Find wildlife in your local pond

Pond dipping is a fun way to discover a hidden world of creatures.

If you've ever walked past a pond and wondered what wildlife could be lurking beneath the surface, give pond dipping a try. It's a great way to get up close with nature and learn more about the creatures that live underwater. Summer is one of the best times of year to try pond dipping. You could find wildlife including small fish, insect larvae, beetles and even frogs.

Pond dipping involves taking a big scoop of water from the shallows of a pond to discover wildlife. You can ask an adult to help you find a guide online to identify the creatures or take pictures of your discoveries and identify them when you get home. You could even take a sketchbook and draw what you see.

Before you get started, it's important to make sure you have permission from the pond's owner to be there. You should always wash your hands and any equipment before and after a pond dip so you don't spread any germs.

CLEVER CRITTERS
UK ponds are home to water scorpions, which use their tails like a snorkel so they can breathe underwater.



WARNING!
Young children should never go near open water without an adult.

What you need

- A tray, a few centimetres deep
- A net
- A spoon
- A magnifying glass



Be prepared

It's important to be safe around water, so make sure you have an adult with you and never pond dip in areas with blue-green algae (which can look like turquoise streaks in the water) as it can make you poorly. When you approach the pond, try to be silent so as not to scare away any wildlife. Then, set up your tray on the side of a pond. Don't lean over the edge and be extra careful where you stand as it can be slippery.

Stop, look, listen

Get comfortable at the water's edge. Try kneeling down or lying flat if you can on the bank. Keep still and see what wildlife you can see or hear moving around. Put a few centimetres of water into your tray and keep it in the shade to make sure it doesn't get too hot. Lower your net into the water and gently move it around in a figure of eight movement. If you haven't got a net, you can use a jug instead.



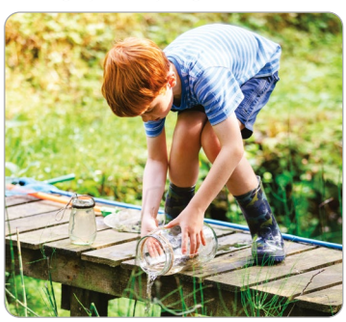


Take a peek

Once you've moved your net around in the water, remove it and place it into your tray. Turn the net inside out to get the wildlife out. Carefully use a spoon to move any plants or dirt out of the way to search for creatures. Use your magnifying glass to take a closer look. The wildlife you see can tell you how healthy the pond is. For example, dragonflies mean the pond is a great place for animals to live.

Return the wildlife home

When you've finished checking out your discoveries, carefully pour them back into the pond. If you'd like to see what other wildlife is living there, have another dip. Once you're done, rinse the tray and the net in the pond to make sure all the creatures are back safely in the water. Double-check them both before you leave. Remember to wash your hands and equipment thoroughly when you get home.



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