

CHUDLEIGH KNIGHTON HEATH

2017-2026: Unconfirmed Priority Site

Five small heathland ponds in the Bovey Basin created in 1990; most records for the Heath refer to this cluster of ponds (see map). Occasional records of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly, Hairy Dragonfly and Ruddy Darter in the past.

Last updated: 28/03/2025

Site: CHUDLEIGH KNIGHTON HEATH	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX83877690	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<i>Damselflies</i>												
Beautiful Demoiselle			A			B			B			
Banded Demoiselle			A									
Emerald Damselfly	B	B	D	B	A	D	B		C			C
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly	C	C	D	B		C	C	C	D	B	B	D
Blue-tailed Damselfly	A	B	D	A	A	D		A	D			
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly						B						
Common Blue Damselfly	C	B	D		B	D	C	C	D	A	A	C
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly	D	C	E	C	B	D	C	C	D	D	C	E
Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red Damselfly												
<i>Dragonflies</i>												
Hairy Dragonfly			A						A			
Common Hawker	B		A			A	A		B			
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker	A		B			B	A		B	B		B
Migrant Hawker			B			A						A
Emperor Dragonfly	C	B	C	D		C	B		C	C		C
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly			A			B			A			A
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser	C	B	C	A		C	A	A	B	B	B	C
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser	A	A	B	B		C	B	B	C	A		C
Keeled Skimmer	B	B	C	A		C			B			B
Black-tailed Skimmer			B	A	A	C	B	B	C			
Common Darter	B	A	C	C	B	D	C	A	D	C	B	D
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter						A			A			
Black Darter			+						A			
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	12	10	19	10	6	18	11	8	18	8	5	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 History

Small Red Damselfly – recorded at small boggy ponds (site currently occupied by Chudleigh Knighton clay pit) in July, 1961; last recorded here in 1965.

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly – 2 immature males on 17/6/06.

Hairy Dragonfly – Singles on 22/6/95, 5/6/96 and a male on 1/6/09.

Ruddy Darter – single adult males were seen on 18/7/06, 4/8/06 and 10/9/06.

Other species of note

Common Hawker – 1 ovipositing on 28/8/93; a male on 8/8/94; an exuvia on 25/6/95 and 2 on 20/7/95; 1 on 5/7/04, single males on 4/8/05, 4/8/06 and 10/9/06; at least 2 on 16/8/09; single exuviae on 30/6/10 and 21/6/12; a male on 8/7/09. Most activity, and all breeding evidence, from Pond 4 (the only proven breeding site in the Bovey Basin, but probably now lost).

Keeled Skimmer – First noted July, 1991; maximum of three males plus one pair *in cop.* on 30/7/91, showing astonishingly rapid colonisation (barely a year after ponds' creation). In 1992, maximum of seven males, two *in cop.* and one ovipositing. In 1993, one recently emerged on 6/6/93 and up to three males were seen subsequently. In 1994, only single males reported, plus one female ovipositing. In 1995, up to 11 individuals, including two pairs *in cop.*, three ovipositing and one recently emerged, with at least two exuviae found. A maximum of 6 males in 1999. An early emergent seen on 29/5/02 and oviposition in 2006. Latterly, only 2 males in 2020 and 3 males in 2022.

Black Darter – an adult male at Pond 4 on 29/8/08

Habitat

A cluster of small ponds in created by DWT early in 1990. They sit amongst wet H4 heathland with much tussocky *Molinia* immediately adjacent and areas of recently cleared scrub nearby. Cattle and/or pony grazed in recent years, and occasionally burnt. Target notes (refer to map):

1. Pond with marginal rushes and spikerushes, but draw-down leaves muddy edges. Silty bottom, slightly murky water, shallow slopes, some submerged/floating weed e.g. *Potamogeton* sp., *Juncus bulbosus*, *Eliogiton fluitans* and algae. A little scrub at the edge. pH: 6.0 (14/7/91); 7.2-7.3 (21/4/92); 7.0-7.2 (13/6/92); 6.7-6.8 (14+22/5/92); 8.5 (12/7/92); 8.0 (31/8/92); 9.0 (3/7/93); 8.7 (early/9/95). Conductivity: 160 μ S/cm (early/9/95).
2. Largest pond, with scrubby, heathy island. Mostly surrounded by marginal rushes and *Molinia*, but drawn-down creates muddy shore. Small patch of *Potamogeton* (much larger by 2024). Water slightly murky in 1995 – submerged plants not visible. pH: 6.6-6.8 (14/7/91); 7.2-7.3 (21/4/92); 6.8-7.2 (14+22/5/92); 7.2-7.7 (13/6/92); 8.2 (12/7/92); 8.7 (31/8/92); 8.1 (3/7/93); 8.3 (early/9/95). Conductivity: 120 μ S/cm (early/9/95). Areas 2a: shallow scrapes at edges, well vegetated with *J. bulbosus*, *P. polygonifolius*, *R. flammula*. Dry at survey. [An attempt to introduce *Sphagnum* here in the 1990s failed, although present elsewhere subsequently.]
3. A small pond which is often dry (including at time of survey in mid-July, 1995). Short gorse and birch scrub around edge with *Molinia*. *J. bulbosus* in pond itself. pH: 5.5 (14/7/91, when half empty); 5.7 (13/6/92, when nearly empty); 5.6-5.7 (14+22/5/92); 6.4 (31/8/92); 6.0 (3/7/93). Heavily shaded by 2024, but still often with water.
4. Small pond. Draw-down leaves muddy banks. Tops of banks are fringed with *Molinia*. Lots of *J. bulbosus* plus some *Eleocharis* etc in the slightly murky water. Much improved in 2024, when abundant *Potamogeton* and *Sphagnum*. Shallow (with gentle slopes?). pH: 6.6 (14/7/91); 8.4 (5/10/91); 6.7-6.8 (14+22/5/92); 7.8 (13/6/92); 7.5 (12/7/92); 7.3 (31/8/92); 8.3 (3/7/93); 8.2 (early/9/95). Conductivity: 290 μ S/cm (early/9/95).
5. Pond in deeper 'basin' than 4, though similarly subject to evaporation draw-down. *Molinia* topped banks. A little *J. bulbosus* in the murky water. pH: 5.8 (14/7/91); 8.0 (5/10/92); 6.0-6.1 (14+22/5/92); 6.4 (13/6/92); 6.9 (12/7/92); 7.1 (31/8/92); 6.0 (3/7/93); 8.2 (early/9/95). Conductivity: 210 μ S/cm (early/9/95). Mostly shaded by small trees by 2020.
6. Ditch drying in parts at time of 1995 survey, elsewhere still, clear water up to 15 cm deep. Fringed with overhanging grass/rush. Some twigs and grass in the ditch itself. Bottom

muddy/detritus. pH: 7.5 (14/7/91); 7.4 (early/9/95). Conductivity: no reading (dry). Mostly shaded by 2024.

Status

SSSI; DWT Reserve.

Area

0.1 ha (part)

Owner/tenant

Sibelco, leased to Devon Wildlife Trust.

Local Authority: Teignbridge DC

Threats

- Predation and turbidity from introduced fish (although no fish apparent by 2024).
- Excessive livestock trampling.
- Wildfire.

Management suggestions

- Periodic management of surrounding trees, bramble and gorse scrub, but retaining sufficient to provide shelter for roosting and feeding by dragonflies.

Chudleigh Knighton Heath ponds (from 1995 survey)

