

# Pond Life



Ponds are very important places for UK wildlife. Sadly, more than one third of ponds have disappeared over recent years because the land they were on needed to be used for another purpose. It is important that we keep and look after the ponds we have left in this country as they provide homes for many **amphibians** and **invertebrates**. They also serve as bathing water for birds and a well-earned drink for other mammals.

If you visit a local pond, here are some of the wild and wonderful creatures that you may just be lucky enough to see...

## Frogs and Toads

Frogs and toads are both amphibians. They are often confused with one another but it is actually quite easy to tell them apart:

- frogs have smooth green or brown skin;
- toads are warty creatures with golden eyes;
- frogs lay their spawn in clumps;
- toads leave long chains of spawn;
- frogs jump away from danger using their long, stripy legs;
- toads crawl away when they feel threatened.

If you are lucky enough to spot any spawn or tadpoles in your local or garden pond, do not move them. Leave them in their natural **habitat** in plenty of warm sunlight.

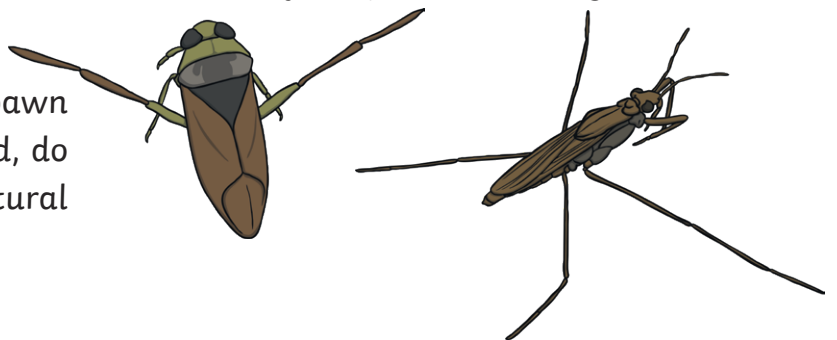
## Water Boatmen and Pond Skaters

Two of the most common swimming invertebrates found in UK ponds are water boatmen and pond skaters. You can spot water boatmen by their large back legs. They are shaped like a boat's oars. Water boatmen use these legs to push themselves through the water as they swim.

Pond skaters have slim, brown bodies with six thin legs. Each of their three pairs of legs do a different job:

- the short front legs collect dead insects from the water's surface;
- the middle pair of legs move the bug forwards;
- the back legs steer them in the right direction.

Both species are very fast-moving so catching them is often quite a challenge!

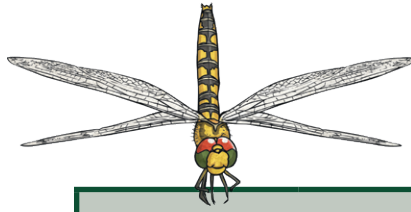
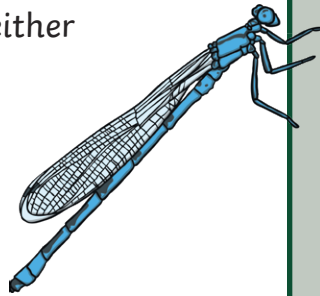


## Dragonflies, Damselflies and Mayflies

As you walk near a pond, you may also see some very beautiful and interesting invertebrates dancing above the water too. These tiny creatures play a huge part in pond life and are a key part of the food chain.

All three of these invertebrates start life as an egg but each species lays their eggs in different places:

- dragonfly eggs are laid either onto plant material or loosely into the water;
- damselflies inject their eggs into plant stems, mud or beneath the surface of a pond;
- mayflies lay their eggs straight into the water, where they sink to the bottom and quickly hatch.



### Glossary

**amphibian** A cold-blooded animal that begins its life in water with gills and a tail but grows and develops lungs and legs for adult life on land.

