlora metallica*) and **Downy Emerald** (*Cordulia aenea*), whilst Butter Bottom Ponds is the single known local site for **White-legged Damselfly** (*Platycnemis pennipes*).

My thanks to Des Sussex and Peter Edwards, who informed me of their records, and to Mike Turton (Berkshire recorder) for providing additional records submitted directly to him.

Appendix Dragonflies and Damselflies Recorded in Bracknell Forest Borough since 2008

Damselflies		Recorded 2017	Recorded Breeding 2017
Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Yes	No
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	Yes	No
Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	Yes	Yes
White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	No	No
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	Yes	Yes
Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	Yes	Yes
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Yes	Yes
Small Red Damselfly**	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>	Yes	Yes
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	Yes	Yes
Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Yes	Yes
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Yes	Yes
Dragonflies		Recorded 2017	Recorded Breeding 2017
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Yes	No
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	Yes	Yes
Brown Hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	Yes	Yes
Common Hawker*	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	No	No
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	Yes	Yes
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax Parthenope</i>	No	No
Hairy Dragonfly*	<i>Brachytron pretense</i>	Yes	No
Golden-ringed Dragonfly *	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	Yes	Yes
Downy Emerald*	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	Yes	No
Brilliant Emerald**	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>	No	No
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Yes	Yes
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Yes	No
Scarce Chaser**	<i>Libellula fulva</i>	No	No
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	Yes	Yes
Keeled Skimmer*	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Yes	Yes
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Yes	Yes
Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Yes	No
Black Darter	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Yes	Yes
Totals 2017		24	17

** Nationally important species
John Ward-Smith

* Locally important species
Updated January 2018