

OLD SLUDGE BEDS, COUNTESS WEAR

2017-2026: Possible Priority Site of National Importance

Site of old sewage beds which has had more dragonfly interest in the past, when open water was more abundant; now very overgrown with reeds, tall herbs and scrub.

Presence of Hairy Dragonfly and Scarce Chaser.

Last updated: 23/03/2025

Site: OLD SLUDGE BEDS, COUNTESS WEAR	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX952888	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<u>Damselflies</u>												
Beautiful Demoiselle			B									B
Banded Demoiselle			B			A			B			C
Emerald Damselfly												
White-legged Damselfly			A									
Large Red Damselfly					B	C			C			C
Blue-tailed Damselfly	C		D						B			C
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly												
Common Blue Damselfly												
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly	B	B	D			B			D			C
Red-eyed Damselfly									A			
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												B
Small Red Damselfly												
<u>Dragonflies</u>												
Hairy Dragonfly			B			A			B			A
Common Hawker												
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker			B									B
Migrant Hawker									B			C
Emperor Dragonfly												
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly												
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser			+			A			B			B
Scarce Chaser												C
Four-spotted Chaser												
Keeled Skimmer												
Black-tailed Skimmer												
Common Darter			+						C			C
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter												
Black Darter												
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	2	1	9	0	1	5	0	0	9	0	0	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.

Key Species History

Red-eyed Damselfly – 1 on 18/5/07.

Hairy Dragonfly – recorded in 1980; 2 males on 9/6/96; singles on 15/5/01 and 16/5/05; B (2-5) on 21/5/07; singles on 15 & 31/5/19 and 21/6/19;

Scarce Chaser – B (2-5) on 6/6/17 and on 15 & 31/5/19, with C (6-20) on 21/6/19; 2 males on 11/6/24.

(Note: in the contiguous South-west Water Waste Water Treatment Works, at least 6 **Scarce Chaser** and 4 **Red-eyed Damselfly** present on 25/6/24.)

Habitat

In 1995, reedbed with shallow, *Lemna*-covered ditches and some areas of taller herbs and scrub. Sewage sludge beds until 1969, dug out to create small ponds during early 1970's and since has been allowed to revert to scrub (which is being cleared by DWT). pH 7.4-7.6 (13/8/95) and conductivity 430-470 $\mu\text{S/cm}$ (30/5/95).

In 2005, more scrub was apparent than in 1995, with old small areas of open water within Reedbeds and willow scrub. There was no open water in 2024, emergent vegetation having spread across the pool, and there was evidence of saline intrusion from the (tidal) River Exe.

Status

SPA; RAMSAR; SSSI; DWT Reserve.

Area

5.3 ha

Local Authority: Exeter City Council.

Owner/tenant

South West Water leased to Devon Wildlife Trust Reserve since 1979.

Threats

- Scrub encroachment and loss of open water
- Inadequate water depth
- Saline intrusion

Management suggestions

- Clear some areas to provide open water
- Continue tree/scrub clearance programme

Old Sludge Beds: 2005 survey map

