

## Fobney Island Monitoring Summary Renton Righelato November 2013

The monitoring arrangements are summarised in Table 1. Butterflies, dragonflies and damsel flies and birds have been reported for 2013. Chris Bucke had started to do botanical surveys in 2012, but became ill and died in 2013. His colleagues in the RDNHS have agreed to restart surveying in 2014. Mammal surveys planned for 2013 were not carried out and a new arrangement has been made for 2014.



5 May 2012 East gate view of island westward



5 May 2012 Central screen looking E



15 May 2013 Central screen looking E



24 July 2013 Central screen looking E

After a slow start, 2013 was an excellent growing year and a dense cover of grasses and wildflowers (most of the species sown in 2011 were apparent) developed, which attracted large numbers of butterflies.

**Butterfly** surveys are carried out on and around Fobney Island by John Lerpiniere (report attached). Towards the end of July, the island was particularly rich in Meadow Browns with smaller numbers of other species. The transect, including the path south of the river, recorded 15 species. Four species of **damselfly** and five **dragonflies** were recorded : Mike Turton's survey report is attached.

**80 bird species** were recorded (table 2), five more than in 2012, with a 30 species confirmed as breeding or probably breeding. The scrapes were used by Green and Common Sandpipers and Redshank on passage as well as summering Little Ringed Plover and breeding Lapwing. Observers are encouraged to submit records via [www.berksbirds.co.uk](http://www.berksbirds.co.uk), where they can also be searched.

**Table 1: Fobney monitoring summary: January-December 2013**

<b>Taxa</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Birds</b>	Renton Righelato et al. /BOC	Monthly + casual recording. Started February 2012 + Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)	BBS recording all territories/breeding pairs on the island. Casual coverage of island + towpath + south bank of river . <b>Breeding:</b> At least two pairs of Lapwing bred and 4 chicks were ringed. Little Ringed Plover were present during the breeding season. Floods caused a lot of movements between sites in the Reading area and there was no evidence of breeding on Fobney. Shelduck was occasionally present. Hobbies were often seen feeding. <b>Wintering:</b> Small numbers of wildfowl were in evidence in January/March and October/November: Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pochard. Canada and Greylag Geese have been present in small numbers and have not, so far, been an obvious problem.
<b>Mammals</b>  Bats	University of Reading (Becky Thomas) Berkshire & S Bucks Bat Group (Hilton Bartlett)		Preliminary site survey done September 2012 by Becky Thomas. Small mammals: no trapping in 2013. Annual surveys to be done by students starting 2014. Mink found in an owl box.  Bat monitoring to start in 2013: <b>Not done</b>
<b>Butterflies</b>	John Lerpiniere	Fortnightly in summer Started	With little vegetation on the island in 2012, few butterflies were noted; but 16 species were recorded south of the river. In 2013 a similar range of species was recorded, with many more butterflies, mostly Meadow Brown, on the island.  Data entered into Transect Walker for the national Butterfly Monitoring Scheme
<b>Dragonflies, damselflies</b>	Mike Turton	Started. Monthly from end April to late September,	Four species of damselfly and five dragonflies were recorded
<b>River fly monitoring</b>	R&DAA/Graham Scholey	Annual?	R&DAA report that the fly monitoring is going well, with an equally good score when compared with our other sites further upstream. We have now a years worth of results and this now can form a comparable baseline.
<b>Plants</b>	RDNHS	Approximately 6 weekly in Spring/Autumn	No data in 2013 – work to restart 2014

## **Fobney Dragonfly Monitoring Report for 2013** Mike Turton October 2013

Now that the island is fully accessible, the monitoring transect is as follows:

- The first section runs from the eastern gate along the path on island to the 1<sup>st</sup> hide, then across the island on the bank dividing the two main areas of water and back to the eastern gate along the bank between the eastern lake and the river.
- The second section runs from the eastern gate along the canal towpath to the weir, then back through the western gate to the western hide. The river is checked from the weir.
- The western lake is checked from the path where possible and from the hides at both ends, though these are not close enough to the water to pick up most species.

Spring this year was very late starting, which is reflected in the results of the first visit at the end of May. Conditions improved considerably after that however. I carried out 4 surveys to date in 2013: 21<sup>st</sup> May (an afternoon visit in poor conditions for dragonflies with only 2 species recorded in very low numbers), 19<sup>th</sup> June, 27<sup>th</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> September.

One, possibly two, species of damselfly bred on the site last year and were not washed away by the winter floods. Exuvia were found on the emergent vegetation on the south side of the eastern lake in September. Those within reach were retrieved and identified; however there were more which were out of reach.

The following species have been recorded this year:

**Banded Demoiselle.** Max count 75. Occurs in grass alongside river on south side of the island and along the canal towpath

**Large Red Damselfly.** Only 1 recorded - found on the lakes in May. This was a teneral, but it is not possible to tell whether it emerged from the lakes on site or from a nearby site.

