

# STOVER COUNTRY PARK

## 2017-2026: Confirmed Key Site of National Importance

A shallow, ornamental lake with abundant water lily (until 2008), locally extensive marginal swamp and woodland; many small ponds have been dug in surrounding heathland and also in marginal swamp. Historically the richest dragonfly site in Devon, with a large population of Red-eyed Damselfly and small numbers of Hairy Dragonfly, Downy Emerald and Scarce Chaser (egg-laying in 2023). Occasional records of Ruddy Darter.

Last updated: 11/04/25

Site: STOVER COUNTRY PARK	1987-1996			1997-2006			2007-2016			2017-2026		
Grid ref.: SX834751	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other	Breeding		Other
	Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss		Succ	Poss	
<b><u>Damselflies</u></b>												
Beautiful Demoiselle			B			C	B		C			C
Banded Demoiselle			A									
Emerald Damselfly		B	D	B	B	E	C	C	D	C	C	D
<b><u>White-legged Damselfly</u></b>												
Large Red Damselfly	B	B	E	D	D	E	D	C	D	D	C	E
Blue-tailed Damselfly	C	C	E	D	D	E	B	B	D	B	B	D
<b><u>Scarce Blue-t Damselfly</u></b>												
Common Blue Damselfly	C	C	E	D	D	E	C	B	E	E	C	F
<b><u>Southern Damselfly</u></b>												
Azure Damselfly	C	C	E	E	C	F	D	B	F	F	D	F
<b><u>Red-eyed Damselfly</u></b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>
Small Red-eyed Damselfly										D	C	F
<b><u>Small Red Damselfly</u></b>												
<b><u>Dragonflies</u></b>												
<b><u>Hairy Dragonfly</u></b>	<b>A</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>		<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>C</b>
Common Hawker						A			A			
<b><u>Norfolk Hawker</u></b>												
Brown Hawker												
Southern Hawker	A		C	C		B	C	A	C	B		C
Migrant Hawker			C	B		D			C	D	B	D
Emperor Dragonfly	B		C	C		C	B		C	C	B	C
Lesser Emperor												B
Vagrant Emperor												
Golden-ringed Dragonfly			A	A		B	A		B			B
<b><u>Downy Emerald</u></b>			<b>B</b>			<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>		<b>B</b>
Broad-bodied Chaser	A	A	C	C	B	C	B	B	C	B	A	C
<b><u>Scarce Chaser</u></b>										<b>A</b>		<b>C</b>
Four-spotted Chaser		A	C	B	B	D	D	B	D	C	B	D
Keeled Skimmer			B	A		C			B	A	A	B
Black-tailed Skimmer			C	A	A	C	A	B	D	C	B	D
Common Darter	B	A	C	D		D	C	B	E	C	C	D
Red-veined Darter						A						A
<b><u>Ruddy Darter</u></b>			<b>A</b>			<b>B</b>						<b>B</b>
Black Darter	A		B				A		A			A
Yellow-winged Darter												
Scarlet Darter												
<b>Total species in category:</b>	11	9	21	16	9	22	13	14	20	18	14	24

**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.

### ***Notable Species History***

**Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly** - recorded on 6/6/70 only.

**Red-eyed Damselfly** - recorded since 1979; 20-25 in spring, 1989-91; 100+ on 25/6/95 and 1/6/06; 57 on 25/5/07; 22 on 12/8/08 (17 Sue's Pond); 18 (1 pair; 6 on Sue's Pond) on 23/5/09; 44 (40 incl 2 ovip on Lake; 1 Sue's Pond and 3 Puddle Pond) on 4/6/10; 25 (12 Lake, 3 ovip; 12 Sue's Pond, 1 cop) on 23/5/18; 20+ on Lake 6+14/7/19; 119 (22 egg-laying) on 18/5/20; 436 (11 egg-laying) 14/6/21; maxima of only 150 in 2022 and 2023 and 115 in 2024 (mostly on the Lake, despite silt dredging, but small numbers scattered at ponds, including egg-laying at the SuDS and Puddle ponds).

