

Dragonfly Ponds as Community and Educational Resources

BDS Species and Habitat Management Sheet #3



Pond Dipping. Photo by Pam Taylor.

The educational benefit of having access to a pond that can be used for environmental projects is enormous. A pond can help everyone learn about life cycles, food chains, adaptations and seasons. This habitat management guide suggests good practice in making use of a pond as a community or education resource. There are useful links at the end of the guide.

Pond design

This leaflet does not deal with the design of ponds, the 'Dig a Pond for Dragonflies' leaflet that can be downloaded from the BDS website <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/habitat-conservation> provides guidance on the design and construction of a new pond.

Pond study equipment

Equipment needed for dragonfly pond dipping includes a long handled net; a white tray to put the water & animals into; a spoon and paintbrush to move animals from the tray into the magnifier without causing any damage; a magnifier; a good identification guide.



Pond dipping equipment. Photos by Daniele Muir (l) and Claire Install (r).

Dipping platforms

Dipping platforms allow safe and close access to the water and can be made from timber or recycled plastic. Good

dipping platforms will be as close to the water as possible - leaning over barriers or reaching down to get nets into the water will increase the risk of falling in.



Common Blue Damselfly. David Kitching

Pond dipping methods

- Fill your white tray three-quarters full of pond water and place it somewhere flat.
- Hold the net vertically and sweep it through the water and vegetation in a figure of eight shape. Try not to disturb the mud at the bottom of the pond and move along one side of the pond if carrying out a number of sweeps.
- Turn the net inside out over the white tray and gently rinse it, allowing the pond wildlife to escape into the water. Make sure there's nothing stuck in the corners.
- Use the paintbrush and plastic spoon to transfer your wildlife into a magnifier for a closer look. Be very careful not to damage delicate legs or antennae.
- Use a guide to identify what you see and return the animals to the tray after identification.
- Ensure predators and prey are not close together as one may eat the other eg keep dragonfly and damselfly larvae separate wherever possible.
- Leave the animals in the tray for no longer than half an hour and make sure they are not in direct sunlight.
- When returning the tray contents to the pond, gently pour it back into the pond at water level. Ensure there are no creatures left in the tray – leeches and flatworms may attach themselves to the tray and need a few rinses to remove them.



Dipping pond. Dave Smallshire.

Educational resources

Feel free to make use of the BDS's Outdoor Education Resources to help your group learn about Dragonflies at: www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/educational-resources-teachers-and-children

Good ponds to visit

Why not visit one of the wonderful ponds at our Dragonfly Hotspots? If you are there on a warm, sunny day, you are almost guaranteed to spot dragonflies flying around. Carry out some pond dipping and you should find some larvae too! Our Hotspot ponds with dipping platforms can be found at Crombie Country Park, near Carnoustie and Greenhead Moss Local Nature Reserve, Wishaw. There may be Rangers on hand to assist.

More Information

You can find out lots of information about dragonflies on the British Dragonfly Society's website at:
www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

You can download our 'Dig a Pond' and 'Managing Habitats for Dragonflies' leaflets at:
www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/dig-pond-dragonflies-0

Useful links

Plant suppliers

Scotia Seeds - Native Scottish wild flower seeds, Angus – www.scotiaseeds.co.uk www.facebook.com/scotia.seeds
Celtica Wildflowers - Native Scottish wild flowers in plugs and bare root pond plants, Perthshire
www.facebook.com/celticawildflowers
Jupiter wildflower nursery - Native Scottish wild flowers in plugs, Grangemouth
www.tcv.org.uk/scotland/discover/jupiter-wildflower-nursery

Platform manufacturers

Watergems – Water features specialists/ platform design & installation
www.watergems.co.uk/gallery/decks-platforms-and-boardwalks

Suppliers of Identification Guides

There are many very informative guides to help with easy pond life and dragonfly identification, dragonfly books can be purchased from the BDS's website - www.british-dragonflies.org.uk other fieldguides can be purchased from the FSC or NHBS
www.field-studies-council.org/publications/pubs/freshwater-name-trail.aspx
www.nhbs.com/browse/subject/614/books

Nets and other field equipment

NHBS field equipment - www.nhbs.com/browse/subject/307
B & S Entomological Services - www.entomology.org.uk
EFE and GB Nets - www.efe-uk.com
Watkins & Doncaster - www.watdon.co.uk/the-naturalists



Photos: Common Hawker laying eggs, Daniele Muir; Blue-tailed Damselfly, Brian Walker; Looking at the catch, Daniele Muir and Large Red Damselfly larvae, Neil Phillips.

This advice sheet has been produced as part of our work with SNH. Design and text by the British Dragonfly Society. Website: www.british-dragonflies.org.uk
British Dragonfly Society (BDS) is a registered charity. Charity number 1168300.



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