

How does your garden croak?



Last year's pond surveys around the parish were mainly concerned with field ponds in the wider countryside. The 93 ponds surveyed showed a range of wildlife, although many ponds proved not to be very suitable for wildlife. The survey looked particularly for amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) but, following a national initiative picked up locally by the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT), we also looked for a range of other animals and plants of interest or conservation concern. A representative from SWT came over in December to look at a selection of our ponds. Eventually, a report will be posted on the group's website.

We are equally interested in the wildlife lurking in your garden ponds. The hundreds of garden ponds in the parish play a very important role in the life cycles of many species. Indeed, we know of a few smaller garden ponds that support rare Great Crested Newt populations. We would like to survey more garden ponds this spring and, if you would like your pond surveyed or have sightings of amphibians, we would like to hear from you.

A well-designed and maintained pond is a haven for all sorts of plants and animals. It is a complex ecosystem full of plants and animals: scavengers, predators, herbivores, decomposers and parasites. A pond is really four distinctive habitats in one location. These four habitats are the surface film habitat, open water habitat, bottom habitat and shore habitat. The different plants and animals share out these habitats.

A pond also provides essential drinking and bathing water for birds and mammals. If you stock your pond with native plant species in and around the edge, you'll encourage an even greater diversity of wildlife. Don't include goldfish: they eat the eggs and young of the amphibians. Of all the habitats you can create in your garden to help wildlife, a pond is probably the most effective.

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