**habitat** The natural home of an animal or plant.

**invertebrates** An animal that does not have a backbone.

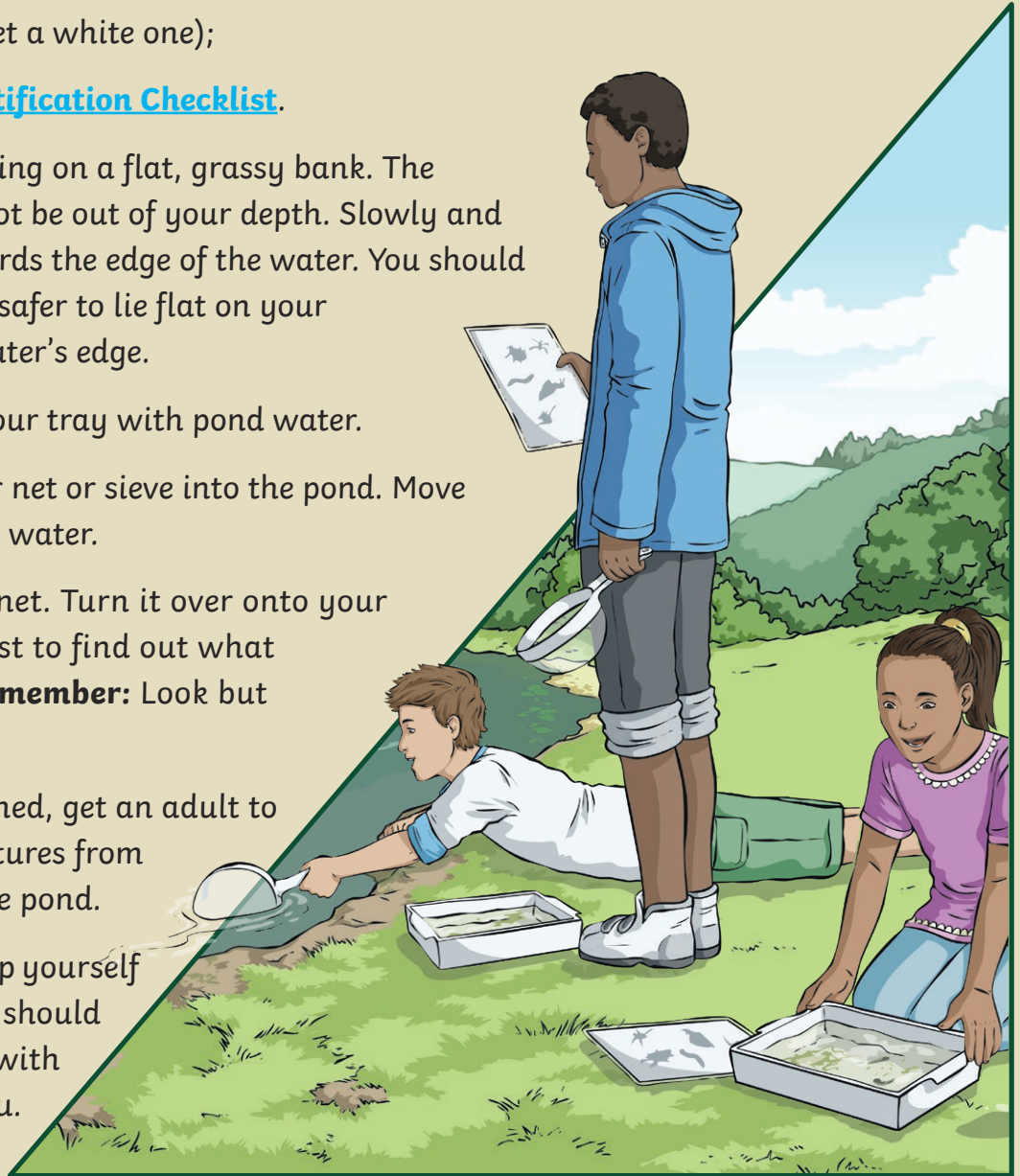


## Why Not Go for a Dip?

Pond dipping is a fun activity and you do not need much equipment. You will be shocked at the number of different creatures that share a home in or by the water. All you need is:

- a net or sieve;
  - a small tray (try to get a white one);
  - a [Pond Dipping Identification Checklist](#).
1. Always go pond dipping on a flat, grassy bank. The pond water should not be out of your depth. Slowly and carefully, move towards the edge of the water. You should never run. It is often safer to lie flat on your tummy facing the water's edge.
  2. Get an adult to fill your tray with pond water.
  3. Carefully, lower your net or sieve into the pond. Move it slowly through the water.
  4. Gently lift out your net. Turn it over onto your tray. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught. **Remember:** Look but never touch.
  5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the tray back into the pond.

