

Childwall Golf Club Bird and Butterfly Survey, 2022



Steve Young

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He is an active member of the Childwall Golf Club Sustainability and Ecology Committee.

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1. BIRD REPORT – CHILDWALL GOLF CLUB 2022

This report contains a list of the bird species recorded at Childwall Golf Club during 2022; details of breeding records are also included (**B** alongside name), with a short course status of each species also given.

For the purposes of the report “breeding” includes singing spring birds, birds seen feeding young and birds at or near nests; to avoid any disturbance no effort has been made to locate nests.

A feeding station was established to provide food during the colder months, but has also been very useful for counting/assessing the bird populations during autumn/winter, full details below.

Feeding Station

Our feeding station was started late March 2022 by the ECO Committee with feeding continuing throughout the year but at a much-reduced level during summer and autumn when natural foods are readily available.

Costs have been kept to a minimum with some feeders “begged and borrowed”, while others have been gifted by members. Members have also given seed and peanuts, while a financial donation from the 100 Club was gratefully received and kept the supply-chain going.



Goldfinch are a common sight at the feeders

Any members are welcome to donate seed/peanuts whenever they wish; please leave at the Pro Shop or Office and they will be collected.

We have tried to squirrel-proof the feeders and seem to have been successful with the Grey Squirrels now feeding mainly on the ground on spilt seed.



Coal Tit (left) feeding on peanuts, Chaffinch (right) munching on sunflower hearts

As well as supplying our birds with food when they need it, especially during the colder months, it also allows members to watch the birds, even from the comfort of the clubhouse.

Species like Great Spotted Woodpecker and Nuthatch can be difficult to see when playing golf, but afterwards sat down with a cup of tea you can easily watch the feeders and see these birds come to feed; both of the aforementioned are regular visitors, along with many other species.

It also gives us the opportunity to see how many birds are actually around the course during the year. For example, 4 Nuthatch have been seen at the same time on the feeders during March, proving that at least 2 pairs are present.

Hopefully, we can maintain the feeders for years to come and provide both food for the birds and enjoyment for our members.



A variety of foods is offered for our birds to enjoy

Nest Boxes

Dotted around the course in the areas of woodlands you may have noticed a selection of nest-boxes. With over 70 fitted in place by our greens staff, they are ready and waiting to be chosen by our birds as home for the spring; in 2022 there was a 10% occupation rate by Blue and Great Tits, which is good going, plus the Kestrel box was successful for the first time since its erection five years ago. Hopefully the pair will return in 2023.



The star bird of the year; Kestrel in our nest box where 5 young were raised



Blue Tits occupied at least 4 nest boxes, possibly more as not all locations were checked on a regular basis; some may also be used as a roost site during winter, but this is difficult to check.

(All photos throughout this report have been taken at Childwall Golf Club)

SPECIES LIST

Mallard (B)

Occasionally seen in flight; female with 9 ducklings walking along the fairways in April. Where she bred remains a mystery.

Teal

Female flew from Netherley Brook and over the 11th tee on 16th December.

Pink-footed Goose

Seen regularly over the course during autumn-winter flying to feeding areas.



Small flocks of Pink-footed Geese can be seen flying noisily overhead as they spend winter in the UK.

Canada Goose

Occasionally seen on the fairways, 2 birds during April for a few days.



Striding along the 4th fairway this Canada Goose was one of 2 that appeared in April.

Pheasant

Very occasionally seen, usually an obvious male reported by golfers.

Cormorant

Occasional birds seen in flight over the course.

Grey Heron

The odd sighting of birds in flight, presumably moving between local ponds.

Red Kite

One record of a bird flying over the clubhouse early spring; nearest breeding sites are North Wales so this would have been a wandering individual.

Common Buzzard (B)

Common; one pair breeding on the course, another pair probably bred in the nearby gardens. Seen daily in flight with as many as 5 displaying/calling, some birds in spring and autumn would be migrants passing through.



