

# THE WILDLIFE

# ROAD SHOW

ON & AROUND THE POND

What is it?



**Insect**  
stay on this page



**Amphibian**  
please turn over

These first three creatures live on the surface of the pond:

## Whirligig Beetle

*Gyrinus substriatus*



actual size

5-7mm. Often in groups, the whirligig beetles look like animated blobs of mercury dashing around on the surface of the water. Will dive down if disturbed. Feed on small insects that fall onto the pond surface.

## Water Measurer

*Hydrometra stagnorum*



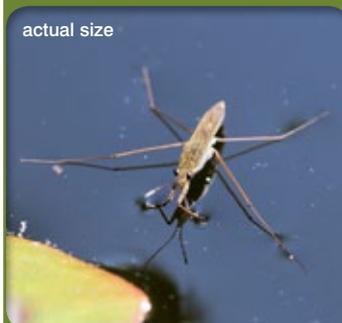
Water measurer feeding on a springtail.

actual size

About 1cm long. Moves slowly on the surface of the water with its delicate hair-like legs. Stays near the cover of plants and feeds by spearing small water creatures e.g. waterfleas.

## Pond Skater

*Gerris lacustris*



actual size

Up to 2cm. Skates on the surface of the water with four long legs and uses the two short front legs to catch and hold prey. It can feel the vibrations of any insect that falls into the water and then dashes there to suck out its body fluids.

## Alderfly

*Sialis* sp.



actual size

Alderflies are often seen sitting around on vegetation by the pond. They are around 2cm long and their lacy wings are dark brown and held like a tent over their bodies. There are 2 species in the UK.

## Dragonfly

*Anisoptera* sp.



**Southern Hawker**  
*Aeshna cyanea*

Wings held out at right angles to the stout brown, blue, green or red body (up to 6cm) depending on the species. Dragonflies are masters of the air being able to fly in every direction catching and also eating insects.

## Damselfly

*Zygoptera* sp.



**Common Blue Damselfly**  
*Enallagma cyathigerum*

Slender bodies up to 4cm and wings over the body when at rest. Some species have iridescent blue or red on the body. In spite of their fluttery flight, they are predators and catch insects using their legs as a kind of trap.

## Caddis Fly

*Trichoptera* sp.

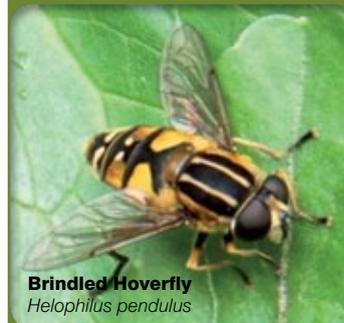


actual size

Up to 2cm. Moth-like with long antennae, caddisflies are often seen in the evenings flying above the pond. On close examination, the wings are covered with tiny hairs (moth wings are covered with tiny scales). More than 100 species.

## Hoverfly

*Syrphidae* sp.



**Brindled Hoverfly**  
*Helophilus pendulus*

This fly mimics a wasp to protect it from predators and has a characteristic hovering flight. This particular species sits on pond vegetation waiting for a female and chasing away other hoverflies.

There are more than 20 species of dragonfly in the UK. Here're some more to look out for...



**Broad-bodied Chaser**



**Emperor Dragonfly**



The Wildlife Trust  
for Birmingham and  
The Black Country

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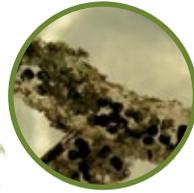
## ON & AROUND THE POND

Frogs lay their eggs in large clumps.



Frogs can spawn as early as December and as late as April, depending on how warm the weather is.

After 30 to 40 days, tadpoles begin to emerge.



Toads lay their eggs in long gelatinous strings.

### Amphibians

Most ponds are home to at least one species of amphibian. Frogs, Toads and Newts spend the majority of their lives away from water feeding on worms, slugs etc.

