

ODONATA OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT

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Two lists have been published detailing sightings of dragonflies and damselflies in the Isle of Wight, one compiled by W.J. Lucas (Morey 1909) and the other by Dr. K.G. Blair in 1951 (Table 1). After ten years of intensive investigation into the distribution of these insects in the Island, this paper has been written to summarise their present status. Some smaller ponds have still to be visited but most areas thought to be suitable for dragonflies or damselflies have been searched thoroughly. An exception is the area below the cliffs between Blackgang and Ladder Chine where a colony of *Orthetrum coerulescens* (Keeled Skimmer) may still be extant (Blair 1951). The comparative lack of running streams and large sheets of water (Blair 1951) means that Odonata are poorly represented in the Island, but the situation has been further aggravated by the extensive dredging of rivers and rills and the in-filling of ponds in farmland that has taken place since the end of World War Two. Another cause for concern is the decline in the ability of remaining sites to support these insects because of pollution or eutrophication. Records and sightings of dragonflies or damselflies are always welcome, as are dead specimens forwarded for identification.

Discussion

Calopteryx virgo (= *Agrion virgo*), Beautiful Demoiselle. As this damselfly prefers a clean fast-flowing river it is not surprising that Island records are sparse. Seen only once, in a rill at Blackpan in 1979.

Calopteryx splendens (= *Agrion splendens*), Banded Demoiselle. This species requires a slow-running river with a muddy bottom such as the Eastern Yar. Common on this river between Sandown Water Works and Newchurch and in the smaller tributaries at Budbridge and Munsley.

Lestes sponsa, Emerald Damselfly. A species that prefers the wet surroundings of ponds and small streams. Seen only near ponds at Brickfields, the pond at Porchfield rifle range and by the Medina at Werrar.

Platynemis pennipes, White-legged Damselfly. Another damselfly that prefers the vegetation adjacent to muddy rivers and ponds. Found at Leechmore Pond; Stag Lane Reservoir; the pond in the Parkhurst Forest small-holding; ponds at Brickfields; the pond on Idlecombe Down and by the author's garden pond at Shanklin. Also near the Yar at Bembridge, Brading, Alverstone and Merstone.

Pyrhosoma nymphula, Large Red Damselfly. Common and widespread. Found by a pond at Redcliff; along the Yar from Brading to Newchurch; in rills at Blackpan; in the Wilderness by the Medina; in garden ponds at Shanklin; in marshes near Centurion's Copse; in Parkhurst Forest and near the pond at Barton Manor.

Ichnura elegans, Blue-tailed Damselfly. Common and widespread. Found near the ponds at Harbour Farm, Bembridge; in rills on Brading Marshes; along the Yar from Sandown Water Works to Newchurch; in rills at Blackpan; in Parkhurst Forest; by the

pond at Redcliff; at Elmsworth Farm pond; from the Causeway at Freshwater through the Afton Reserve to Freshwater Bay; at Yafford; near Werrar; at Brighstone; by garden ponds at Shanklin; by the pond in Ventnor Botanic Garden; by the pond at Woolverton; near Burnt Wood and at the reservoir at Stag Lane. Form *infuscans-obsolata* has been seen at Gurnard (Dr. D.T. Biggs) and form *rufescens* at Woolverton (personal observation). *Ischnura pumilio*, Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly. Seen once only, in 1981, near the dismantled rail track at Bembridge.

Enallagma cyathigerum, Common Blue Damselfly. Common and widespread. Found at Brickfields; Hamstead Duver; Parkhurst Forest; by a pond at Redcliff; near Sandown Waterworks; in Burnt Wood; by a pond at Wydcombe; in the Wilderness; Afton Marsh Reserve; by ponds on Bleakdown; by a pond in Godshill Park; at Harbour Farm, Bembridge; by garden ponds at Shanklin; by a pond at Porchfield Rifle Range; near a pond on Idlecombe Down; at Barton Manor; by a pond in Dickson's Copse and a reservoir in Stag Lane.

Coenagrion mercuriale, Southern Blue Damselfly. This very rare damselfly has been seen once, in 1983 at Harbour Farm, Bembridge.

Coenagrion puella, Azure Damselfly. Common and widespread. Found at Brickfields; Harbour Farm, Bembridge; from Brading Marsh along the Yar and its side streams through Blackpan and Alverstone to Newchurch; ponds at Osborne; pond at Redcliff; garden ponds at Shanklin; in Atkie's Copse; pond on Porchfield Rifle Range; Ventnor Botanic Gardens; in Parkhurst Forest; pond at Leechmore; pond at Woolverton and pond on Idlecombe Down.

Aeshna juncea, Common Hawker. Scarce. One or two most years since 1979. Seen in Parkhurst Forest; at Bembridge; Alverstone; Walter's Copse; in the Botanic Gardens at Ventnor; along the dismantled rail track near Haven Street, and at Shanklin, where one was watched emerging from the author's garden pond.

Aeshna grandis, Brown Hawker. Seen only twice: over Main Bench in 1977 and at Bembridge in 1982.

