HOW TO: Pond Dip

Pond dipping is a simple and popular activity that shows a whole new world of creatures. First of all we find out about the different areas of the pond, and what we think might live there. This introduces ideas about the variety of life, habitats, how different animals are made, and how some animals can survive in water.

We then find out how we are going to collect pond creatures without hurting them.

Equipment needed:
* Pond dipping nets
* Plastic pots, with magnifying lids
* White plastic trays
* Plastic spoons
* Magnifying glasses
* Microscope (optional)
* Plastic/rubber gloves
* Handwash
* Pond life key or spot sheet

CAUTIONS:
- Frogs, Toads and Newts don’t like to be handled too much. Encourage the group to focus on the smaller creatures in the pond, and leave the amphibians to look at from a distance. If the group are really interested perhaps a group leader could carefully bring the animal closer for a short period
- Be careful not to ‘over-dip’! Pond dipping can disturb a pond quite a lot, especially small ponds and on the banks. Don’t dip for longer than necessary, and leave a period of time for the pond to recover before you revisit the same pond again
- Be careful to check for any birds that might be breeding in reeds or near the pond; if you are planning a dip between early March and August, do a check before hand. Pond dipping where you might disturb nesting birds should be avoided.

ACTIVITY: Pond dipping

THIS TAKES: 2-3 hours

DO IT IN: All year round, ideally spring or summer
**STEP ONE:**
Get your nets and tray ready and positioned near the pond. **BE CAREFUL** pond dipping equipment should be cleaned between ponds - they can spread disease.

**STEP TWO:**
Fill the tray with an inch or 2 of water, this is so you have somewhere to immediately put the creatures you catch.

**STEP THREE:**
Find a safe and stable place to dip - watch out for vegetation covered banks (where you can’t see the edge) and slippery mud. See our template risk assessment for further information. ‘dip’ the pond in circular or ‘figure of 8’ movements. This is to maximise your catch! Be careful not to pull out too much mud and weeds!

**STEP FOUR:**
Carefully empty the net into the tray. This needs to be done gently to protect the creatures, an effective way is to turn the net inside out and gently touch it against the water. Wait for the water to settle and use a key or pictures to find out what you have. The more you look, the more tiny and different creatures you will see. Wildlife in the City can recommend good pond dipping keys.

REPEAT STEPS 2 - 3 TO GET MORE CREATURES. Perhaps try different areas of the pond to see what different creatures there are. Have you tried near reeds? in open water? shallow parts and deep parts?

**STEP FOUR:**
Tip all pond water and creatures carefully back into the pond - get the tray as close to the water as possible to minimise shock. Check and rinse all equipment. Store clean and dry.

*How about..?*
* A record of the creatures found can be filled in, using the picture charts and keys to help match or identify them.
* Children can also draw the creatures on a pond profile. They spend some time looking closely at what they have caught, and choose a creature to make a fact sheet from. This introduces ideas about food chains and adaptations.
* Encourage children to think what animals might live in a pond, and how they survive in water.