

POND DIPPING: ACTIVITY GUIDE

Pond dipping is an engaging and enjoyable activity that encourages children to connect with nature and helps foster a love for the outdoors. Kids discover a wide range of fascinating creatures when exploring ponds, from frogs and tadpoles to water beetles and dragonfly larvae. Delving into the underwater world of ponds and rivers children learn about different species first-hand, sparking their curiosity and nurturing their sense of wonder in the natural world.



Ideal Time for Pond dipping:

The best time to try pond or river dipping is during the warmer months when aquatic life is most active. However, there is usually something to find all year round. Spring is best for spotting frogspawn and tadpoles, whilst in Autumn you may find frogs hiding in the mud and newts laying their eggs. Although less lively, you may find pond snails and freshwater shrimp lurking in the depths in Winter.

Where to pond dip:

A good pond for dipping should have clear water, minimal pollution, and plenty of vegetation around it to provide habitats for various creatures. Ensure you have the landowner's permission and consider the participant's safety before commencing, eg. is there an easy exit point if someone falls in? A pond with a dipping platform can be a great place to dip. Rivers can also be interesting habitats to explore..



Common aquatic creatures:

You may find tadpoles, frogs and toads, water beetles, pond skaters, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, pond snails and freshwater shrimp living in local ponds and rivers. Every species has unique features that can help you identify it. We have created a bespoke FSC Guide for children of all ages to help them identify aquatic life found in the local area. Please visit our website to download a free copy.

National Curriculum links:

- Science: food chains, life cycles, habitats & biodiversity, seasonal changes.
- Geography: how physical processes (sunlight, temperature, water quality) affect organisms living in a pond. Local knowledge.
- Outdoor Learning: observation, critical thinking and teamwork.



Equipment for Pond dipping:

You just need a few items to pond dip: a net; a container for collecting specimens; a magnifying glass; and an ID guide. Ensure all equipment is thoroughly cleaned and dried after each use to prevent the spread of disease. CNL has a selection of equipment available to borrow free of charge. Contact us for more information.



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Health and safety considerations and other responsibilities:

- Encourage children to kneel or lie down when near the pond to reduce risk of falling into water.
- Cover cuts that may come into contact with freshwater. Wash hands after the activity.
- Ensure suitable child : adult ratio maintained whilst near bodies of water.
- Ensure that appropriate buoyancy aids are nearby, and assess the best way to exit the water if necessary. Have a spare set of clothes on hand if possible.
- Always ask landowner's permission before pond dipping.
- Handle wild creatures with care, and return them to their habitat at the end of the session.

Ten Top Pond Facts

- Dragonfly nymphs are fierce predators that can remain underwater for years before emerging as adult dragonflies. Dragonflies typically live for only a week or two in their adult form.
- Diving beetles can trap a bubble of air under their wings, which allows them to breathe while they swim underwater.
- If a newt loses a leg or tail to a predator, it can grow a new one in a matter of weeks.
- Pond skaters use the surface tension of water to walk on its surface. Their legs are "hydrophobic" which means they repel water.
- Great crested newts are a protected species, and you need a licence to handle them.
- Tadpoles metamorphose into frogs. First they grow legs then they lose their tails and develop lungs before emerging from the pond as frog.
- Pond snails are important scavengers in pond ecosystems, as they feed on decaying plants and algae.
- Caddisfly larvae build protective cases around themselves using debris from the pond, such as twigs, leaves and small stones.
- Toads can live up to 40 years old but usually around 12 years old
- Whirly gig beetles swim on the surface of the water. Their eyes are positioned so they can see above and below the surface at the same time, keeping an eye out for predators.

Comparing Frogs and Toads

FROGS

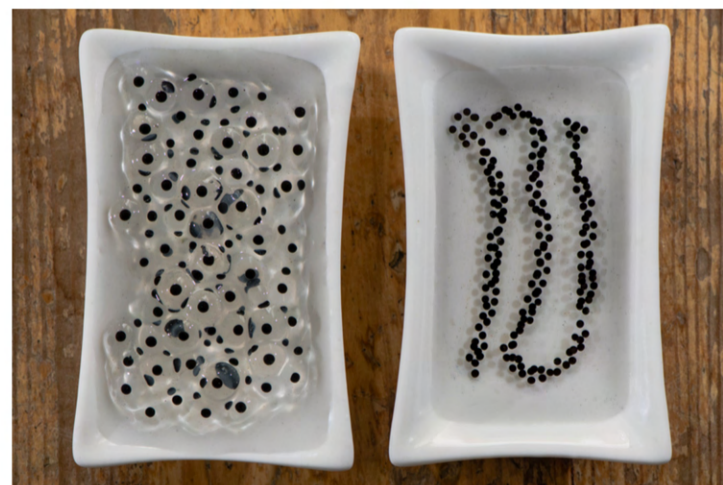
- Hibernate in the mud at the bottom of ponds
- Lay their eggs in any body of water
- Frogspawn is laid in big clumps
- Move about by jumping
- Frog tadpoles are slimmer than toad tadpoles and are covered in gold flecks

Smooth, slimy, wet looking skin
Long, strong hind legs

Pointy nose



FROGSPAWN



TOADS

- Hibernate under underground, or under rocks, logs or piles of leaves
- Return to their natal pond to lay eggs
- Toadspawn is laid in a long string
- Prefer to crawl than hop
- Toad tadpoles are chunky and black

Rough, warty skin that is usually dry
Shorter hind legs
Broad nose



TOADSPAWN

Useful Links:

WWT: www.wwt.org.uk/news-and-stories/blog/a-guide-to-pond-dipping-tips-for-a-successful-trip/

Everyone's Evenlode: www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/looking-after/engaging-with-evenlode/

