

Ponds



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What are ponds?

Ponds come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, both natural and man-made. They can be described as still or slow moving bodies of water that offer a vital habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

Why are they important?

In recent years the number of ponds in the UK has decreased dramatically. In addition to this, the majority of ponds that still remain in the UK tend to be in very poor condition.

This is a major concern because the national loss of suitable pond habitat has led to a decline in the numbers of species that rely on ponds. Consequently some of those species are now listed as protected.

It is therefore important that pond numbers and pond quality are sustained or improved so that endangered species have access to the habitat they need to complete their life-cycles, otherwise they could become locally extinct.

One approach to increasing pond numbers is to create a garden pond. Although garden ponds do not generally attract the rarer species, they still provide an excellent habitat for many other important species.

Whose Habitat is it?

The species that require pond habitat include a whole host of living organisms such as amphibians, invertebrates, birds and plants.

Amphibians that can be found in UK ponds include newts, frogs and toads.



Great Crested Newt

Dean Heward

Newts

There are three species of newt which are commonly found in Britain. These include:

- The Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)
- The Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*)
- The Palmate Newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*)

At present, the great crested newt is classified as the most strictly protected amphibian in Britain. It has been disappearing from many locations across Britain over the last century, due to a loss of suitable habitat.

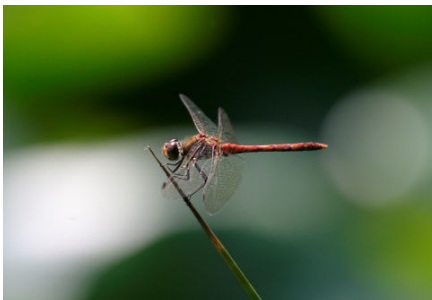


Common Frog

R. Harris

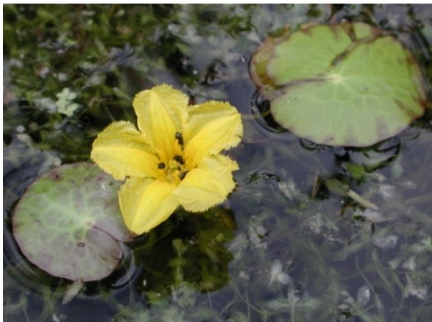


Joes Pond



Red Darter Dragonfly

Darin Smith



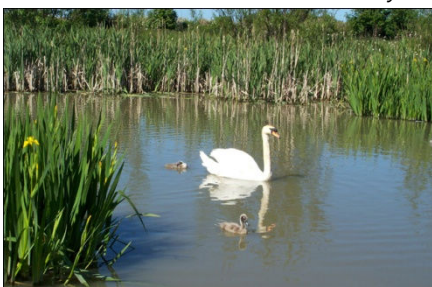
Fringed Lilly

Rupert Paul



Pond Plants

Karen Devenney



Swan & Cygnets

South Tyneside Council

Frogs and Toads

The common frog is one of the most well known amphibians in Britain. They can normally be found in any habitat which is located close to a suitable breeding pond. The common frog can be easily distinguished from the common toad as it has smooth skin, longer back legs and a more angular shaped head and body, compared to the common toad which has drier more warty skin, a rounder body and coppery eyes.

Invertebrates

As well as amphibians, ponds also tend to attract many different invertebrates, including:

- Mayflies
- Dragonflies
- Pond skaters
- Caddis flies
- Damselflies
- Snails
- Alderfly larvae
- Water beetles
- Wrigglies

Pond Plants

If your pond is clean and well maintained, then you could expect to see numerous different plant species. Ponds provide different habitats for different species ranging from damp areas on the pond bank to full aquatic areas. Some of the most commonly found plant species in ponds include:

- Common duckweed
- Floating sweet grass
- Creeping bent grass
- Reed mace

Birds

The size of pond will determine what kind of birds will be present. For example, a smaller pond will attract smaller birds which will use the pond to drink and bathe, whereas larger ponds will provide breeding habitats for larger wetland species. Some of the most familiar birds present at ponds include: ducks, wild geese, swans, moorhens and herons.

What can I do to help?

There are various ways in which you can get involved in helping with pond management and conservation, both in your back garden and local area.

Garden ponds

Creating a garden pond can be a great way to attract various species into your own back yard, but there are important factors to take into consideration when designing your pond, including the following:

When designing a pond, ensure that there is at least one gentle sloping side so wildlife can easily enter and escape. The diagram below shows what a well designed pond should look like.

