

SMALL BROOK, AVON DAM

1997-2006: Possible Priority Site of National Importance

CURRENT STATUS UNCERTAIN

Typical Dartmoor runnels and flushes discovered in 1994 to hold small numbers of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly, but no records since 2005.

Last updated: 23/03/2025

Site: SMALL BROOK, AVON DAM	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX683647	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												
Emerald Damselfly												
White-legged Damselfly												
Large Red Damselfly	A	B	D		B	D			C			
Blue-tailed Damselfly												
Scarce Blue-t Damselfly			C		A	B						
Common Blue Damselfly												
Southern Damselfly												
Azure Damselfly						A						
Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red-eyed Damselfly												
Small Red Damselfly												
<u>Dragonflies</u>												
Hairy Dragonfly												
Common Hawker	B	A	B			+			B			
Norfolk Hawker												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker												
Migrant Hawker												
Emperor Dragonfly												
Lesser Emperor												
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	A		B	A		C			B			
Downy Emerald												
Broad-bodied Chaser												
Scarce Chaser												
Four-spotted Chaser												
Keeled Skimmer	A	B	D			D			C			
Black-tailed Skimmer												
Common Darter			B	B		C			B			
Red-veined Darter												
Ruddy Darter												
Black Darter	B	A	C			C			C			+
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
Total species in category:	5	4	8	2	2	9	0	0	6	0	0	1

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

Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly – A small colony (<10) discovered in 1994; maximum of three only in July 1995; 3 (including a pair *in cop.*) on 10/7/05.

Other species of note

Keeled Skimmer – in 1995, a maximum of 42 adults (four pairs *in cop.* and one ovipositing) on 15/8/95.

Habitat

A mosaic of heathland habitats in the Avon Valley just below the Avon Dam, including flushes, runnels, boggy areas and streams as well as drier habitats such as acid grassland and stands of bracken. pH: 5.8-6.7 (8/7/95). Conductivity: 40, 50-120 and 210 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ occasionally (15/8/95). Key to map (8/7/95):

- A. Very small runnels/flush/boggy patch.
- B. River Avon: clear, peaty, fast flow, rocky, occasional pools, frequently shaded by overhanging trees, *Rhododendron* etc. B': above bridge River Avon is similar, but with fewer trees – mostly fringed by 'open' moorland.
- C. Lower slopes running down to river: mosaic of bracken, tussocky *Molinia* grassland and *Sphagnum* lawn/small flushes. Much of this was dry in 1995.
- D. Very small, rushy/boggy flush, seasonally drying (1995).
- E. Tiny open pool with *Juncus effusus*/*Sphagnum* flush.
- F. Large flush/runnel complex south of Small Brook. (Runnels flowing south to form a tiny streamlet). Mosaic of runnels and pools, both open and vegetated, some with detritus base, some with *Potamogeton polygonifolius*/*Hypericum elodes*/*Ranunculus flammula*. Also much *Sphagnum*, tall tussocks of *J. effusus* and areas of *J. bulbosus*, grasses (*Holcus*) and *Hydrocotyle* etc. (The Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies seen in 1995 were at the extreme south of this area). Areas of bracken and drier grassland border and intersperse. F': tending towards *Molinia* south of Small Brook.
- G. Small Brook: a small stream varying from a fast flowing, narrow channel banked with dry heathland and containing mostly algae through slow, 1m deep pools with gravelly bases, to various well-vegetated, slower-moving stretches. In places the stream spreads out into a boggy flush or disappears beneath *Sphagnum*. Abundant *Sphagnum*, *P. polygonifolius*, *J. bulbosus*, *J. effusus* and *Molinia* ensuring plenty of emergent, submerged and overhanging vegetation. pH: 5.8 (8/7/95).
- H. Vegetation immediately north of Small Brook varies from seasonally dry *J. effusus* over dense, deep *Sphagnum* (by track) to short *Molinia*/*Sphagnum* flush/wet grassland. No dragonfly interest in 1995, but possibly better in wetter summers.
- I. Short (grazed?) boggy turf – *Sphagnum*/*Narthecium ossifragum*/*Molinia*.
- J. Boggy flushes (and seasonally dry runnels) with taller *J. effusus* and *Molinia* between.
- K. Zeal Gulley Stream, small, deeply incised and fast flowing (0.5m wide with pools to 1m deep). A little *Sphagnum* at edges, but mostly tall rush, *Molinia*, bracken, heath vegetation and gorse along edges. Algae and gravelly base in various spots.
- L. *Molinia* sward with some *Sphagnum*/*Erica tetralix* - relatively dry in 1995. Patches of wetter flush opening to a little open standing water in places.
- M. Striking *Sphagnum* dominated flush below small outcrop/headland with spring at top(?). Mosaic of *Molinia*, *Sphagnum*/*Drosera* and some open water.
- N. Stream very like K.
- O. The areas of greatest dragonfly activity appear to be around Small Brook itself (area G) and a large flush immediately to the south (areas F and F'). Avon Dam is a popular tourist attraction, but visitors appear to keep mainly to the surfaced track and areas of dry vegetation, so avoiding trampling wetland areas.

