

COLATON RALEIGH COMMON

2017-2026: Confirmed Priority Site of National Importance

Successful breeding populations of Southern Damselfly (but not since 2021) and Small Red Damselfly.

Last updated: 07/03/2025

Site: COLATON RALEIGH COMMON	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SY050868	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<u>Damselflies</u>												
Beautiful Demoiselle	B	B	D			C			C			C
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly			A			B						
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly	C	B	E	C	C	D	C	D	D	C	C	C
Blue-tailed Damselfly		A	B			B			A			A
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly												
Common Blue Damselfly			A			A			A			
Southern Damselfly	D	C	D	B	D	E	B	C	D	A	A	C
Azure Damselfly	B	B	C	C	D	E			D	+		B
Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red Damselfly	B	A	D	B	C	C	B	B	D	C	C	D
<u>Dragonflies</u>												
Hairy Dragonfly												
Common Hawker												
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker			B			A						
Migrant Hawker												
Emperor Dragonfly			B	B		B						A
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	B	A	C			C	A		B	A		C
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser			A	A	A	B			B	A		B
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser												A
Keeled Skimmer	B	B	D	C	D	E	C	B	D	B	C	E
Black-tailed Skimmer												
Common Darter			C	A		C			C	A	A	C
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter												
Black Darter												
Yellow-winged Darter			A									
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	7	8	15	8	6	14	5	4	11	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

Southern Damselfly – first recorded 1963; the highest counts since have been 55-80 in 1982, 100+ in 1986, 40+ (plus 25 exuviae) in 1991, 71 on 7/7/94 and 49 on 9/7/95. Further details in Knights (1983) and, including transect route details, in Kerry (1994). Annual maxima:

91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
54	20	16	71	49	62	39	29	28	27	38	10	62	85	133	60	55	24
09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
73	62	35	5	32	12	36	1	9	6	5	1	2	?	0	0		

The apparent loss of this species is most unfortunate, given its once healthy population, although the reasons for its demise are unclear. The water quality appeared visually poor by 2024 and, despite light grazing and some brush-cutting, the runnels were more overgrown than previously; an interruption in the main water source was corrected, but possibly too late.

Small Red Damselfly – noted at a small ponded area west of the main Southern Damselfly area in small numbers since earlier records in 1978 and 1981: seven in 1993, 25+ on 3/7/94 and 16 (14 male) in 1995. However, since 2004 small numbers have appeared across the more open seepages frequented by the Southern Damselflies. Recent peaks over the whole site are 14 (including 3 pairs in cop. and 1 emergent) on 8/7/05, 8 (including a pair in cop. and a pair ovipositing) on 27/7/06, increasing to 26 in 2011, 50 (32 males) in 2019; 55 on 8/7/21; c50 on 25/6/24. A total of 567 individuals were marked during the 2013 flight period.

Other species of note

Keeled Skimmer – breeding abundantly throughout; for example, 42 (28 males) in 1995 and 100+ on 8/7/05 and 27/7/06 and 138 on 18/7/20.

Yellow-winged Darter – one on 8/8/95, during an unprecedented national influx.

Habitat

Southern Damselfly site: A small runnel flowing parallel to the main valley stream through an area of wet heath with smaller tributary runnels and seepages (often with *Schoenus nigricans*) flowing in from the north. The main runnel is 0.25-0.5m across and 4-10 cm deep, swiftly flowing over a predominantly gravel substrate, and occasionally over a more peaty base. In some areas the runnel disappears into tussock *Molinia*. Vegetation overhangs the water in many places: *Molinia*, *Juncus effusus* and *Juncus acutiflorus*. Around the open pools *Sphagnum* species and *Drosera rotundifolia* carpets are extensive. *Cirsium dissectum* is also present, indicating base enrichment (as does the *Schoenus*). pH in the Southern Damselfly area, 6.2-6.5, but 5.9 further upstream (5/7/91); 6.2-6.4 (16/7/93); 6.1-6.2, but 5.6-6.0 immediately upstream and downstream (3/7/94); 5.6-6.2 (12/8/95). Conductivity 100 μ S/cm. (14/6/95). In places adjacent to the runnel are higher areas of dry heath with *Calluna vulgaris*, *Ulex gallii*, *Erica tetralix* and rare *Scirpus cespitosus*. To the south and generally within 10m is the main stream (pH 6.7 on 5/7/91, 7.0 on 12/8/95) which flows between mature birches and coppiced willows and is dammed to form a small pond at the south-eastern corner of the site (pH 6.7 on 12/8/95, conductivity 80 μ S/cm. on 14/6/95). To the north is an additional area with two runnels flowing through similar wet heath/mire vegetation. One runnel (pH 6.0 on 5/7/91, 4.9-5.7 on 3/7/94 and 12/8/95; conductivity 70 μ S/cm. on 14/6/95) is deeply incised but the other forms pools and shallow boggy areas. Before entering the main valley stream, the main runnel is dammed to form a small pond (pH 6.6 on 12/8/95, conductivity 70 μ S/cm. on 14/6/95). (Further habitat details are given in Kerry, 1994).