It is very important to keep yourself safe near water. You should **always** go pond dipping with an adult to look after you.



# Questions

1. Which of these is the main purpose of a pond skater's front legs? Tick one.

- To move the pond skater forwards.  
 To steer them in the right direction.  
 To collect dead insects from the water's surface.  
 To allow the pond skater to walk on the water's surface.

2. Match the invertebrate to the place in which it lays its eggs.

dragonfly

into plant stems, mud or beneath the surface of a pond

damsel fly

onto plant material or loosely into the water

mayfly

straight into the water

3. List **two** pieces of equipment you need in order to go pond dipping.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. ... **leave them in their natural habitat in plenty of warm sunlight.**

What is meant by the word **habitat** in this sentence?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Find and copy **two** adjectives from the text which describe a frog's legs.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Explain why it is important that we continue to look after the ponds that are left in the UK.

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\_\_\_\_\_

7. Give one way that frogs and toads are similar and one way in which they differ.

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8. **Remember: Look but never touch.**

Give two reasons why this might be the case.

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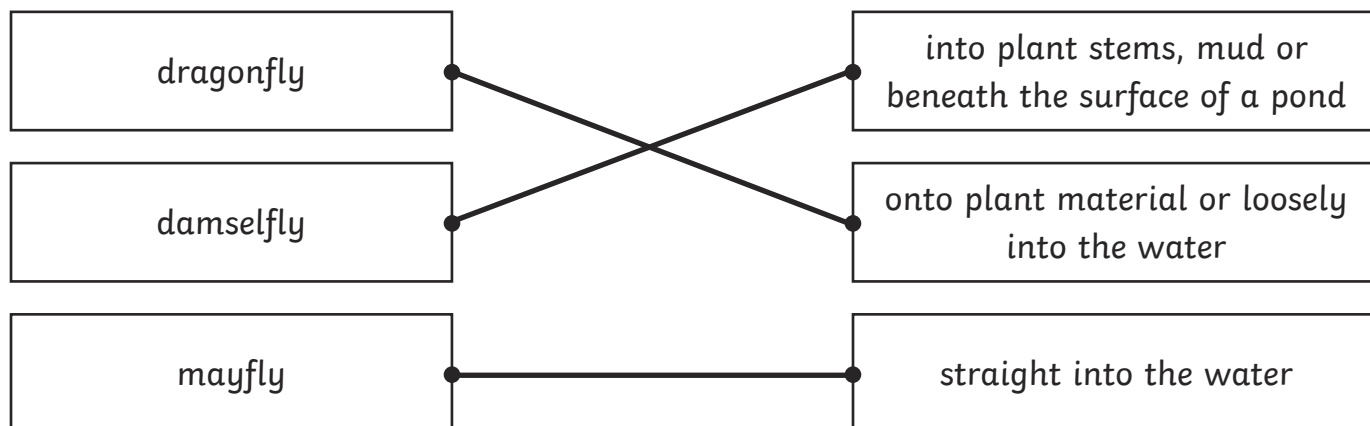
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# Answers

1. Which of these is the main purpose of a pond skater's front legs? Tick one.

- To move the pond skater forwards.  
 To steer them in the right direction.  
 **To collect dead insects from the water's surface.**  
 To allow the pond skater to walk on the water's surface.

2. Match the invertebrate to the place in which it lays its eggs.



3. List **two** pieces of equipment you need in order to go pond dipping.

**Accept any two of the following: a net or a sieve; a small tray; a Pond Dipping Identification Checklist.**

4. ... **leave them in their natural habitat in plenty of warm sunlight.**

What is meant by the word **habitat** in this sentence?

**Habitat means the natural home of an animal or plant.**

5. Find and copy **two** adjectives from the text which describe a frog's legs.

- **long**
- **stripy**

6. Explain why it is important that we continue to look after the ponds that are left in the UK.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important to look after the remaining ponds in the UK because they are an important place for wildlife to live, bathe and drink and, without them, lots of creatures would die.**

7. Give one way that frogs and toads are similar and one way in which they differ.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Frogs and toads are similar because they are both amphibians but they differ because frogs lay their spawn in clumps but toads lay their spawn in long chains.**

8. **Remember: Look but never touch.**

Give two reasons why this might be the case.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important because you may hurt the creatures you find by accident and they may also carry diseases which could make your poorly.**

# Pond Life

Ponds are important havens for UK wildlife but, unfortunately, more than one third of them have disappeared over recent years. This is due to changes in how areas of land are used. It is vitally important that we keep and look after the remaining ponds in this country as they provide homes for many freshwater **amphibians** and **invertebrates**. They also provide bathing water for birds and a well-earned drink for other wandering mammals.

