



Pond Dipping on the Showground

Enjoy and Stay Dry!

Introduction to the pond

Welcome to the fascinating world of freshwater ponds. Ponds come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, they can be manmade or natural, they can be very old and have played an important role in the history of the landscape or the community around them or they can be new and in the very early stages of development. No matter what, they are a very important habitat in our landscape providing for many hundreds of different creatures that depend on them for shelter or food. Some creatures live in the pond all the time, others spend their larval or nymph (junior) stages in there before emerging out of the pond to colonise other ponds. Some creatures depend on ponds as breeding sites, others as a source of food and water.

Finding different species of creatures in either small or large numbers can be an indicator as to how healthy the pond is. This might be due to its age as ponds evolve over time, the quality of the water in the pond, the types and ranges of aquatic plants found, the location of the pond and its surroundings and proximity to other ponds.

Before you set out for the pond you need to take with you:

- Pond dipping nets (minimum of 6)
- White trays (minimum of 6)
- The Freshwater Name Trail ID charts (minimum of 6)
- Specimen jars to show individual animals found
- Other equipment such as plastic spoons, magnifying lenses etc.
- You will also need access to the sunken toilet block for hand washing before eating. (see later notes)

We have just one pond which is suitable for dipping as it has 5 dipping platforms but both ponds are deep, have thick plastic liners that are slippery and the vegetation around the edges can give way.

On arrival at the pond it is very important to go through a few safety procedures and pond dipping techniques first to ensure you get the most out of your visit.

Using the pond safely

- It is important to ensure that ALL people dipping are as close to the water as possible. There are four single and one double dipping platform specifically constructed to get you as close to the water as possible. They are made of recycled plastic and have an anti-slip surface. There is a toe rail along the front of the platform that can be used as a hand-rail as well. Kneeling or sitting on the platform ensures that your centre of gravity is as low as possible, reducing the risk of leaning too far and losing your balance.
- In the interest of both hygiene and the safety of the creatures please ensure that as little contact as possible is made with the water, creatures or plants. Some contact is necessary but this can be minimised by using sticks to remove excess plants, plastic spoons for scooping creatures out of the trays and putting them into specimen jars.
Hands must be washed using soap and water once the activity is finished and particularly before eating.

Soap, hot and cold water and hand towels are provided in the sunken toilets (Those nearest the ponds) and in all other toilet blocks on the site.

- Any cuts or open wounds should be covered with a waterproof plaster before starting to dip.
- Pond dippers must take it in turns which will prevent overcrowding and arguments on the platform which may lead to the dippers forgetting the reason why they are here and the instructions they have been given.
- A first exercise which will emphasise the importance of kneeling down. Spread the children around you with their arms outstretched. Get them to bend their knees one at a time and then both together to ensure that they can kneel down. (A learning opportunity in its own right!). Whilst they are knelt down take a dipping net and demonstrate the difference between standing up and kneeling down and reaching out into the pond – balance, greater reach and the ability to use the hand rail on the front of the platform for support.
- Once the correct position has been established it is important to ensure that the dipping net is used correctly. If used incorrectly all the captured creatures can escape and the end of the pole ends up harming a fellow dipper.
- The dipping nets are designed for Key Stage 2 children. They should be able to hold them by the handle at the end of the pole. The dippers should draw a number 8 with the pole to ensure that the net is kept open and is moving forward at all times.
- Before dipping, have a look at the information board that can be found between the two ponds. The same information can be found on both sides. They will give you some basic information about the sorts of creatures you are likely to come across whilst pond dipping.
- On the dipping platform, make sure that the white tray, with pond water is in its place at the back of the platform, up against the grass edge out of the way. Each dipper takes it in turn to have a dip. They move to the front of the platform, kneel down and draw a number 8 with the net in the water. Remember that different creatures live in

different parts of the pond – some are on the surface, others in the body of the pond whilst the majority live on the bottom of the pond. The creatures also live amongst the vegetation in the pond. Make sure all areas are explored.

- There is no need to spend lots of time with the net in the water during each dip. After a couple of sweeps take the net out of the water and to the white tray. Turn the net upside down and inside out and dip it into the tray making sure that all creatures are out of the net. With a stick, spread the contents of the tray around and let the water settle. Once the water has settled, using a teaspoon to transfer a creature into the sample jars to be identified using the Freshwater Name Trail provided.
- If you move the groups around the different platforms they will probably get different results.
- The creatures captured are small and delicate and can be harmed easily. All creatures and plant material must be returned to the pond once the session is finished.
- Give the nets a good swill round in clean water to remove any plant or animal material and make sure all creatures have been removed from the tray.

Useful Contacts

Pond dipping equipment www.gbnets-uk.com

ID charts www.field-studies-council.org

Further information about ponds www.pondconservation.org.uk

www.naturalengland.org.uk