**Small Red Damselfly** - recorded in 1950 only.

**Hairy Dragonfly** - regular since at least 1978, but in very small numbers: usually only one or two territorial males during 1990-95 (though Ranger considered 'C' adults appropriate); 1 egg-laying on 22/5/92 (Puddle Pond) and 22/6/96; singles egg-laying in 1997 and 2006; singles emerging on 3/5/98, 30/4/06 and 5/5/06; 12 exuviae (6 in N Marsh, 5 in S Marsh, 1 Sue's Pond) and 6 emergents on 7/5/06; 4 (1 pair in cop.) on 25/5/07; 1 exuvia on 27/4/08 and 19/5/08, with B (2-5) on 5/5/08; 2 exuviae Sue's Pond 25/4/09; a maximum of c6 (1 egg-laying) on 1/6/09; 2 exuviae 16/5/10; 4-7 on 22/5/10 and 2 (1 egg-laying Puddle Pond) 4/6/10; 5 (1 egg-laying) on 15/6/13; 1 exuvia Sue's Pond 28/5/17; c12 on 23/5/18; 5 exuviae 27/5/18; c5 (1 egg-laying at Hotspot pools) and 4 exuviae 1/6/19; 5 (1 egg-laying Sue's Pond 8+21/5/20) in 5/20; 8 (7 male; 1 exuvia) 14/6/21; up to 5 males in 2022; 11 on 19/5/24.

**Downy Emerald** - regular since at least 1976, but in very small numbers only: singles during 1990-95, though up to three in 1992; 2 on 25/5/07 and 1 male at Sue's Pond on 8/6/07; B (2-5) exuviae on 11/5/08; 1 at Lake on 1/6/09; 1 emergent and 2 exuviae on 22/5/10; up to 3 (Sue's P, Puddle P and Lake) 4/6/10; 4 exuviae Sue's Pond 22/5/16; 1 egg-laying Sue's Pond 27/5/18; 3 males and 6 exuviae Sue's Pond 1/6/19; 3 (possibly 6, 1 egg-laying) at Lake and 1 emergent Sue's Pond 21/5/20; 4 males on 19/5/24 and an exuvia on the Outlet Channel on 2/6/24.

**Scarce Chaser** – an old female photographed in dry heath on 5/7/19; a male was along the outlet channel on 2/6/22 and 3 unmated males there on 6/6/22; after a record on 1/6/23, there were 3 males scattered around the Lake and its channels on 4/6/23 and 8 (1 egg-laying) on 23/6/23; no records in 2024

**Ruddy Darter** – one male in 1988; singles on 29/7/02, 1/8/02; 2 on 1/9/02 and 28/9/02; 1 on 3/8/05; 2 immature males at Puddle Pond 4/8/21; mature male at the SuDS ponds on 18/8/24.

### ***Other species of interest***

**Banded Demoiselle** – 1 on 4/9/93 is the sole record (the nearest known breeding sites are in the Exe Valley).

**Small Red-eyed Damselfly** – first seen c5 (1 pair egg-laying) in the Inlet Channel and 2 males at Sue's Pond on 3/8/18; 20+ (3 in cop. on Lake, 1 egg-laying at Sue's Pond) on 6+14/7/19; c100 (2 egg-laying, 3 cop Lake; few Sue's Pond; 1 male Hotspot Pond) on 28/7/19; 114 (35+ egg-laying) on 12/8/20; 100 (75, including 12 egg-laying, on the SuDS Ponds) on 4/8/21; 577 (72 on the SuDS Ponds, 500+ on the Lake) on 15/07/22; 49 in 2023; and 158 in 2024 (during lake dredging), including 125 (38 egg-laying) at the SuDS Ponds on 31/7/24.

**Common Hawker** – reported on 6/8/78, in 1982, on 13/7/85, 1/7/02, 14/10/02, 8/8/09 and 9/9/09 (male).

**Lesser Emperor** – 1 male over Lake on 6 & 15/7/19 and 2/8/19; 2 males (Lake and SuDS) 11-12/8/20, with 1 on 13/8/20; a male over the Lake on 25/6/23 and 18-19/7/23.

**Keeled Skimmer** - recorded on 13/7/85; two or three teners seen along a ride in 1992; male at 'Puddle Pond' in 1995; 1 egg-laying on 18/6/02; C (6-20) on 24/6/06; 2 on 12/8/08; 5 males on 23/7/13; 2 males on 31/7/17; max 3 males Hotspot pool 2019; 5 (4 males) 24/6 & 12/8/20 (in cop. on 12/8); 1 male SuDS pond 14/6/21; 1 male at Hotspot Pond in 2022 and on 4/6/23, and in the S Marsh on 18/7/23; 1 male on 30/6/24 and 2, including a teneral, at SuDS pond on 21/7/24.

