BLACKABROOK – BLACKATON CROSS area

2017-2026: Confirmed Priority Site of National Importance

Confirmed breeding population of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly over extensive flushes and pools. Also small populations of Common Hawker and Black Darter.

Last updated 28/03/2025

Site: BLACKABROOK	**1987-1996**			**1997-2006**			**2007-2016**			**2017-2026**		
Grid ref.: SX569640	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**	**Breeding**		**Other**
	Succ	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**		**Succ**	**Poss**	
Damselflies												
Beautiful Demoiselle									C			
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly									C			B
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly						B		C	D	A		B
Blue-tailed Damselfly									B			B
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly					**A**	**C**			**C**	**A**	**B**	**D**
Common Blue Damselfly							B	B	D			D
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly												B
Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red Damselfly												
Dragonflies												
Hairy Dragonfly												
Common Hawker						+	B		B			B
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker												
Migrant Hawker												
Emperor Dragonfly									A			A
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly						A			C			
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser							A		A			
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser												B
Keeled Skimmer				+	+	B			C	A	B	D
Black-tailed Skimmer												
Common Darter						+			B			A
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter												
Black Darter						+			B		B	C
Yellow-winged Darter						+						
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:				1	2	7	3	2	13	3	3	12

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.

Priority Species
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly – at SX569640, 5 (1 ovipositing) on 23/6/05; C adults on 11/7/05; and 13 (10 males; 1 pair *in cop*.) were marked by a team of 3 on 8/7/06. In the same general area, on 14/7/05, 6 were found at SX565644 and 10 at SX573641. On 15/7/18, at least 35 were seen in the Blackaton Cross area, but only 8 in 2023 after drought.

Other species of note
Common Hawker – small numbers noted, but exuviae and emergents found in 2010 and egg-laying in 2019.
Black Darter – only small numbers seen, maximum 6-20 on 23/8/19.

Habitat
2005: Open, sheep-grazed moorland with old workings and flushes flowing from below Great Trowlesworthy Tor. The southernmost valley was dry or damp, with abundant *Sphagnum* and other mosses. The easternmost was wet and from the confluence the valley contained a fast-flowing stream, often in an incised channel, which flows down to the River Plym. A small colony of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies was found on an open, flat area to the east of the main stream. This area contained several small, shallow pools and runnels with scattered sparse mire vegetation.

Status	***Area***
?	c70 ha.

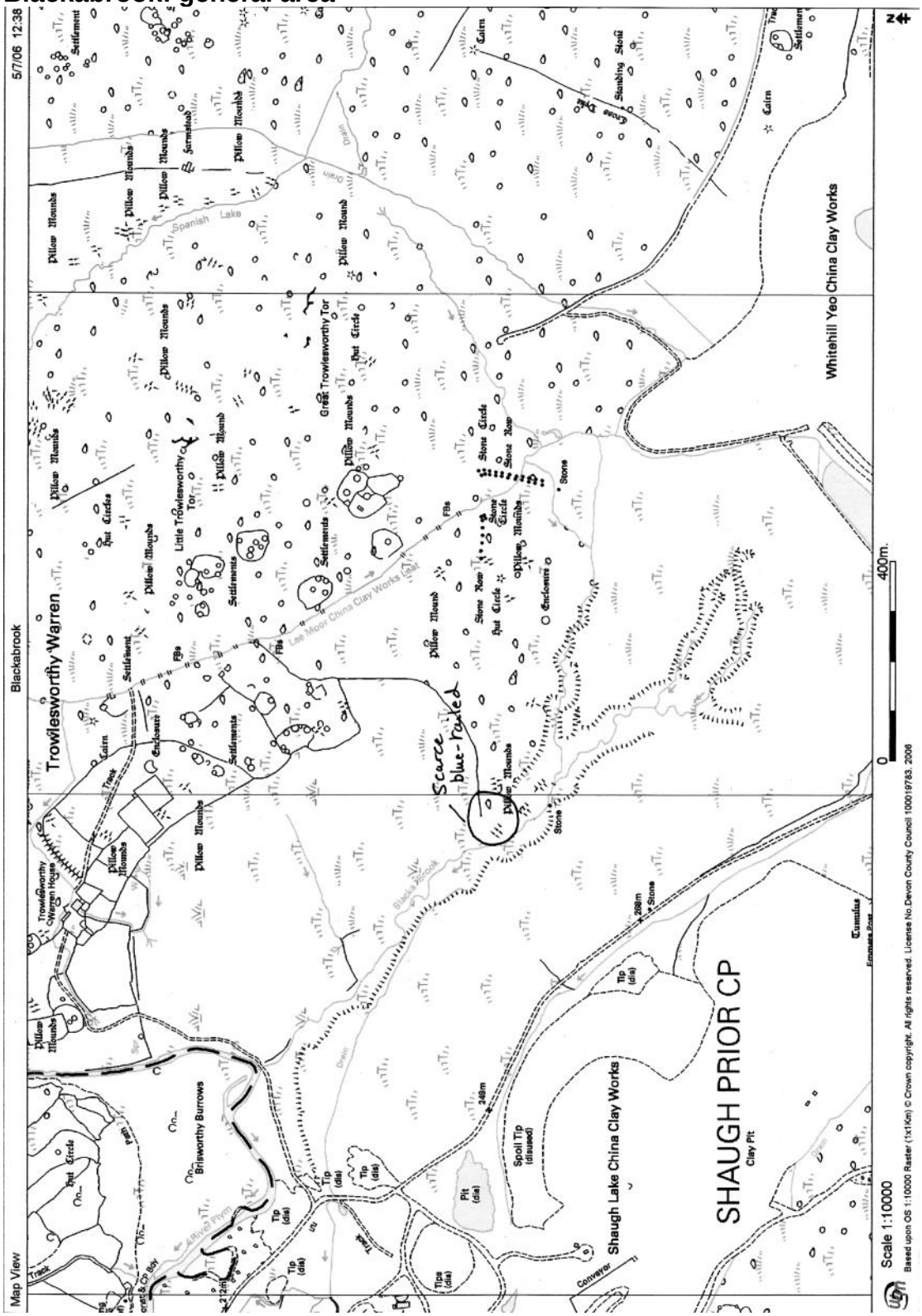
Local Authority: Dartmoor NPA.

