

ODONATA 1986-2008 AT WOOLSTON EYES

A very wet summer this year which affected many of the odonata species on the Reserve, and as a result very few records were received. The new pools on No.1 bed proved to be attractive almost immediately, with several species seen patrolling the waters even though most lacked any submergent vegetation. It will be interesting to note how these pools are colonized during the coming years, and hopefully breeding on them will be confirmed.

Banded Demoiselle

Calopteryx splendens

There were few records of this species until 2006 and breeding activity was first observed on the River Mersey by No.2 bed in 2007. The only sightings during 2008 were of a male on one of the new pools on No.1 bed on 5th July and two males under the footbridge on to No.3 bed on 10th August.

Emerald Damselfly

Lestes sponsa

Recorded on beds 1,3 and 4 from 1990 and breeding has been confirmed on all three beds. This season four males were noted around the west pool on No.1 bed on 2nd August and a single male on the 10th. These were the only records received.

Large Red Damselfly

Pyrrosoma nymphula

Present on all beds, usually in small numbers, with breeding confirmed on Nos.1 and 4 beds. The first record of the season was of a teneral on No.1 bed, and a single exuvia was also found on 3rd May. Six males were found on the 12th May, increasing to over 20 by 5th July, with several around the new pools. On 24th May two were noted on No.3 bed, and two males were seen by the new pools on 2nd August.

Azure Damselfly

Coenagrion puella

This is a common species at Woolston, which breeds on all of the beds. First recorded this year on the 24th May, with many pairs in tandem and seen ovipositing. Noted on the new pools on No.1 bed in good numbers on 5th July, when several were seen ovipositing. Good numbers were still present there on 2nd August, and also on the west pool of No.1 bed.

Common Blue Damselfly

Enallagma cyathigerum

This species has been found to be common on all of the beds since recording began in 1986. Several were seen on No.1 bed on 5th July and by 2nd August the new pools on No.1 bed held many individuals. On the 10th August a female was seen to completely submerge onto vegetation to lay her eggs.

Red-eyed Damselfly*Erythromma najas*

Two males seen in 1986 were the first records for the Reserve. There were then no sightings until five were found on the Sandpit Ponds in 1998. This species was probably overlooked until 2006, and breeding was confirmed in 2007. On 24th May eight individuals were found under the footbridge on to No.3 bed and a single was on the south bank of No.3 bed on 2nd August. The last sighting was on 10th August, with several on the bund of No. 3 bed and at least one pair copulating.

Blue-tailed Damselfly*Ischnura elegans*

This is the most common damselfly throughout the Reserve. The first sighting of the year was of a single male on No.3 bed on 24th May. By 2nd August this species was numerous on No.1 bed, with many in tandem and copulating, including a few female colour forms. Many were still present on the 10th despite the wet weather.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly*Ischnura pumilio*

A photograph, possibly of this species, was taken in 1986. Unfortunately the diagnostic features could not be clearly seen and the record therefore remains uncorroborated.

Southern Hawker*Aeshna cyanea*

Present in small numbers and once bred at the viaduct pools before they became overgrown. Ovipositing was observed on the Reserve in 2005.

The first records this year were of a male patrolling the south bank of No.2 bed on 5th July and another by the copse on 2nd August. Another male was perched on vegetation by the footbridge on 10th August and the final sighting for the year was on 20th September of a single on No.2 bed.

Brown Hawker*Aeshna grandis*

Historically the commonest hawker on the Reserve, and breeding activity has frequently been recorded. First noted on No.2 bed when a single was present on 5th July and by the 10th this species seemed to be numerous everywhere on the Reserve. The last sightings this year were of two individuals on No.1 bed and a single on No.3 bed on 20th September.

Common Hawker*Aeshna juncea*

Historically recorded as breeding on the Sandpit Ponds in 1998, but is now scarce on the Reserve. On 2nd August a single male was patrolling one of the new pools on No.1 bed and on 20th September a pair was seen there with ovipositing observed.

Migrant Hawker*Aeshna mixta*

First seen in 1998 when three males were seen at Warman's Pit on No.4 bed. Now the most common hawker, with breeding confirmed in 2006 when six exuvia were found on No.1 bed. The first sighting this year was not until 10th August when a single was seen on No.3 bed; numbers increased slowly until the last sighting on 20th September when several were noted on all beds.

Emperor Dragonfly*Anax imperator*

First recorded in 2001, and breeding activity has since been regularly recorded on all water bodies. Only one record was received this year, a single male close to the new pools on No.1 bed on 5th July.

Downy Emerald*Cordulia aenea*

A single adult in 1990 is the only Woolston record of a species that is a localised breeder in Cheshire.

Broad-bodied Chaser*Libellula depressa*

A new species to the Reserve in 2006, and breeding activity was observed but not confirmed in 2007. The new pools are proving to be attractive to dragonflies, with two males of this species seen on 12th May and a female was seen ovipositing there; hopefully this will soon be a confirmed breeding species. A single male was seen again on the new pools on No.1 bed on 5th July.

Four-spotted Chaser*Libellula quadrimaculata*

This has been a common dragonfly species throughout the Reserve since 1986. Breeding was confirmed again in 2005, 2006 and 2007 when exuvia and teneral were found. On 5th July over 20 were found on No.1 bed, including many teneral. Surprisingly, this was the only record received during 2008.

Black-tailed Skimmer*Orthetrum cancellatum*

This was a new species to the Reserve in 2006, when a single male was recorded. This species has spread northwards in recent years and is now common at many sites in Cheshire. It should be looked for on the Eyes in future seasons.

Black Darter*Sympetrum danae*

Breeding was confirmed 1993/94 and this species was a rare visitor in 2005 and 2006. During 2008 only a few individuals were seen on No.1 bed on 2nd August. No other records were received until a single female was noted on 20th September, the last sighting of the year.

Yellow-winged Darter*Sympetrum flaveolum*

A vagrant from the Continent, a single male was recorded on No.1 bed in 2006.

Red-veined Darter*Sympetrum fonscolombei*

A single male was seen in May 1989 when an influx from the Continent was recorded nationally.

Common Darter*Sympetrum striolatum*

This is an abundant species on the Reserve and has been confirmed breeding throughout. The first sightings this year were on 2nd August when a few were seen on No.1 bed around the new pools and over 100 were counted around the west pool, including many teneral. Only a lone female was seen on 10th August, but this was probably due to the wet weather. The final few individuals were seen on all the beds on 20th September.

Ruddy Darter*Sympetrum sanguineum*

Seen in small numbers in most years when breeding activity has been observed. Breeding was confirmed in 2006 when exuvia were found. First noted this year on 2nd August, with a single male found in the grass around one of the new pools on No.1 bed, and 15 were seen there on 15th August, with four more around the west pool on the same date.

Scott Kennedy**Glossary:**

Exuvia – an empty larval case. Teneral – a newly emerged adult