From 1998 the area has been grazed in summer by fenced-in cattle. The numbers of Southern Damselfly responded favourably and their focus moved away from the main runnel to use mainly the seepages to the north. Also, from 2004, Small Red Damselflies colonised this area.

Small Red Damselfly site: Deep pools and runnels (0.5-1.5m deep) within an area of floating *Sphagnum* bog, *Eriophorum angustifolium*, *Hypericum elodes* and *Carex panicea* being the main constituents. The site has willow (*Salix*) scrub to the east and is surrounded by dry lowland heath. pH 5.9 (5/7/91); 6.3 (16/7/93); 5.9 (3/7/94); 6.5-6.8 (12/8/95). Conductivity 100 µS/cm. (22/6/95).

Status

SSSI, SAC & SPA.

Area

ca. 2 ha

Owner/tenant

Clinton Devon Estates.

Local Authority: East Devon DC

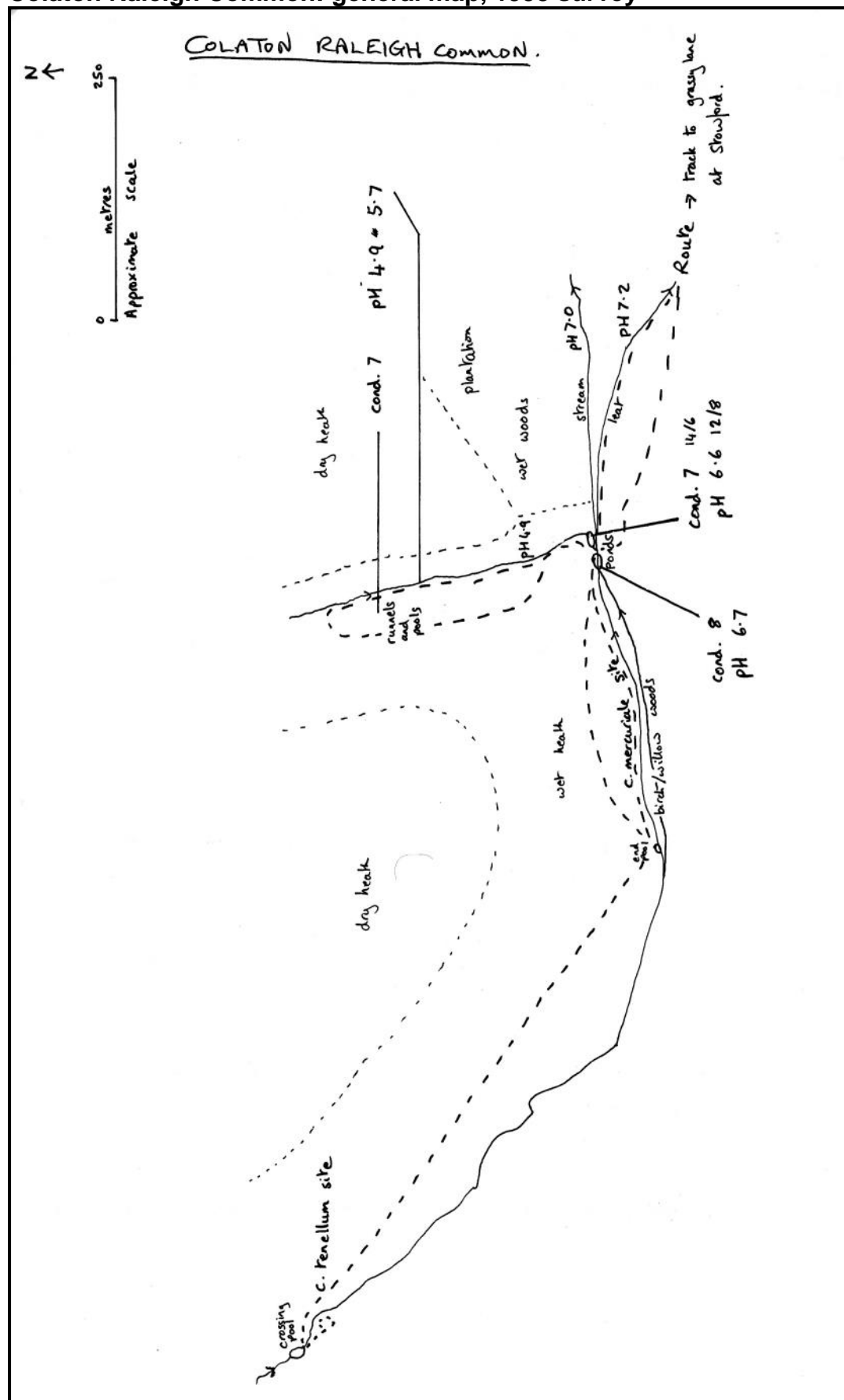
Threats

- Earlier threats from the runnel being overgrown have been greatly alleviated by burning, followed by fencing and cattle grazing since 1998.
- Earlier concerns about the supply of water to the Southern Damselfly runnel appear to have receded.

