

## **Radnorshire VC43 – Two notable field events**

From a Radnorshire VCR's perspective, the number and spread of Odonata species in 2009 was about average but the season overall was exceptional in terms of increased recorder involvement. The following two field events certainly seem to have helped.

### **Llyn Gwyn**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the Powys Biodiversity Information Service and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership sponsored a Dragonfly Identification workshop which I led and delivered. With 10 attendees, the course was fully subscribed and consisted of a morning indoor session held in Rhayader followed by a field visit after lunch to nearby Llyn Gwyn [*'white lake'* in Welsh].

Historically used by the Cistercian monks of nearby Abbey Cwmhir (*'Abbey in the long valley'*), the 16-acre spring-fed Llyn Gwyn is now under the custodianship of the Rhayader Angling Club. It is a beautiful lake in a tranquil setting and is an excellent site for Odonata, supporting 18 species to date.

In the mid 90's, it provided the first Vice County record for **Black-tailed skimmer** *Orthetrum cancellatum* and gave us the first proof of breeding in Radnorshire for **Brown hawker** *Aeshna grandis*. As they didn't fit into the accepted UK Odonata distributions at that time, I have often conjectured that these two species may have found their way here via fish-stocking activities rather than 'under their own steam'!

On the day, we recorded 11 species, including scores of newly emerging and mature **Common darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* and one of the season's three VC43 records for **Black-tailed skimmer**. The presence of exuviae was useful in illustrating to the group their importance in proving breeding. The presence of both **Azure damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* and **Common blue damselfly** *Enallagma Cyathigerum* was also instructive in reinforcing the differences we had seen earlier in the classroom presentation.

Noticeably absent from the list were **Black darter** *Sympetrum danae* which are usually found in comparable numbers to their 'Common' cousins. However, what seemed to be a successful day was crowned by a collective close-encounter with a fine male **Emperor dragonfly** *Anax imperator*, taking a late afternoon breather in the lake-side juncus.

### **Cors y Llyn**

The site of the second notable event was the Cors y Llyn National Nature Reserve near Newbridge-on-Wye where, historically, 16 species of Odonata have been recorded. Cors y Llyn (*'Bog by the lake'* in Welsh) incorporates an ancient hay meadow, the sphagnum-covered remnants of a melt-water pool dating from the last Ice Age and a large open pool which has grown in recent years due to the deliberate raising of on-site water levels.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, with permission from the Countryside Council for Wales, Cors y Llyn hosted a 'combined interest' event run under the auspices of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust. Led by Pete and Ginny Clarke for the Moth and Butterfly recording, and supported by Bronwen Jenkins and myself in terms of the Botany and Odonata interests, a dozen lucky souls were treated to a feast of wildlife under surprisingly blue skies - a rare commodity in Radnorshire last August!

Ten species of Odonata were recorded on the day. The list included a male **Emperor dragonfly** *Anax imperator*, several **Common hawkers** *Aeshna juncea* and **Brown hawkers** *Aeshna grandis* patrolling the meadow areas - all joined in aerial battle over the pool by a few 'end of season' **Four-spotted chasers** *Libellula quadrimaculata*.

The group experienced an abundance of **Emerald damselfly** *Lestes sponsa* and **Common blue damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* performing the full range of breeding behaviours. In contrast to the Llyn Gwyn visit, we saw **Black darters** *Sympetrum danae* and **Common darters** *Sympetrum striolatum* in equal numbers, again witnessing maiden-flight teneral, various stages of adult maturation and breeding behaviours. The occasional **Blue-tailed damselfly** *Ischnura elegans* and **Azure damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* completed the Odonata list

Taking into account the 32 species of moths, 13 species of butterfly and numerous botanical gems we had seen, everyone seemed to agree that it had been (to quote Wallace and Grommit) a grand day out!

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