

RACKERHAYES (AKA ZITHERIXON)

2017-2026: Confirmed Priority Site of Local Importance

A series of old, flooded clay pits in the Bovey Basin, now well-established angling ponds with a large population of Red-eyed Damselfly and breeding Hairy Dragonfly, possibly Downy Emerald and formerly Ruddy Darter.

Last updated: 23/03/2025

Site: RACKERHAYES	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX863724	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<u>Damselflies</u>												
Beautiful Demoiselle			C	B		C						B
Banded Demoiselle												
Emerald Damselfly			A			+						
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly	B	C	E	D	B	C				B		B
Blue-tailed Damselfly	B	D	E	D	B	D				B	A	D
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly												
Common Blue Damselfly	D	B	E	D	D	E				C	C	F
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly	D	D	E	E	D	E				D	C	E
Red-eyed Damselfly	D	C	E	D	D	E				D	C	F
Small Red-eyed Damselfly										D	B	E
Small Red Damselfly												
<u>Dragonflies</u>												
Hairy Dragonfly		A	B	B		B				A		B
Common Hawker												
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker				C		A						B
Migrant Hawker						+					A	B
Emperor Dragonfly	C	A	C	B		C				B		C
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly						A						
Downy Emerald			B			B						
Broad-bodied Chaser			B	A		A						B
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser	C		C	B	B	D				A		C
Keeled Skimmer			A									
Black-tailed Skimmer			B	A	A	C				A	A	D
Common Darter	B		B	B		C				C	B	D
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter		A	D									
Black Darter												
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	8	8	16	13	7	17				11	8	15

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

Red-eyed Damselfly – recorded during 1978-86; strong population, estimated at 220+ adults on 27/5/91 (100+ at Dores Pond, 50 each at First and Island Ponds); no more than 28 (plus up to seven pairs *in cop.* and three ovipositing) in 1995; E (101-500) at Dores Pond alone on 7/6/06 and D (21-100) larvae in First Pond in December 2006; a record 516 in June 2021, with breeding evidence in all ponds.

Hairy Dragonfly – small numbers regularly; first recorded in 1943 and during 1978-80; in June 1986, four territorial males on 21/5/88; one on 29/5/89; two territorial males (Dores and Wheel Ponds) plus a pair *in cop.* (Weedy Pond) on 27/5/91; B (2-5) in spring 2006 and B larvae in Dores Pond and 1 in Linhay Pond on 14/9/06, with 1 in Island Pond in December 2006; an exuvia in Weedy Pond on 19/5/21 and 3 males in June 2021.

Downy Emerald – reported during 1979-82; small numbers of territorial males regular to 1992: three on 21/5/88; three (First and Island Ponds) on 27/5/91; and two on 26/5/92; not recorded in 1995, but B (2-5) in May 2006; not recorded during surveys in 2021.

Ruddy Darter – noted in 1979 and 1985-86; then 24 adults (including 12 mature) on 3/8/91 in the vicinity of a small swamp at SX862734 (Lower Marsh), where one pair seen *in cop.* (and subsequently presumed to be ovipositing out of view); this site held two (neither a mature male) on 17/7/92, but none has been seen subsequently, the site being dry and prepared for reworking for clay in 1995.

Other species of note

Common Hawker and **Black Darter** – reported in July 1979.

Keeled Skimmer – not considered to be breeding, but small numbers of presumed dispersing teneral recorded in recent years.

Red-veined Darter – 1 on 27/8/84.

Habitat (from 1995 survey)

A complex of ponds in old clay workings, now let to NAFA for angling. There are five mature ponds and one younger (<10 years) pond, all set in a mosaic of scrub and broad-leaved woodland, semi-improved grassland and bramble/tall herb/tall grass patches, adjacent to the River Teign. Thus the surrounding habitat provides potentially ideal dragonfly feeding areas. However the majority of the grass is kept short by cattle grazing. This is a popular angling site and fish are stocked at high levels. Conductivity readings were taken on 4/8/95. Moderate numbers of waterfowl use the site.

First Pond: Mostly tree-fringed (some overhanging), with open stretches of 'rock armour' on the south side. A few emergents (*Juncus effusus*), some submerged plants (*Elodea*, *Ceratophyllum demersum*). Very high cover of *Nymphoides peltata*. Some gently shelving slopes. Water clear. pH: 7.9 (26/5/92); 8.2 8/6/95). Conductivity: 330 μ S/cm.