Owner/tenant
?

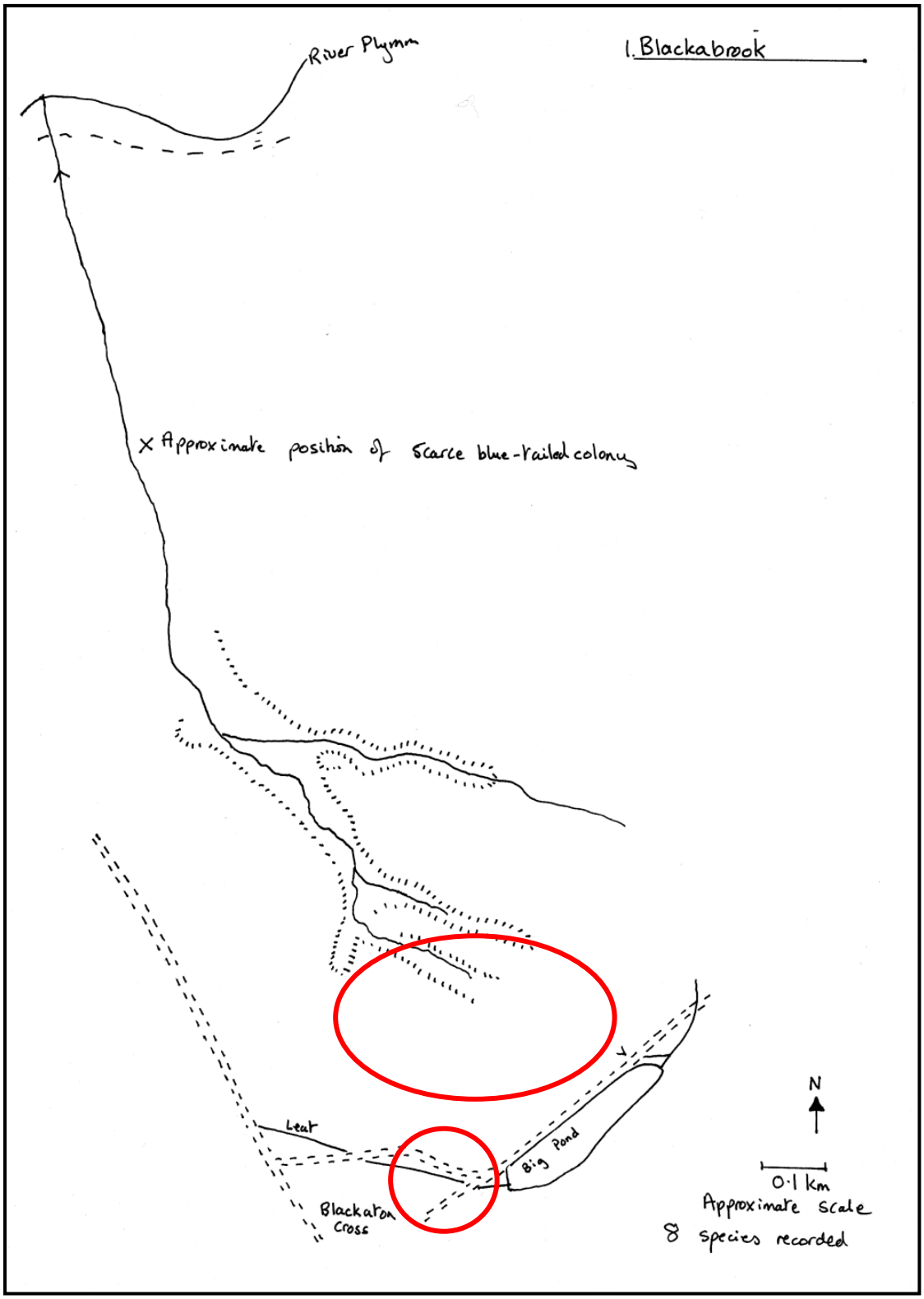
Threats
Overgrazing may be a threat, but helpful in maintaining open, muddy areas favoured by Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly.

