

The Beautiful Demoiselle

Rarely has a creature been so aptly named. This large damselfly is indeed truly beautiful. The male has a brilliant electric blue body with dark blackish wings and the female has a bronzy-green body with green-brown wings. Somehow the words don't seem to do them justice – when they are fluttering around over a small stream with their metallic colours flashing in the sunlight they are simply stunning.



We are lucky to have a colony of these damselflies on the stream which borders our garden – in fact they were the clinching factor when we were deciding whether to buy the house! The first Beautiful Demoiselle on the stream each year, usually sometime in May, is awaited with as much anticipation as the arrival of the first swallow. Some years I have been worried that strong floods will have washed all the larvae away, but no, they always appear as usual. The one thing which does seem to cause a problem for the adults is wet and windy weather – at these times they all disappear, only to be replaced by newly emerged individuals as the weather improves.

Beautiful Demoiselles like sheltered small streams with sandy or gravelly beds, with plenty of vegetation and sunshine. They are probably not uncommon in Pembrokeshire but their habitat would often be in farmland so they are perhaps not often seen. The only other spot in which I have seen them in Pembrokeshire is the stream which flows through the fields at Cilgerran Wildlife Trust reserve near Cardigan.

A close relative, the Banded Demoiselle, which in my biased eye is not quite so beautiful, is found on larger, slow flowing, streams and canals. The male of this species has less dark colouration on the wing, in the form of a wide band, hence the name.

Rosemary Royle