

ODONATA RECORDS FOR 2006

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Fewer observers rendered reports than in most years making comparisons of annual totals for individual species a little difficult. However, for most damselfly species it was a disappointing year. The exceptions were *Calopteryx virgo*, the Beautiful Damselfly, with the largest number logged since recording commenced in 1978, and *Calopteryx splendens*, the Banded Damselfly, that had the best year since 2000. Additionally, there was a welcome increase in the number recorded of *Erythromma najas*, the Red-eyed Damselfly, a recent addition to the Island's list.

Most species of dragonflies were recorded in large numbers, the exceptions being *Aeshna cyanea*, the Southern Hawker, and *Libellula depressa*, the Broad-bodied Chaser, which were either missed by observers or had a particularly poor year. Both *Aeshna mixta*, the Migrant Hawker, and *Orthetrum coerulescens*, the Keeled Skimmer, were noted in the highest numbers since systematic recording began while exceptional numbers of the usually scarce migrant *Sympetrum fonscolombii*, the Red-veined Darter, were seen. Another scarce migrant *Sympetrum flaveolum*, the Yellow-winged Darter, was also seen, albeit singly.

Systematic List

Calopteryx virgo (Beautiful Demoiselle)

The total number recorded this year was 174, the largest since the first were recorded in 1989. Most were seen at "Wild Tracts", Shalfleet (SZ4189), the first on 8th June (VG) and the last on 21st August (VG), but a few were recorded along the Caul Bourne between Shalfleet and Homestead Farm (SZ4188) and one stray male in a garden at Gurnard (SZ476954) on 16th July (DTB).

Calopteryx splendens (Banded Demoiselle)

The total number recorded was 285, the highest since 2001. The first was seen at Merstone Fishing Lake (SZ533838) on 23rd May (DD) and the last at Hale Manor Farm (SZ536841) on 22nd August (DD). An unusual sighting was that of a female flying along a main road at Bonchurch (SZ5778) on 17th July (DT).

Lestes sponsa (Emerald Damselfly)

The total number recorded was 54 with the first at Lessland (SZ545828) on 6th July (DD) and the last at Cridmore Bog pond (SZ499821) on 7th August (DD).

Platycnemis pennipes (White-legged Damselfly)

None have been reported since 1992.

Pyrrhosoma nymphula (Large Red Damselfly)

This species had a much better year with 226 recorded. The first were seen in a field at Parkhurst Forest (SZ470913) on 26th April (DD) and the last on a cliff ledge at Chale Bay (SZ4777) on 22nd July (DD).

Ischnura elegans (Blue-tailed Damselfly)

There was a return towards the ten-year average of 943 with a total of 867 recorded. The first was seen in a garden at Shanklin (SZ576810) on 7th May (JMC) and the last at Merstone Fishing Lake on 8th September (DD).

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Enallagma cyathigerum (Common Blue Damselfly)

This species remains widespread and common but the total seen was lower than last year with 3735 individuals reported, a reduction of 934, possibly due to fewer observers. The first, approximately 40, were seen at Hale Manor Farm (SZ540851) on 2nd June (DD) and the last at Thorness Marsh (SZ459932) on 21st September (DD).

Coenagrion pulchellum (Variable Damselfly)

None have been reported since 1997.

Coenagrion puella (Azure Damselfly)

The total number recorded was 1004, considerably less than the ten-year average of 1805 but possibly partly due to reduced observer coverage. The first was seen in woodland at Clamerkin (SZ438908) on 4th May (DD) and the last at Thorness Marsh (SZ459932) on 16th August (DD).

Erythromma viridulum (Small Red-eyed Damselfly)

After a record year in 2005 there was a low count of 705, a little less than the six-year average of 723. The first were seen at Brockley Barns, Alvington Manor Farm (SZ474887), on 30th June (DD) and the last at Merstone Fishing Lakes (SZ533838) on 8th September (DD).

Erythromma najas (Red-eyed Damselfly)

After the first sighting in 2001 this species continues to spread in larger numbers each year and it now seems unlikely that it was overlooked in the past. There were 104 sightings this year. The first were seen at Hale Manor Farm (SZ540851) on 2nd June (DD) and the last at the same locality on 21st August (DD).

Brachytron pratense (Hairy Dragonfly)

None were reported this year.