Pond size

Ponds can vary in size considerably from just 1m² up to 2 hectares.

Generally a small pond is usually about 2.5m by 1.5m, which is small enough to be created in most people's back yard. However if you have more space, you could build a bigger pond or why not make a complex of smaller ponds, as this can often provide a wider variety of habitats than one big pond.

Small garden ponds are ideal habitats for common invertebrates and amphibians as well as being good bathing sites for birds such as robins and wrens. However, larger ponds, often found in the countryside, also attract larger birds such as ducks and swans etc.

To plant or not to plant?

It is often best to leave ponds to colonise plant species in their own time. However if you do wish to plant your pond, ensure that you use native species.

It is very important that you do not introduce non-native species such as:

- New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*)
- Marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*)
- Water fern (*Azolla fillicoides*)
- Nuttall's pondweed (*Elodea nutalli*)

These species are very invasive and may cause problems for your pond.

Should I introduce fish?

If you are wanting your pond to attract and provide a habitat for wildlife then it is best not to introduce ornamental fish into your pond.

Best time of year to carry out pond work

Autumn: September to November

All major pond work should be carried out during this period, as this is when there is less activity in the pond. This may involve maintenance such as pond clearing, especially the removal of any non-native species

Volunteering with DWT

There are often volunteering opportunities available at Durham Wildlife Trust relating to pond management and conservation.

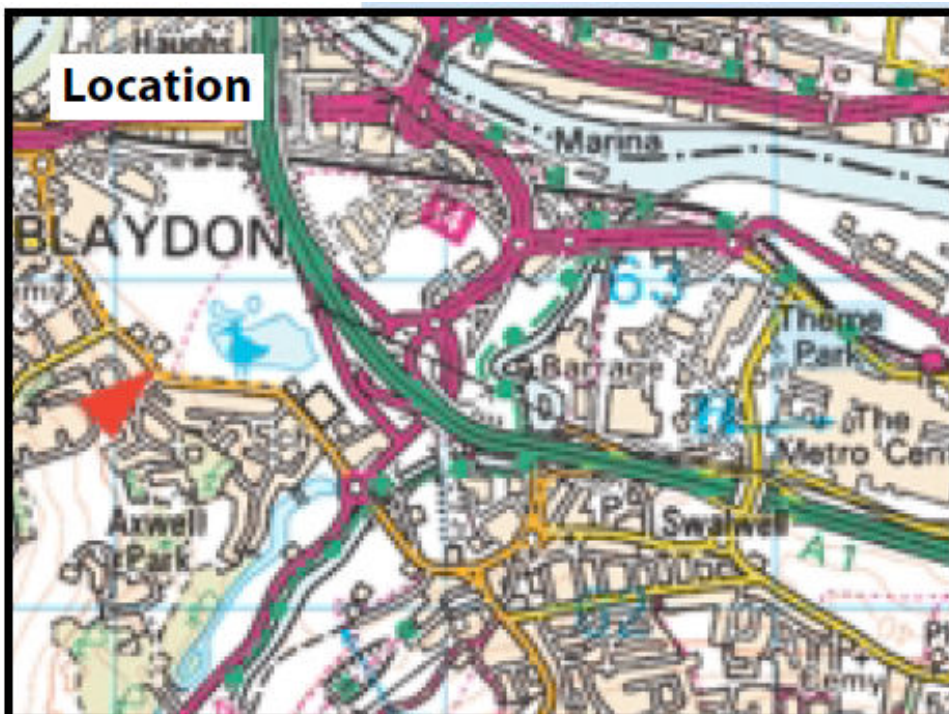
Check out the website or call to see what projects are currently running.

A perfect garden wildlife pond

Shallow water, a natural sandy bottom, grassy edges and full of plants



Where can I view this type of habitat?



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Shibdon Pond

Located at Blaydon, near the A1 and Metro Centre

Best Seen:

April – July for breeding wildfowl
Spring and Autumn for passage waders

For more information take a look at the reserves section of the DWT website:

www.durhamwt.co.uk

Burnhope Pond

Located 7 miles northeast of Durham City

Best seen:

April – July for breeding wildfowl

June/July for dragonflies

July/August for meadow flora

For more information take a look at

The reserves section of the DWT website:

www.durhamwt.co.uk



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Further Information

- Pond Conservation Website: www.pondconservation.org.uk
- Great Crested Newt Handbook: http://www.froglife.org/documents/GCN_Conservation_Handbook.pdf

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