

# BEESANDS LEY (aka Widdicombe Ley)

## 2007-2016: Confirmed Priority Site of Local Importance

### CURRENT STATUS UNCERTAIN

A eutrophic, reed-ringed coastal lake with adjacent pond. Hairy Dragonfly breeding in 2008 (the most south-westerly site in Britain for the species) and Norfolk Hawker present in 2024.

Last updated: 28/03/2025

Site: BEESANDS LEY	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX820410	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<b><u>Damselflies</u></b>												
Beautiful Demoiselle									B			
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly												
<b>White-legged Damselfly</b>												
Large Red Damselfly									C			
Blue-tailed Damselfly	D		D			C			E			
<b>Scarce Blue-t Damselfly</b>												
Common Blue Damselfly		B	D			B		A	C			B
<b>Southern Damselfly</b>												
Azure Damselfly									D			
<b>Red-eyed Damselfly</b>												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
<b>Small Red Damselfly</b>												
<b><u>Dragonflies</u></b>												
<b>Hairy Dragonfly</b>			+				A	A	B			
Common Hawker												
<b>Norfolk Hawker</b>												A
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker									B			B
Migrant Hawker					A	C			B			
Emperor Dragonfly			B			+			B			
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly												A
<b>Downy Emerald</b>												
Broad-bodied Chaser							C		B			
<b>Scarce Chaser</b>												
Four-spotted Chaser												
Keeled Skimmer												
Black-tailed Skimmer		A	B			+			C			B
Common Darter		B	B			+			B			
Red-veined Darter						B						B
<b>Ruddy Darter</b>												
Black Darter												
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
<b>Total species in category:</b>	1	3	6	0	1	7	2	2	12	0	0	6

**Bold underlined = nationally important species** **Bold black = important species**

Succ = Successful breeding (exuvia(e) and/or larva(e) and/or pre-flight emergent and/or oviposition);

Poss = Possible breeding (copulating pair); Other = Adult(s) or unspecified.

Abundance codes: A=1; B=2-5; C=6-20; D=21-100; E=101-500; F=>500; + = no count.

### **Key Species History**

**Hairy Dragonfly** – males reported in 1991 and 1994. At a nearby pond (SX815411), there were 2 territorial males and a female ovipositing (subsequently seen *in cop.*) on 11/5/08; 2 on 23/5/08.

**Norfolk Hawker** – 1 on 7/6/24.

### **Other species of note**

**Red-veined Darter** – present on 17-18/8/84; 1 on 16/7/05; B (2-5) on 22/7/06; at least 5 at the margin, possibly more offshore, on 27/7/19; several males photographed.

### **Habitat (1995 survey)**

Lake just behind the shingle ridge of Beesands Beach. 98% of the margins are reed-fringed, with this thickening to reedbed, especially towards the west end. Along the eastern edge reed is sparse and mixed with *Phalaris* etc. Also along the east edge is a strip of bare soil/gravel beach used by Canada geese and other waterfowl. The clear water supports a little *Elodea* and algae at the shallow edges. There are large rafts of (possible) *Enteromorpha* to the south-west. pH 5.3 on 16/6/95 and conductivity 340  $\mu$ S/cm on 31/7/95.

There is a small pool off-shoot of the lake on the east side. It is 1m deep with gentle slopes, two-thirds bare bank, one-third tall herb. Frequent emergent *Sparganium*, *Polygonum amphibium* and submerged vegetation. pH 5.2-5.3 on 16/6/95. Large shoals of small fish.

A small pond was dug a few years ago by the adjacent landowner (Mike Rogers) at SX815411, adjacent to the willows west of the bird hide. The Hairy Dragonflies in 2008 were seen here.

The surrounding habitats of coastal grassland and tall herb areas provide feeding areas and shelter for damselflies.

### **Status**

None.

### **Area**

8 ha

### **Owner/tenant**

Private landowner (believed to be out of the country).

**Local Authority:** South Hams DC

### **Threats**

- Eutrophication from surrounding agrochemical inputs.

### **Management suggestions**

- Introduce floating vegetation e.g. *Nymphaea* or *P. amphibium*.
- Introduce some dead branches to act as perches.
- Dig shallow pools in the adjacent semi-improved grassland, on a long rotation.

1995 survey map