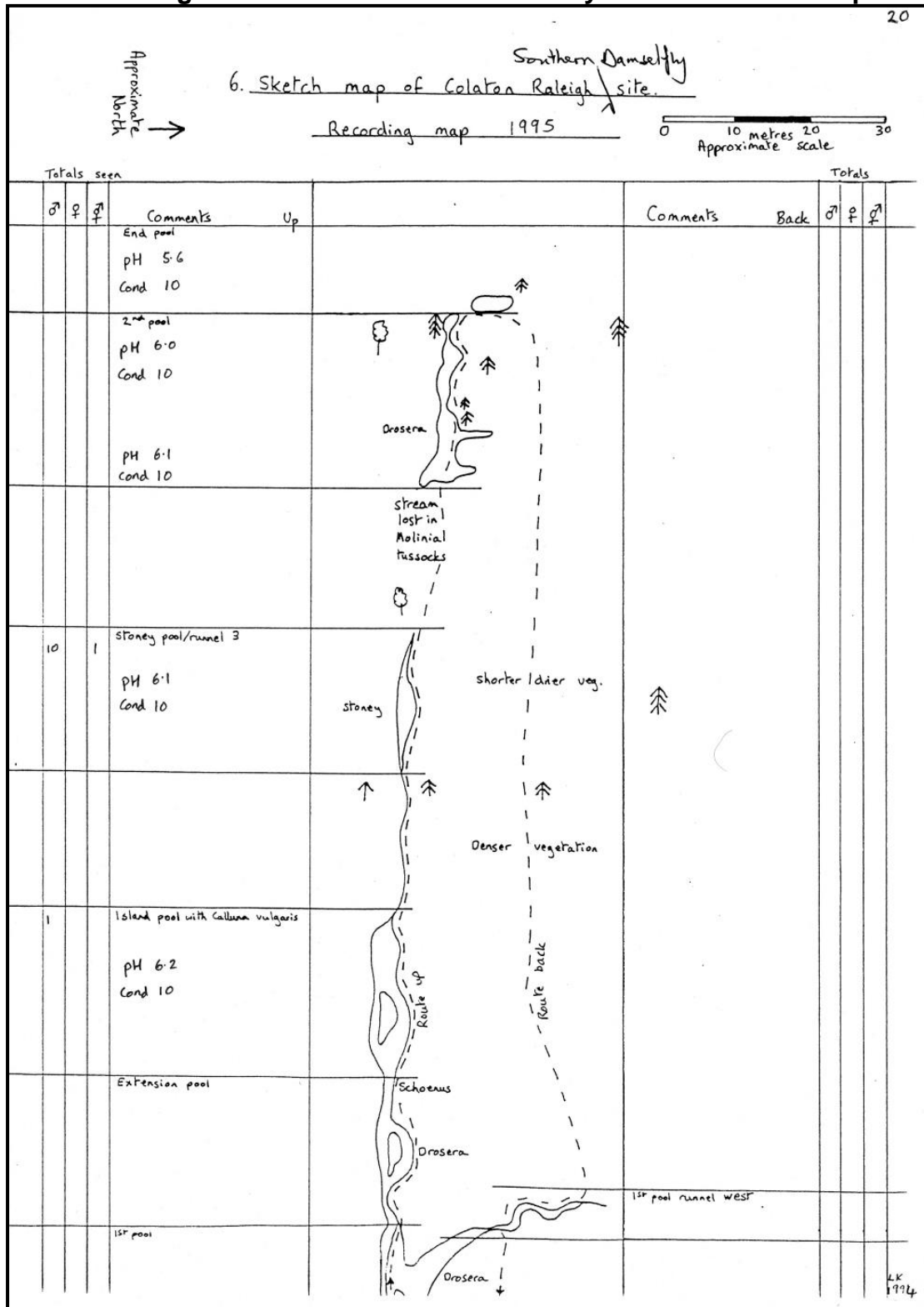
Management suggestions

- In 2005/6, the site appeared to be in very good condition