Aeshna juncea (Common Hawker)

None were reported this year

Aeshna grandis (Brown Hawker)

The only record this year was of one was seen in Nodes road at Northwood (SZ487941) on 28th July (MC).

Aeshna cyanea (Southern Hawker)

After recovering last year this species had another poor year with only 88 reported, well below the ten-year average of 124. The first was seen in a garden at Wroxall (SZ551802) on 25th June (DD) and the last in the same locality on 24th October (DD).

Aeshna mixta (Migrant Hawker)

A very good year with 355 individuals reported, the highest number since recording commenced in 1979. The first was seen in a garden at Wroxall (SZ551802) on 24th July (DD) and the last at St Helen's Millpond (SZ6388) on 29th October (JMC).

Anax imperator (Emperor Dragonfly)

A good year with a total of 187 recorded, well above the ten-year average of 168. The first was seen at Springwood Cemetery (SZ561837) on 5th June (MC) and the last, a male, at "Wild Tracts", Shalfleet (SZ4189) on 29th September (VG).

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Cordulegaster boltonii (Golden-ringed Dragonfly)

An excellent year with 101 recorded, almost as many as recorded in 2003, the survey year. The first were seen at "Wild Tracts" (SZ4189) on 9th June (VG) the last, a female, at Haseley Manor (SZ547857) on 28th August (AR).

Libellula depressa (Broad-bodied Chaser)

The number recorded was 73, not greatly different from last year and still below the 10-year average of 98. The first was seen in woodland at Clamerkin (SZ438908) on 4th May (DD) and the last at Hale Manor Farm (SZ539847) on 24th July (DD)..

Libellula quadrimaculata (Four-spotted Chaser)

Only one was recorded, at Haseley Manor (SZ547857) on 6th June (AR), well away from the usual locality.

Orthetrum coerulescens (Keeled Skimmer)

As a result of a further increase in the number of visits to the cliffs in the Chale Bay area, the 204 individuals recorded this year was the largest number seen since the colony was rediscovered by BJ Angell in 1983. The first, two males and seven females, were seen by the Walpen Chine foot-path (SZ4777) on 17th June (DTB, JMC) and the last (12) at Whale Chine cliffs (SZ467784) on 28th July (DD).

Orthetrum cancellatum (Black-tailed Skimmer)

Another good year with 459 individuals reported, the second highest number since 1978. The first was seen at Haseley Manor (SZ547857) on 6th June (DD) and the last at Holliers lower marsh (SZ552834) on 6th September (DD).

Sympetrum flaveolum (Yellow-winged Darter)

One of these scarce migrants was seen at Whitecliff Bay (SZ638859) on 19th July (DD). This was the seventh record since the first was recorded by the late Oliver Frazer in 1955.

Sympetrum fonscolombii (Red-veined Darter)

There was an astonishing total of 35 records of this scarce migrant. Three were seen at Meadow Farm reservoir (SZ544831) on 28th June (DD), 22 at Leycroft Farm reservoir (SZ452807) on 2nd July (DD) and 10 males in the same locality on 3rd July (KM).

Sympetrum striolatum (Common Darter)

The total number of 431 recorded this year was well below the 10-year average of 602. The first, a male in a garden at Gurnard (SZ476954) and a female at Ningwood Common (SZ3989), were seen on 4th May (DTB). This is the earliest date yet recorded on the Island for this species, the previous being 30th May in 2001. The last was recorded at Rofford Marsh (SZ3689) on 5th November (JMC).

Sympetrum sanguineum (Ruddy Darter)

A much better year with 148 individuals recorded. The first was one at Meadow Farm reservoir (SZ544831) on 28th June (DD) with four males at "Wild Tracts" (SZ416894) on the same day (VG). The exceptionally large number of 44 was counted at Bouldnor Forest (SZ380902) on 8th August (DD) and the last was seen at Thorness Marshes (SZ458936) on 21st September (DD).

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Observers

I thank the following observers who have contributed records, only a small number of which are shown above.

Dr D T Biggs (DTB)

Mr A J L Butler (AJLB)

Mrs E Butler (EB)

Mr M Cahill (MC)

Mr D Dana (DD)

Ms V Gwynn (VG)

Mr K Marston (KM)

Mr B Ransom (BR)

Dr. A Roberts (AR)

Mr D Tucker (DT)

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