**Red-eyed Damselfly.** Max count 49, mainly on the lakes where they are attempting to breed. The occasional one is also found on the canal.

**Common Blue Damselfly.** Max count 425. Mainly found on the lakes and in the grass on the island with some also occurring along the canal towpath. Egg-laying females were recorded on the eastern lake. Teneral were also recorded, but it is not possible to tell whether they emerged from the lakes on site or from a nearby site. However some of the exuvia recorded (but not collected) in September may have been of this species.

**Blue-tailed Damselfly.** Max count of 8, all on the lakes. Some of the exuvia present were positively identified as belonging to this species. Three emerging Blue-tailed Damselflies were also recorded.

**Brown Hawker.** Max count of 4. Occurs on both the island and the adjoining canal, probably moving between the different habitats.

**Migrant Hawker.** Max count 5. Occurs on both the island and the adjoining canal, probably moving between the different habitats.

**Emperor Dragonfly.** Max count 3. Occurs on both the island and the adjoining canal, probably moving between the different habitats.

**Black-tailed Skimmer.** Max count 9 on the lakes. This species is attempting to breed.

**Common Darter.** Maximum count 14. Often seen at rest on the gravel path through the site. One egg-laying female was recorded.

**Ruddy Darter.** Maximum count 3. One egg-laying female was recorded.

Five species either have bred or are attempting to breed in the lakes. There is currently very little emergent vegetation for the nymphs to use to climb out of the water when they are ready to emerge. Without more vegetation, it is likely that breeding success will be limited. Hopefully the vegetation will spread as the lakes mature. Roesel's Bush Cricket was also found on the island.

### **Fobney Butterflies in July 2013**      John Lerpiniere July 2013

The new wetland reserve at Fobney Island has given a lift to butterflies in the 10km square SU77. The reserve is at the south west corner of the square at SU7071 north of the recycling centre in Island Road. The reserve was completed in November 2011 with the formal opening in May 2013. In 2012 surveys of a range of taxa began including a UKBMS transect. Section 2 of the transect runs through the first half of the island for about 300m. The west end is fenced off as a refuge for birds. In early 2012 wild flowers were sown but it was feared most seed was washed away in the prolific rains and flooding. However this year the flowers, and a number of thistles, exploded providing good nectar sources and a variety of vegetation heights.

In 2012 only an occasional butterfly was noted in section 2 although reasonable numbers to the south of the island compensated somewhat. However in July this year the butterflies in section 2 exploded with the flowers. On 1st July ten Small Tortoiseshells were counted with two more along the towpath in section 3 totalling 12 along the island. The following week 85 Meadow Browns were counted in section two. Near the end of July 15 species were recorded on the transect route including 23 Peacocks although the majority were to the south of the island, also six moth species, not including grass veneers. The dragonflies are flourishing too with excellent photo opportunities of a variety of species landing on the tall vegetation around the pathways.

Table 2

**Fobney: Bird species recorded January- December 2013**

Total species recorded 80

Total confirmed breeding 12

Total probable breeding 18

Species	Breeding code	Species	Breeding code
Mute Swan	● ON	Skylark	●
Greylag Goose	●	Sand Martin	●
Canada Goose	● FL	Swallow	●
Egyptian Goose	● P	House Martin	●
Shelduck	●	Meadow Pipit	●
Mandarin Duck	● P	Grey Wagtail	● FL
Gadwall	● P	Pied-White Wagtail	● P
Teal	●	Wren	● T
Mallard	● FL	Dunnock	● T
Shoveler	●	Robin	● T
Pochard	●	Blackbird	● T
Tufted Duck	●	Fieldfare	●
Pheasant	● T	Song Thrush	● T
Little Grebe	●	Redwing	●
Cormorant	●	Mistle Thrush	●
Little Egret	●	Sedge Warbler	● T
Grey Heron	●	Blackcap	●
Red Kite	●	Garden Warbler	● FL
Buzzard	●	Whitethroat	● FL
Sparrowhawk	●	Chiffchaff	● T
Kestrel	●	Willow Warbler	●
Hobby	●	Goldcrest	●
Moorhen	● P	Long-tailed Tit	● FL
Coot	● ON	Blue Tit	● FL
Redshank	●	Great Tit	● FL
Little Ringed Plover	●	Treecreeper	●
Lapwing	● FL	Jay	●
Common Sandpiper	●	Magpie	●
Green Sandpiper	●	Rook	●
Black-headed Gull	●	Carrion Crow	●
Lesser Black-backed Gull	●	Starling	●
Herring Gull	●	Chaffinch	● T
Common Tern	●	Greenfinch	● T
Feral Pigeon	●	Goldfinch	● T
Stock Dove	● T	Siskin	●
Woodpigeon	● T	Linnet	●
Collared Dove	●	Bullfinch	●
Swift	●	Reed Bunting	● FF
Kingfisher	●	Yellowhammer	F
Green Woodpecker	●		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	●		

