



19 December 2023

RARE DRAGONFLIES RECORDED IN DEESIDE ALONGSIDE AN ABUNDANCE OF NEW SPECIES AT MAR LODGE ESTATE

Two rare dragonfly species have been discovered at the National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge Estate in the Cairngorms National Park ahead of the next phase of peatland restoration starting on the nature reserve.

Invertebrate specialists carrying out a survey for the conservation charity made the first-ever recording in Deeside of the iridescent Northern emerald dragonfly species, at Mar Lodge, the UK's largest National Nature Reserve (NNR). The dragonfly species, which is listed as near threatened on the British Odonata List 2008, was recorded during baseline monitoring undertaken in advance of peatland restoration work starting on the Deeside estate this winter.

Also spotted in the survey for the National Trust for Scotland was the brightly coloured Azure hawker dragonfly – only the second ever recording in Deeside of the species, which is classified as vulnerable in the British Odonata List.

The dragonfly species, usually seen whizzing over boggy moorlands in the north and west of Scotland, are part of a wider discovery of species at Mar Lodge, with an amazing 72 invertebrate and 44 spider species found. Among these, 41 invertebrate species were identified on the NNR for the first time, of which eight are nationally scarce. Also recorded for the first time were 36 types of spider, with five nationally scarce tiny money spiders making up part of this cohort, raising the total number of species recorded on Mar Lodge Estate to 5260 to date.

Shaila Rao, National Trust for Scotland Conservation Manager at Mar Lodge Estate, said: "We're thrilled to find these rare species of dragonfly at Mar Lodge, only the first and second time, respectively, they have been recorded in Deeside, and we're excited to discover an abundance of new species alongside them, including five nationally scarce tiny money spiders that have set up home on the estate. It's a really special moment for us and we are very excited to see how the species will respond to the peatland restoration work carried out this autumn."

"After three years of restoration work by the National Trust for Scotland, we've restored nearly 250 hectares of peatland; that's equivalent in size to roughly 350 football pitches, which demonstrates the scale of our achievements so far. We are keen to observe how the restored peatland is affecting the biodiversity of the nature reserve and undertook

our baseline monitoring to produce data that will be used as a benchmark to measure how the interventions we are taking to restore degraded peatland has on the nature and wildlife going forward.

“Many of these invertebrate species are threatened from drainage and erosion of the peatland, a habitat so important for biodiversity and carbon storage to help in our fight against climate change, so it’s a real boost for all of us at the National Trust for Scotland to see so many different species during our monitoring work and is a good sign that our efforts are having a positive effect on the area. With the peatland rewetted, the plants restored and an abundance of new bog pools reinstated, the future for our invertebrates looks a lot brighter. These insects are the engine house of the peatland food chain, so we expect this to have knock-on benefits to other species who call this peatland habitat home, such as dunlin and golden plover.

“This work is made possible thanks to the help of Peatland Action funding and support from the Cairngorms National Park Authority alongside funds raised by our members and supporters. This support allows us to carry out this vital work to restore this important natural asset and continue towards our goal of being carbon negative by 2031.”

This work supports the National Trust for Scotland’s vision to care for, share and protect Scotland’s nature, beauty and heritage for everyone to enjoy, as outlined in its 10-year strategy, launched in 2022. This work helps the Trust to deliver its conservation objectives to improve the condition of our estate, enable nature to flourish and enrich Scotland’s protected heritage.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/47hq40mRN7>

Football pitch equivalent calculation:

- A standard UK football pitch is 105m x 68m
- 105m x 68m = 7149 sq m
- 1 sq m = 0.0001 hectare
- 7149 sq m = 0.714 hectares
- 250 hectares (peatland restored area) / 0.714 hectares = 350 football pitches

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares

for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031. The Trust's Gardens Strategy 'Connecting People, Plants and Places 2023-32' sets out the Trust's ambition for its gardens during the Corporate Strategy period.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.