



Standard Operating Procedures

Pond dipping

Equipment

- White trays
- Pond nets
- White spoons and lenses
- Specials tray
- Clip boards and worksheets
- Keys/pictures/food chain cards
- Two buckets
- Disposable gloves
- Safety line
- First aid kit

Group organisation

There are two dipping platforms on the Finger Lakes for this activity, one near the memorial seat, the other, near the rough meadow. The latter is used most frequently and was upgraded in 2007 to provide wheelchair access and benches for placing trays. At both sites start with an introduction including safety talk/demonstration. Ideally trays will have water in and sited in the shade before the group arrives.

Group size

Between 10 -15 children per session in small groups of 3 - 5. Each small group is provided with one set of equipment.

Purpose of activity

To find out what lives in the pond.

Background

The Finger Lakes were formed after holes were dug for gravel extraction then left to fill with rain water. The 'fingers' are the result of piles of spoil being left in ridges which now stand above the water level and provide safe, undisturbed habitat for nesting birds, muntjac deer and other wildlife.

Points to include in demonstration & safety talk

- Adults to check for cuts, and issue disposable gloves if necessary after demonstration and before anyone touches a net
- Children are only allowed on the dipping platform if an adult is present and they have a net
- Net has two ends – interesting and dangerous. Take care with the dangerous end especially near the eyes.
- Plant feet firmly behind edge board; do figure eight movement with net just under surface of water; pull out net and allow to drip over pond
- Carefully carry the net to the tray and tip out contents of net and dip into water.
- Children are to have one dip each
- Examine the catch. Take care with animals and do not stir the water. Use a plastic spoon to carefully lift animal up in spoonful of water for a closer look. Ensure you hold the spoon over the tray
- Put one of each species found in a small amount of water in a 'specials' pot
- Hold hand lenses close to your eye and move the spoon up towards it
- Show children how to use the keys/picture cards
- Explain how to record finds – use worksheet to tick off or keep count.

Practical work

- Ask children to carry the equipment from Visitor Centre to the site.
- Organise children into small groups.
- Hand out equipment, clip boards and worksheets.
- Give the demonstration and safety talk.
- Explain pond dipping procedure and use of keys.
- Emphasise that each child will get a turn. Take children, nets and bucket onto the dipping platform to demonstrate dipping. Collect a bucket of water.
- Afterwards allow one child from each group to stay to dip under supervision.
- Take the other children back to the trays.
- Fill trays and pots a third with water.
- If possible, have a tray with specimens in to allow the remaining children to start identifying before they identify what is in their group's tray.

During this time adults will supervise the children to carry out identification; to offer advice on behaviour; equipment use; links in information to previous or following activities, e.g. food chains, camouflage.

With a small group it is possible to reduce movement to and from the platform by having the trays on the platform. In this case it needs to be made clear that only those having a turn at dipping can walk about, and that other children must stay at their tray.

Finishing off

- Gather the children together; collect and count equipment; and store equipment for the next group.
- Arrange the specials pots in the middle of a circle of children.
- Ask each group to point out and name their 'best' catch.
- Talk about what has been found, similarities in colour or physical features, and adaptations.
- If time, look at adaptations or use cards to construct food chains.