

# 2003 Dragonfly Report

## BNHS Journal for 2003

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2003 with its long hot summer would seem to be an ideal one for dragonflies, but actual results showed it to be in-line with the previous year. What the good weather did help, was the observation of dragonflies, as there were more days when dragonflies were on the wing and for a longer time each day. With a life cycle of at least one-year, it will take more than one hot summer to increase dragonfly numbers. A number of ponds were seen to dry out, which would almost certainly kill off any dragonflies in these ponds. Visits will be made in 2004 to check their condition.

Records were received for all 21 species on the record form, including the important rare species of Scarce Blue-tailed and Small Red-eyed Damselflies and Scarce Chaser Dragonfly. However despite the good weather no migrant species were seen

The first records for the year were on the 17th April, when Large Red Damselflies were seen by Dave Withers at Duck End and by Andy and Melissa Banthorpe at Lower Stondon. Four days later this species was seen at two other locations. This compares to previous years when the first damselflies seen were also Large Reds, but on 18th April 2002 and 3rd May 2001. The last records of the year were on the 16th November when Common Darters were seen at Biggleswade by Phil Cottier and at Linslade by Mick McCarrick. Another sighting of this species was made on the 10th Nov., while Tony Smith recorded an unidentified damselfly on the 15th Nov. at Odell Great Wood. Last records in previous years were of Migrant Hawkers on 12th Nov in 2002 and on the 14th Nov in 2001. An interesting question has been asked about these late records. The normal adult life span of a Common Darter is about six weeks. Are the dragonflies living longer due to the warm and mild conditions, or are they the result of late hatching, if so from eggs laid in 2002 or 2003 ? Late emergence records, say after the 15th September 2004 would be most welcome.

### Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly

Only found at its usual site in Sundon Quarry. However breeding was confirmed rather than assumed. This species can no longer be found at Houghton Regis Quarry. It was last seen there in 1999, and no records have been obtained since that time. The habitat is drying out and changing for the worse.

### Small Red-eyed Damselfly

Known to be present at only four sites this year. Priory Park was the only carry-over site, but was well watched and enjoyed by many people, due to detailed information being available as to how to find the exact location. Mating was seen at this site. The 2001 site in Sundon Pit was again active, suggesting continual presence since that time, even though no dragonflies could be found in 2002. Mating was also recorded at this site. The other two sites at which this species was recorded for the first time were Felmersham and one of the mid-county brick pits. The Recorders can only list information available to them, but we suspect that the species was much more widespread within Bedfordshire than is shown above. Nationally the species continues to spread and is known at two sites away from Bedfordshire with over 1000 insects.

### Scarce Chaser

Only found at one site on the River Ouse at Little Barford. Why is there still no sign of this species extending its range up river towards Sandy or Bedford ?

### Beautiful Demoiselle

There was a suggestion that this species could exist on the River Ouse at Turvey. Andy and Melissa Banthorpe made a visit on the 7th June 2003, but only Banded Demoiselle Damselflies could be found. The Beautiful Demoiselle has never been recorded in Bedfordshire, so if its presence could be established it would be a welcome addition to our list.

### Best Sites

The best 12 sites in the county during 2003 for richness of species, are listed in Table 1. Although there must be an amount of recorder effort bias, it is a good guide to the most productive sites. The total for the county is 21 different species, of which Scarce Chaser is only recorded at the one site at Little

Barford and the Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly is now only recorded at Sundon Pit. Of these 12 best sites, the Small Red-eyed Damselfly has only been recorded during 2003 at Priory Park and Sundon Pit.

Position	Site	No. of Species	No. of Species in 2002	No. of Species in 2001
1	Priory Park	17	17	11
2	Bromham Lake	17	15	13
3	Sundon Pit	16	17	14
4	Marston Thrift	15	15	10
5	Felmersham	15	16	
6	Duck End	14	12	11
7	Marston Vale Country Park	14		
8	Field Ponds- Turvey	13		
9	Randalls Farm	12	12	
10	RSPB Sandy	12		
11	Dunstable Wetland Centre	11		
12	Bromham Hall	11		

TABLE 1. Best Species Richness Sites.

#### First and Last Dates

Table 2 shows the first and last dates for all species. The last records for Hairy Dragonfly on the 14th August and another record on the 9th July are very late for this species. These records could come from some late emergence or even a second generation, but could also be a misidentification of Migrant Hawkers, or Southern Hawkers, both of which would be flying at these dates. In September there were 12 species still flying, compared to 14 species in 2002 and 12 species in 2001. In October there were five species flying (Brown, Southern & Migrant Hawkers, Common & Ruddy Darters) compared to six in both 2002 and 2001. In November there were two species flying (Southern Hawker and Common Darter) compared to three species in 2002 and two in 2001.

