

## Wildlife Recording Kit: Ponds

- Please ensure that all equipment borrowed is replaced; consider the people who are using the box after you.
- The borrower of the loan box is liable for the cost of any equipment lost or damaged.
- If anything is broken/lost, we would be grateful if you could let Surrey Wildlife Trust know as soon as possible so that we can replace this in time for the next people borrowing the box. You will be charged for any missing or broken equipment.
- Ensure that before surveying, you have the permission of the landowner to undertake these surveys.

### Why survey?

Almost 70% of the UK's natural ponds have been lost and species such as dragonflies, waterbugs and great crested newts have declined rapidly over the past 40 years. Over 65% of all Britain's freshwater species live in ponds meaning there are an incredibly important habitat.

By surveying what is in your pond, you can work out what actions to take and how best to look after it. You can also identify what species you are missing and work to make your pond more desirable for them.

By undertaking the OPAL Water Survey you can also assess how healthy a lake or pond is, by looking at what animals and plants are living in and around it.

### When to survey

The best time to survey is May to August  
 Frog and toad survey – 1st Jan – 31st March  
 Newt survey – 1st April – 30th May

### Equipment included:

What's included in the kit?	What you need to provide?
Pond ID booklets (x 2)	Butter tub/ tupperware (if wanted)
Pond net (x 2)	Fully charged phone that can be used in an emergency
White trays (x 2)	
Freshwater Invertebrate Identification Guide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dragonflies and damselflies</li> <li>• Reptiles and amphibians</li> </ul>	

### Instructions on use

Preparing to Dip:

1. Before dipping with the net, you must fill the tray with water. This means that when you catch the creatures, they have some water to go back into, as many of them require to be submerged in order to breathe.

2. Carefully kneel at the side of the water and scoop some water into the tray, make it about halfway full.
3. If the water is too low, or you find it difficult to scoop with the tray, you can use a bucket to get the water, and then pour it into the tray.

#### Dipping:

4. Find a spot at the edge of the water where you have stable footing and are able to submerge the net into the water without over-stretching. This is important to keep control of the net.
5. Lower the net into the water until you find the bottom of the pond, then lift up a few inches. This means you are deep enough to disturb creatures in the sediment, but not deep enough to end up with a net full of mud.
6. Sweep the net back and forth in a figure of 8 motion for about a minute, making sure that you turn the net each time so that anything you've caught stays inside the net.
7. It's a good idea to sweep in and around vegetation, where many of the pond creatures will be hiding out.
8. When you're ready, use the handle to pull the net back in, making sure there is no one behind you to get hit with the pole. Secure it by holding just below the net, and tucking the pole under your arm.

#### Decanting the Net:

9. Bring the net over to your tray, which is already full of water. Turn the net upside down and push it down into the tray, submerging it into the water.
10. Wiggle it around to rinse out the net and help any creatures escape into your tray.
11. Check there is nothing else in the net, and then lay it down near the water somewhere that no one will trip over it.
12. If you have caught a lot of mud, you might want to empty the tray back into the pond and try again. See below for how to do this safely.
13. If you have caught a lot of vegetation, rinse it out into the tray before carefully placing it back in the pond.

#### Searching the Tray:

14. Use a plastic spoon to gently search the tray and pick up any creatures for a closer look. Do not use your hands to pick up the creatures.
15. You may want to use a small container like a butter tub to act as an aquarium.
16. Do not stir the tray, allow the water to settle so that it will become clearer and you will see the creatures more easily.
17. When picking up creatures, gently scoop them from underneath rather than chasing them into a corner.
18. When you have a creature on the spoon, use the magnifying glass to take a closer look.
19. Use an ID guide to try and identify the creature. Look out for the number of legs, tails and shape of the head.
20. When you are finished, or want to get some clean water, you can deposit your tray contents back into the pond. Do this carefully, making sure you lower the tray as close as possible to the surface before pouring in the creatures. Then you can scoop up some clear water and start again.

#### Finishing Up:

21. Make sure everything has gone back into the pond, snails and leeches often get left behind in the tray or the net. Gently use the spoon to unstick them if you need to.
22. Rinse the tray and net as best you can in the pond ensure everything has gone back in.
23. You must wash your hands before eating or drinking anything.
24. Rinse down the equipment with tap water and leave it to dry.
25. All equipment needs to be either cleaned with e.g. hot water and Milton between sites OR left to dry for a minimum of 48 hours, but ideally longer.
26. For more guidance on this, as well as information on invasive aquatic species to look out for, check out the Clean, Check, Dry campaign: <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry/>

Using the equipment safely:

Before you use this equipment think about your risk assessment for the location and for the activities.

The following are some suggestions of hazards you might need to consider:

- Ground Surface – are there roots, holes, or kerbs to trip over?
- Weather – are participants appropriately dressed and have suitable protection from wet or hot weather?
- Plants and animals – brambles and stinging nettles can cause discomfort and participants should watch out for low branches.
- Germs – have participants got open cuts which might get muddy, and do they have an opportunity to wash their hands before eating?
- Using equipment – do you and other participants know how to use the equipment safely, is there a chance someone could hurt themselves?
- Appropriate supervision – are all children accompanied by a parent or guardian, and are they being appropriately supervised?
- Lone working – ensure you tell someone when undertaking surveys and they are aware of where you are and when you should return. Make sure you have a fully charged mobile phone and know where you can get signal.
- Group management – how will you ensure that participants don't get lost and are where you want them to be?
- Plan B – do you have an alternative activity or location if there is a problem with your planned activity?

With water there are additional considerations:

- Weil's disease: There is a risk of infection from pond water entering open wounds. Cover all open wounds and ensure that gloves are worn if there are any open/fresh wounds on the hands, and also for eczema or sensitive skin conditions.
- Working around water: Always be careful around water, assess your surroundings for any slip or trip hazards before starting dipping. Ensure you find a spot at the edge of the water where you have stable footing and are able to submerge the net into the water without over-stretching.
- Children: Ensure children are supervised at all times when working near water.
- Lone working: You must not work alone near water – you must always be accompanied by someone else. Ensure you have access to a mobile phone and can call for help if needed.
- Frozen lakes: Do not try to walk on frozen ponds or lakes.

## Top tips

- If you are going to more than 1 lake or pond, the equipment must be cleaned between dips to avoid spreading diseases or non-native plants.
- Before returning the equipment, all equipment needs to be either cleaned with e.g. hot water and Milton between sites OR left to dry for a minimum of 48 hours, but ideally longer. For more guidance on this, as well as information on invasive aquatic species to look out for, check out the Clean, Check, Dry campaign:  
<https://www.nonnativespecies.org/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry/>

## Protected species

Great crested newts and natterjack toads are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species:

- The Norfolk Aeshna, also known as the Norfolk Hawker (*Aeshna Isosceles*), a type of dragonfly, is rare and endangered.
- There are 63 species of dragonfly listed in the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species. Of these, 2 are endangered, 6 are vulnerable, and 6 are near threatened.
- The great crested newt, also known as the northern crested newt is listed as least concern by the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species.
- The natterjack toad and the common frog are also classified by the IUCN as least concern.

## Please note

Great crested newts and natterjack toads are some of the protected species in the UK and require a licence to handle them. It is also prohibited under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to take or kill any of the following species: smooth newts, palmate newts, common frog and common toad.