

2011 CalOdes/SoWestOdes/DSA West Blitz aka Some Like It HOT!!

Kathy Biggs (Bigsnest@sonic.net) with a note from Rich Bailowitz (raberg2@q.com)

The CalOdes/SowestOdes/DSA west blitz was originally planned for August 26-29 in the area of Needles, CA and Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (HNWR) in AZ, just across the Colorado River from each other, with a third location, Clark Co., NV nearby. But, due to fear of extreme heat and what it might do to our bodies (Needles is often the hottest place in the nation – per Wikipedia), it was changed to one month later, from September 23-26. And it WAS cooler then! Instead of the 115F recorded on the weekend we'd first selected for our blitz, it was "ONLY" 109F!! And in fact, it was only 109 for the first 2 days, with the temp a cool 101 the last 2 daysand yes, it did feel cooler! The purpose of this blitz was to find new county records, and meet each other for some commonality – fully 50% of us had never been face to face before!

Despite warmer weather than hoped for, the 13 participants had a great time together. And we all enjoyed the siesta tradition – every afternoon we'd come back to our motel to use the swimming pool, or nap in our air-conditioned rooms.

This was the first blitz to canvass a multi-state area in the west (that we know of anyway!!) and folks came from as far away as Eureka, CA. We had attendees also from Nevada and even New Mexico. Participants included Kathy & Dave Biggs (organizers), Bob Miller (field coordinator), Ron Oriti, Gary Suttle, Chris Heavilin, Rick Schilk, Matthew Matthiessen, Dave Welling, and Sandra von Arb from CA; Tony & Shela Godfrey from NM; and Bruce Lund (& Flo Lund) from NV.

A few of the folks who had showed up a day or two early went into HNWR to scout for locations on Friday. We had obtained a special use permit and even keys to the locked gates. While they surveyed the Refuge, the rest of us drove in (most driving at least 6 hrs that day, or flying and driving combined taking that long) and met at the motel. This is only the second time we've headquartered in a motel, but with the heat, it was necessary. We talked logistics until it cooled down enough at 3 PM to get out into the field. Our first place surveyed was Gowan Cove at Park Moabi on the CA side of the Colorado River.

At Park Moabi (one of the very FEW places on the CA side of the river with water access) we immediately found some of the so-cal (southern California) desert specialties: Double-striped Bluets, Mexican Amberwings and Citrine Forktails. Although none of these were new county records, they were new species for many of the Californians. Just before we left something with spots on its wings flew by, giving us not much more than a fleeting glimpse....but the only dragonflies in the vicinity with spots on their wings would be the 12-spotted or 8-spotted Skimmer and either would be a county record. Of course it flew across the slough-like cove. So we took our vehicles around to the other side, risking getting stuck in the sandy track to hunt it down – with no luck!

We returned to the motel at dusk and all met in the Biggs's room and discovered that the earlier group had a photo of a female Clubtail, taken by the Godfreys which none of them could identify. It turned out to be a female Russet-tipped Clubtail, our first county record (Mohave, AZ) and a fairly rare Ode for the area, not being known previously from any of the 3 counties in the tri-state area we were surveying. A nice way to start the blitz!

The next morning we took our blitz to the HNWR in AZ. The key they'd given us permitted our entry into Pintail Slough at the far northern end of the Refuge. There were

only a few pools of water left, but an ‘island’ of trees, tall grass and scrubs in the middle of the area enticed us. We ended up spending hours there as the Odes were present in good numbers, often sitting, and the photographers in the group (most of us) were having a hey-day. One very interesting phenomenon was the discovery of a Wandering Glider hovering in place over a bush for at least 20 minutes. First Ron Oriti found it, photographed it, and after ~5 minutes when it was amazingly STILL hovering in place, he called Dave Biggs over. Dave photographed it another 10 minutes before calling Bruce Lund over. They were still photographing it when the rest of us starting beeping car horns to signal to them, wherever they might be, that it was time to move on.



We documented no new species for the county, but worked on a species list for the Refuge. We eventually came up with a list of ~15 species for the Slough and 22 for the Refuge. Maddening to us was that Striped Saddlebags and Twelve-spotted Skimmers were there in fairly good numbers while we couldn't find either of them just a few miles or so away on the CA side of the River, where they'd be county records! And, all dragonflies had to be sorted out from the hundreds and hundreds of Variegated Meadowhawk that came in an array of sizes, throwing us off time after time. In fact, by the end of blitz we refused to speak the “V” word out loud (Variegated Meadowhawk) because we'd seen thousands and they were so distracting. We began referring to them as “those that must NOT be named”!

