



## Milton Keynes Natural History Society

### Blue Lagoon Self-Guided Walk

Entrance grid reference: SP871322

Starting point: Notice board at the end of the car park

Length: Approx 0.75miles

This is an excellent site for Damselflies, Dragonflies and Butterflies. It is a large area and a number of walks are possible. This suggested route is fairly short but will enable you to sample what the site has to offer and could take more than an hour on a warm, sunny afternoon. If you have binoculars take them along as they are very useful for watching insects, as well as for the birds. Most of the paths have firm surfaces, but some are grassy and can be muddy after rain.

The main entrance is off Drayton Road, to the west of the main railway line, at SP871322 (see OS Explorer map 192 or OS Landranger map 152 or MK City Atlas ref. 13Q). From here, a signpost directs you to go under the railway and turn right into the car park. At the far end of the car park you will find a notice board showing a plan of the site.

Start at the notice board. Take the track along the edge of the car park and follow it round to the right. Walk along this track past reed beds and open water (point 1) popularly known as Newfoundout. This is a good spot to see Moorhens and to start looking out for Damselflies and Dragonflies. The Large Red



Common Darter ©Harry Appleyard

Damselfly is the first to appear in late April and flies until mid-July. From mid-May through June and July, Red-eyed Damselfly males can be easily seen resting on lily pads at the Newfoundout and making territorial flights to search for females or to repel other males. Four-spotted Chaser Dragonflies may be seen here from late May to early August. Watch them flying over the water and settling on reeds. Check the way they hold their wings when they land to see the difference between damselflies, which hold their wings together parallel to the body, and dragonflies which rest with them open at right angles to the body.

At the next junction turn left, and continue along a boardwalk between more reed beds with some open water in between (point 2). This is another good area for Damselflies.

When you come to a T-junction, turn left and then immediately right to another section of boardwalk (point 3). This is an excellent place to stand and watch Emperor Dragonflies flying backwards and forwards catching insects high above the reeds and pools. These large dragonflies are on the wing from early June to late August. It tends to survey ponds and open water from a height of several metres rather than flying close to the water and alternates between bursts of rapid flight and hovering. It is said to be the most vigorous and agile of our dragonflies. In early summer, during May and June you may also see the Hairy Dragonfly, which in contrast to the Emperor, flies low over the water.

At the next T junction, turn left. As you walk along this section of the track (point 4), you will have reeds and water on your right where you can continue to look out for Dragonflies and Damselflies. Another species which can be seen sometimes is the Banded Demoiselle. It occurs only in small numbers from mid-May to late September. The wings of the male are a beautiful blue when in flight. Other dragonflies to be seen are Black-tailed Skimmer (June/July), Common Darter (late June to early October) and Brown Hawkers (June-October). Brown Hawkers are large, brown dragonflies which can be seen patrolling their territories, often flying over reed beds as well as open water. Look out for the tall spikes of Purple Loosestrife between June and August, popular with bees and other insects.



Black-tailed Skimmer © Harry Appleyard

Turn right at the next junction and walk along beside open water. This is the Blue Lagoon (point 5). This was formed while the London Brick Works was still in operation. A small stream burst its banks and flooded the quarry. Whilst shallow at the edges, it shelves very steeply. Apart from a further chance to watch dragonflies and pond skaters on the surface of the water, this is a good spot to wait and observe water birds such as Canada Goose, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Mallard and Mute Swan. Reed, Sedge and Willow Warblers can be seen in the marginal vegetation at any point on the walk, whilst various other Warblers, Tits, Finches, Whitethroats and Woodpeckers occur in the trees and shrubs. In the right light, the water is a beautiful colour blue, hence the name. **Please keep a close eye on children at this point and on no account enter the water as due to the depth, drowning is a real danger.**

After you have spent time looking at the Blue Lagoon, turn right at the next junction and follow the trail back to the carpark, ignoring other turnings. You will cross another section of boardwalk before you reach the car park (point 6) and this is a good spot to look for Yellow Iris in May and June.



Marbled White © Peter Hassett

At any point on the walk, on a sunny day during the summer, you may also see pale yellow Brimstone, Large and Small White Butterflies, and during June/July, the beautiful black and white patterned Marbled White Butterfly. A site which is particularly favourable for butterfly sightings is the grassy area beyond and left of the small lake (Knot Hole) when viewed from the car park.

The site has a rich variety of plant life. The barer, open areas of clay soil are particularly good for plants such as: Common Spotted-orchid, Bee Orchid, Cowslip, Ragworts, Spotted Medick, White and Red Campion, Tansy and Yellow-wort. In addition to the Purple Loosestrife and Yellow Iris already mentioned, you may also find Water Mint and the rare Flowering Rush along the margins of the water. In the water Yellow Water-lily and Water Crowfoots can be seen from June to August.



Bee Orchid © Julian Lambley

For a more detailed description of this wildlife site go to <http://mknhs.org.uk/blue-lagoon/>

If you would like to check for any recent sightings of interesting species at this site, or would like to report what you see, go to <http://mknhs.org.uk/recent-sightings/>

Enjoy your walk!

## BLUE LAGOON LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Car Park **P**

Walk Route 

