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Whirligig beetle

Gyrinus substriatus

Whirling and gyrating groups skim and slide chaotically across the water surface in summer. At 3mm long this oily black bead of a beetle has two paddle shaped rear legs to assist swimming and two compound eyes, each of which are split into two halves, the top half for seeing above the water the other for seeing below.

find me

In small groups at the pond edge frantically spinning and spiralling upon the water surface.

Common pond skater

Gerris lacustris

Having more than a passing resemblance to an Olympic style rowing boat, the common pond skater rests upon the surface tension of the water with six water resistant legs, the front set for grabbing and holding prey, the second for rowing and the third act as a rudder for steering. It is estimated that this insect can move across the water at 1.5 m a second.

find me

On the surface of still water in ponds, lakes and even puddles in spring and summer.

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Common frog

Rana temporaria

Although common frogs have been found in a wide variety of colours including, red, yellow, and black you are most likely to find one sporting a skin with the more familiar glossy olive green, decorated with brown stripes on its back legs and dark brown eye mask, distinguishing it from the dull grey brown dry and warty skin of the common toad. Hibernating over the cold winter months under deep leaf litter or rocks, frogs can also hibernate under leaves and mud at the bottom of ponds where, through their skin, oxygen from the surrounding water is exchanged for carbon dioxide in a process called cutaneous respiration.

find me

In the spring and summer in woodland close to ponds hunting for invertebrates, or gently croaking in shallow pond edges at night.

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pond life

hard to find

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More mantis than stick insect in appearance, with its tail piercing the surface acting as a snorkel, this stealthy predator lies in wait, camouflaged amongst plants and reeds waiting to strike out at any passing prey, such as tadpoles, small fish and invertebrates which they inject with a saliva which disables the prey and also aids in digestion.

find me

All year round in ponds and lakes hiding amongst reeds and aquatic vegetation.

Water stick insect

Ranatra linearis

Diving bell spider

Argyroneta aquatica

Spinning a non-uniform underwater structure from silken sheeting which is then tethered to vegetation, this aquatic spider, which lives its entire life underwater, traps air at the surface in the dense hairs on its abdomen, then returning to its underwater lair releases the air, inflating a bubble or diving bell, from where it patiently waits for any passing prey to make contact with the structure, at which point it will grab the prey, which mainly consists of aquatic insects and crustaceans, before returning to the diving bell to feast.

find me

Close to the surface of ponds in aquatic vegetation. Look closely for the silver sparkle of air trapped underwater.

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Smooth newt

Lissotriton vulgaris

Reaching up to 10cm long from the nose to the tip of the tail, an upper body coloured with slate grey-brown whilst underneath a rusty orange belly, which is covered all over with smart black spots, making the smooth newt a truly handsome amphibian. Leaving ponds in spring after breeding it will spend the remainder of the year feeding on insects in woodland and grassland before overwintering under deep leaf litter, woodpiles or buried in mud.

all
zones

find me

In autumn dwelling under rocks and logs feeding on slugs and insects.

pond life

a **real** find

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Grass snake

Natrix natrix



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The largest reptile in the UK, with the female reaching up to 75cm in length, a rich earthy green brown with black vertical stripes along each side, and a yellow and black collar keep this snake perfectly camouflaged amongst leaf litter and vegetation. Also a very strong swimmer, grass snake's prefer wetland habitat where they can feed almost exclusively on frogs and toads.

find me

In the summer months basking in open safe places close to water, or if you are really lucky..... swimming.

Leaving their roosts in hollow trees at dusk to hunt down their favoured prey, consisting of small flying insects such as moths, mayflies and midges, the Daubenton's bat skims the surface of lakes and ponds using echolocation to build a picture of its surroundings, and once located, the desired food item is scooped up with help from its tail membrane and feet and then consumed on the wing.

find me

At dusk in the summer skimming at a centimetre or 2 above the surface of ponds and lakes.

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©Bat Conservation Trust

Daubenton's bat

Myotis daubentonii

Four spotted chaser

Libellula quadrimaculata



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Uniformly golden brown becoming darker toward the tip of the abdomen, this sturdy looking dragonfly has yellow panels along each side, and it can easily be identified by the black spots on the leading edge of each wing, which is how it came by its name. The male, upon finding a favourite perch, will watch the skies for passing prey and other male intruders, and can be seen aggressively defending this patch before returning to the very same perch.

find me

Hovering over water and around reed beds in June and July.

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Nottinghamshire

Wildlife Trust

