

Information about Pond Wildlife

Invertebrates – animals without backbones

A healthy British pond can be home to a vast diversity of invertebrates over 115 species.; Some of which only complete part of their lifecycle in the pond whilst others need an aquatic environment for all of their lifecycle.

Most species are insects there are also crustaceans, annelids (worms), snails and arachnids (spiders and their relatives).

The diversity of species is dependent on water quality as a general rule the more polluted a watercourse is the fewer the number of species.

Insect Larvae and Nymphs

Many flying insects lay their eggs in the pond and their young called nymphs or larvae live under water before changing into adults. .

Larvae are maggot-like insect young, sometimes with legs.



Midge larva



Mosquito larva



Phantom Midge larva

Nymphs look more like adult insects but without wings, usually with jointed legs



Mayfly nymph

A number of different mayfly species lay their eggs in the pond, some take only two months to mature as adults whilst other species take two years. The presence of mayfly in the pond shows the pond has high water quality. Mayfly are very short lived as adults although one species can live for a fortnight



Damselfly nymph

Damselfly nymphs live underwater for about six months before turning into an adult. The main species recorded is the common blue damselfly.



Dragonfly nymph

Dragonfly nymphs can live underwater for up to two years before turning into adults, dependent on the species. The main species seen flying as adults are the emperor and ruddy darter

Both damselfly and dragonfly nymphs are voracious predators with larger nymphs preying on tadpoles.

Information on Pond Wildlife cont.

Pond invertebrates

Common invertebrates who live all their lives in the ponds are:

Crustaceans (animals that are related to crabs and shrimps)

- Daphnia or water fleas – tiny free swimming crustaceans that mainly feed on algae. They are termed water fleas because they swim in a jerky motion. They are the most common animal in the pond and vary in colour from orange to almost transparent.



- Cyclops – similar in size to daphnia. Termed Cyclops as they only have one eye like the giants in Greek mythology.



- Water or hoglouse – related to woodlouse, these live at the bottom of the pond feeding on dead organic matter. Water louse carry their eggs and small young on their tummies.



- Freshwater shrimp – smaller freshwater species of marine shrimps. They belong to the decapods as they have ten legs.



Molluscs – gastropods

- Pond snails – the two types that are found in our pond are the ramshorn and the great pond snail. Both are mainly plant eaters but will eat dead animal and plant matter.



Insects (six legs and three body parts)

- Greater water boatman – fast moving predators who swim upside down catching prey with their jaws.
- Lesser water boatman – not closely related to the greater water boatman. These creatures swim the right way up and eat algae.



- Greater Diving beetle – a large carnivore that breathes using a bubble of air on its body.



- Water scorpion – not related to scorpions. It has large front legs for catching its prey and its long tail acts as a snorkel



- Pond skater – lives on the surface of the pond and hunt for struggling insects by vibration. Their feet have water repellent hairs that hold tiny air bubbles to allow them to walk on water.



Other

- Leech – related to worms and are parasites. They feed on the body fluids of other animals attaching themselves by a sucker. None of the leeches in our pond can pierce human skin. Leeches can swim but most often move along the bottom of the pond.



Information on Pond Wildlife cont.

Vertebrates (animals with a backbone)

Amphibians

The park is home to three species of amphibian, the common frog, the common toad and the common newt. An amphibian is a moist skinned animal which has a gilled aquatic larva that transforms into an adult with air breathing lungs.

Common toad – toads tend to be larger than frogs and have more warty skins and are poorer jumpers. They can vary in colour from dark brown to orange. They come to the pond in spring to spawn and toad spawn is laid in long strings. Toad tadpoles are darker and smaller than frog tadpoles. They also tend to swim in large shoals. Once changed from tadpoles to toadlets they hide under rocks, logs and in deep vegetation.



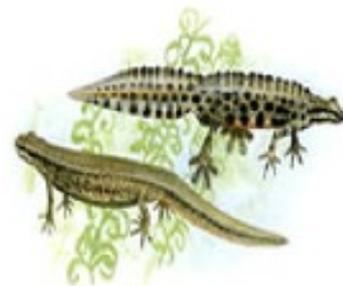
Common Frog – frogs have smooth skin and are excellent leapers. Frog spawn is laid in clumps in early spring and tadpoles are present in the pond until about May. After metamorphosis the young froglets leave the pond for long grass and woodland.



Both frogs and toads produce a lot of spawn or eggs, over 5000 eggs maybe in a string of toadspawn. Out of this number only a handful will reach maturity due to heavy predation from other creatures including water beetles, dragonfly nymphs and birds.

Common newt – newts return to the pond in late spring to breed. Female newts are brown in colour and the males are brighter in colour with spots.

Newts lay their eggs individually wrapped in the leaves of submerged plants and newt tadpoles are called eft. They are light brown in colour and have gills.



Information on Pond Wildlife cont.

Vertebrates (animals with a backbone)

Birds

Moorhen

A pair of moorhens are resident on the pond all year round, during the summer they can have up to three broods and feed on pond vegetation and invertebrates.



Mallard

Mallard ducks nest around the park. In early spring a number of mallard often appear on the pond before pairing to breed. The duck can lay up to 15 eggs so large broods of ducklings are not uncommon, sadly most do not survive.



Grey heron

Heron will come to the pond to feed on small amphibians.