

## **Pond dipping Flaxton 2025**

Although we advertised this as pond dipping to see animals that you would not normally be able to see, it also includes finding out about why ponds are so important to us and why they require management.

So why is this pond here in the first place? Who can tell me?

Ponds gradually silt up or are filled in to make even surface to grow crops, so why has this survived?

What can we tell by pond dipping? It can tell us if it has been polluted by insecticides for example or has no oxygen in the water at times; if there are sufficient rooted and submerged plants for animals that require these to breed if it has dried up recently and several other things.

So why are ponds so important and what makes them hotspots for biodiversity? It has often been assumed that large waterbodies, like rivers and lakes, have a higher conservation value than ponds. In fact, this is not true. In a study comparing the number of invertebrate animal species collected from 600 rivers and 150 ponds across Britain, it was found that, in total, ponds supported more invertebrate species than rivers. The ponds also had a greater number of rare animals. Nationally, around two thirds of all Britain's freshwater plants and animals can be found somewhere in permanent and temporary ponds.

Invertebrates (animals without backbones), include dragonflies, mayflies, snails, water fleas and many others. There are at least 4000 species of freshwater invertebrate in the UK, and around 70% of these live in ponds. Amongst these are many rare, vulnerable and endangered species. In a diverse pond there may be over 100 of the larger invertebrate species, such as beetles, dragonflies, snails and caddisflies. In highly diverse ponds, over 150 species may be supported.

Around the margins of ponds in the zone between the water and dry land, many wetland invertebrates also live. However, there have been few studies into these damp ground communities. Studies that have been conducted, have suggested these zones can contain very uncommon animals. Rare invertebrates are often found in what seems to be on first sight, unpromising habitats. These can include habitats such as wooded and seasonal ponds, ponds with floating mats of rushes and reeds, or

muddy, damp ground at the water's edge. Exceptional ponds can have over 15 species of dragonfly.

Our native amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) are pond specialists. They use these small waterbodies as their main breeding habitat. As adults, amphibians utilize ponds in different ways. Young amphibians can stay close to their home pond and others might hibernate over winter. Common toads prefer to live in deep ponds together with fish as the tadpoles are distasteful to fish. Great crested newts, better survive in ponds without fish, as they eat their larvae. So please do not put your goldfish or other freshwater fish that have outgrown their tank or bred too well in your pond into this one. Great crested newts are very rare in some parts of the country, so are strongly protected. If we catch any of their tadpoles today we must return them carefully to the pond. Please look at the newt stone at the edge of the pond. Did you know that it is there? Newts require submerged aquatic plants on which they lay their eggs and fold over the leaf they have used to protect the eggs. Can you see any submerged aquatic plants that they might use? They were in short supply last year and I have not seen any suitable plants this year. The trees are shading the pond too much, so I need permission to trim them or remove some.

Ponds are also important habitats for birds and some mammals, the open water as well as the margins. Did you know that we had to postpone this event because geese had made a nest on the island of this pond? I have just seen some lovely little moorhen chicks on York Lane pond.