

# Darters

**Phil Hendry**

Odonata Survey, 29th September, 2020.

Today was the first good day for a few days, and the short-range forecast doesn't show any more good days. Temperature was a little low, at 13°C, but cloud cover was low at just 10-20%, so it was mostly sunny. For the time of year, a good dragonfly day!

There were two male Common Darters (*Sympetrum striolatum*) in the apple trees in the orchard.

There were four male and one female Common Darter around Alder Pond. They're beginning to look quite 'geriatric' - the red abdomens of the males are slowly fading to a greyish colour from the underside upwards; the females, having been bright green-yellow, are becoming a brownish grey, with a tinge of red along the top of the abdomen - as they age, it becomes harder to distinguish the sexes - though males have a thinner, somewhat waisted, abdomen.

There was another male Common Darter perched near the water on Cromwell's Pond, and a female perching in a tree near Lucy's Pool. A male was to be seen on the tree overhanging Anna's Pool, and another in the rushes on Willow Pond.

Coming back around from Flora Field, there were a few on the fences leading from Cromwell Rd. towards the orchard. The cattle were in LGS Field, so I was unable to get a look on School Pond. But on a fence-post near the boardwalk coming past School Pond, what should I spot but a Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*). I see these infrequently on the reserve, and it isn't really their sort of habitat, so I suspect the odd ones I see are vagrants (they're known to be great wanderers). Black Darters are one of Britain's smallest dragonflies, and are smaller than several species of damselfly - though their habit of perching with wings outstretched, the relative sizes of forewing and hindwing, and the form of their head, gives away their status as anisoptera rather than zygoptera.

Ageing male Common Darter on Cromwell's Pond.



Continued overleaf...

Ageing female Common Darter on the fence.



Black Darter near School Pond.