for Southern Damselfly.

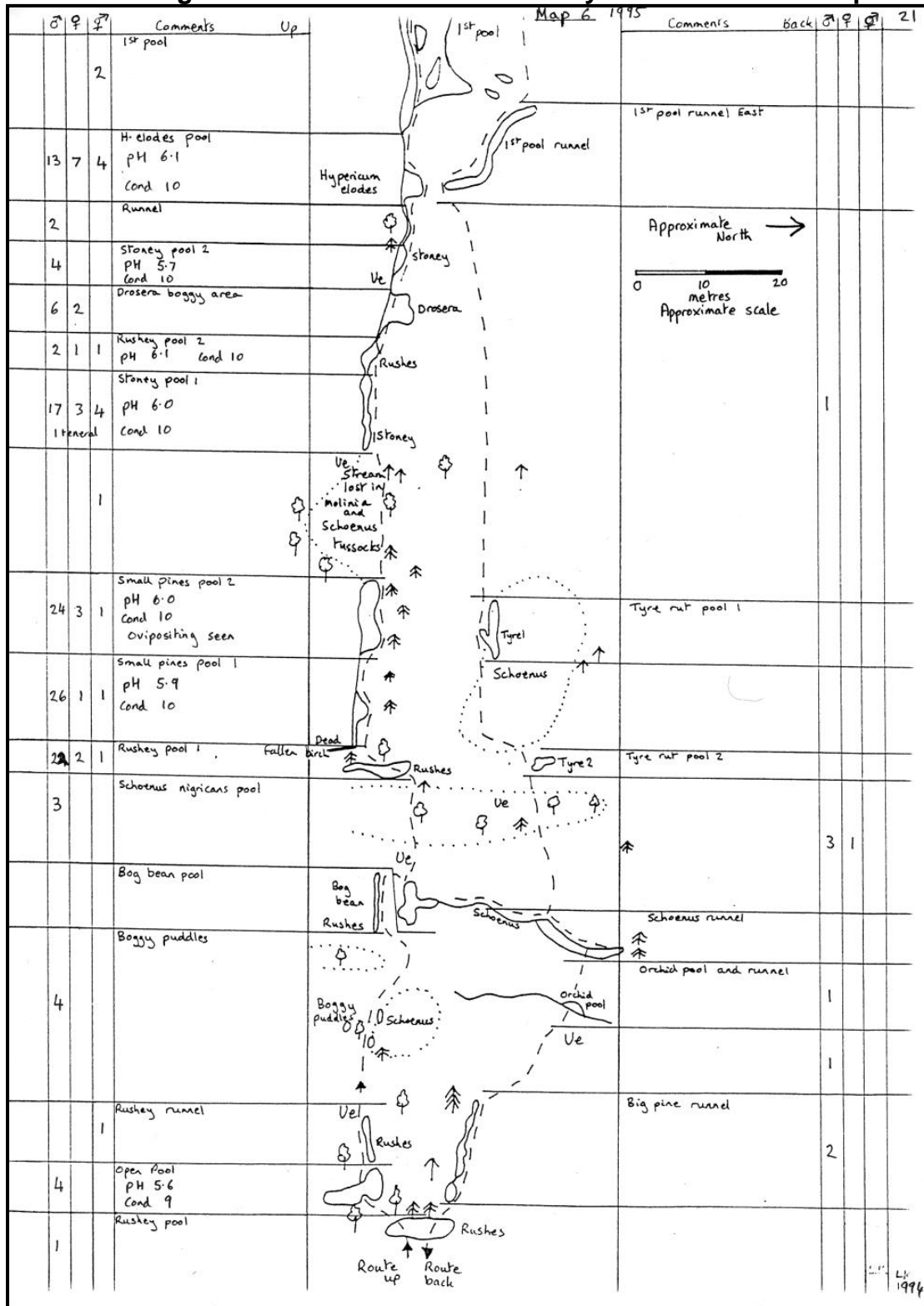
Colaton Raleigh Common: general map, 1995 survey



