

LITTLE BRADLEY PONDS

2017-2026: Confirmed Priority Site of Local Importance

An old flooded clay pit and a relatively new pond and associated marshy areas in the Bovey Basin, forming one of the best dragonfly sites in Devon. One of few sites in Devon where Downy Emerald has been proved to breed. Successful breeding populations of Red-eyed Damselfly, Hairy Dragonfly and Downy Emerald. Presence of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (not since 1999), Scarce Chaser and Ruddy Darter (not since 2006).

Last updated: 16/12/2025

Site: LITTLE BRADLEY PONDS	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX830778	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<i>Damselflies</i>												
Beautiful Demoiselle			B			C			C	A		B
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly			C	A	A	D			B			B
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly	D	C	E	C	B	E	B	C	E	B		D
Blue-tailed Damselfly	+	C	E		C	D			D	A		D
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly						B						
Common Blue Damselfly	C	C	E	D		E	B		E	A		D
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly	D	D	E	D	C	E	D	B	E	E	D	E
Red-eyed Damselfly			B			A			B	C	B	D
Small Red-eyed Damselfly										C	B	D
Small Red Damselfly												
<i>Dragonflies</i>												
Hairy Dragonfly			B			A			B	A		B
Common Hawker			A						A			
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker						A						
Southern Hawker	A		B			B			B			B
Migrant Hawker	A	A	C	A		C		A	B	A		C
Emperor Dragonfly	B		C	B	A	C	A		B	A	A	B
Lesser Emperor						A						
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly			A			B			A			A
Downy Emerald	A		C	D	A	C	C	A	C	C		C
Broad-bodied Chaser	B	A	C			C	A		B			A
Scarce Chaser												B
Four-spotted Chaser	C	B	D	C	C	D	B	C	D	A		C
Keeled Skimmer	B		C		A	C						
Black-tailed Skimmer	B	B	D	A	B	C			B			
Common Darter	D	C	E	D		D	B		C	C	B	D
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter						A						
Black Darter												A
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	13	9	19	10	9	22	8	5	18	13	4	19

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

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly - recorded in 1980 and 1982 (undated). 16 adults (11 males) were translocated from the nearby Chudleigh Knighton Clay Pit (where the breeding site had been essentially destroyed) and released near the old and new ponds on 6-7 July 1996. However, no sightings followed until two males were seen in the marshy area adjacent to the new pond on 21 August 1999, with a female there on 28 August 1999.

Red-eyed Damselfly - records from the old pond on 9/7/1978 and on 22/5/92 (five males) and from the new pond single males on 18/7/98, 10/6/01 and 4/6/06 with two on 3/6/09; colonisation occurred since 2017, with oviposition noted in 2018 and 22, including a mating pair (18 on the 'new' pond) on 2/6/22; on 3/6/23 there 43 (6 ovipositing) on the 'new' pond and 20 (2 ovipositing) on the 'old' pond. An exuvia was found at the 'new' pond on 11/5/24 and 45 were counted (32 at the 'new' pond) on 10/6/24.

Small Red Damselfly – formerly bred, being recorded on 9/7/78, 5/8/78, 11/7/79, 1982 (undated) and 8/9/84 (area subsequently lost due to natural succession).

Hairy Dragonfly - 2 males on 22/5/92 (first record) and 1 male on 14/6/92; at least two males on 5-6/6/93; singles at old pond and ovipositing at new pond in early June, 1994; two territorial males on 7/5/95; two on 15/6/96; at least 1 territorial male at both ponds on 13/5/00; and single males on 14/5/06 and 6/5/07; 1 or 2 males were seen in 8 years during 2013-25, with egg-laying in the new pond on 7/5/22. An exuvia was found at the 'old' pond on 11/5/24.

Downy Emerald - seen regularly in small numbers at the old pond from 1989: two territorial males annually during 1989-91, with singles ovipositing in 1989 and 1991; 6-8 territorial males on 22/5/92 and four on 14/6/92; four males in 1993; up to three males in June 1994, plus one at the new pond; not recorded in 1995, no doubt as a result of cold weather during the flight period; one male at both ponds on 26 May 1997 and at the old pond on 29 May 1997 and 21 May 1998. Mating pairs were seen in 2003 and 2005, with egg-laying on 21/6/05. 53 exuviae were counted during 12-14 May 2006, 23 around the old pond and 30 around the western two-thirds of the new pond; a maximum of 12 adults (10 males) was reported subsequently on 5/6/06. Up to 4 were seen during 6/5/07-5/6/07, with 1 exuvia on 17/5/07. C exuviae were found on 11/5/08. Seen from 23/5/09 to 3/6/09, with 6 on the last date. 11 exuviae were found on 16/5/10, with 3 emergents, following by 2 adults on 22/5/10, an emergent next day and egg-laying on 8/6/10. In 2011, 1 or 2 adults were seen between 29 May and 6 June. Emergences and small numbers (typically up to 6) reported most years during 2013-25, with up to 6 exuviae; 1 egg-laying on 10/6/24 and 18/5/25.

