

DRAGONFLIES

1. CURRENT STATUS

1.1. National

1.1.1 Twenty species of dragonflies have been reliably recorded in North Merseyside. Two of these are rare vagrants from the continent, the others being relatively common nationally, though six are largely confined to southern and eastern England and have been extending their range north and west in recent years. Seven species, including the two continental vagrants, have only been recorded here since 1989.

1.2. Local

1.2.1 Fifteen of the 20 species have certainly bred in the region and two others (Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* and Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*) are probable breeders (Table 1). Five species, namely Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*, Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*, Black-tailed Skimmer, Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* and Black Darter *Sympetrum danae*, have highly restricted breeding distributions in North Merseyside.

1.2.2 The Sefton Coast sand-dune system is considered to be nationally important for this group of insects with 11 breeding species.

1.2.3 Another regionally important locality is Bold Moss, St Helens with 14 species recorded in 2000, their breeding status being as yet unclear.

1.2.4 Red-eyed Damselfly breeds at only one locality, Eccleston Dams in St Helens.

1.3. Legal

None of the dragonflies occurring in North Merseyside is specially protected under national or European legislation.

2. CURRENT FACTORS CAUSING LOSS OR DECLINE

2.1. National

2.1.1 Loss of or damage to freshwater wetlands due to development, infilling, drainage and lowered water tables.

2.1.2 Introduction of invasive plants.

2.1.3 Various forms of pollution.

2.1.4 Agricultural improvements and over-assiduous tidying up of the countryside. The adults of many species need shelter in the form of woodlands, hedgerows or tall vegetation near to the breeding site.

2.2. Local

Most species of dragonflies in North Merseyside appear to be stable or increasing but local problems include:

2.2.1 Waste-tipping.

2.2.2 Enrichment of ponds by agricultural runoff.

2.2.3 Management of sand-dune areas to remove sheltering scrub adjacent to ponds and partial infilling of some sites to make them more suitable for breeding Natterjack Toads *Bufo calamita*.

3. CURRENT ACTION

3.1 National

3.1.1 None for Merseyside species.

3.2 Local

3.2.1 An Atlas Survey of dragonflies is being considered for North Merseyside, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. A database of past and present records has been established by LWT.

3.2.2 Most of the prime dragonfly localities on the Sefton Coast are included in the recently notified Sefton Coast SSSI and candidate Special Area of Conservation.

3.2.3 An important site at Brookvale, Sefton has been designated a Local Nature Reserve.

3.2.4 Bold Moss and parts of Eccleston Dams have been notified as Sites of Community Wildlife Interest.

3.2.5 New ponds have been excavated in the rearward woodlands at Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR to replace those proposed to be modified in English Nature's Dune Restoration Scheme.

3.2.6 Pollution controls on inflows to Sands Lake, Ainsdale, a potentially rich dragonfly site, have been instigated by the Environment Agency.

3.2.7 An article summarising current dragonfly status in North Merseyside and Lancashire has been published in the Lancashire Bird Report requesting contributions to the database.

3.2.8 A number of papers on dragonflies in the Vice County of South Lancashire has been or is being published in the Journal of the British Dragonfly Society.

4. KEY HABITATS

- * Slacks and ponds in sand-dunes
- * Farm ponds including marl pits
- * Industrial wetlands such as subsidence flashes
- * Reclaimed mossland
- * Canals

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 Protect and suitably manage key breeding sites and their surrounds in the region for dragonflies.

5.2 Seek to establish new sites by appropriate design and management of wetlands created for industrial, agricultural and amenity purposes.

6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

6.1. Site safeguard

6.1.1 Ensure that important dragonfly breeding sites are protected by designation as SSSIs, LNRs, or as non-statutory Wildlife Sites (SLBI, SBI, SNCV, SCWI). (Action: EN; LAs) (Priority: High)

6.2 Policy

6.2.1 Ensure that requirements of dragonflies are considered during the development of wildlife policies in, for example, Unitary Development Plans and other statutory plans. (Action: LAs; EN; LWT) (Priority: High)

6.3 Land Management

6.3.1 Enable sympathetic management of key dragonfly breeding sites where appropriate through site management plans. (Action: LAs; land owners) (Priority: High)

6.3.2 Promote a Ground-water Conservation Plan for the Sefton Coast sand-dune system. (Action: EA) (Priority: High)

6.4 Species Management and Protection

6.4.1 Ensure that requirements for dragonflies are taken into account in the management of wetlands known to be important for this group. (Action: land managers) (Priority: High)

6.4.2 Ensure that sites made less suitable for dragonflies by dune restoration work and management for Natterjack Toads on the Sefton Coast are replaced by other suitable wetlands nearby. (Action: EN, land managers) (Priority: High)

6.5 Advice

6.5.1 Advise land managers to ensure that site management takes due account of dragonflies. (Action: SCP) (Priority: Medium)

6.6 Research and Monitoring

6.6.1 Organise regular surveys of dragonfly numbers and breeding success at key sites and general distributional surveys in the region. (Action: voluntary recorders; land managers) (Priority: Medium)

6.6.2 Monitor key breeding sites at regular intervals. (Action: voluntary recorders, land managers) (Priority: High)

6.6.3 Investigate and determine habitat requirements of important species, such as Ruddy Darter. (Action: SCP; universities) (Priority: Low)

6.6.4 Organise Dragonfly Atlas Survey by 2002. (Action: Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society) (Priority: High)

6.7 Communications and Publicity

6.7.1 Promote dragonflies and dragonfly recording in North Merseyside in appropriate publications, e.g. Lancashire Bird Report, Journal of the Lancashire & Cheshire Entomological Society, Coastlines, Lapwing. (Action: Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society, L&CES, SCP, LWT) (Priority: Low)

6.7.2 Encourage additional research and monitoring. (Action: SCP; universities) (Priority: Low)

7. LINKS TO OTHER ACTION PLANS

7.1 North Merseyside BAP. Sand Dune HAP, Ponds HAP, Reedbed HAP, Canals HAP, Great Crested Newt SAP.

8. CONFLICTS WITH OTHER PLANS

Natterjack Toad SAP.

9. CONTACT POINTS

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside (S.J. White, P.H. Smith)
Lancashire & Cheshire Entomological Society & Liverpool Museum (S. Judd)
Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society (S.J. White)

10. REFERENCES

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Table 1. Dragonflies and damselflies reliably recorded in North Merseyside.

Anisoptera		
Emperor dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	LB
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	LB
Common Hawker	<i>A. juncea</i>	LB
Brown Hawker	<i>A. grandis</i>	B
Migrant Hawker	<i>A. mixta</i>	LB
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	LB
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>L. quadrimaculata</i>	LB
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	RB
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	B
Ruddy Darter	<i>S. sanguineum</i>	RB
Black Darter	<i>S. danae</i>	RB
Yellow-winged Darter	<i>S. flaveolum</i>	V
Red-veined Darter	<i>S. fonscolombii</i>	V

Zygoptera		
Blue-tailed damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	B
Emerald damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	LB
Azure damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	B
Common Blue damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	B
Large Red damselfly	<i>Pyrrosoma nymphula</i>	LB
Red-eyed damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>	RB
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	V

B = widespread breeder
 LB = local breeder
 RB = rare breeder
 V = vagrant