**Black Darter** – 2 on 10/10/92; 1 egg-laying on 21/8/95; 1 recently-emerged at the Puddle Pond 29/7/08; 1 on 26/8/17; mature male at the SuDS ponds on 18/8/24.

**Red-veined Darter** – single males over Lake on 10/6/06 and 6/7/19.

### ***Habitat (from 1995 survey)***

A large ornamental lake and associated channels, ponds and ditches amongst conifer woodland and small areas of heathland. A very popular country park with large numbers of visitors. The public feeds the ducks (and gulls), thereby maintain artificially large numbers of birds. The site is positively managed for wildlife and quiet recreation by Devon CC. Target notes (refer to map):

1. Pylon Island Pond: Small pond created in 1992 under pylon, amongst heathy vegetated island. Some shade from trees to NW. Lots of emergent *Juncus effusus* plus a little *Typha* and *Alisma*. Submerged: abundant *Potamogeton* and algae with *Eleogiton fluitans*/*J. bulbosus*. Considerable drawdown in 1995. pH: 7.7 (1995).
2. Pylon Weedy Pond: Another small pond created in 1992 under pylon. 70% shaded at 11.30 am due to trees at south. Choked with *J. bulbosus*/*Eleogiton fluitans* plus some *Potamogeton*. pH: 8.0 (1995).
3. Sedimentation pond: created in 1992 to intercept pollutants coming from the catchment via the Inlet Channel, leading to western lake channels (8). Quite a lot of shade from surrounding trees (but sunny in centre and dappled sun round edges). Emergents, rush and sedge, sparse (partly due to drawdown?). Submerged *Callitriche*/*Eleogiton fluitans* etc. Water clear, about 0.6 m deep.
4. Cascade: Inlet to lake. This is an open sunny stretch. Plenty of submerged weed including algae, *Callitriche*. Frequent emergents include *Juncus*, *Iris*, *Alisma*, *Sparganium*. Banks quite tall and steep, vegetated with tall grass/herbs. Backed up behind a boom. Deep, fairly clear water. Flow imperceptible.
5. Ditches beside paths: Part recently cleared = bare clay. Elsewhere well vegetated with emergent rush and herbs abundant and blanketweed abundant. Much iron ochre in parts. About 0.5-0.75 wide and 0.5-0.75 deep. pH variable.
6. Cascade: Shady where it runs through woodland. With a series of gabion weirs designed to back up water into a series of deep pools. Dappled sun and shade means weed growth limited to very sparse algae and no emergents. Water slightly cloudy. Inlet to the Lake.
7. On ground appears as wide blind ditch unconnected to Cascade. Shady, much *Potamogeton*.
8. Western lake channels: Surrounded by woodland and with maturely-wooded islands, the water channels are very shaded, with occasional patches of dappled sun which support clumps of *Potamogeton* and white water lily. Water fairly cloudy and deep.
9. Shady end of main lake: Similar to 8 in its overhanging trees, dappled sun, occasional lily patches and semi-cloudy water.
10. Duck feeding area: This small part of the lake is open and sunny, but with little vegetation because of actions of feeding wildfowl. pH: 8.4 (14/6/92).
11. Western marshy fringe of lake: tending to fairly solid ground at the base of the mature trees on the bank. Tall wetland plants such as *Typha*, *Juncus*, *Iris*, *Phalaris*, *Mentha*, *Filipendula*, *Lycopus*, *Oenanthe* and much *Salix*, which is subject to control. The lakeside margin comprises tall emergents such as *Iris* mixed with *Salix* and is a valuable refuge area for damselflies.
12. Off-shoot of lake (once the inflow, but now no water movement): Overhung with trees with many tall emergents (especially *Iris*), but plenty of open water. pH: 6.8 (1995).
13. Tree-lined, shady southern and eastern lake banks: Occasional emergents at bank-edge (i.e. no marshy areas). Trees are broadleaves. pH: 7.8 (14/6/92).
14. Outflow 'canal': Banked, wooded with (overhanging) broadleaves. Fairly sunny, with tall emergents, patches of *Nymphaea* and fairly clear water.
15. Bare bank providing access point to lake bank by outflow.
16. Northern marshy fringe of lake: composed of tall emergents and herbs including *Iris*, *Typha*, *Phalaris*, some *Scirpus lacustris*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, etc, plus invading *Salix*, *Betula* and Bog Myrtle. *Equisetum* and *Sphagnum* visible from the landward edge. Ponds

dug (and periodically cleared) adjacent to the main path hold many dragonflies, including breeding Hairy Dragonfly.

