

Fobney Island Monitoring Summary 2020

The monitoring arrangements are summarised in Table 1. There has been limited monitoring in 202 due partly to the coronavirus epidemic, which has restricted movement and to the fact that Mike Turton, who carried out or organised many of the surveys, has moved from the area.

As in 2019. for much of the year water levels were low, leaving the scrapes mostly dry in summer and water levels low in the eastern lake. However, heavy rains in November and December almost completely flooded the island by the end of the year. The areas of Phragmites and Typha continue to expand in the wetter margins.

Table 1: Fobney monitoring summary: January-December 2020

Taxa	By whom	Frequency	Comments
Plants	Renee Grayer and Trish Marcuse	Last survey in 2018	Management plan involves: (a) August/September mowing of two thirds of meadow areas, leaving wide margins that are cut alternate years, (b) removal of Willow from meadows and lake/scrape margins.
Birds	Adrian Lawson, Renton Righelato and others via berksbirds.co.uk	Approx. Monthly casual recording.	Casual coverage of island + towpath + south bank of river. 85 species in 2020. A total of 107 species have now been recorded since 2012. Breeding: 36 species probably bred in the survey area, with a further 10 possibly breeding. Nightingale, which was singing on the south bank of the river again in May and June is considered a probable breeder. The Reed Warbler population has increased from two territories in 2018 to six or seven. Barn Owls bred successfully in the Thames Water site north of the canal. Passage: No unusual species. Winter: Wintering Stonechat numbers have been increasing from one or two in 2012 to four to six on the island and the rough grassland south of the river. Dartford Warbler was recorded for the third year: a bird present with the Stonechats south of the river.
Bats	Giles Sutton (RBC)		No survey in 2020.
Other mammals		No survey	Roe Deer and Mole recorded.
Butterflies	John Lerpiniere	Weekly in spring and summer.	19 of the 24 species recorded on the site were seen in 2020. Numbers were generally lower than in the previous four years. Marbled White was present for the second year in succession.
Dragonflies, damselflies		No surveys in 2020	
River fly	R&DAA/EA		No data
Hoverflies	Linda Fenwick		
Orthoptera			
Reptiles			
Amphibia			

The area recorded includes Fobney Island, the contiguous Kennet and Avon Canal, the strip of woodland to the south of the River Kennet owned by Reading Borough Council and the adjacent rough grassland.

The nearby field to the north of the Thames Water plant was again flooded early and late in the year but dried during the mid summer months. It held good numbers of Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall, Snipe and Lapwing in the winter months. Green Sandpiper were present much of the year. Lapwing bred. Gadwall probably bred. No Water Rail surveys were done, but birds were present through the breeding season. A Little Owl again used a hole in a Willow on the south side. Records for this area are **not** included in the Fobney Island survey data.

Butterflies

Transects to count butterflies are carried out weekly from 1st April to late September. Usually around 22 weeks of the 26 are covered and in this difficult year we managed 17 weeks, thanks to continued help from Anne and John Booth. The route is divided into six sections in a complete circuit:

Section 2 eastern half of the island

Section 3 towpath

Sections 4 and 5 south shore

Section 6 Smallmead side and paddock

Section 1 road and car park

In spite of some fine weather butterfly numbers were a little down with four year figures showing a downward trend for most species. Those bucking the trend were Large White and Red Admiral with Peacock alone showing substantial increase which was reflected nationally. Section 2 on the island itself was once again disappointing. There was a pleasing show of flowering plants but as these are at their best in mid to late summer a possible explanation is that the earlier good weather meant butterfly numbers dwindled early. Certainly, August produced very low numbers of butterflies nationally. Although fewer species were noted this year, 19 of the 24, it was encouraging that a single Marbled White was counted, its first appearance being the previous year. As a colonial species it may have established a small colony on the island.

Dragonflies

Mike Turton, who has carried out odonata surveys since 2014, has moved from the area and we are now seeking a surveyor. The monitoring transect is as follows:

- The first section runs from the eastern gate along the path on island to the 1st 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. Where possible, the transect stays close to the water's edge so as to include all Odonata on the water.
- 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.
- During the nesting season, 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. Later in the summer and depending on the density of the grass and willow scrub, it is sometimes possible to gain access to the ponds at this end.
- The final section is the path on the south bank of the R. Kennet.

Surveys were carried out by walking the above route at a slow pace and counting all Odonata within an imaginary box 5m in front, behind and above and 2.5m either side.

Birds

Species	● present w winter only S summer only	Breeding code	Notes
Total species	81	47	
Mute Swan	●	FL	
Greylag Goose	●	FL	
Canada Goose	●	FL	
Egyptian Goose	●		
Shelduck			
Mandarin Duck	●	H	
Wigeon			
Gadwall	● w		
Teal	● w		
Mallard	●	FL	
Shoveler			
Garganey			
Pochard			
Tufted Duck	● w		
Pheasant	●	P	
Little Grebe			On river
Great Crested Grebe			
Cormorant	●		
Little Egret	●		
Grey Heron	●		
Red Kite	●		
Sparrowhawk	●		
Buzzard	●		
Kestrel	●	P	
Hobby	● S		
Water Rail	●	T	
Moorhen	●	H	
Coot	●	FL	
Oystercatcher	●		
Little Ringed Plover			
Lapwing	●		
Snipe			
Common Sandpiper			
Green Sandpiper	●		
Redshank			
Greenshank			
Black-headed Gull	●		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	●		
Herring Gull	●		
Black Tern			
Common Tern	● S		
Feral Pigeon	●		
Stock Dove	●		
Woodpigeon	●		
Collared Dove	●		
Ring-necked Parakeet	●		
Cuckoo	● S	H	
Barn Owl	●	FL	
Swift	● S		
Kingfisher	●	H	
Green Woodpecker	●	H	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	●	T	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker			

Species	● present w winter only S summer only	Breeding code	Notes
Skylark			
Sand Martin	● S	H	
Swallow	● S		
House Martin	● S		
Meadow Pipit	● w		
Grey Wagtail	●	T	
Pied-White Wagtail	●		
Wren	●	T	
Dunnock	●	T	
Robin	●	T	
Whinchat			
Stonechat	● w		4+ wintering on the Island and grassland S of river
Nightingale	● S	T	Singing from scrub on south bank of river May/June
Wheatear			
Redstart			
Blackbird	●	T	
Fieldfare	● w		
Song Thrush	●	T	
Redwing	● w		
Mistle Thrush	●		
Cetti's Warbler	●	T	Singing at three sites - south bank of river and canal bank
Sedge Warbler	● S	T	
Reed Warbler	● S	FL	6 territorial birds
Blackcap	● S	T	
Garden Warbler	● S	T	At the usual site in scrub at west end of island
Lesser Whitethroat			
Whitethroat	● S	FL	
Dartford Warbler	● w		With Stonechats S of river 2020/21 winter
Chiffchaff	●	T	
Willow Warbler	● S		
Goldcrest	●	T	
Long-tailed Tit	●	T	
Blue Tit	●	FL	
Great Tit	●	FL	
Nuthatch	●	T	
Treecreeper	●	T	
Jay	●	H	
Magpie	●	UN	
Jackdaw	●	T	
Rook	●		
Carrion Crow	●	UN	
Raven			
Starling	●	T	
Chaffinch	●	T	
Greenfinch	●	T	
Goldfinch	●	T	
Siskin			
Linnet	●		
Lesser Redpoll			
Bullfinch	●	S	
Yellowhammer			
Reed Bunting	●	P	
Common Mynah			Escape singing April/May