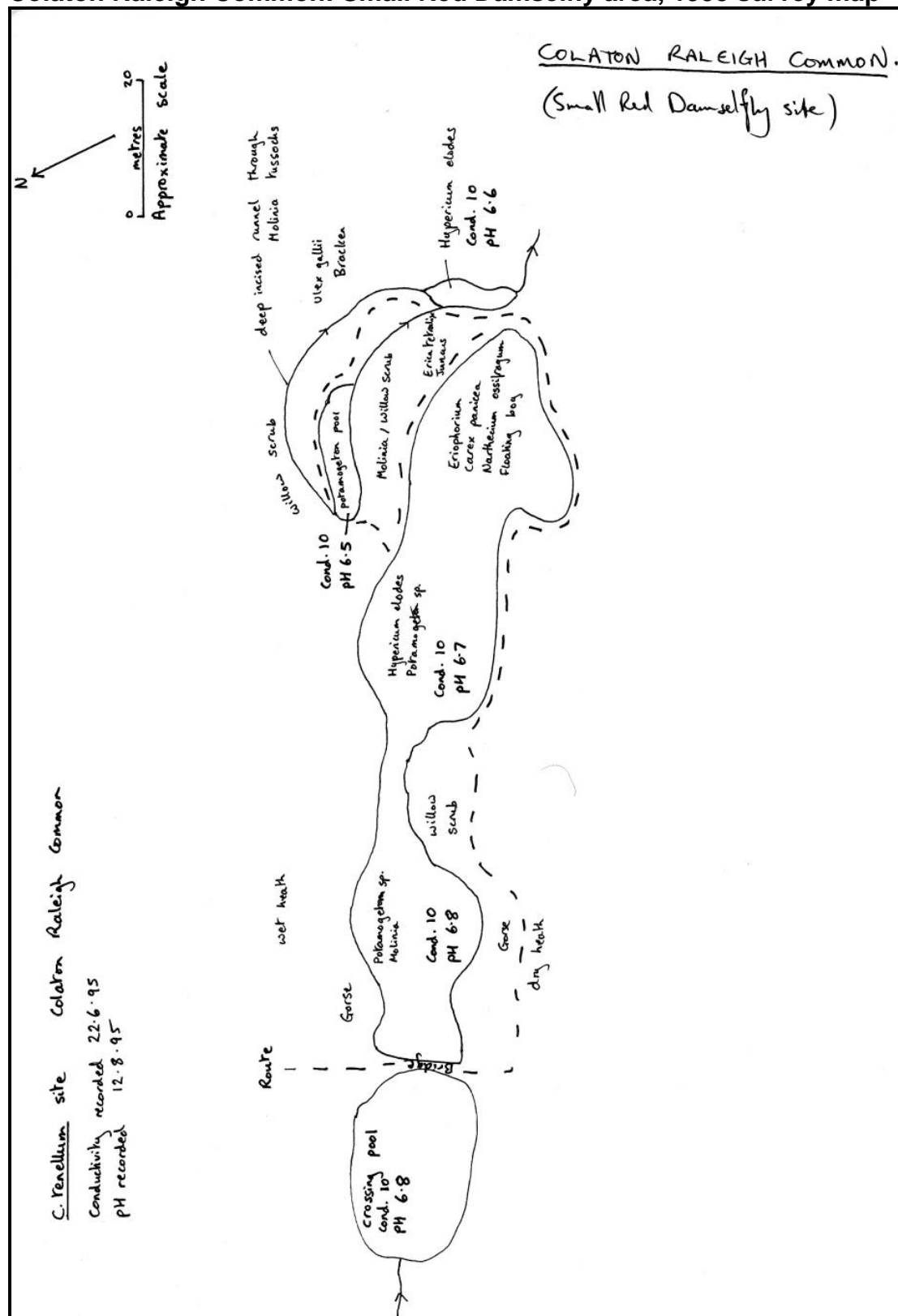
Colaton Raleigh Common: Southern Damselfly transect route – map 1