17. The main body of the lake: divided between open water (40%+) and *Nymphaea alba* (60% at most) in large (and some smaller) rafts. The lake is reportedly 1.5m deep, but much of it is appreciably shallower (0.6-1.0 m?), with a fairly deep layer of silt. There is a small clump of other water plants, most notably *Utricularia*, near the marsh edge. The fish population includes large pike and, in the past at least, there have been large numbers of eels. Overall, banks comprise ca. 50% overhanging trees and ca. 50% emergents, with <1% bare; open water 30-40%; water lilies 60-70%. pH: 7.4-7.5 (14/6/92); 7.4 (1995). Conductivity: 300  $\mu$ S/cm (1995).
18. Puddle Pond: Created in 1987 in a heathy clearing in the woods. Public access has been limited to a jetty at the south edge (to help reinstate trampled bare clay along most of south bank). Around the rest of the pond emergents are very sparse, rush mostly, with one or two patches of good *J. effusus*. The water itself is mostly choked with thick *Eleogiton fluitans* or *Juncus bulbosus*, though some clear water persists near the jetty. A few dead branches provide perching posts. pH: 6.4 (14/6/92); 5.5 (1995). Conductivity: 130-140  $\mu$ S/cm (1995).
19. Tiny Peaty Pool: Created in 1994 where a ditch flows into the edge of the marsh. Very shallow, peaty base, some very sparse and short emergent *Eleocharis/Equisetum*. Bordered by marsh vegetation and by bare path edge with some Rhododendron/Laurel regrowth. Some oily film near inlet. Conductivity: 190  $\mu$ S/cm (1995).

The Ventiford Brook flows through the Park to the south of the Lake. Although mostly shaded, it supports small numbers of Beautiful Demoiselles and Golden-ringed Dragonflies, some of which wander to the Park's standing waters.

A pond shown on old maps below the dam was re-created in about 2000. Known informally as 'Sue's Pond' and surrounded by trees, it has become an important breeding site for Downy Emerald and Hairy Dragonfly; both red-eyed damselflies may breed here. Ponds either side of the Puddle Pond were created prior to 2009, together with another to the east; these ponds often dry out, or almost so, in dry periods.

White Water-lilies, formerly a feature of the lake, suffered rapid die back in 2009. These had hosted Stover's Red-eyed Damselfly population, which subsequently bred in some of the surrounding pools. In 2018, Curly Waterweed had colonised the Inlet Channel, spreading into the lake and its channels by 2019, when the lake held a substantial mix of pondweeds. This in turn supported thousands of Azure, Common Blue and both red-eyed damselflies. However, this vegetation was essentially removed during a major desilting operation in 2024. With a view to returning the lake's condition to 'favourable', in summer 2024 most of the sediment on the bed of the lake was removed and transferred to a cleared woodland site adjacent to area 11 above.

Two pairs of Sustainable Drainage System ponds ('the SuDS Ponds') were created in the 2018/9 winter to intercept pollutants coming from the adjacent A38. Smaller 'sedimentation' ponds take the run-off from two sources, which proceeds into two 'balancing' (or 'reedbed') ponds. Although shallow and lined with gravel, emergent vegetation was introduced and the ponds soon attracted a wide range of breeding species, including both red-eyed damselflies, Hairy Dragonfly, Migrant Hawker and Black-tailed Skimmer.

**Status**

SSSI; Country Park.

**Area**

8 ha

**Owner/tenant**

Devon County Council.