Buzzard trying to fend off a Carrion Crow attack



One of our young Buzzards (left) perched near the 16th green, adult looking for food (right)

Sparrowhawk (B)

Presumed common, but not seen very often; birds observed soaring and displaying during spring over the car park, occasional sightings of hunting birds dashing through our wooded areas, evidence of “kills” regularly seen on course. During the cold spell in December a female discovered the “take-away” feeding station on a few occasions, but was unsuccessful both times. It won’t be long before she strikes again and could become a regular visitor.



Sparrowhawks soaring over the car park; female left, male right



Rarely seen perched, this image of a female Sparrowhawk was taken near the feeding station after she made a failed swoop at the finches on a snowy December 10th.

Kestrel (B)

Seen virtually on a daily basis; pair bred in nest box and raised 5 young. Another pair possibly bred in gardens around the 1st hole area. Birds still

around during autumn with at least 3 seen calling and flying near 12th green during October/early November and another female hunting the 4th tee area.



Our young Kestrels, photographed on the day they left the box



Male (left), who provided virtually all the food for the family including the female (right), seen here with a vole being taken into the box.

Oystercatcher

Very scarce, the occasional spring record in flight and calling, possibly from pair breeding nearby?

Lapwing

As per Oystercatcher, very occasionally seen flying over course, possibly breeding nearby? One on 16th December near 18th green in the “big freeze” period.

Woodcock

One flying over 11th fairway mid-morning 4th December heading towards rough ground bordering course. Only other record is of a bird flushed by J Fox while looking for a wayward golf ball during early winter 2021.

Common Snipe

At least 2 feeding along the edges of the brook and ditch behind 10th green during December.

Black-headed Gull

Small flocks can be seen feeding on the fairways in autumn/winter; more feed around the sewage works, count of 47 during cold snap in December.



Winter plumaged Black-headed Gulls (left) flying along 1st hole and (right) near the 4th tee, the “black” head (actually chocolate brown) is replaced by a black spot from autumn.

Common Gull

One or two birds amongst Black-headed Gulls during autumn/winter, not as common as the name suggests, more regular on playing fields along 2nd hole.



Moulting adult Common Gull (left) on 4th fairway in September, 1st winter plumaged bird (right) along 2nd fairway, 3rd December.

Herring Gull

The commonest gull on the course, sometimes flocks of 10-15 along the fairways during autumn/winter, larger flocks feeding over sewage works, regular pair by 4th tee during autumn.



Adult winter Herring Gull (left), by 14th bunker, 1st winter bird (right) near 4th tee

Lesser Black-backed Gull

The odd one occasionally with Herring Gulls, more regularly seen around sewage works.

Wood Pigeon (B)

Common, always around the course and a regular at the feeding station, mopping up the spilt seed.



Wood Pigeons can be seen flying around the course and at the feeding station.

Collared Dove

Occasionally seen, possibly breeding on the course or maybe in nearby gardens, but not regular anywhere.

Barn Owl

One seen 1st December at 06.15 by our Head Greenkeeper on his way to work flying towards the 1st green area over the playing fields.

Common Swift

Regular during the summer months, large numbers (100's) over sewage works and 10th green/11th fairway early morning on 10th June, last record mid-August.



Part of large Swift flock over 11th tee, 10th June; close-up of one individual

Great Spotted Woodpecker (B)

Common; at least 2 pairs bred on course and in gardens bordering 1st. Young birds seen around 10th, 11th and 12th holes; regular at feeding station. Very vocal with “chup” call given from tops of trees during autumn, “drumming” heard regularly during spring.



Male Great Spotted Woodpecker (left) at feeding station; juvenile(right) searching for insects near 11th tee; note the red “cap” of the juvenile bird.

Green Woodpecker

Apparent historic records at Childwall GC, but this is a mega rare species in the Liverpool area; no sightings in 2022 on the course.

Ring-necked Parakeet

The odd bird seen around 2nd green early in the year, but loss of regular roosting/perching trees during 2021 storms seems to have driven them away from the course. Occasionally seen during summer, but a flock of 10 flying over 8th fairway on 27th December shows they are still in the area.



Ring-necked Parakeet is now a rare sight on the course since storms of 2021

Skylark

Regularly seen/heard flying over during the autumn months, rare at other times. One singing in April alongside the 12th hole but outside the course.