If you visit a local pond, or are lucky enough to have a pond in your own garden, here are some of the wild and wonderful creatures that you may just be lucky enough to encounter...

## Frogs and Toads

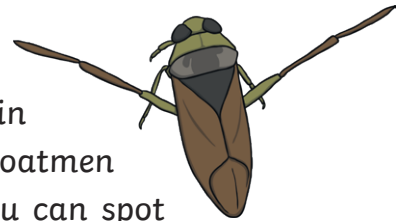
Frogs and toads are both freshwater amphibians and are often confused with one another but it is actually quite easy to tell them apart. Frogs have smooth green or brown skin and they lay their spawn in clumps. Toads are warty creatures with golden eyes and they leave long chains of spawn, which look like strings of pearls. Frogs and toads also move differently: frogs jump away from danger using their long, stripy legs, while toads crawl away when they feel threatened.

If you are lucky enough to spot any spawn or tadpoles in your local or garden pond, do not move them. Leave them in their natural habitat in plenty of warm sunlight.



## Water Boatmen and Pond Skaters

Two of the most common swimming invertebrates found in UK ponds are water boatmen and pond skaters. You can spot water boatmen by their large hind legs. They are shaped like a boat's oars and they use them to push themselves through the water as they swim. Just like a scuba diver, they carry their own air supply around their bodies.



Pond skaters have slim, brown bodies with six spindly legs. Each of their three pairs of legs do a different job: the short front legs collect dead insects from the water's surface, the middle pair move the bug forwards and the back legs act as **rudders** to steer them in the right direction.

Both species are very fast-moving so catching them in a sieve or net is often quite a challenge!

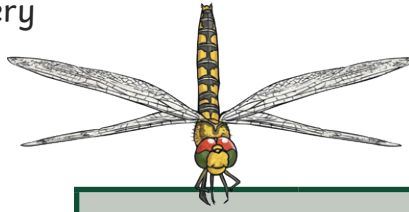
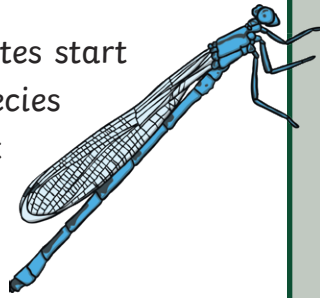
"A Big Smile for the Camera" by Brian Mckay



## Dragonflies, Damselflies and Mayflies

Pond life isn't just about creatures that you might see in the water itself. As you walk near a pond, you may also see some very beautiful and interesting invertebrates dancing above the water too. These tiny creatures play a huge part in pond life and are a key part of the food chain.

All three of these invertebrates start life as an egg but each species lays their eggs in different places. Dragonfly eggs are laid either onto plant material or loosely into the water. Damselflies inject their eggs into plant stems, mud or beneath the surface of a pond. Mayflies lay their eggs straight into the water; the eggs sink to the bottom before quickly hatching into nymphs.



### Glossary

**amphibian** A cold-blooded animal that begins its life in water with gills and a tail but grows and develops lungs and legs for adult life on land.