**Local Authority:** Teignbridge DC

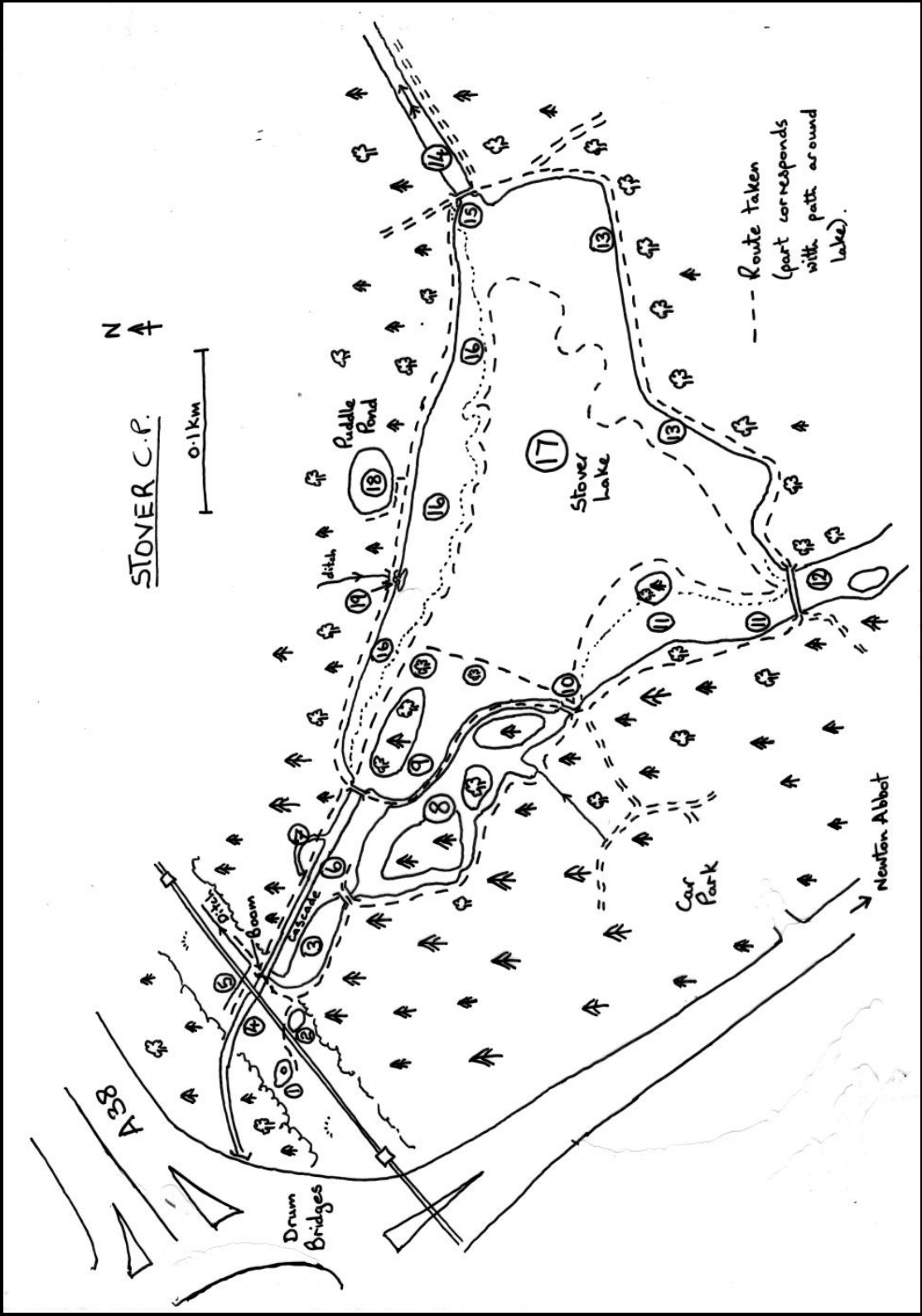
***Threats***

- Siltation and natural succession.
- Pollution from A38 (now treated in the SuDS ponds), Heathfield and the catchment more widely.
- Eutrophication and turbidity from wildfowl (and in 2024 from desilting).