Swallow

Many during spring migration over the sewage works, occasionally seen feeding low over the fairways during summer, last record late August.



Swallow over 10th green, photographed 25th April

Sand Martin

Just one record; feeding with House Martins over sewage works in spring.

House Martin

Common over the sewage works during spring and early summer, odd birds during July/August, one noted 18th September.

Meadow Pipit

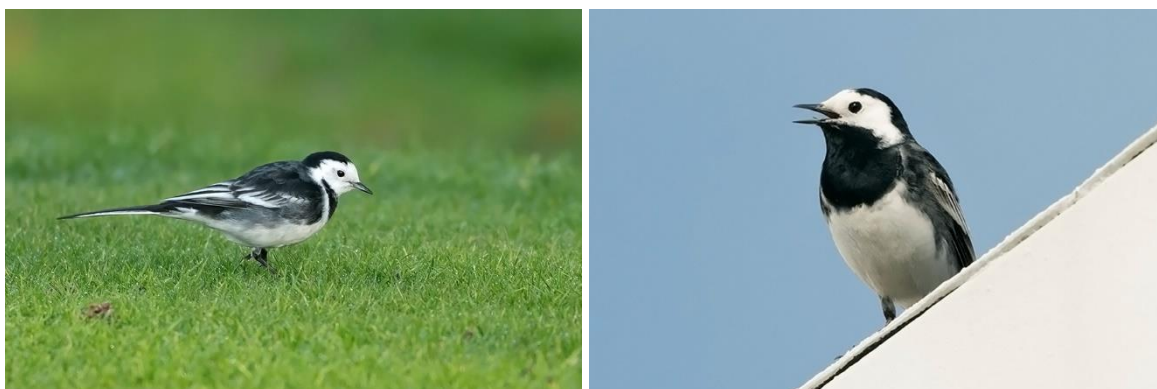
Just the occasional bird seen/heard during spring migration times, usually in flight. Regular in and around the sewage works in winter, flock of 21 here on 5th December when also perched along the 10th fairway.



Two of the Meadow Pipit flock seen 5th December perched on the sewage work's rotating filter bed arms

Pied Wagtail (B)

Regularly seen throughout the year; singing male on top of clubhouse during March, pairs seen along various fairways; higher numbers present during winter with a flock of 14 on 10th fairway on 14th November.



Winter male Pied Wagtail (left), singing male (right) on clubhouse roof, 29th March

Grey Wagtail (B)

Pair with food seen along Netherley Brook by 11th tee, during spring, male singing regularly in the area. Also present in autumn/winter on sewage works and around 11th tee area. 1st winter feeding around 2nd green/3rd tee on 23rd November.



Singing male Grey Wagtail in sewage works (left) 1st winter (right) by 2nd green

Dunnock (B)

Common breeder, but tricky to see away from the feeding station; many males singing during spring.



Fairly regular around the feeding station, Dunnock usually feeds along the ground

Robin (B)

Common; many singing during the year, seen all around the course, numbers probably increased during winter with migrating individuals.



Robin pair bringing food to nest by 11th tee; bathing bird in ditch by path to sheds



Photographed during the cold spell in December, near the 5th green

Song Thrush (B)

Good numbers present; at least 5 singing early spring, widespread around course but one favouring areas at back of 9th towards practice area.



Song Thrush; left hand bird near feeding station, singing bird behind 9th green

Mistle Thrush (B)

Common; at least 5 pairs with many young seen. Flock of 17 on 18th fairway during September. Frequent visitor to the Rowan trees dotted around the

course during autumn to feed on berries; very early singer, could be heard from early December.



Mistle Thrush; note larger size and greyer plumage tones compared to Song Thrush

Redwing

Winter visitor in small numbers, seen regularly around 10th tee in ivy-covered trees and along the fairways.



Redwing behind 8th tee/9th green area



Redwing's name comes from the red underwing and flanks as can be seen here; photo taken behind 4th green 11th December.

Fieldfare

Mixed flocks of both Redwing and Fieldfare can be seen from autumn onwards when thousands spend the winter in the UK after migrating from Scandinavia. 9 feeding on hawthorn berries along 11th fairway on 23rd November.



