

Freshwater Fun

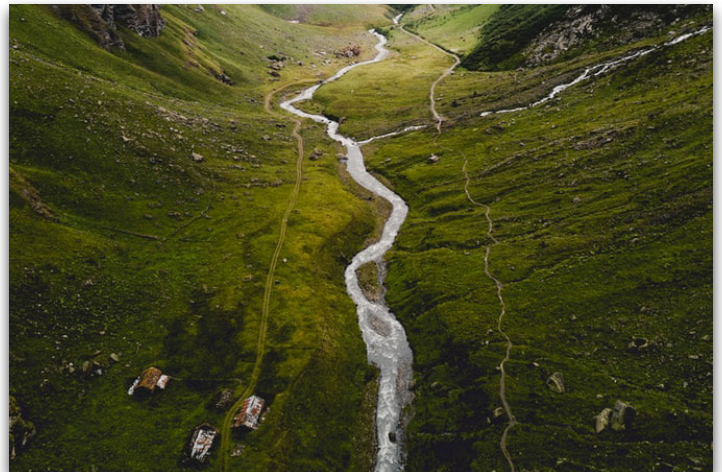
Our planet is covered in water. Most of it is salt water, which we find in the oceans, but the rest is called freshwater. Freshwater environments support all kinds of life and include: ponds, rivers, lakes, wetlands, streams and even water underground! Freshwater environments can be very small, like a pond in your local park, or massive, like the Amazon River in South America.

In this activity, we'll be thinking about freshwater environments around the globe, checking up on how healthy they are and meeting some of the creatures which rely on freshwater to survive.

One of the best ways to learn about freshwater is by seeing which species live in or on it! Pond dipping is an easy activity to meet some freshwater creatures near you. The number of different species living in freshwater can tell us how healthy that environment is.



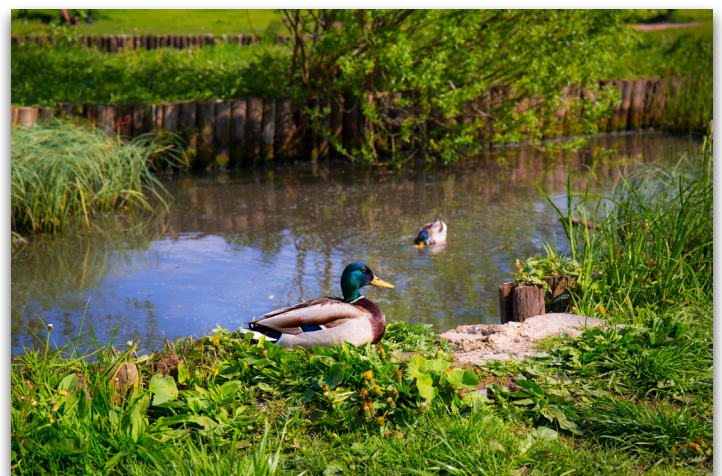
Wetland



River



Lake



Freshwater

Pond Dipping

You can explore a pond in your garden or local park to go dipping or use the [RSPB website](#) to find a local nature reserve here. You must be accompanied by an adult to do this activity!

You will need:

- A net
- A tray or see-through container to fill with water
- A magnifying glass (not essential, but will help you identify the creatures you find)
- A freshwater creature ID chart. [This downloadable one](#) from the RSPB is great!

How to pond dip:

1. It is important to be safe when pond dipping, so start off by looking for any hazards, such as litter or slippery patches around the edge of the pond. Find a safe place to pond dip and try to choose a place that lets you reach the water easily.
2. Remember that you are trying to find as many creatures as possible, so you must try and be quiet! Pretend that you are a spy sneaking up to the water so that you don't scare any of the pond creatures away!
3. Get an adult to fill your tray or container with water from the pond.
4. Kneel down at the edge of the pond and gently dip your net into the water. (Kneeling down means you have less chance of falling into the pond!) Sweep it slowly around in a figure of eight movement. This will help you to catch a few creatures! Be careful not to dig your net into the bottom of the pond, so that you don't catch lots of mud.
5. Pull your net carefully out of the water and gently tip it into your tray. Anything you have caught will fall into the water so that you can get a closer look!
6. Use your ID chart to figure out which creatures you have found.
7. When you have finished, get an adult to carefully empty your tray back into the pond and remember to leave everything as you found it!

Things to think about:

- Which creatures did you find and identify?
- How many different species did you find?
- Did you see many plants or birds around the pond?
- Did you see any litter?

If you spotted any of these species, it could mean that your pond is very healthy! These are called 'indicator species' and can only survive in very clean water with little pollution.



Alder Tree



Kingfisher



Water Boatman



Palmate Newt