

## Dragonflies in Worcestershire 2015

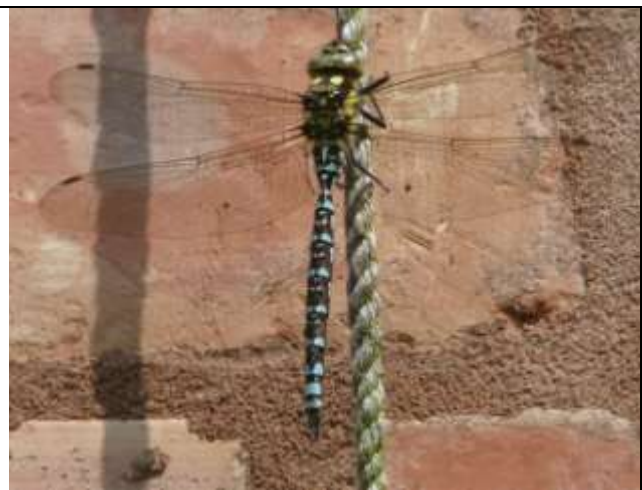
Experience shows that the number of adult dragonflies sighted is closely related to the weather at the time of the observation and this was reflected in the up and down counts made through a variable summer. The weather in the run in to spring was generally mild with good sunshine amounts and so emergence of the spring species were by and large on time. However as the year progressed dull months from May to August meant that the dragonfly year seemed to end rather early and although September was a very sunny month it was all a bit late for most species. The only species which emerged earlier than usual was the Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* which had a very good year. Other than weather the other factor which particularly affects sightings is the local water level condition, and as predicted last year after three years of rainfall surplus and good conditions, a return to average rainfall in Jan and March but below average rainfall in Feb and April meant pool levels dropped quickly and began to dry completely in some cases.

Overall 22 out of a possible total of 28 species recorded, were seen but there was an exciting new addition taking the Worcestershire total to 29, when the Downy Emerald *Cordulea aenea* was seen in Grafton Wood. Wherever the Grafton Wood individual came from, it was found patrolling woodland pools which it is said to favour, so let's hope we see some more in the future. The Club-tailed Dragonfly *Gomphus vulgatissimus* had a poor year and was hard to find along the Avon and even in its core area at Bewdley the counts were the lowest for 8 years. Nearly all other species showed declines on last year except for The Small red-eyed Damselfly, Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*, Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* and Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* - Is there a colour pattern here?

Mention has been made before about the blue coloured Southern Hawkers that are occasionally encountered and there have been a number of reports of these from John Lane in Malvern who seems to have a garden which is especially attractive to these individuals. He reports a number of males and females arriving to sit on a sunny wall, many showing the blue colours along the whole abdomen instead of just the usual end segments of the males (see photos). It is not sure whether these are still going through a maturing phase or whether they can be considered as a separate colour form, so perhaps the only way to be sure will be to take a leg and do some DNA analysis.



A Downy Emerald



Blue form of male Southern Hawker