Fieldfares along 17th fairway, 23rd November; below mixed flock with Redwings, December



Blackbird (B)

Common; widespread around the course, regular visitor to feeding station.



Male Blackbird on the 8th tee

Blackcap (B)

At least 4, possibly 6, singing males early spring; 3 in the area behind 9th green showed very well, females less obvious but presume that a few pairs bred.

Female on 11th December, first over-wintering record; ringing recoveries have proved that these wintering birds are from the German population that move during the winter and have recently found UK shores to their liking.



Male Blackcap (left) near 9th green, female (right) around 12th fairway



Wintering female Blackcap behind 10th green, 11th December

Whitethroat (possible B)

Male singing alongside 12th fairway in May on several days, possibly breeding on rough land outside course?

Willow Warbler (possible B)

At least 2 heard singing during May, possibly breeding but no proof of such.

Chiffchaff (B)

Good numbers early spring: first one by bee-hives late March sang continuously until June. Another by the sheds and more dotted around the course, at least 6 singing.

This species also overwinters and there were at least 2 birds feeding in the trees behind 10th and 15th greens during December.



Chiffchaff along 12th hole (left) and singing in the car park area (right)



One of the 2 wintering Chiffchaffs seen during December by the 15th tee

Goldcrest (B)

Singing birds obvious during spring with at least 2 pairs breeding. Seen throughout the year, at least 12 seen December.



Goldcrest; both photos taken near 8th tee, singing bird regular here



Goldcrest photographed 7th December behind 8th tee area while catching aphids in the ivy

Wren (B)

Common; pair with young around 4th tee in spring. Very vocal, heard singing and calling all around the course.



Singing Wren photographed by 14th green; one of 3 juveniles (right) in wild area by 4th tee

Spotted Flycatcher

One record, seen early morning 19th May, fly-catching high up in the trees along 8th fairway. Nearest breeding pairs are in east Lancashire and North Wales so this bird would be a migrant heading to a suitable site.



Spotted Flycatcher in the woods along 8th fairway

Great Tit (B)

Common; one pair in a nest box, another in tree hole behind 14th green and a 3rd by 11th tee. Probably many other pairs breeding on the course, a regular at the feeding station.



Great Tit (left) near feeding station; although a pair of Great Tits used one of our nest boxes, this one (right) preferred a natural tree hole behind 14th green.

Blue Tit (B)

Very common; pair nested in the “ash tray nest box” on veranda of clubhouse, for the second successive year. Another 4 pairs in nest boxes and probably many more around the course. Good numbers visit the feeding station, up to 6 at a time so probably 20+ birds visiting to feed.



Blue Tits at the ash tray nest box on the veranda, as you can see the right-hand bird (probably the female) is extremely worn with all the coming and going.

Coal Tit (B)

Approximately 6-8 birds regularly visiting feeding station; at least 2 breeding pairs with young seen around 12th tee.



Juvenile Coal Tit (left) near 12th tee and adult (right) near the feeding station

Long-tailed Tit (B)

Common at the feeding station; probably 3-4 pairs breeding, small flocks regularly seen around the course, many juveniles in late spring points to a successful breeding season.



Adult Long-tailed Tit (left), juvenile (right); small flocks can be seen around the course from late spring onwards, often mixed with Blue and Great Tits and occasionally Goldcrests, and even Chiffchaff during winter

Nuthatch (B)

At least 2 pairs present, one of which bred in tree along 14th fairway and raised a minimum of 2 young. Regular at the feeding station when up to 4 visited together during January -March.



Nuthatch at the nest on 14th hole and on peanuts at the feeding station

Treecreeper (B)

At least one pair bred, with 3 young being fed by the parents watched along the 1st hole on 13th May; seen throughout the year.



Adult Treecreeper (left) and juvenile (right) in oak trees along 1st hole

Magpie (B)

Common; seen all around the course.



Familiar to everyone, Magpie is as common at Childwall GC as it is everywhere else

Jay (B)

One pair bred in gardens alongside 1st hole, seen carrying nest material; regular during the autumn as birds feed on fallen acorns.