**invertebrates** An animal that does not have a backbone.

**rudders** Part of a boat, ship or aircraft that helps to steer it.

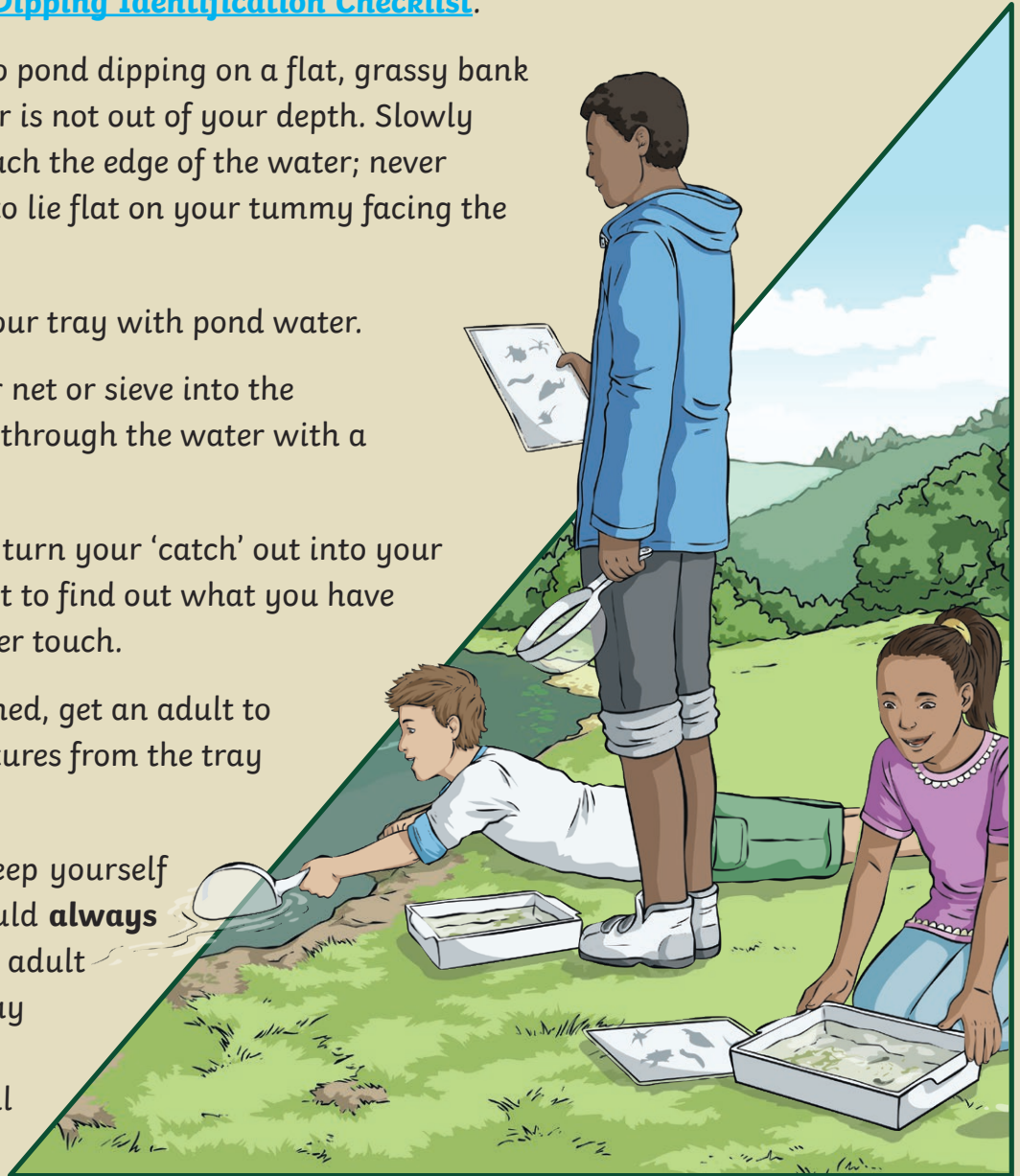


## Why Not Go for a Dip?

Pond dipping is a fun activity that doesn't need much equipment. Why not find out what's lurking in and around a pond near you? You'll be shocked at the number of different creatures that share a home in or by the water. All you need is a net or sieve, a small tray (ideally a white one!) and a [Pond Dipping Identification Checklist](#).

1. You should always go pond dipping on a flat, grassy bank where the pond water is not out of your depth. Slowly and carefully, approach the edge of the water; never run. It is often safer to lie flat on your tummy facing the water's edge.
2. Get an adult to fill your tray with pond water.
3. Carefully, lower your net or sieve into the pond. Move it slowly through the water with a sweeping action.
4. Gently lift it out and turn your 'catch' out into your tray. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught. Look but never touch.
5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the tray back into the pond.

It is very important to keep yourself safe near water. You should **always** go pond dipping with an adult to look after you. You may even be able to go to an organised event at a local nature reserve.



# Questions

1. Which of these creatures is described as a freshwater amphibian with smooth skin?

Tick one.