We checked multiple sites within HNWR, but didn't find any other “hot spots” although a Refuge Ranger found us and spent a full 10 minutes scrutinizing our permit and warning us that he saw collecting equipment in our vehicles and admonished us not to give in to temptation and use them (nets) as he'd be back watching for us. When we told him that the permit stated that we could do catch and release of Damselflies and Darners as needed for identification, he spent another 5 minutes looking for that text in the permit. Finally satisfied, he left. We hadn't even wanted to mention that we were permitted to keep specimens of Damselflies and Darners if they were county vouchers!! We were amazed at how well our wildlife is protected there!!

We checked carefully along the Levee Rd. where the Godfrey's had found the Russet-tipped Clubtail to no avail. We did find a nicely postured White-belted Ringtail though. As the blitz progressed, we would find Ringtails at many sites, but all wore the White-belt – none were the Serpent Ringtail, which we desired as a county record.

Siesta time at the motel was interrupted by a phone call from the Godfreys, still out in the field who reported that they had just found a male Russet-tipped Clubtail at nearly the identical location (and time) where they had found the female the day beforeAND....it was staying put!! Most of us abandoned our siesta, threw appropriate shoes/clothes on and dashed to the site. Although we had to cross the state line, we were there within 15 minutes and the blessed Ode was still there, not having moved at all. Everyone got a chance to take its picture and he even stayed put as a branch was held away to ease the photography! This county record dragonfly is **OC#:**[333778](#)



Because we were in a motel, instead of our usual blitz campsites with evening campfire, the Biggses brought their digital projector, which enabled wide-ranging evening shows of wonderful images. They included Sandra's unique Hind's Emerald photos, Dave's rarities from Texas, Matt's Dragonflies of Africa, Bruce's PowerPoint introduction to oedeing, Kathy's PowerPoint showing the species we should be looking for, and the Godfrey's presentation about the new bird and dragonfly Preserve being created at Granite Gap, New Mexico--it's a very intriguing idea and I hope they'll write about it in *Argia* too. These were a fun and informative addition to the Blitz.

On Sunday, some blitzers had to head home, while about 6 of us stayed on and searched. Dave Welling found a Striped Meadowhawk at Pintail Slough for our second Mohave Co, AZ record, **OC#:**[333834](#) and he showed us a photo of a female Plateau Dragonlet from 5-mile Landing (HNWF) that Shela had found the day before. We went to the site and tried to find it again - later finding out that, although not a record, the Dragonlet was a range extension. The Biggs's group again saw the elusive Twelve-spotted Skimmer at Gowan Cove, but was not able to even photograph it, and Bob Miller's group made a foray into Clark Co., NV, looking to find sites and Odes for that area.

We met for dinner that night as a conclusion, and had a very interesting experience indeed: Matthew's order of enchiladas was billed at only 37 cents!! That's just over 18 cents each for the 2 enchiladas! Maybe because we'd come straight in from the field, they were trying to get rid of us?? Well, Matt DID then alert the waitress to this price discrepancy!

By Monday morning we all had to head out. As is traditional at DSA meetings though, a Wandering Glider showed up above the motel parking lot. This species has only a sight record for San Bernardino Co., CA and although cameras were raised, photographs taken and nets swung from the second story balcony, it will remain only a sight record. In all, 30 species were recorded on the blitz, and although on a good summer day in July, that many species can be recorded in one day, we all felt that we'd given the area a thorough search and did as well as possible considering the heat and how late in the season it was. Anyone want to try again next spring?

A list of places visited by county and state:

San Bernardino Co. (CA)

Park Moabi Regional Park including Gowan Cove & other vicinities around this park, Jack Smith Memorial Park (inside & outside park boundaries), River Edge Golf Course's ponds, Hwy 95 as far north as the Avi Casino (no water access found)

Mohave Co. (AZ)

Havasu National Wildlife Refuge including Topock Marsh/Topock Gorge Units, Pintail Slough in particular, Levee Rd. locations, Five Mile Landing, New South Dike Rd, North Dike Rd., Catfish Paradise, Farm Ditch

Clark Co. (NV)

Above and below Big Bend of the Colorado State Rec. Area, Grapevine Canyon, Lake Mohave.