Jay photographed near the 7th hole; often seen flying across the course

Jackdaw (B)

Colony breeding behind 10th green in trees backing on to sewage works, probably 10-15 pairs.



Jackdaw (left) and Carrion Crow (right) are a familiar sight at CGC

Carrion Crow (B)

Common around the course, often following golfers hoping for food to be thrown to them.

Rook

No sightings in 2022, but has previously been recorded.

Starling

Small flocks seen flying around but not regular on the course or feeding station

House Sparrow

Very rare, just one record at the feeding station in January.

Chaffinch (B)

Singing males dotted around the course in spring, juvenile seen near 12th tee, common visitor to the feeding station.



Male Chaffinch (left) near feeding station and (right) a very young Chaffinch fresh out of the nest. From this angle I didn't know what it was until the adult came to feed it.

Goldfinch (B)

Common at the feeding station with flocks feeding on both Niger seed and sunflower hearts; many juveniles seen on feeders during summer so presumed quite a few pairs breeding.



Goldfinch is one of the most numerous visitors to the feeding station

Siskin

Very rare, occasional birds seen/heard flying over; hopefully some will soon visit the feeders during December and or winter 2023.

Greenfinch (B)

Common at the feeding station during winter, singing males during spring.



Greenfinch is common at the feeding station during the winter months

Bullfinch

Very rare; pair in the car park trees on 12th December was the only sighting.

A total of 65 species were recorded during 2022, 30 of which almost certainly bred, while 2 others, Willow Warbler and Whitethroat, were possible breeders. Hoped for new species in the future are Redpoll and Brambling at the feeding station during winter, while birds such as Wheatear, Redstart and Pied Flycatcher are all possible during spring migration.

Any members with additional reports of any species please get in touch via the office.

Steve Young

2. BUTTERFLY (and Dragonfly) SURVEY CHILDWALL GC 2022

The survey was carried out during 2022 at weekly/twice weekly intervals when possible and on the sunniest days for a fair assessment.

Results were as expected to be honest, nothing special but with good populations of Orange Tip, Holly Blue and Speckled Wood, while the grassland specialities such as Meadow Brown were present in smaller numbers. Red Admiral and Comma were recorded in decent numbers especially during the late summer/early autumn months with one of the favoured sites being the blackberry bushes bordering the car park near the bee-hives.

Two species of skipper, Large and Small, were present in small numbers and both favoured the wildflower area near the 12th tee during June/July, although a Small Skipper was also seen around the car park.



One of the most obvious butterflies at Childwall GC is the male Orange Tip; from early April to late May, it can be seen flying around the fairways in search of flowers to feed on. Females lack the orange so can be confused with the other white species, but still retain the striking underwing pattern. This image was taken at the wildflower area by the 12th tee, a popular site for many of our butterfly species.

Planting of Buddleia bushes would lead to more butterflies such as Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and others in mid-summer; as far as I can see there is only one bush near the sheds, but Buddleia does have a habit of spreading and growing of its own accord so possibly next year more bushes will appear.

The wildflower areas have been a great success as far as butterflies and bees are concerned, with many species using them over the course of the summer – extending them can only lend more of a helping hand to all the insects that use them.

Butterfly List

Small Skipper

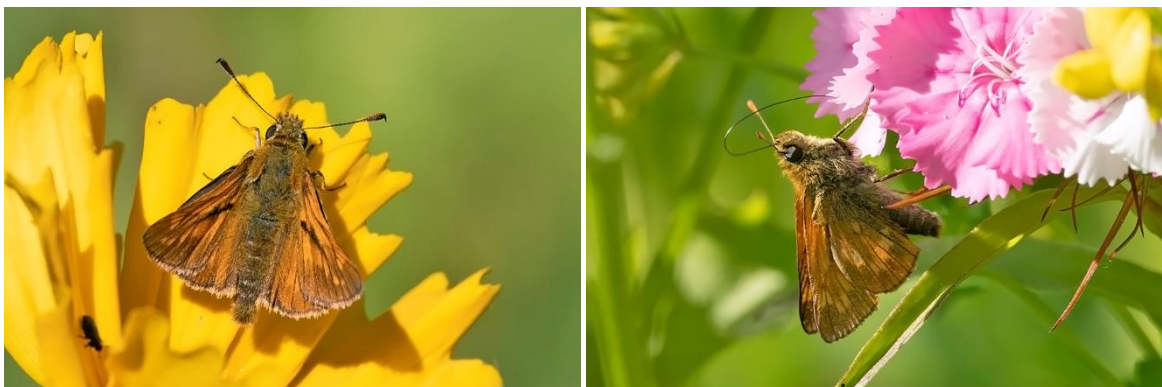
One seen in the car park near the large bramble patch on 1st July and 2 were feeding in the 12th wildflower area on 8th July.