Scarce Chaser – at least 2 were reported on 24/6/20 (the first record for the Bovey Basin) and 30/5/23; a territorial male was at the old pond on 2/6/22 and, astonishingly, a male was seen on exactly the same clump of Greater Tussock-sedge on 3/6/23.

Ruddy Darter – Few records since 1982, prior to which the species was said to breed (although the only BRC records are on 9/7/78, 5/8/78 and 18/9/78): undated records of a male near the new pond in 1994 on 3/9/98 and an immature male, presumably a migrant, on territory on 18-19/7/06.

Other species of note

Small Red-eyed Damselfly – first recorded in 2017 (42), with peaks of 50+ in 2018 and 61 on both ponds in 2020.

Common Hawker – reported in 1978 and on 15/8/92 and 28/8/12.

Brown Hawker – the first record Devon was recorded at the new pond on 26-28/8/99.

Lesser Emperor – a male seen at both ponds on 17//6/06.

Keeled Skimmer - small numbers seen annually from 1978, usually in wetland area 8 (see below): six adults in 1988, generally only one-two males during 1991-94, with one ovipositing in 1994; four territorial males (one at old pond) and 3+ emergents in June 1995, with a maximum of 11 reported. Up to 6 in 1996 (2 at old pond) and 1999, 4 in 1998 and up to 5 in 2000 around the new pond and marshy area. 5 were present on 10/6/01, but there have been no records there since 2003 after the marshy area scrubbed over. A male was seen at the new pond on 8/7/22.

Black Darter – 1 on 18/9/78 and a male on 13/9/20.

Habitat (from 1995 survey)

Two large ponds (and several tiny ones [subsequently lost to scrub invasion]) on old clay workings, managed as a DWT Reserve since 1991. The 'Old Pond' (eastern of the two main ponds) is well established with about half the bank surrounded by trees (mainly birch) and the rest fringed by dense marginal vegetation. Much work has been done recently to control scrub invasion, to maintain water levels and remove excessive numbers of fish remaining after cessation as a NAFA fishing pond. The 'New Pond' (western) was specifically created for wildlife in 1991 (with transplanted vegetation from Horse mills Pond and elsewhere) has hastened colonisation. Scrub control, heathland creation and digging of scrapes has diversified the habitats available for dragonflies here, but much of this lost subsequently due to succession. Target notes below refer to map.

Old (eastern) Pond:

1. Small scrape - much bare clay starting to vegetate.
2. Series of three small ponds dug out in 1994 - largely bare clay. There is a small inlet 'stream' to the Old Pond via these.
3. Extensive area of tall emergents: *Typha latifolia*, *Iris psuedacorus*, *Carex paniculata* and tall rushes and herbs at the drier edges 3a and shallow areas of open water between the vegetation. pH: 7.0 (14/7/91).
4. An 'island' of emergents especially *Typha*. (NB died away after water level raised).
5. Marshy area of *Carex paniculata* outside main pond.
6. Northern bank - mature, overhanging trees, sparse *Juncus effusus* fringe.
7. Outlet - flows via a sluice to the new pond.

Open water slightly murky, no submerged plants visible, though previously extensive rafts of *Potamogeton natans*. pH: 7.3 (14/7/91); 7.2-7.3 (April-May 1992); 7.1-7.5 (14/6/92); 8.0 (31/8/92); 7.8 (22/5/95).

New (western) Pond:

8. Inlet ditch - very deep vertical sides, overgrown with rushes and herbs.
9. Wetland area of 0.3-0.5m high vegetation of mosses, rushes and wetland herbs. A series of small ponds (pH: 6.7, 7.2 and 7.5 on 14/7/91) and scrapes have been created here.
10. This pond existed before the new pond and had been invaded by trees which have now been felled allowing *Typha*, *Iris* etc to grow. pH: 7.5-7.6 (May-June, 1992).
11. Area of bare clay spoil and island with attempted heathland creation.
12. Outlet with sluice with bare clay sides.
13. Clay spoil vegetating to gorse scrub plus some small herbs/grasses. Much bare ground remains.
14. Western end of pond: tall rush, wetland herbs etc at margin with carpet of *Crassula helmsii* at water's edge. Coppiced alder behind.
15. Most of pond margins are developing a scattered to fairly dense fringe of tall rushes, Gipsywort etc, with bare clay between.
16. The open water is clear with much algae growing over the bare clay. Fish fry plentiful by 1995. pH: 8.0-8.8 (14/7/91); 7.9 (5/10/91); 8.1-8.2 (22/5/92); 8.4 (14/6/92 and 31/8/92); 8.6 (12/7/92); 8.3 (3/7/93); 9.1 (22/5/95). Conductivity: 230 μ S/cm (9/6/95).
17. The most heavily vegetated part of the pond with thick tall emergents/marginals (especially *Juncus* and *Typha*) near the inlet and the surface of the water thickly covered with *Nymphoides peltata* (plus a little *Potamogeton natans*).