Management suggestions
No management required unless the area is to be worked for China clay.

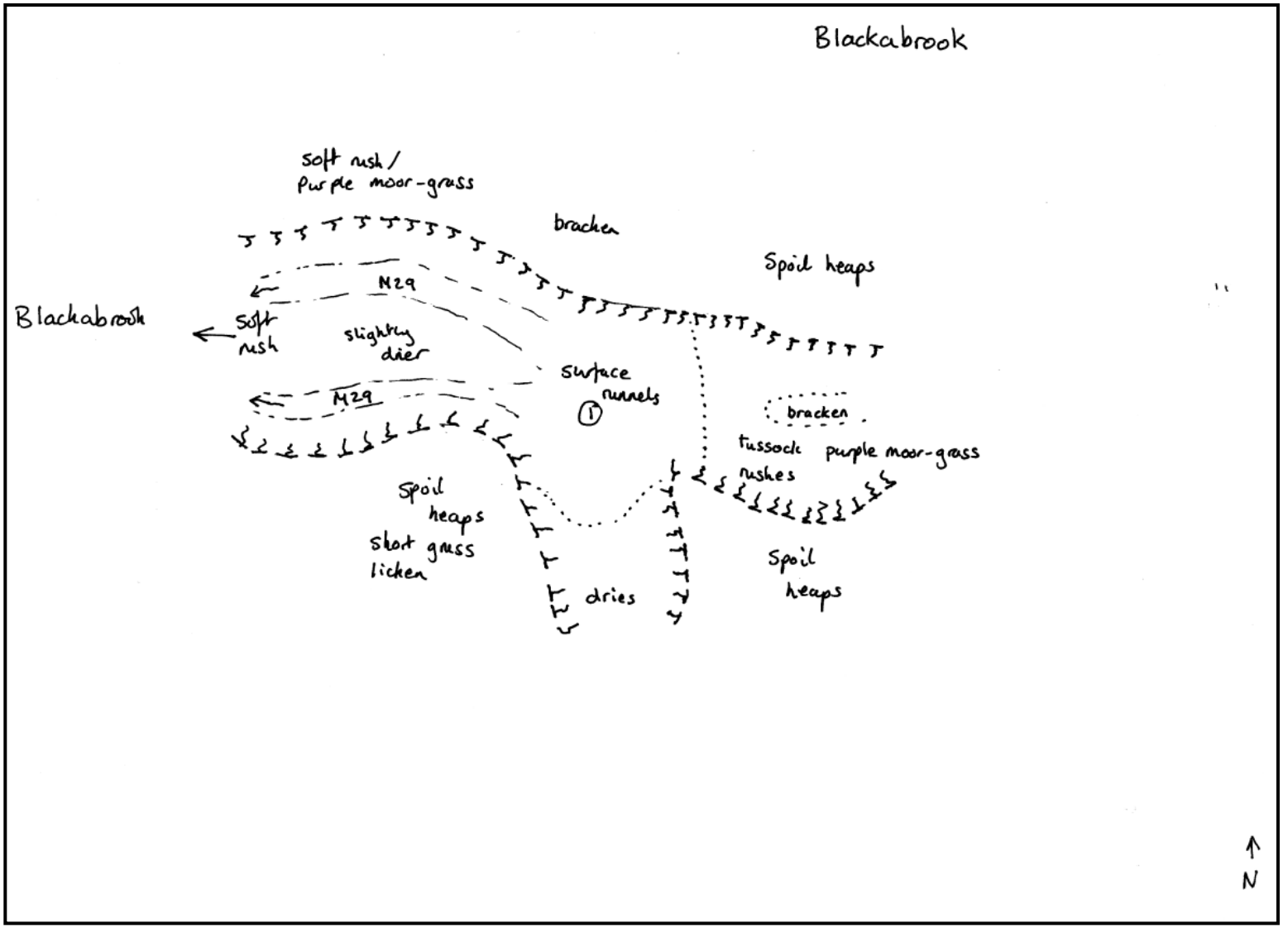
Blackabrook: general area



From site visits in 2005



On subsequent visits, Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly also found in in 2018 (red oval) and 2023 (red circle).


Blackabrook
soft rush / purple moor-grass
bracken
Spoil heaps
M29
Blackabrook
soft rush
slightly drier
surface runnels
1
M29
bracken
tussock purple moor-grass rushes
Spoil heaps
short grass lichen
dries
Spoil heaps
N