Island Pond: Mostly mature trees fringing (some overhanging) with bare swims between. To NE becomes more wooded, shady and swampy. A few emergents: *Juncus* at swims, *Typha* and *Phragmites* etc. towards NE end. One small patch of *Nymphoides*. Some gently shelving banks, very little submerged vegetation apparent. Water clear. pH: 8.4 (25/5/92 and 8/6/95). Conductivity: 300-330 μ S/cm.

Tiny Pond: At the NE corner of Island Pond in amongst woodland. Very shady and overhung. Appears shallow and full of detritus/vegetation.

Dores Pond: Large pond, mostly tree-fringed, much overhanging. Large area of part-submerged willow towards north end. At SW corner short cropped grass and bare beach frequented by cattle and Canada geese. Along SW edge are two large stretches of *Nymphoides peltata*. Some areas of *Phragmites*, especially to north, but mostly very few emergents. Very little submerged plant growth. Water clear; apparently subjected to liming programme in recent years, in an attempt to improve fish productivity. pH: 8.3 (26/5/92 and 8/6/95). Conductivity: 410 μ S/cm.

Weedy Pond: Completely tree-lined, mostly overhanging and hence shady. A few open anglers' 'swims' at edge. Few emergents, mostly rushes. Much detritus/dead leaves on bottom. Submerged vegetation frequent at very edge (e.g. *Utricularia australis*). Water clear. pH: 7.7 (26/5/92); 8.2 (8/6/95). Conductivity: 360-370 μ S/cm.

Linhay Pond: Largely tree-lined, much overhanging. North end shady. Areas of beach/goose lawn at west side plus some bare swims. Very few emergents and no submerged weed visible. Small area of *Nymphoides* near the goose beach on 8/6/95, but gone by 13/7/95 (probably goose grazed). pH: 8.1 (25/5/92); 8.2 (8/6/95). Conductivity: 310-360 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$.

Wheel Pond: About 50% of outer bank alder lined, the remainder semi-improved grassland, beach and swims, plus a swampy area of *Eleocharis palustris*. Emergents plentiful (*Juncus*, *Eleocharis*, *Typha latifolia*). Very large quantities of *Ceratophyllum*, *Utricularia*, *Myriophyllum* and *Elodea*. Island holds dense growth of young trees with some rushes at the edge. Fish numerous. Water clear. pH: 7.8 (25/5/92); 8.5 (8/6/95). Conductivity: 270,300 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$.

River Teign margins: Tree-lined, nettles, brambles and tall herbs.

Ruddy Darter area: At the extreme northern end of the site, a small, field edge swamp (dominated by *Sparganium erectum*) with little, if any, open water, held breeding Ruddy Darters, at least until 1992.

Status

None.

Area

ca. 25 ha

Owner/tenant

Sibelco, leased to Newton Abbot Federation of Anglers.

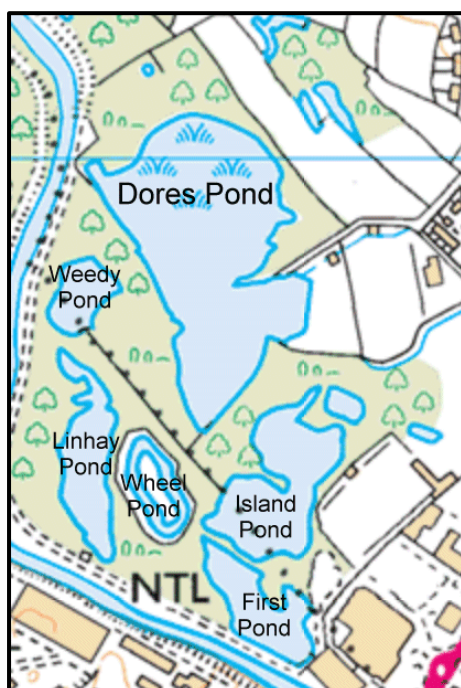
Local Authority: Teignbridge DC

Threats

- Over-zealous trimming of scrub and tall herb vegetation.
- Predation by stocked fish.
- Changes in water chemistry (liming).
- Re-working for clay.

Management suggestions

- Reduce level of cattle grazing or exclude cattle from some areas to improve grassland as feeding area, at least in main flight period.
- Minimise weed clearance in swims.
- Coppice or fell a proportion of the trees in patches, to encourage bankside vegetation. Fence off these areas to allow regeneration of tall herb/grass vegetation.



Rackerhayes (1995 survey map)