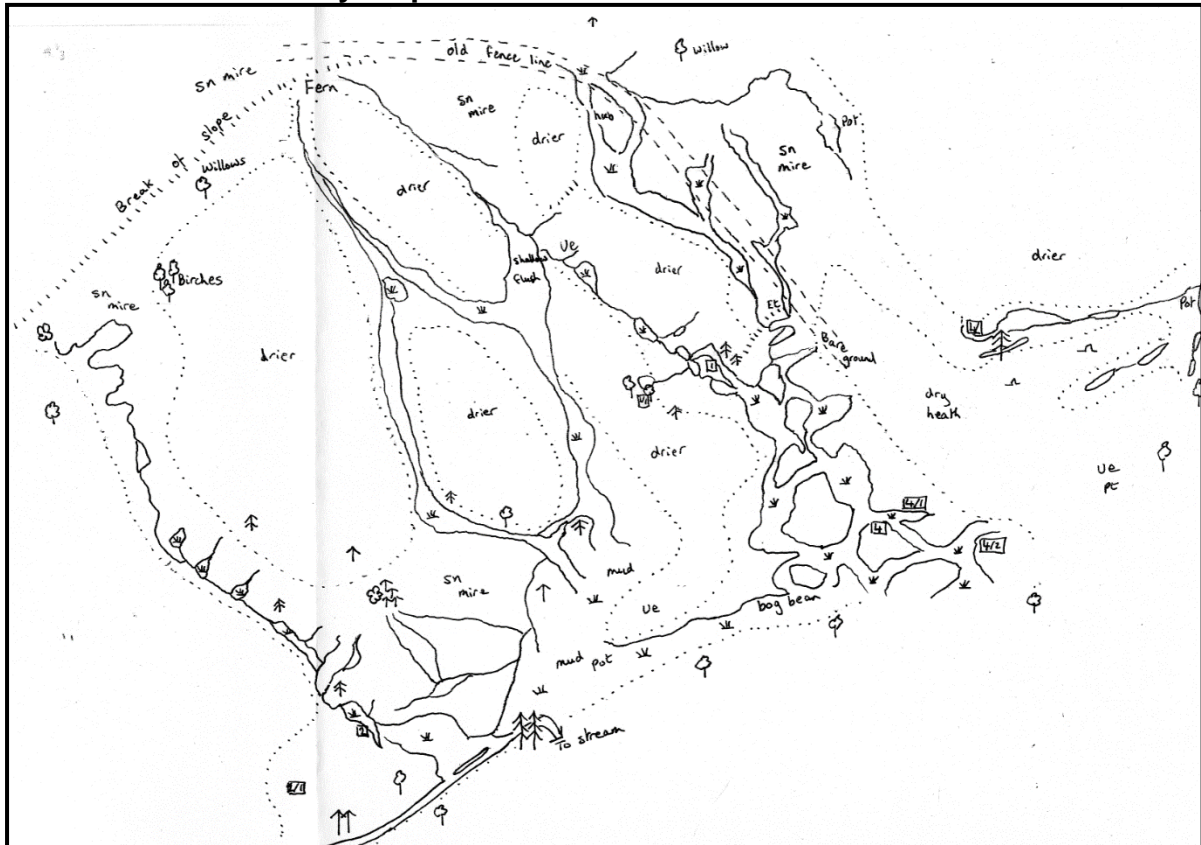
Colaton Raleigh Common: Southern Damselfly transect route – map 2



