



## Pond Conservation's Big Pond Dip 2011

We are pleased to announce the launch of the 2011 Big Pond Dip Survey. In this annual survey Pond Conservation invites the nation's gardeners to find out what's living in their ponds.

The survey uses a simple biological assessment method, based on the creatures that live in ponds, to find out what condition garden ponds are in. The results can then be entered online, via the Pond Conservation web-site, and are automatically added to the national database.

The survey is now in its third year and is helping Pond Conservation to find out more about what makes a good pond. The results so far also tell us that:

- Half of everyone doing the survey found dragonflies or damselflies in their ponds.
- Three quarters recorded water snails, water beetles and pond skaters.
- Virtually everyone reported that their ponds were visited by amphibians and, in around 60%, amphibians were breeding.
- Only a few garden ponds had the most sensitive creatures: caddisflies and alderflies were seen only in about 10% of ponds.

Perhaps surprisingly, fish ponds had as wide a variety of invertebrate animals as ponds without fish - probably because quite a lot of the smaller animals can live alongside fish as long as there are lots of places to hide away to avoid being eaten. But if you are hoping to see a lot of frogs, it's still best to avoid fish, or have a second pond just for the amphibians.

In 2011 we are hoping that even more people will do the survey. The results will help to confirm some of the findings from the first two years. For example, it looked as though the better the pond was for invertebrates, the more likely it was to support amphibians. This is not something that's been observed before, and if it turns out to be true, would have considerable implications for the way we look after ponds.

The results so far also suggest that although the tiniest ponds *can* support rich wildlife communities, it's harder to keep these ponds in good condition. Again, with results from larger numbers of ponds we'll be able to find out if this really is the case.

If you would like to join our Big Pond Dip and find out more about what makes your garden pond tick, then got to:

<http://www.pondconservation.org.uk/bigponddip>