



Section 6

Embedding care for our outdoor spaces into our experiences



6.15 Exploring aquatic pond and stream life

Building on prior learning

A child notices a movement or finds a frog when playing outside near damp or wet ground. They may have seen or heard about tadpoles.

Amphibians (frogs, toads and newts)

- In the spring, avoid water activity in the vicinity of ponds whilst the spawn is laid and tadpoles are growing.
- If the spawn has been laid in a place which is in danger of drying out, contact the SSPCA ([Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#)) for advice and to arrange for it to be moved.

- Visit week on week rather than taking spawn back to your immediate outdoor space. Encourage children to watch the tadpoles – what are they doing? Where are they going? How can we capture the changes we observe?
- Amphibians have highly porous skins which can easily be damaged through handling, so try to avoid this.

Pond and stream dipping

There are outdoor professionals, e.g. countryside rangers, who can provide support and advice about these activities.

- Most aquatic creatures are active in the warmer months of the year from late May through to early September.



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- Ensure only the minimum amount of pond and stream life are disturbed.
- Use a cylinder with a see-through bottom to view the animals without having to remove them. Learn [how to easily make an underwater viewer](#).
- Have insulating mats to lie on close to the water's edge. This is useful for children with limited physical mobility and to create a calm observation space, where the edge of water is more visible.
- Use hands to gently move rocks on the bottom of a stream or pond and avoid kicking.



Having a closer look

- Partially fill a shallow white tray with water from the pond or stream.
- Carefully transfer animals from net to tray by lowering a soft net into water and turning inside out. One netful should be sufficient.
- Keep the tray away from the water's edge and out of direct sunlight.
- Return the creatures back to their home as soon as possible after studying.
- Create your own mini pond in your immediate outdoor space – good for wildlife and to see lots of pond life.



Find out more

- RSPCA [Fieldwork guidance](#)
- [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust](#)
- [Froglife](#)
- [Scottish Invasive Species Initiative](#) has river and other outdoor resources
- [Buglife](#)