Our list of species found and where (underlined names are new county records).

1. White-belted Ringtail *Erpetogomphus compositus*- San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ); Clark Co. (NV)
2. **Russet-tipped Clubtail *Stylurus plagiatus* Mohave (AZ) Dike Rd, M&F, photo record Shela & Tony Godrey+Blitz Participants**
3. Common Green Darner *Anax junius* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
4. Blue-eyed Darner *Rhionaeschna multicolor* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
5. Western Pondhawk *Erythemis collocata* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ)
6. Plateau Dragonlet *Erythrodiplax basifusca* Mohave (AZ)
7. Widow Skimmer *Libellula. luctuosa* Mohave (AZ)
8. **Twelve-spotted Skimmer *L. pulchella* SB San Bernardino (CA), Gowan Cove, Moabi Park, many Blitz participants** & Mohave (AZ)
9. Flame Skimmer *L. saturata* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ)
10. Blue Dasher *Pachydiplax longipennis* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
11. **Wandering Glider *Pantala flavescens* again sight only San Bernardino (CA) America's Best Value Inn parking lot** & Mohave (AZ)
12. Spot-winged Glider *P. hymenaea* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ)
13. Mexican Amberwing *Perithemis intensa* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
14. Variegated Meadowhawk *Sympetrum corruptum* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
15. **Striped Meadowhawk *S. pallipes* Mohave (AZ) Pintail Slough, HNWR photo record M Dave Welling**
16. Band-winged Meadowhawk *S. semicinctum* Mohave (AZ)
17. Striped Saddlebags *Tamea calverti* Mohave (AZ)
18. Black Saddlebags *T. lacerata* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
19. Red Saddlebags *T. onusta* San Bernardino (CA)??? & Mohave (AZ)
20. Powdered Dancer *Argia moesta* Mohave (AZ)
21. Aztec Dancer *A. nahuana* Clark Co. (CA)
22. Blue-ringed Dancer *A. sedula* San Bernardino (CA)??? & Mohave (AZ)
23. Double-striped Bluet *Enallagma basidens* San Bernardino (CA)
24. Tule Bluet *E. carunculatum* San Bernardino (CA)
25. Familiar Bluet *E. civile* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
26. Desert Forktail *Ischnura barberi* San Bernardino (CA)??? Mohave (AZ)
27. Pacific Forktail *I. cervula* Clark (NV)
28. Citrine Forktail *I. hastata* San Bernardino (CA)??? Mohave (AZ)
29. Rambur's Forktail *I. ramburii* San Bernardino (CA) & Mohave (AZ) Clark Co. (NV)
30. Desert Firetail *Telebasis salva* San Bernardino (CA)

It wasn't until after the Blitz that an email from Rich Bailowitz alerted us to the fact that some of our sightings that weren't county records were actually range extensions for Arizona! He wrote:

"The Blitz, led by Kathy Biggs, was quite successful in the Arizona share of the region. Several locations, all within Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, were focal points for the Blitz attack within the state. The highlight for the 4-day foray was the finding of

Stylurus plagiatus. Although this was only a northward extension of 45 miles up the Colorado River from previous reports, it represented a new record for Mohave County. Perhaps even more startling are the Blitz reports of both *Sympetrum semicinatum* and *Sympetrum pallipes* at HNWR. While these are not county records since there are viable populations of both species in extreme northern Mohave County near the Utah border, it is just over 100 miles to the nearest known populations of both species in west-central Yavapai County near Skull Valley. Perhaps most intriguing of all, however, is the finding of a single fresh female *Erythrodiplax basifusca*. The closest populations are along the middle Bill Williams River, some 45+ air miles from the Refuge. What is most noteworthy about this find is as follows. During late July of this year, two possible specimens of this species were seen (but neither photographed nor collected) far to the north, along Beaver Dam Wash in extreme NW Arizona. One of these two specimens was within 1/2 mile of the Utah border. This Blitz specimen, coupled with the state record for California not far away but along the Colorado River Valley several years ago, helps to support the finding along Beaver Dam Wash, a wash which is a tributary of the Virgin River, itself a tributary of the Colorado River. These records, both verified and unverified, support the notion that, at least of late, *E. basifusca* is colonizing the Colorado River system. Congratulations to the entire Blitz crew for a job well done.” – Rich Bailowitz.