Status

DWT Reserve.

Area

ca. 1 ha

Owner/tenant

Sibelco, leased to Devon Wildlife Trust.

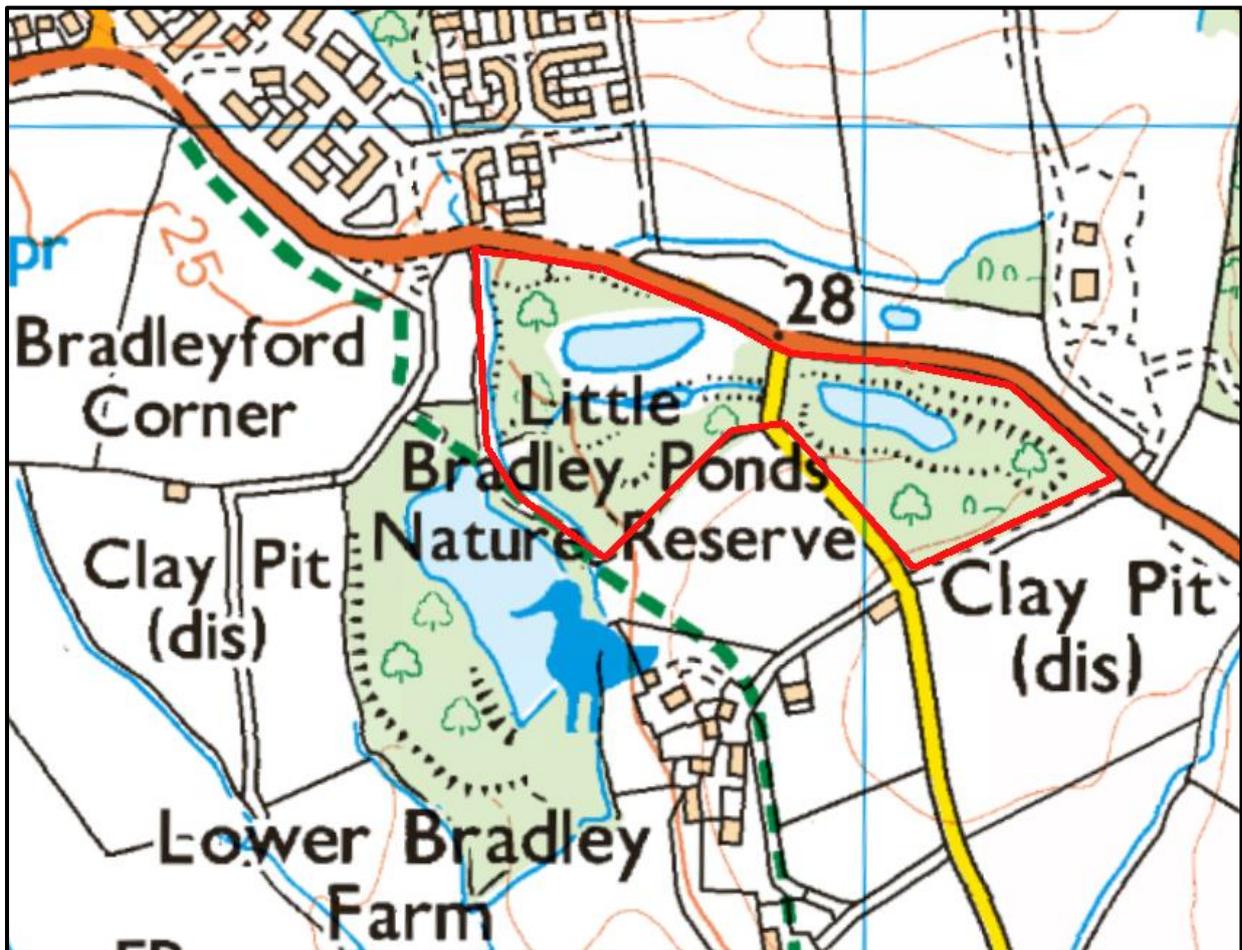
Local Authority: Teignbridge DC.

Threats

- Predation by an increasing fish population, especially Carp.
- Succession (scrub encroachment).
- Loss of pondweed and reedmace in the old pond.
- Spread of exotic pondweeds (*Crassula helmsii* and Fringed Water-lily *Nymphoides peltata* in the New Pond, Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum* in both ponds).

Management suggestions

- Continue present management according to DWT Management Plan.
- Ensure adequate access to viewpoints for monitoring (whole site very overgrown in 2024).
- Cut back gorse, fringing trees and other encroaching vegetation periodically.
- Ensure outlet channel is kept free of obstruction.
- Consider periodic electro-fishing.



LITTLE BRADLEY PONDS

New pond to the west, old pond to the east.