***Management suggestions***

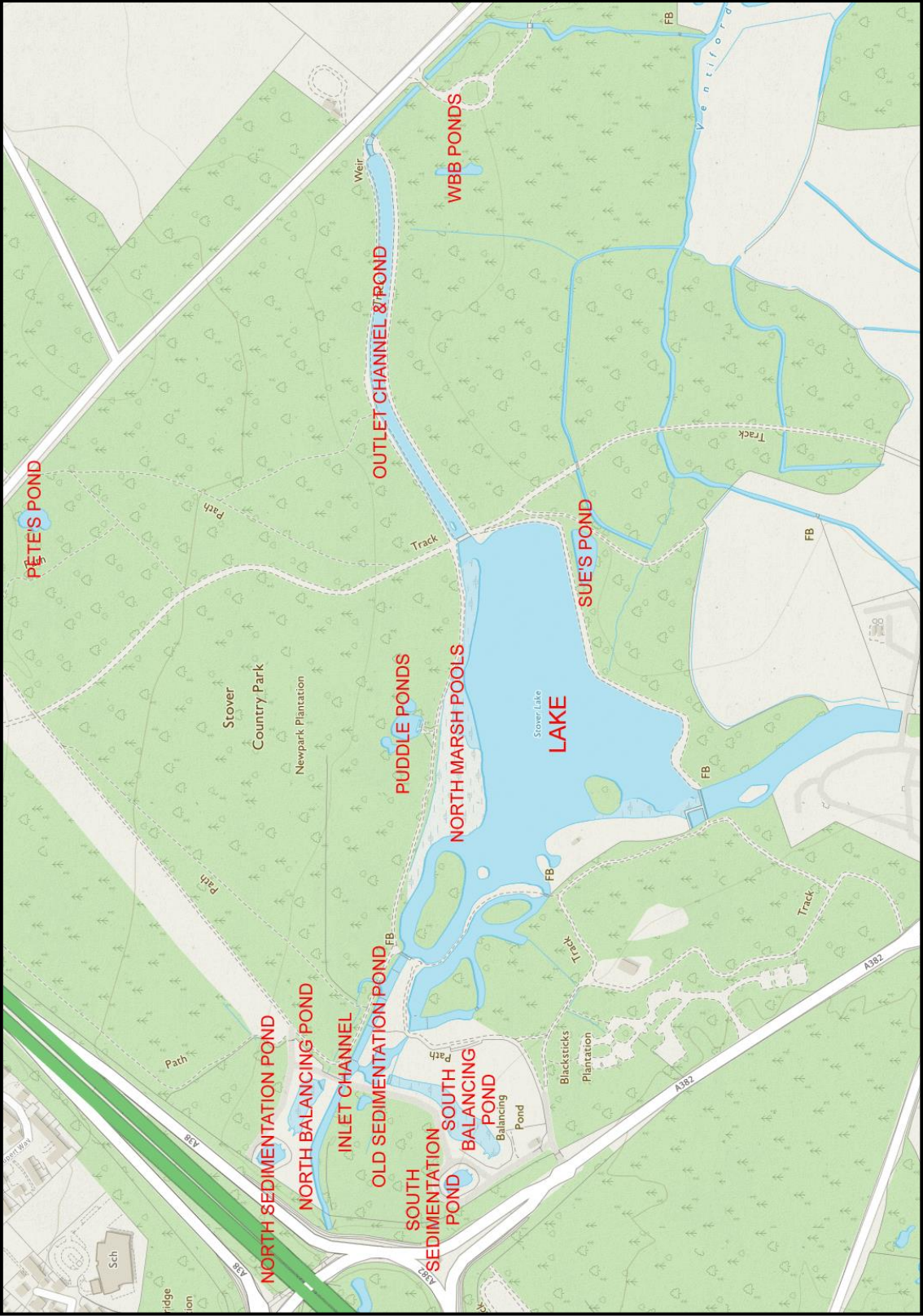
- Create new ponds periodically and manage others in rotation.
- Determine reason for the loss of water-lilies in the lake.
- Ensure adequate protection against pollution hazard, including sewage from Heathfield.
- Discourage the public from feeding wildfowl away from one, very limited area.

Stover: 1995 survey map





Stover Lake and ponds following creation of SuDS ponds in 2018/9.



2019-2024	SuDS Ponds					Inlet Channel		Western Lake Channels		Hotspot Pond	Puddle Ponds	Outlet Channel	Sue's Pond	Lake (N)	Lake (S)	Lake (W)	Board-walk
Species \ Sub-site	1	2	3	4	5	6a	6b	7a	7b	8	9	10	11	12a	12b	12c	13
Emerald Damselfly																	
Beautiful Demoiselle	+				+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+		
Azure Damselfly																	
Large Red Damselfly																	
Red-eyed Damselfly																	
Small Red-eyed Dam.																	
Common Blue Damselfly																	
Blue-tailed Damselfly																	
Southern Hawker																	
Migrant Hawker																	
Emperor Dragonfly																	
Lesser Emperor		+		+										+			
Hairy Dragonfly																	
Golden-ringed Dragonfly		+															
Downy Emerald																	
Four-spotted Chaser																	
Broad-bodied Chaser																	
Scarce Chaser																	
Black-tailed Skimmer							+										
Keeled Skimmer	+	+		+													
Red-veined Darter														+			
Black Darter		+									+						
Common Darter																	
Ruddy Darter	+																



Confirmed breeding (exuvia(e) and/or pre-flight emergent)

Probable breeding (oviposition)

Possible breeding (copulating pair)

+ Present, but not necessarily breeding