SPECIES	FIRST DATE	LAST DATE	2001-2002
Banded Demoiselle	21 May-R. Lawrence Sandy-The Riddy	13 Sep.-K & R Weeden Toddington-Village Pond	12 May-11 Sep
Emerald Damselfly	8 June-P. Trodd Dunstable-WetlandCen.	2 Sep.-D. Withers Bromham Lake	20 June-11 Sep.
White legged Dam.	29 May-P.Almond Bromham Lake	8 Aug.-P.Almond Bromham Lake	1 June-4 Sep.
Large Red Dam.	17April-D.Withers Maulden-Duck End & A & M Banthorp. Lower Stondon-Garden Pond	23 June-C.Carpenter Stewartby-Randalls Farm	18 April - 3 Oct.
Azure Dam.	23 May-S.Plummer Amphill-Westmin.Pond	2 Sep.-D.Withers Bromham Lake	12 May-11 Sep.
Common Blue Dam.	15 May-L.Carman Kempston-Coronation Pit	24 Sep.-D.Green Dunstable-Wetland Cen.	11 May-24 Oct.
Blue tailed Dam.	23 April-S.Plummer Maulden-Duck End & Amphill-Westmin. Pond	9 Sep.-S.Plummer Amphill Park	2 May-24 Sep.
Scarce Blue tailed Dam.	24 June-L.Carman Sundon Pit	24 July-L.Carman Sundon Pit	18 June-14 Aug.
Red eyed Dam.	31 May-D.Ball Wyboston-Begwary Bro.	23 Aug.-B.Squires Bedford-Priory Park	3 May-8 Sep.
Small Red eyed Dam.	16 July-P.Almond Bedford-Priory Park	30 Aug.-L.Carman Stewartby-Rookery Pit	29 July-3 Sep.

Hairy Dragonfly	7 May-J.Leadley Bedford-Priory Park	14 Aug. Stewartby Lake	11 May-18 June
Migrant Hawker	19 July-P.Almond Bromham Garden Pond	9 Oct.-D.Withers Maulden-Duck End & C.Carpenter-Sharnbrook	3 July-14 Nov
Southern Hawker	7 June-C.Carpenter Stewartby-Randalls Farm	4 Nov.-S.Blain Sandy-The Lodge RSPB	21 June-1 Nov.
Brown Hawker	20 June-L.Carman Marston Thrift & P.Almond-Turvey- Crown Farm	17 Oct-I.Allsopp Carlton-Garden Pond	17 June-5 Nov
Emperor dragonfly	9 June-D.Withers & S.Plummer Maulden-Duck End	28 Sep-C.Carpenter Stewartby-Randalls Farm	16 May-25 Sep
Four spotted Chaser	15 May-L.Carman Kempston-Coronation Pit	9 Aug-L.Carman Stewartby-Rookery Pit	15 May-25 Aug
Scarce Chaser	19 June-S.Plummer Wyboston-River Ouse	19 June-S.Plummer Wyboston-River Ouse	17 June-17 June
Broad bodied Chaser	14 June-L.Carman Cranfield-Marston Thrift	9 Aug-P.Almond Turvey-Crown Farm	15 May-13 July
Black tailed Skimmer	10 June-J.Adams Haynes-Chicksands Wood	3 Sep-S.Plummer Maulden-Duck End	5 June-13 Sep
Common Darter	24 June-L.Carman Sundon Pit	16 Nov-M.McCarrick Linslade-Canal Meadows & P.Cottier Biggleswade -The Common	15 May-14 Nov
Ruddy Darter	25 June-J.Adams Cranfield-Marston Thrift	20 Oct-C.Carpenter Houghton Conquest Glebe Meadows	13 July-10 Oct

Table 2. First and Last Dates For All Species.

Andrew Hay of the RSPB at Sandy reported an interesting dragonfly event. On the 26th of September he witnessed a struggle between a Hornet and what was probably a Southern Hawker. Andrew reported “ I came across a Hornet and a dragonfly engaged in a life and death struggle. For a while it looked like the odds were even, but eventually the dragonfly succumbed, and then the full horror ensued ! The Hornet started chewing at its opponent’s throat, working its way around the dragonfly’s underbelly. Finally, after having gnawed out a chunk of meat half the size of the dragonfly’s thorax (and at least the size of its own ), it took off towards the treetops with it ( after a little struggling !). But the really gruesome aspect was that the dragonfly was still moving after all this ! ”

A total of 1291 records have been supplied to date. All these records will be entered onto the database and copies supplied to the Bedfordshire Record Centre as well as the National Dragonfly Record System. Distribution maps will be produced as soon as the system is available.

The records were received from 45 people and three groups, compared to 41 people in 2002. Many records were collected from the Beds Birds email Group and the BNHS email Group, showing the usefulness of these computer-based systems. Our thanks go to all these recorders. These people are listed below :-

J.Adams, I.Allsop, P.Almond, B.Anderson, D.Anderson, G.Anderson, K.Anderson, Y.Anderson, D.Ball, A.Banthorpe, M.Banthorpe, B.Blain, S.Blain, S.Brooke, L.Carman, C.Carpenter, P.Cottier, I.Dawson, M.Eaton, P.Glenister, D.Green, G.Griffiths, H.Griffiths, A.Hay, F.James, R.Lawrence, J.Leadley, M.McCarrick, L.Newman, M.Palmer, J.Pitts, S.Plummer, N.Renwick, R.Revels, M.Russell,

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D.Withers,Beds. Birds email Group, BNHS email Group, Dunstable Wader Scrape.

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