Small Skipper near the wildflower area on the 12th hole, a popular area for all insects

Large Skipper

Three-four individuals around 12th wildflower area during last week of June.



Large Skipper feeding in the wildflower area near the 12th tee

Large White

Widespread, seen flying around the course July-August; still 16th Sept with 1 feeding on wildflower section by 2nd tee.



Female Large White (male lacks spotting) on wildflower area by 2nd tee, photographed on 17th September

Small White

As Large White, widespread throughout the summer months.



Small White (left) and Green-veined White (right)

Green-veined White

Doesn't appear to be as common as the other two whites, but still seen on many occasions flying swiftly over the fairways.

Brimstone

Just one single record of a fly-through on 21st April

Orange Tip

This early spring butterfly is present around the course during April/May, usually seen in flight while searching for flowers. Favoured sites appear to be the back of 18th hole area and along the 12th fairway when feeding on bluebells, but generally can be seen anywhere it can find food!



Male Orange Tip (left) on bluebell flower, female (right) showing black upperwing markings instead of the male's orange

Holly Blue

Good numbers (20+) around the ivy clad trees near 8th tee area during April; second brood in smaller numbers during July and August; during summer "heatwave" period seen feeding outside clubhouse on patio flowers



Holly Blue upperwing and underwing

Painted Lady

One record on bramble patch in car park early July

Small Tortoiseshell

Disappointingly low numbers, just the odd one or two seen

Red Admiral

Often seen flying around course; 1 sat on path of 16th hole on 4th August; 4 feeding on blackberries in car park on 26th August. Many still around late September, with a few still flying on warm days during October, 3-4 watched on 17th October behind 16th green.

The final record of any butterflies in 2022 was this species, with 2 seen on a lovely warm day on November 3rd.



Red Admiral showing upper and underwing, photographed near car park

Peacock

This was the first species seen in 2022 on the rather late date of 20th April near clubhouse and feeding station. But the survey was not totally up and running before this date.

2nd brood seen regularly dotted around the course later in the year, usually in flight.



Peacock resting on the grass near the feeding station

Comma

The flowering bramble patch on the bee-hive side of the car park proved popular with this species during June with up to 3 individuals feeding and sunning. During late summer/early autumn the patch was again popular as butterflies fed on blackberries during August, others seen by 4th tee 18th Sept; 7th tee 28th September.



Comma showing upper and underwing both photographed along 12th hole; note the white “comma” mark on the underwing that gives the butterfly its name

Speckled Wood

Common around the trees near 8th/10th holes early April-May, second brood less common but in various places around course wherever there are trees/shady areas with sun. 3 or 4 on blackberry patch in car park 26th August, others dotted around the course 28th August.

Still plentiful mid-September and could be seen “sparring” at various places, lower numbers at month end.



Speckled Wood showing upper and underwing

Meadow Brown

Widespread during July in small numbers wherever there is long grass on the course, seen flitting about regularly. Numbers could/would benefit from extra areas of long grass as I think most are fly overs from the “wasteland” area between the M62 and course.



Meadow Brown at rest on a dull day alongside 14th fairway

Gatekeeper

As per Meadow Brown but present in much smaller numbers

(All butterfly photos taken at Childwall GC)

Dragonfly List

Due to a lack of ponds Childwall GC is not blessed with a wide variety or large numbers of dragonflies and damselflies. However, this did not stop a few from wandering around our course and four species were recorded in 2022.