- frog  
 toad  
 water boatman  
 pond skater

2. Join the boxes to match the fact to the pond creature it relates to.

|               |                                        |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|
| water boatman | They quickly hatch into nymphs.        |
| pond skater   | They have large, oar-shaped hind legs. |
| mayfly        | They have three pairs of legs.         |

3. **...here are some of the wild and wonderful creatures that you may just be lucky enough to encounter...**

Write a word or phrase which could be used instead of encounter in this sentence.

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4. What fraction of UK ponds have disappeared over recent years?

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5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which describes how the net or sieve should be moved through the water.

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6. **...and a well-earned drink for other wandering mammals.**

What does this phrase imply about the wandering mammals?

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7. **Get an adult to fill your tray with pond water.**

Explain why this instruction specifically involves an adult.

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8. **...they leave long chains of spawn which look like strings of pearls.**

Why do you think the author describes the toad's spawn in this way?

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9. **a small tray (ideally a white one!)**

Explain why the author suggests that the tray should ideally be white.

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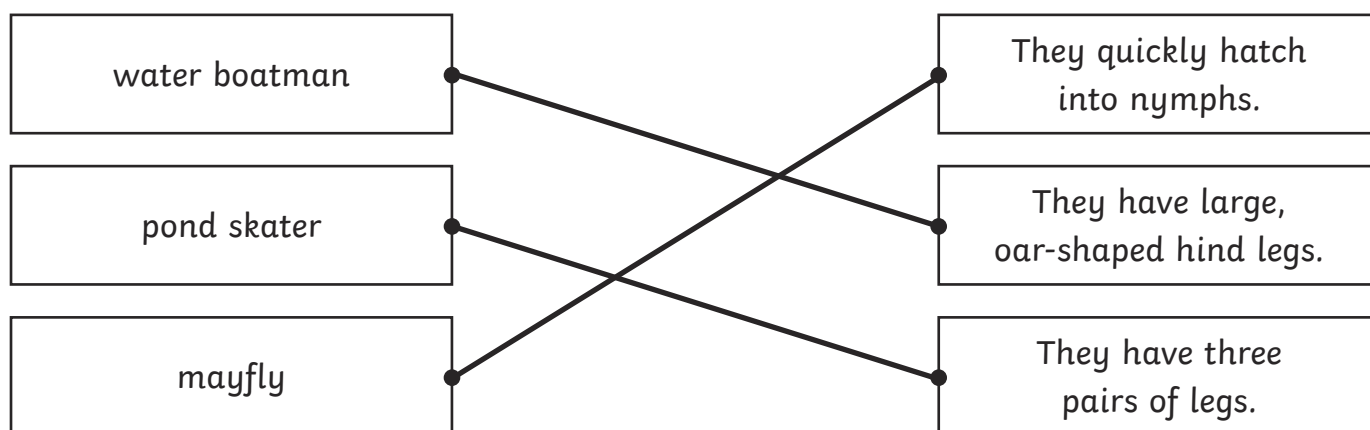
# Answers

1. Which of these creatures is described as a freshwater amphibian with smooth skin?

Tick one.

- frog  
 toad  
 water boatman  
 pond skater

2. Join the boxes to match the fact to the pond creature it relates to.



3. **...here are some of the wild and wonderful creatures that you may just be lucky enough to encounter...**

Write a word or phrase which could be used instead of encounter in this sentence.

**Accept any appropriate synonym, such as: find; see; discover; meet; come across.**

4. What fraction of UK ponds have disappeared over recent years?

**More than one third of UK ponds have disappeared over recent years.**

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which describes how the net or sieve should be moved through the water.

**(with a) sweeping action**

6. **...and a well-earned drink for other wandering mammals.**

What does this phrase imply about the wandering mammals?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: This phrase implies that the wandering mammals have been working hard or travelling for a while and, therefore, really deserve their drink from the pond.**

7. **Get an adult to fill your tray with pond water.**

Explain why this instruction specifically involves an adult.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: This instruction specifically involves an adult because leaning over the pond to fill the tray is dangerous. Therefore, an adult must help in order to keep the child safe.**

8. **...they leave long chains of spawn which look like strings of pearls.**

Why do you think the author describes the toad's spawn in this way?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author describes the toad's spawn in this way so that readers who have never seen it before get a good idea of what it looks like.**

9. **a small tray (ideally a white one!)**

Explain why the author suggests that the tray should ideally be white.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The tray should ideally be white so that any pond creatures turned out onto it can be seen clearly. It would be hard to see the creatures on a darker coloured tray because they would not stand out.**

# Pond Life

Ponds are vital havens for UK wildlife but, unfortunately, more than one third of them have disappeared over recent decades due to changes in land usage. It is critically important that we keep and maintain the remaining ponds in this country as they provide homes for many freshwater amphibians and invertebrates, as well as providing bathing water for birds and a well-earned drink for other wandering mammals.

