

## Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura pumilio* first record for Worcestershire 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2020.

Andy Warr.

When I started taking an interest in recording dragonflies on my local birding patch, Ripple and Ryall sand pits in 2018, one species Mike Averill suggested I keep an eye open for was Scarce Blue-tailed, as this secretive and elusive damselfly is known to occur at actively worked, earth-extraction sites and small colonies had been discovered in the neighbouring counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. Classified as near-threatened in the UK, this species prefers shallow water, that has only sparse aquatic vegetation

and will even occupy temporary water catchments, such as water filled wheel ruts, but neither Ripple nor Ryall have produced sighting to date.

On Saturday 22nd August, after a late morning/early afternoon spent exploring the lagoons surrounding Throckmorton Landfill Site, I decided to visit the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserve, Feckenham Wylde Moor in search of dragonflies. Whilst reasonably warm in the mid-afternoon sunshine, a moderate breeze meant conditions were not ideal for dragonflies, so I headed for one of the more sheltered ponds on the reserve, hoping to see Emerald Damselfly, though became distracted en route by a recently mowed field of sedge and juncus, with small areas of standing water, plus many water filled tractor wheel ruts.



01. Habitat of the site Feckenham Wylde Moor on 22nd August 2020. Andy Warr.

Due to the breeze, this area was pretty much devoid of dragonflies, with just a couple of male Common Darters spotted patrolling the ruts, so I continued to the sheltered pond, here observing a few Emerald and Blue-tailed Damselflies, a male Southern Hawker, plus a reasonable number of Common Darter. After an hour or so, I decided to head for home, though thought I'd better take a second look at the flooded ruts. This proved to be a very wise decision, as on reaching one of the ruts I immediately spotted a Blue-tail species perched halfway up an isolated spike of *Juncus*.

Once centred in my binoculars, I instantly noticed the one feature I'd been looking for over the past three years, an abdomen with a blue segment eight. Wow! My first ever sighting of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly and a new species for Worcestershire to boot.

Due to the sensitivity of this species and locality, I decided not to make my discovery public on any of the social media platforms, though immediately contacted the Worcestershire dragonfly recorder Mike Averill and a handful of other dragonfly enthusiasts, and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.



02. The first male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly recorded in Worcestershire, 22nd August 2020. Andy Warr.

I made five further visits to the site, the last on 30th August, before departing for a short holiday in Devon. During this period I managed to photograph five individuals, four males and a female, the latter discovered on 30<sup>th</sup> August and my daily totals are listed below.

22nd: one male (male 1)  
 23rd: two males (male 1 & 2)  
 24th: three males (male 1, 2 & 3)  
 27th: one male (male 1)

29th: two males (male 1 & 2)  
 30th: three males (male 1, 2 & 4) and one female.

Hopefully this small area can be enhanced and managed for Scarce Blue-tails by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, with guidance from Mike Averill, so this near-threatened damselfly can stand a chance of colonising the area.



03. Three of the males and the female Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies, 22nd-30th August. Andy Warr

**Images:**

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