#### Common Frog *Rana temporaria*



Dark patch behind eye  
Smooth skin  
Long hind legs can leap if disturbed  
Can be anywhere between 6 and 10cm. They live mainly on land outside the breeding season. They feed on any moving invertebrates of a suitable size, such as insects, slugs and worms, which they catch with their long, sticky tongues.

#### Tadpoles



Are these Frog or Toad tadpoles?  
The black tadpoles are toad tadpoles, the paler ones are frog tadpoles. Both start off black but Frog tadpoles develop bronzy patches. Frog tadpoles are tasty prey to fish and are secretive. Toad tadpoles are poisonous to fish and can often be seen in large shoals in open water.

#### Common Toad *Bufo bufo*



Warty skin  
Crawling, not leaping  
Toads migrate to regular breeding ponds in their hundreds and spawn within a week or so. Many are killed on the roads on the way and in spite of toad patrols and signs warning motorists, toad populations appear to be at an all time low.

#### Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*



Roughly 10cm head-to-tail. Newts also breed in water, laying their eggs singly in leaves of waterweed. The newt tadpoles look like miniature newts with gills at the side of the head.

**Over the past 100 years the UK countryside has lost over 70% of its ponds. The creation of new ponds has never been more important for wildlife.**

A wildlife pond is one of the single best features for attracting new wildlife to the garden. Before long you could be helping to preserve our natural biodiversity and also enjoying a lively, attractive garden feature. Your wildlife pond can really make a difference to the wealth of animals which rely heavily on ponds for their success.

Tips on building a wildlife pond: Spring is the best time to put in a new pond. Firstly choose a sunny site away from overhanging trees. Dig out the space for your pond, making sure it is at least 77cm deep with shallow edges. This will enable plants to take root and it will allow easy access for animals. Remove any stones and line the hole with sand and old carpet if you can get hold of it, before laying a butyl rubber lining.

To help you work out how much lining you'll need you can use the following guidelines:

**Length of liner** = length of pond + twice depth of pond + 60cm (for overlap at edges);

**Width of liner** = width of pond + twice depth of pond + 60cm (for overlap at edges).

After putting the lining in, turn it under at the edges and cover it with turf, then fill with water. Around one week later you can introduce native plants and watch as creatures start populating your pond!

### AVOID THESE AT ALL COST!!!

Exotic aquatic plant species are often sold in garden centres for garden ponds. Some of these are highly invasive and can cause havoc in Britain's ponds, lakes, rivers and other waterways. Examples of aquatic invasive species to be avoided are:

Australian Swamp Stonecrop, New Zealand Stonecrop, New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*); Canadian Waterweed or Pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*); Curly Waterweed (*Lagarosiphon major* or *Elodea crispata*); Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*); Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*); Nuttall's Waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*); Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum* or *Myriophyllum brasiliensis*); Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*); Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*); Water Lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*); Water Primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*).

There are three species of Newt in the UK – Smooth Newt, Palmate Newt and the legally protected Great Crested Newt.



### Is a garden pond good for Frogs, Toads or Newts?

Frogs prefer to spawn in ponds with shallow edges and no fish.

Toads are happy with deeper water and don't mind fish. Both like ponds with algae and waterweed.

Newts also like waterweed in a pond – they can lay their eggs in the leaves.

### Common water plants suitable for small garden ponds:

Plants for the shallows and ledges include Yellow Iris, Water Forget-me-not, Water-plaintain, Branched Bur-reed and Arrowhead.

Floating leaved plants include the Fringed Water-lily, Water-soldier and Potamogeton.

Plants that thrive in deep water include Hornwort, Water Crowfoot, Common Water-starwort, Spiked Water-milfoil, Curled Pondweed and Willow Moss.

For the edge of the pond, or if you have any marshy areas try Meadowsweet, Purple-loosestrife, Cuckoo-flower, Gipsywort, Ragged Robin, Marsh Marigold, Brooklime and rushes.

Water plants tend to grow quickly and any surplus can be put on the compost heap (not released into the wild!).

**Sources:** Text by Ellen Pisolkar; Other information sources: <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>, <http://www.pondconservation.org.uk/>, The Wildlife Trusts' Guide to Wildlife Gardening leaflet (2011).

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