Female Common Darter resting on the 5th tee log

Emperor

This large and impressive-looking dragonfly was seen on a number of occasions hunting the 18th fairway during June. Possibly breeding on the old Manor par 3 course where there is large pond.



Emperor Dragonfly on 18th fairway, left with prey, and then resting after devouring it.

Migrant Hawker

A late summer/autumn dragonfly and seen on a number of occasions flying over various fairways, usually 4th and 5th. It declined the opportunity to pose for my camera every time so the image shown here was taken elsewhere...

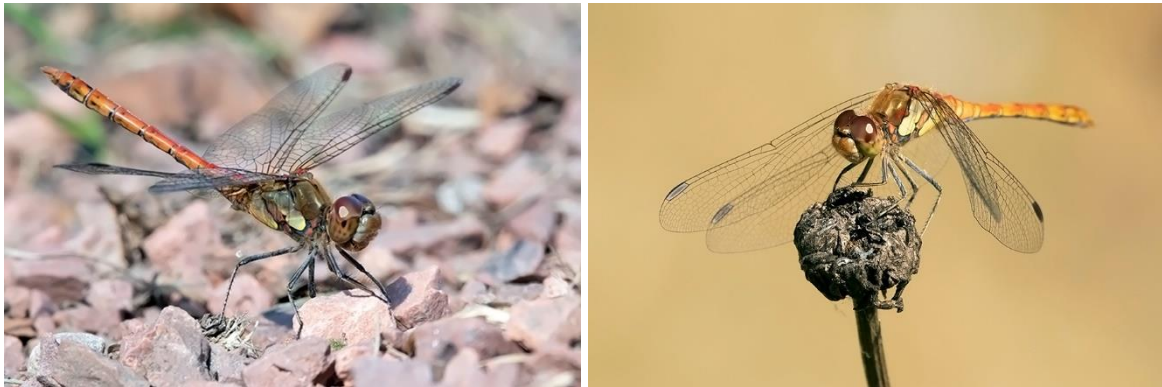


Migrant Hawkers are fast flyers but they often hover for a few seconds, apart from the ones at Childwall GC that is... so "here's one I took earlier" to show what they look like.

Common Darter

By far the most obvious and regular species recorded; could be seen on warm days soaking up the heat on quite a few of the paths, but especially near the 11th tee, presumably breeding took place in nearby Netherley Brook.

Dotted around the course in very small numbers, including ones seen by the 4th tee and over the wildflower areas which would have been good hunting ground for their prey of small insects.



Male Common Darter (left) on 11th hole path, bright female (right) on wildflower area near 12th tee.

Blue-tailed Damselfly

Just 1 brief sighting of a freshly hatched individual by the 12th tee which flew off over the boundary fence.

Steve Young

3. CHILDWALL GOLF CLUB APIARY

In this section of the report our friends from the Liverpool Beekeepers, Ted and Denis, provide a view on our joint journey into beekeeping at Childwall Golf Club to date.



Common Carder

In 2021 Liverpool Beekeepers were contacted by the Ecology Committee of the golf club to see if some beehives could be located on the club premises.

Subsequently we were asked if we would be interested in the project and, following meetings with Steve Douglas, a suitable site was agreed upon. Late in 2021 we moved four colonies on to the site and the bees settled in.



Bees at Childwall.

Early in the spring of 2022 we became aware that the local farmers were planting fields of Rape Seed Oil Plants (identifiable by the yellow colour).

Due to the worldwide price of Olive Oil, Rape Seed Oil was being grown as a cheaper alternative.

Honeybees love this plant and produce lots of honey, however this honey is extremely thick and is very difficult for us to extract out of the honeycomb so we try to leave it in the hive for the bees to use the following winter. We can then extract the lighter coloured honey produced in the summer and make it available to the club members.



Bees making Childwall honey.

To date we have five colonies on the site and, so far, all have survived the winter, we trust that the bees will find the wild flowers we understand you are planting.

We have a few jars of last year's honey left and should have more early in the summer.

Ted Travers & Denis Neale