Aeshna cyanea, Southern Hawker. Probably our commonest dragonfly. Seen at Alum Bay; Parkhurst Forest; Clamerkin; Osborne; Afton Marsh; Yarmouth; the Landslip; Bembridge; Ryde; Shanklin; Bathingbourne; Lower Hamstead; Hamstead; Brook; St Lawrence; Pigeon Coe Farm; Newtown; Barton Manor; Alverstone; Lowtherville; Lucombe Farm; Werrar; Dodnor; Blackpan; Tennyson Down; Bleak Down; St Georges Down; Yaverland.

Aeshna mixta, Migrant Hawker. This migrant from Southern Europe was seen on three occasions: on Brook Down in August 1979; near the dismantled rail track at Bembridge, where a pair were seen mating in October 1985, the female subsequently laying eggs; and at Dickson's Copse and Dodnor Creek in August 1986.

Anax imperator, Emperor Dragonfly. Widespread and common. Seen at Shanklin; Brighstone; Bembridge; Elmsworth Farm; Brook; Atherfield; Porchfield Rifle Range; Chale Green; Barton Manor; Leechmore Pond; Dickson's Copse; reservoir in Stag Lane; Dodnor Creek.

Cordulegaster boltonii, Golden-ringed Dragonfly. Scarce. Only nine seen in 10 years; at Hamstead; Shanklin; St Catherine's Point; Brighstone; Shide Pit; Windmill Copse; and Parkhurst Forest.

Libellula depressa, Broad-bodied Chaser. Common and widespread. Seen at Upper Hyde; Bembridge; Newchurch; Alverstone; Newtown; Elmsworth Farm; Brading; Botanic Gardens Ventnor; Shanklin; Morton Marsh; Blackpan; Parkhurst Forest; Osborne; Atkies Copse; Burnt Wood; Newchurch; Yarmouth; Chessel Down; Knighton; Newport; Munsley; pond on Idlecombe Down; Rowridge; Barton Manor; Norris Castle; Havenstreet; Dodnor.

Libellula fulva, Scarce Chaser. Rare. Seen three times: female at Harbour Farm, Bembridge; pond west of Botanic Gardens, Ventnor; Shanklin.

Libellula quadrimaculata, Four-spotted Chaser. Surprisingly scarce. One reported over the pond at Mottistone Mill in 1955 (Frazer 1956); one at Corfeheath in 1976; one at Blackpan in 1976; 14 on pond at 'Butterfly World' in 1984 (Butterfly Keeper pers. comm.).

Orthetrum coerulescens, Keeled Skimmer. Rare. A female was photographed near Whale Chine by Mr. B. Angell in June 1983. The site was not far from that of the colony located between Blackgang and Ladder Chine (Blair 1951).

Orthetrum cancellatum, Black-tailed Skimmer. Seen near St Lawrence; in Firestone Copse; at Harbour Farm, Bembridge; and Barton Manor.

Sympetrum striolatum, Common Darter. Common and widely distributed. Seen in Whitefield Wood; at Alum Bay; Parkhurst Forest; Bembridge; Afton Marsh; Clamerkin; Knighton; near Centurion's Copse; Hamstead Duver; Osborne; Brook; Burnt Wood; Atkies Copse; cliffs near Bembridge School; Walpen Chine; Firestone Copse; Alverstone; Shanklin; Werrar; Dodnor; from Sandown Waterworks to Newchurch along Yar; dismantled rail track at Havenstreet; pond in Dicksons Copse; reservoir in Stag Lane; Bleak Down; near Shide; Blackwater; St Georges Down; Bembridge Marsh.

Sympetrum sanguineum, Ruddy Darter. Scarce. Seen at Harbour Farm, Bembridge; Parkhurst Forest; at author's garden pond in Shanklin.

Sympetrum flaveolum, Yellow-winged Darter. A migrant from the Continent. None since the one reported on a pond at Mottistone Mill in 1955 (Frazer 1956).

Listed previously and not found

Coenagrion pulchellum, Variable Blue Damselfly. Isle of Wight (Longfield 1949: 215)

Brachytron pratense, Hairy Dragonfly. Freshwater Marsh (Blair 1951)

Sympetrum danae (= *S. scoticum*), Black Darter. I have one probable sighting of a female at Bembridge in September 1979. A confirmed sighting is required before this species can be added to the current list.

Table 1

Current status of Odonata on the Isle of Wight compared with earlier records

Species	Lucas	Blair	Current
<i>Caleopteryx virgo</i>		X	X
<i>Caleopteryx splendens</i>	X	X	X
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>		X	X
<i>Platynemis pennipes</i>	X	X	X
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	X	X	X
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	X	X	X
<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>			X
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	X	X	X
<i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i>			X
<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>		X	
<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	X	X	X
<i>Brachytron pratense</i>		X	
<i>Aeshna juncea</i>			X
<i>Aeshna grandis</i>			X

Species	Lucas	Blair	Current
<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	X	X	X
<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	X	X	X
<i>Anax imperator</i>	X	X	X
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	X	X	X
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	X	X	X
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>		X	X
<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	X	X	X
<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	X	X	X
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	X	X	X
<i>Sympetrum flaveolum</i>	X	X	X
<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	X	X	X
<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	X	X	
TOTAL	16	22	23

References

- Blair, K.G. 1951. Neuroptera of the Isle of Wight. *Proc. Isle Wight nat. Hist. archaeol. Soc.*, 4(5) (for 1950): 157–162.
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- Morey, F. (ed.) 1909. *A Guide to the Natural History of the Isle of Wight*. Newport.