

## **Dragonflies at Drakelow Wildfowl Reserve 2003 by Tom Cockburn (Hon Warden)**

### **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens* Flying dates 6<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> September

The first was noted on the 6<sup>th</sup> May with six recorded the next day. Numbers increased to ten on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 25 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 50 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. There was 100+ on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The insect then became 'common' to 'abundant' through June and remained 'common' during July. In August numbers declined thereafter until two males on the 12<sup>th</sup> September and three on the 15<sup>th</sup> with the last two on the 17<sup>th</sup>. I consider 'common' to be in excess of 200 and 'abundant' uncountable. The height of the season is without doubt, June/July when the species is recorded across the whole of the reserve. A very good year for the insect.

### **Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes sponsa* Not recorded in 2003

### **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrosoma nymphula* Flying dates 1<sup>st</sup> May to 14<sup>th</sup> September

Recorded from both the reserve and the Nature Trail (now defunct) area fish pond. The latter site was the area where most records came from but the species is now being seen with more regularity in the Reserve. Only singles recorded from 1<sup>st</sup> May to the 27<sup>th</sup>. On the 30<sup>th</sup> May up to four seen with egg laying noted. Along the Nature Trail on the 31<sup>st</sup> three pairs seen in tandem and another 16 individuals were scattered round the pond. Records then became sporadic with one on the 31<sup>st</sup> May and two on the 13<sup>th</sup> June. No more until one on 14<sup>th</sup> September. The last date is extraordinary for Drakelow with the previous latest being the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1999. This may well be down to the fact that bird watching is the principal function of the visitors and other branches of wildlife tends to be over looked when such birds as Great White Egret, Little Egret and Spotted Crake turn up!

### **Azure Damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* Flying Dates 6<sup>th</sup> May to 24<sup>th</sup> June

After the first record on the 6<sup>th</sup> May there were regular records from mid month to mid June with the last being seen on the 24<sup>th</sup>. This is not exceptional as the latest record I have is the 15<sup>th</sup> July. It is likely that the lack of concentrated observation contributes to the apparent dearth of records and the fact that many observers do not try and separate this species from Common Blue although, to be fair I try to examine all as closely as possible but I am the only one and see remarks under the previous species.

### **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* Flying dates 24<sup>th</sup> May to 24<sup>th</sup> September

The species was 'common' to 'abundant' through June – August and from what I saw and examined in the hand were mainly of this species. Dates were unexceptional.

### **Blue-tailed Damselfly** *Ishnura elegans* Flying dates 6<sup>th</sup> May to 26<sup>th</sup> August

Like the fore mentioned Common Blue this species was 'common' throughout the period mid-May to Mid –June. There seemed to be a small upsurge of records early July but became scarce from the middle of the month. The last date was somewhat early but not exceptionally so.

### **Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma najas* Flying dates 14<sup>th</sup> May to 26<sup>th</sup> August

After the first insect on the 14<sup>th</sup> May (= to 1997 earliest date) there was a count of 20 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 60 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 100+ on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 130+ on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Even better was the colonisation of a new area (in the reserve) where up to a dozen insects were counted on a patch of 'blanket weed'. Meanwhile, back at the fish pond, there was an astounding count of 310 on 4<sup>th</sup> June and, as you might imagine, there was not a Lily-leaf that did not have half a dozen insects on it. By the 16<sup>th</sup> only 50 could be counted. The decline continued into July with 20 on the 13<sup>th</sup> the maximum. Ten on 4<sup>th</sup> August, six on the 8<sup>th</sup> and a lonely male was seen daily to the 24<sup>th</sup>. This was an exceptional year, again for the species and, it is

hoped, the expansion continues into the reserve proper. The down side would seem to be the lack of lily pads and it remains to be seen if 'blanket weed' will serve the purpose and sustain a colony.

**Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*** Flying dates 18<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> November

This insect has been recorded in July (mid month) in five of the last eight years viz. 16/7/95, 29/7/99, 15/7/01, 23/7/02 and 18/7/03 when previously it was looked for in late August. Two records on the 18<sup>th</sup> July and one on the 23<sup>rd</sup> were the only ones recorded until one on 9<sup>th</sup> August. In August up to 5 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 12 on 15<sup>th</sup>, 17 on 18<sup>th</sup> and ten on the 19<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> were the maximum counts. Recorded regularly into September when numbers increased again with ten on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 15 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 20 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 25 on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 19 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. During October one or two was the norm with a maximum of five on the 9<sup>th</sup>. It was thought that the last was on 20<sup>th</sup> October but a single appeared on the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> November to claim that distinction. A similar pattern to 2002.

**Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*** Flying dates 24<sup>th</sup> June to 16<sup>th</sup> September

As with the previous species the flying dates are becoming earlier. We expected the species in early August but there are now many July records and in the last four years 2000 –2003 there are three June records –18<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with the other being the 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

From the first on 24<sup>th</sup> June no more records until singles on 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July. There was another gap until two on the 18<sup>th</sup> and one on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Recorded on nine dates in August with three on 15<sup>th</sup> the maximum. Recorded on five dates to 8<sup>th</sup> September and then the last one on the 16<sup>th</sup> September. A fairly average year.

**Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*** Flying dates 13<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> September

Five on the 13<sup>th</sup> June were the first and four or five was the regular count to the end of the month. In July ten on 7<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> and 15+ on the 14<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> were the maximums. Recorded through August with 20 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and ten on the 16<sup>th</sup> the top counts. Numbers then dwindled to singles through to the 24<sup>th</sup> September.

**Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*** Flying dates 7<sup>th</sup> June- 24<sup>th</sup> June.

Five males on 7<sup>th</sup> June are unprecedented at Drakelow. Two on the 13<sup>th</sup> June and singles on 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. No females seen. Equal to or even slightly better than 2000 which was our previous best year.

**Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*** Flying dates 21<sup>st</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> August

Following the first on 21<sup>st</sup> May one or two noted to the end of the month. In June one to four to the 11<sup>th</sup> then 12 on the 13<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> then one/two to the month's end. One on the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July and one on 4<sup>th</sup> August was the last. A much better showing than in 2002.

**Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*** Flying dates 28<sup>th</sup> May to 14<sup>th</sup> July

One on 28<sup>th</sup> May and another 12<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> July. These were the only records-another depressing (sorry) year.

**Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*** Flying dates 28<sup>th</sup> May to 18<sup>th</sup> August

After the first on 28<sup>th</sup> May there was one on the 29<sup>th</sup> May and two on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In June, ten on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 16 on 13<sup>th</sup>, 20 on 17<sup>th</sup> and then ten regularly to the end of the month. In July one to three 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> and there was a count of 13 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Singles on 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> August. A better year than 2002.

**Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* Flying dates 24th June to 7th November

Two on the 14<sup>th</sup> June were the first but no more seen until 8<sup>th</sup> July and six on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Present through August but not more than ten. Better numbers in September with 30 on several dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> and a maximum of 60 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Thirty on 9<sup>th</sup> October was the maximum for that month with 15 on 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> and eight on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Singles on 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> November were the last an average year.

**Ruddy Darter** *Sympetrum sanguineum* Flying dates 4<sup>th</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Recorded on 12 dates from 4<sup>th</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September with a maximum of five on 16<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> August. Most records come from the fish pond area but are now increasing to other areas within the Reserve. An average showing but poorer than 2002.