Status

None.

Area

10 ha

Owner/tenant

South West Water(?). Part of South Brent Common.

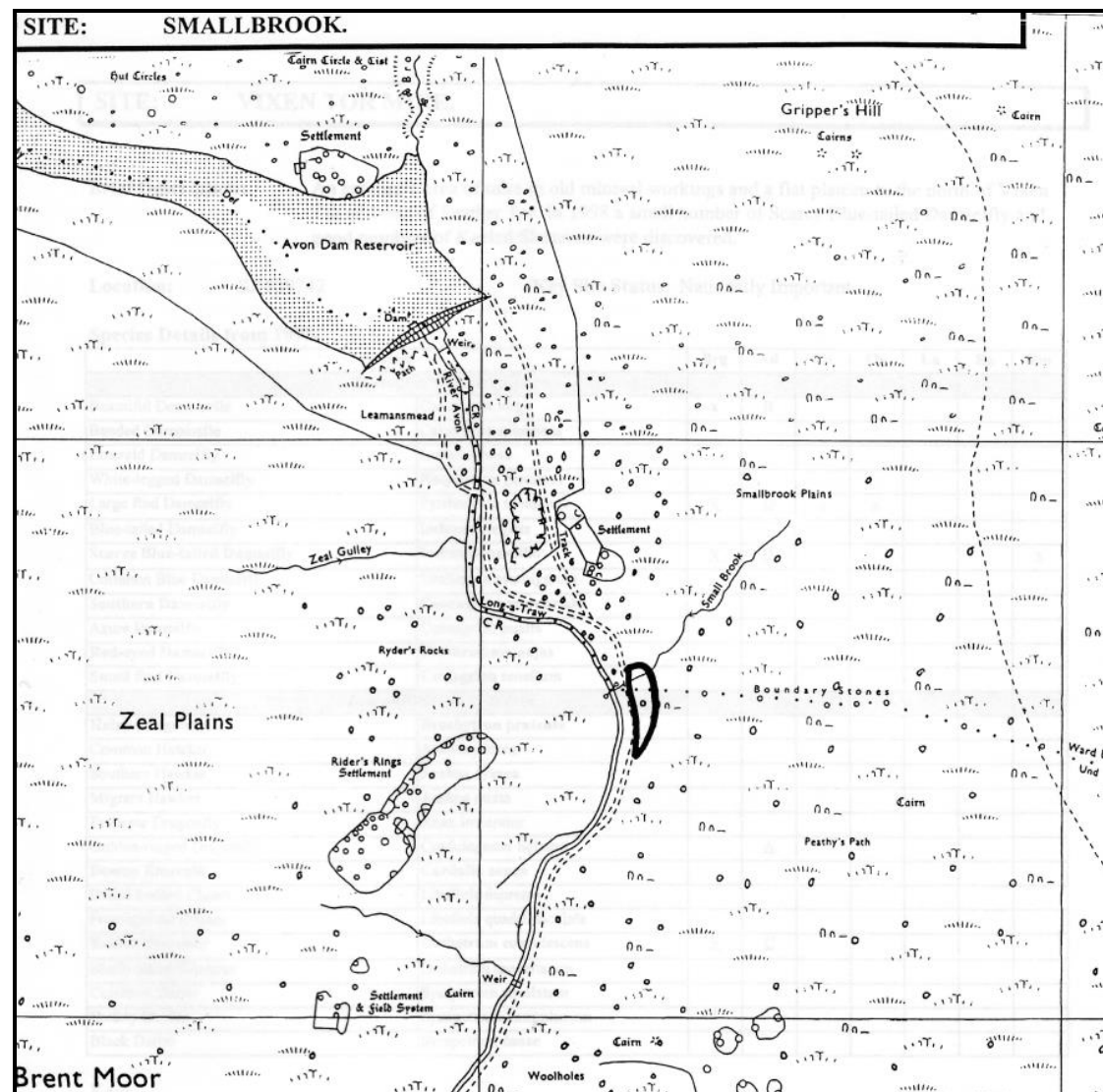
Local Authority: Dartmoor National Park.

Threats

- Overstocking could cause excessive poaching, especially by cattle in winter.

Management suggestions

- Maintain present hydrology.
- Maintain local grazing pressure at sufficient to keep open watercourses.
- Consider providing an interpretation board for visitors, highlighting the interest and importance of the site for wildlife.



Small Brook map (from 1995 survey)

