

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSLETTER JULY 2014

DAMSELFLIES



Photography courtesy of Gareth Harris

In June 2014 an exciting discovery was made at Roundhouse Farm Quarry, in the Cotswold Water Park. A small and fragile colony of the rare Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly, *Ischnura pumilio*, was found in one of the active pits by ecologist, Gareth Harris of the Cotswold Water Park Trust's CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project.

The Cotswold Water Park Trust launched the Dragonfly Atlas Project in 2008 to coincide with the national atlas project coordinated by the British Dragonfly Society. The national atlas project aimed to stimulate the recording and survey of dragonflies and damselflies across the UK to update our current knowledge of these species' distribution. Such information contributes to our knowledge of the impact of changes in habitat and of the impacts of climate change.

The CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project was launched to promote the local recording of dragonflies, ultimately to publish an account of the CWP's important dragonfly assemblage where around a half of the UK's may be found. The CWP is recognised regionally and nationally as an important location for a variety of species. The expansion of a number of species has been facilitated by the creation of new wetlands and lakes by the minerals industry.

The Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly is a specialist damselfly relying upon small temporary wetland features. This species has been recorded infrequently in the CWP since the 1980's but typically only 1-2 individuals are recorded every few years. They typically associate with the temporary shallow

pools sometimes found in the bottom of gravel pits during the extraction phases and consequently, due to health and safety reasons, finding them can be challenging!

Establishing whether this species remained in the CWP after a long period of no records was a priority for the CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project. Funds were secured from Cotswold District Council to support additional survey work in 2014 and local mineral companies such as the Cullimore Group kindly supported these surveys by enabling access to the areas of suitable habitat.

“Remarkably a small colony of this species was found in June and July. This discovery is particularly interesting since the majority of records since the 1980s have been in the South Cerney area, so this demonstrates this species’ ability to seek and find new areas of suitable habitat. It highlights that this species continues to cling on here”, says Gareth Harris, of the CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project. “I’m hopeful this colony can thrive here and take advantage of additional suitable habitat as it becomes available”.

- Gareth Harris