

2013 Dragonfly Season in Bracknell Forest Borough: Summary Report

During the 2013 flying season, 26 species (see Appendix) were recorded on the wing in the Borough, with evidence of breeding for 21 species.

Summer 2013 was the sunniest and driest since 2006, although the build-up had not been promising. The twelve months from July 2012 to June 2013 were all cooler than the long-term monthly averages. Indeed, the three months April, May and June 2013 were the coldest for 50 years. So, with low water temperatures, the dragonfly flying season got off to a slow start. Early in July conditions changed for the better, with a glorious spell of hot, sunny weather lasting through most of the month. There were occasional thundery downpours, localised and highly intense, towards the end of July and into early August, but much of August was also characterised by dry, sunny weather and this lasted into the early days of September. At the end of the first week of September all changed. Daytime temperatures dropped from the twenties Centigrade to the mid-teens, and cloudy weather with wind and rain became the norm. A short but glorious summer was suddenly over. A few warm, bright days towards the end of September and another brief spell in the first week of October relieved the descent into Autumn.

Three species which have been recorded locally are classified under the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) scheme as **nationally-important**: For the second year running, it was not a good year for **Brilliant Emerald**, with only a single record, from Rapley Lake on 17 July. In contrast, it was generally a good year for **Small Red Damselfly** (*Ceragrion tenellum*). Several of the known sites for this species were not visited during 2013, but it was present in good numbers at those sites that were visited. After last year's first ever record in the Borough for **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*) (obtained by Des Sussex on the River Blackwater, at Shepherd Meadows, Sandhurst) there were no sightings during 2013.

Five local species have been 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*). For the fifth successive year male **Hairy Dragonfly** (*Brachytron pratense*) has been recorded locally. This year's sightings were at Swinley Brick Pits and Felix Farm Trout Fishery, Binfield. We still await the first local records of females and breeding activity. Never common locally, there was just one record of **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*), obtained by Mike Turton at Wildmoor. **Downy Emerald** had a good year and was reported at a range of sites. **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** had a generally good season, with particularly good counts from Wildmoor and Crowthorne Wood. **Keeled Skimmer** had an excellent flying season, with good numbers reported from several sites. Higher than usual figures were reported from Swinley Brick Pits and Rapley Lake, where 5 and 3 males were recorded, respectively.

White-legged Damselfly (*Platycnemis pennipes*) continues to do well at its single site, Butter Bottom Pond, where ovipositing was once again observed during 2013. Records of **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (*Erythromma viridulum*) still appear to be in decline; in 2013 it was only recorded at Felix Farm Trout Fishery, Binfield and Allsmoor Pond. After previous years of decline, **Black-tailed Skimmer** had a much better summer in 2013. Species seen in good numbers in 2013 included **Emerald Damselfly** and **Black Darter**. A new site record was obtained at Bush Fields, Swinley Forest, where a male **Red-eyed Damselfly** was observed. The insect was probably in transit because, when the site was visited two hours later, it was no longer in evidence. No records were obtained in the Borough for **Beautiful Demoiselle** (*Calopteryx virgo*).

Due to the poor weather early in the year, there were no early flying records this year. However two long-standing late flying records were broken. On 6 October 2013, a beautiful sunny day at Crowthorne Wood saw two male **Emerald Damselfly** on the wing, supplanting the previous record from 1 October 1995. Also on 6 October 2013, at the same location, a female **Brown Hawker** was ovipositing, replacing the former record from 3 October 1997.

For many years, Rapley Lake and Crowthorne Wood have been high-quality dragonfly sites. Both of these sites have been further enhanced in recent years by habitat management. At Rapley Lake, contractors working for the Crown Estate removed large amounts of Rhododendron in 2007/8, allowing new marginal habitat to develop, with very positive effects for dragonflies. In 2013 **Black Darter** was recorded there for the first time since 2005, **Small Red Damselfly** are moving into new areas around the margin and three male **Keeled Skimmer** were observed holding territory, only the second time this species has been recorded there in the past twenty years. At Crowthorne Wood, there has been a strong influx of species into the new ponds excavated in 2012 by contractors working for the Forestry Commission.

Acknowledgement. Thanks to Mike Turton for providing additional local records.

Appendix Dragonflies and Damselflies Recorded in the Borough 2013

		Breeding 2013
Damselflies		
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	B
Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	B
White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	B
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	B
Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	B
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrosoma nymphula</i>	B
Small Red Damselfly**	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>	B
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	B
Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	B
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	B
Dragonflies		
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	B
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	B
Brown Hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	B
Common Hawker*	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	-
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	B
Hairy Dragonfly*	<i>Brachytron pretense</i>	-
Golden-ringed Dragonfly *	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	-
Downy Emerald*	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>	B
Brilliant Emerald**	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>	-
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	B
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	-
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	B
Keeled Skimmer*	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	B
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	B
Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	B
Black Darter	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	B

** Nationally important species

* Locally important species