

Golden-ringed Dragonfly

It seems to have been a good year for the Golden-ringed Dragonfly – I have seen quite a few, including some in the garden, and other people have also reported them from various locations.

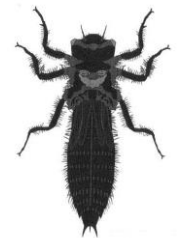
They are certainly not hard to identify – a very large dragonfly (second only to the Emperor in size) and with very straightforward markings being black and yellow striped all over. There is no hint of blue or green on the body which might lead to confusion with the large hawkers, however the large eyes are a bright emerald green. Often creatures which are yellow and black are poisonous or distasteful – I have no idea whether this is the case here and I have tried Googling it without success!

It is often easy to get a good view of a Golden-ringed Dragonfly – they fly slowly along the streams in which they breed and quite often settle. When settled, and especially when eating, they are easy to approach. The first one I ever saw was eating a wasp – a dazzling display in black and yellow! They are also regularly seen some distance from water.

They breed in small, often acidic, streams. I am pretty sure they breed in the stream which runs past our house and probably in all the other streams around the area which run off the central plateau. One of my dragonfly books describes a typical breeding stream as follows: “less than 2 metres wide, and often deeply cut and overhung with fern, grasses, or other vegetation. During the summer the water may only be a few centimetres deep”. So although they are a big dragonfly they do not need a lot of water!

Peter sometimes assists at National Park events where children enjoy “stream dipping” in Haroldston Woods. They almost always find Golden-ringed Dragonfly larvae in the sandy and stony stream bottom. These larvae (see picture) are hairy. Sand and mud becomes attached to the hairs thus helping to disguise them as they lay in wait for their prey. They take about 2 years to develop before they emerge as adults, though in the cold northern streams it can be more.

Golden-ringed Dragonflies have a Western distribution as can be seen from the map. So next time you see one take time to enjoy a local speciality.



Rosemary Royle