If you visit a local pond, or are lucky enough to have a pond in your own garden, here are some of the wild and wonderful creatures that you may just be lucky enough to encounter...



## Frogs and Toads

Frogs and toads are both freshwater amphibians. Despite often being confused with one another, frogs and toads are actually quite easy to differentiate: frogs have smooth green or brown skin and lay their spawn in clumps, whereas toads are warty creatures with golden eyes. Toads leave long chains of spawn, which look like strings of pearls. They also move rather differently – frogs jump away from danger using their long, stripy legs, while toads tend to crawl when they feel threatened.

If you are lucky enough to spot any spawn or tadpoles in your local or garden pond, do not move them. They have their best chance of survival to become fully-grown amphibians if they are left in their natural habitat in plenty of warm sunlight.



## Water Boatmen and Pond Skaters

Two of the most common swimming invertebrates found in UK ponds are water boatmen and pond skaters. Water boatmen are recognisable by their large, oar-shaped hind legs, which they use to push themselves through the water as they swim. Just like a scuba diver, they carry their own air supply around their bodies so that they can breathe underwater for extended periods.

Pond skaters have slim, brown bodies with six spindly legs, which they use to move across the pond's surface. Each of their three pairs of legs do a different job: the short front legs collect dead insects from the water's surface for the bug to eat, the middle pair propel them forwards in a skating motion and the back legs act as rudders to steer them in the right direction.

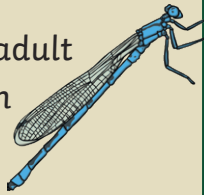
Both species are very fast-moving so catching them in a pond-dipping sieve or net is often quite a challenge!



## Why Not Go for a Dip?

Pond dipping is a fun activity that can be done using very little equipment so why not find out what's lurking in and around a pond near you? You'll be astonished at the number of different creatures that share a home in or by the water! All you need is a net or sieve, a small tray (ideally a white one!) and a [Pond Dipping Identification Checklist](#).

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2. Get an adult to fill your tray with pond water.
3. Carefully, lower your net or sieve into the pond and move it slowly through the water with a sweeping action.
4. Gently lift it out and turn your 'catch' out into your tray. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught! Look but never touch.
5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the tray back into the pond.



It is vitally important to keep yourself safe near water. You should **always** go pond dipping with an adult to supervise you. You may even be able to go to an organised event at a local nature reserve.



## Dragonflies, Damselflies and Mayflies

Pond life isn't just limited to creatures that you might see in the water itself. As you walk near a pond, you may also see some very beautiful and interesting invertebrates dancing above the water too. These tiny creatures play a huge part in pond life and are a key part of the food chain.

All three of these invertebrates start life as an egg but the location of the egg is different for each creature: dragonfly eggs are laid either onto plant material or loosely into the water, damselflies inject their eggs into plant stems, mud or beneath the surface of a pond and mayflies lay their eggs straight into the water, which sink to the bottom before quickly hatching into nymphs.





# Questions

## 1. Ponds are vital havens for UK wildlife...

Which of these phrases is closest in meaning to the words **vital haven**? Tick one.

- crucial sanctuary
- unnecessary retreat
- wasteful refuge
- aquatic accommodation

## 2. Join the boxes to match the phrase from the text to the topic it explores.

disappeared over  
recent decades

energy transfer  
and nutrients

do not move them

the decline in  
pond habitats

a key part of the  
food chain

conserving and  
protecting wildlife

## 3. Find and copy an adjective from the section **Why Not Go for a Dip?** which is a synonym for **shocked**.

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## 4. **Despite often being confused with one another, frogs and toads are actually quite easy to differentiate...**

Write a word or phrase which the author could have used in this sentence instead of **differentiate**.

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## 5. What does the author compare a water boatman's air supply to?

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6. Summarise the information in the first paragraph of this text in 30 words or less.