Colaton Raleigh Common: Small Red Damselfly area, 1995 survey map



Main area: 2005 survey map

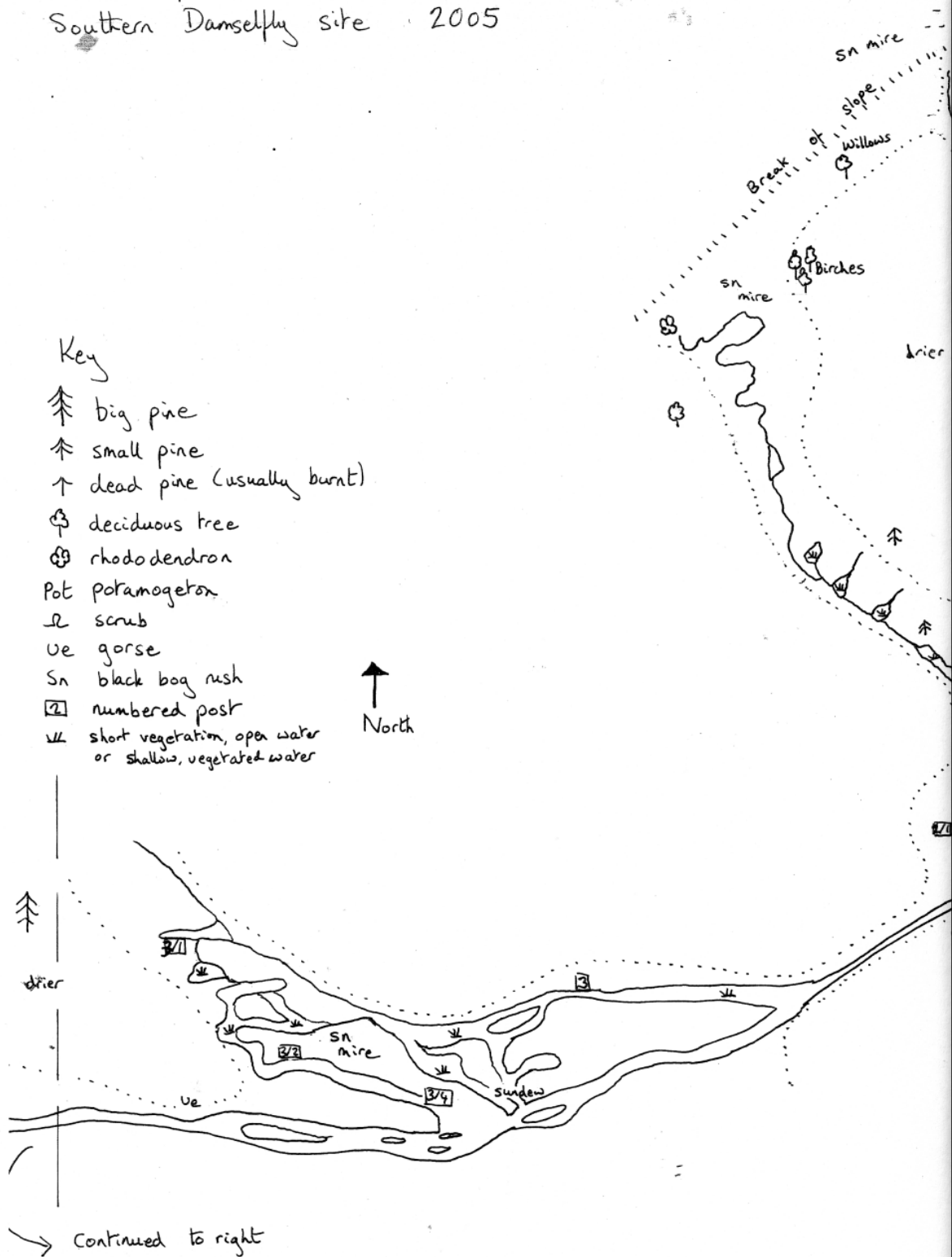


Colaton Raleigh Common: western area, 2005 map

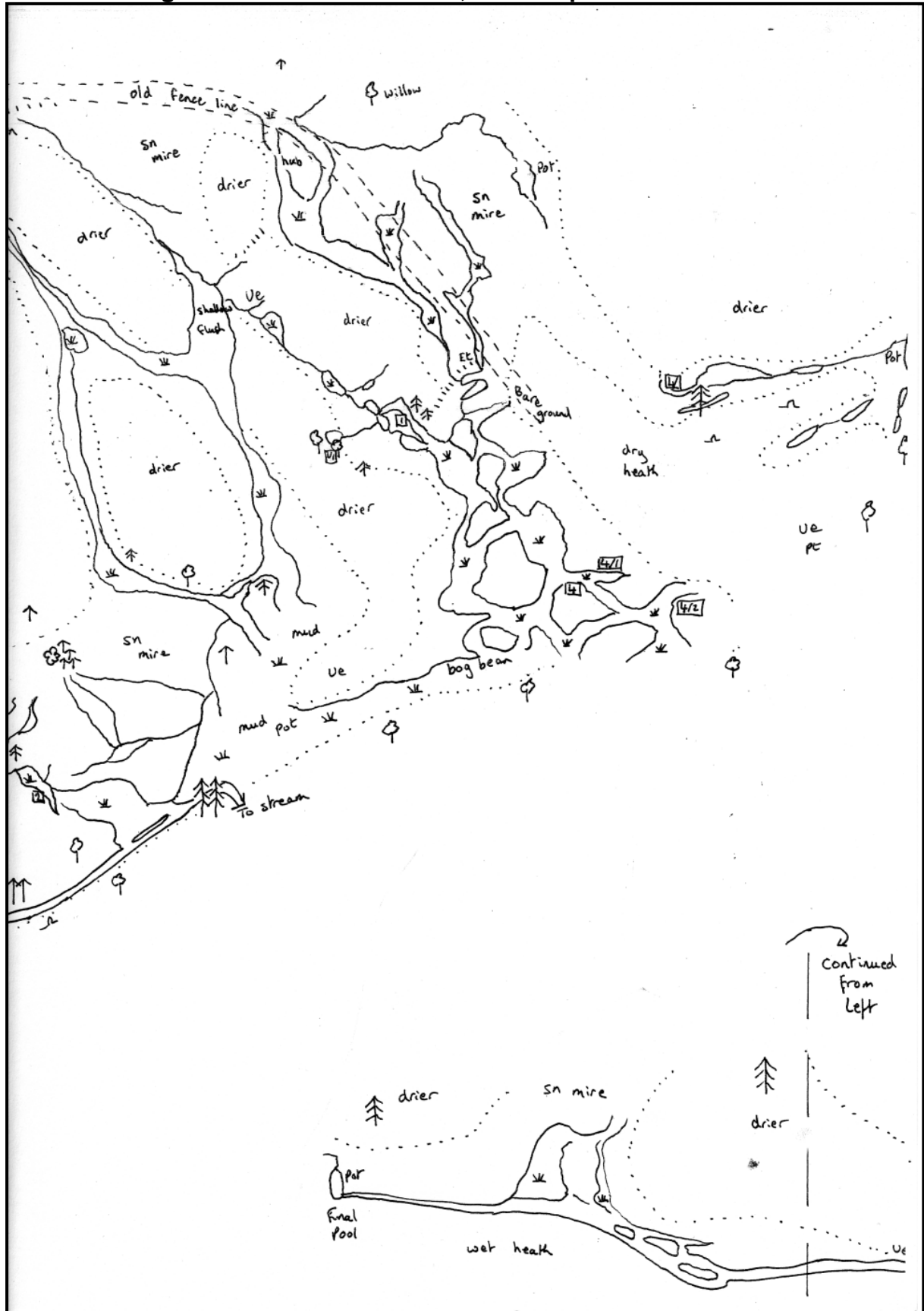
Sketch map of Colaton Raleigh Common
Southern Damsel fly site 2005

Key

- ⌋ big pine
- ⌋ small pine
- ↑ dead pine (usually burnt)
- ⊕ deciduous tree
- ⊕ rhododendron
- Pot potamogeton
- ⌋ scrub
- ve gorse
- Sn black bog rush
- ⌈ numbered post
- ⌋ short vegetation, open water or shallow, vegetated water



Colaton Raleigh Common: eastern area, 2005 map



2016 Google Earth image

