

White-faced Darter

Leucorrhinia dubia

Status
GB Red List: Endangered



male



female

Length: 33-37mm. This small species of Darter is not easily mistaken with any other due to the creamy-white frons which gives the White-faced Darter its name.

Male: a narrow black abdomen with orange or red markings, although markings are pale yellow in immature males. These markings can darken with age, making some males appear entirely black in flight.

Female: a less narrow black abdomen with yellow markings.

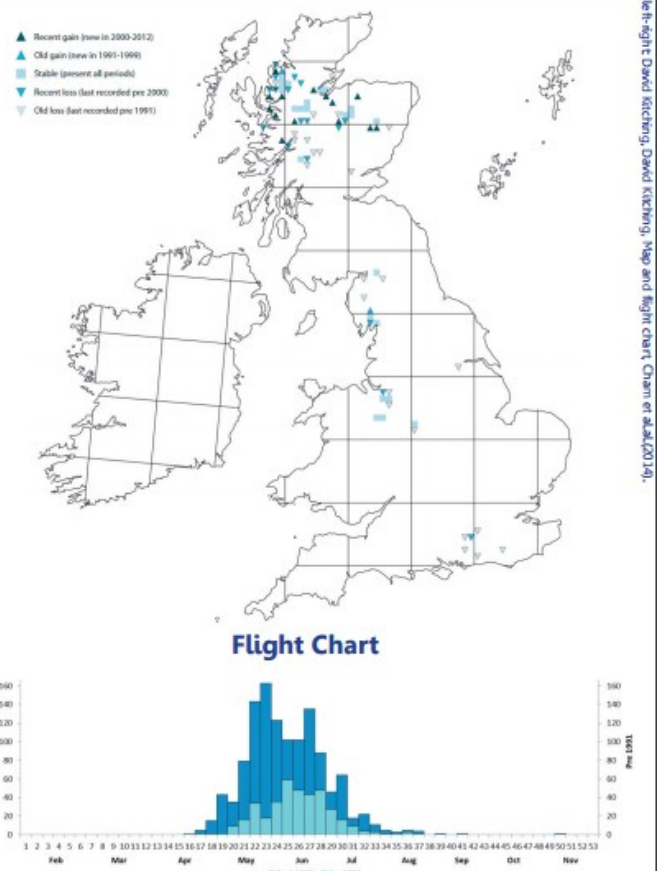
Larvae: 15-18mm when fully developed. Typical squat, Darter larval body shape, usually with distinctive dark stripes on the underside.

Behaviour

Males are territorial near water, but not when basking on logs and bare ground. Females are seldom found near water, preferring to bask on open ground or perch amongst the surrounding vegetation. Adults of both sexes roost in trees and bushes that can be up to 50m away from the nearest pool, thus avoiding low nocturnal temperatures.

Lifecycle

Females oviposit alone, flying low over suitable pools and dropping eggs onto waterlogged Sphagnum moss or among the stems of cotton grass. For egg laying to be elicited the Sphagnum needs to be covered by standing water. Larvae generally take 2 years to develop. Emergence usually begins early in May. A variety of weather conditions are tolerated for emergence but a lack of wind is important. Observations indicate that teneral tend to fly to the nearest suitable scrub or woodland.



Habitat

The White Faced Darter is a species of lowland peatbog, requiring oligotrophic bog pools with a considerable, semi-submerged Sphagnum rafts. Emergent vegetation, such as cotton grass or rushes provides emergence supports and resting sites. The species is confined to waters without fish.

Help us find new sites for the White-faced Darter! What we need:

Date of sighting, 6 figure grid ref, site name, your name and e-mail address.

Any photos are very welcome. E-mail to Colin Hall at cbhall@hotmail.co.uk