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7. Discuss why frogs and toads may often be confused with each other.

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8. Explain the importance of the fifth instruction in the section entitled **Why Not Go for a Dip?**

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9. Give three ways in which the instructions for pond dipping in this text emphasise the importance of safety.

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10. Choose any **two** creatures discussed in the text and fully discuss at least two of their similarities and differences.

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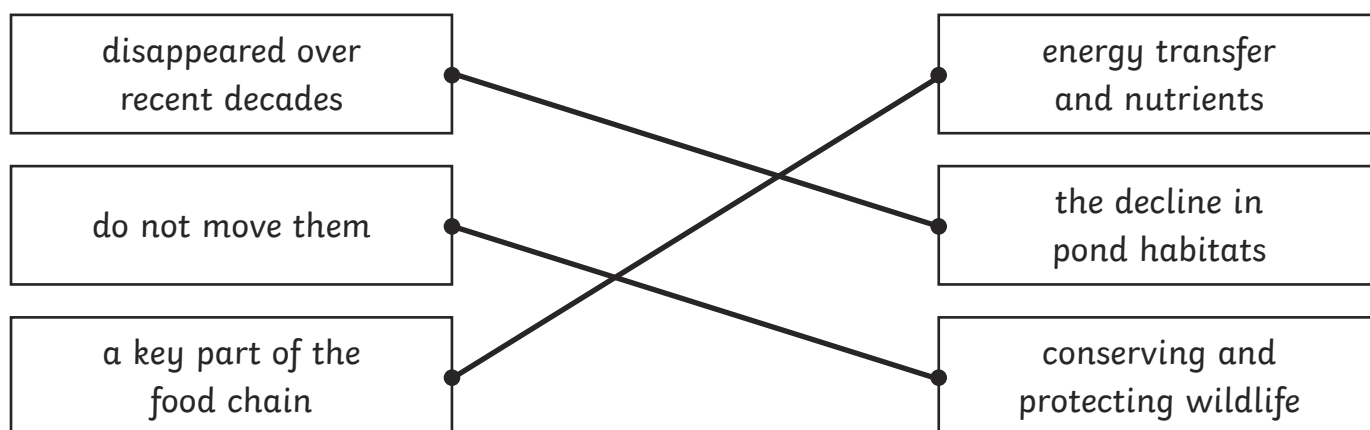
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## 1. Ponds are vital havens for UK wildlife...

Which of these phrases is closest in meaning to the words **vital haven**? Tick one.

- crucial sanctuary**
- unnecessary retreat
- wasteful refuge
- aquatic accommodation

## 2. Join the boxes to match the phrase from the text to the topic it explores.



## 3. Find and copy an adjective from the section **Why Not Go for a Dip?** which is a synonym for **shocked**.

**astonished**

## 4. **Despite often being confused with one another, frogs and toads are actually quite easy to differentiate...**

Write a word or phrase which the author could have used in this sentence instead of **differentiate**.

**Accept any appropriate synonym, such as: tell apart; distinguish; discriminate.**

## 5. What does the author compare a water boatman's air supply to?

**The author compares a water boatman's air supply to that of a scuba diver.**

6. Summarise the information in the first paragraph of this text in 30 words or less.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Although a vital haven for many amphibians and invertebrates to live in and around, bathe in and drink from, more than one third of ponds have disappeared in recent years.**
  
7. Discuss why frogs and toads may often be confused with each other.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Frogs and toads may be confused with each other because they initially look quite similar and many people may be unaware of the key differences which allow for correct identification.**
  
8. Explain the importance of the fifth instruction in the section entitled **Why Not Go for a Dip?**  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important to return all creatures you find to the pond at the end of pond dipping so that the creatures continue to survive and are not injured by your activity.**
  
9. Give three ways in which the instructions for pond dipping in this text emphasise the importance of safety.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: The instructions in the text emphasise the importance of being supervised by an adult in lots of different places. The instructions use adverbs such as carefully and gently to show readers to be careful. They also give clear instructions about the safest way to do things, such as lying on your tummy.**
  
10. Choose any **two** creatures discussed in the text and fully discuss at least two of their similarities and differences.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Frogs and dragonflies are similar because they both live near freshwater ponds. However, frogs are amphibians and dragonflies are invertebrates. Frogs lay spawn whilst dragonflies lay eggs.**