



WONDERFUL WETLANDS

What we'd like you to do

- ✓ Boost the wildlife value of your park by focusing on your ponds, streams and other wetland areas.
- ✓ Put in a new pond or other wetland feature *and/or* manage your existing pond, river or wetland feature to boost its value to wildlife.
- ✓ Do something **NEW** that will make a significant positive impact for wildlife.
- ✓ The scope of the work should reflect the resources you have and the location and size of your park.
- ✓ For example, a large park might create a new wildlife pond; a small park might develop a small 'bog garden'. A residential park might encourage residents/anglers to get involved in monitoring the wildlife in 'their' pond.

Why take the challenge?

Ponds, streams and other wetland areas are vital for wildlife. Adding and enhancing these types of habitat can bring wildlife flocking – and add interest for people too. Indeed, creating wetland habitat can actually be one of the most important things a park can do for wildlife – introducing an incredibly valuable habitat niche for a wide variety of plants and animals.

Key steps

1. Decide what you're going to do ...

- ✓ Take a look at the areas of wetland on your park, include ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, reedbeds, marshes, etc.
- ✓ Think about how you can enhance your water and wetland areas and the areas around them, add to them, and manage them to boost their value for wildlife.
- ✓ If you don't have any fresh water habitats then plan to put in a pond or another sort of freshwater/wetland habitat.
- ✓ Parks with little land to spare might consider a mini-pond or other small-scale project,
- ✓ Use the [good ideas](#) and [resources](#) below as a start.
- ✓ Get help and advice from your local wildlife group or expert.

2. Make a plan ...

- ✓ Once you've decided what you're going to do, put together a simple plan with actions and goals - time-tabled if possible. You can use the wildlife plan template [here](#).
- ✓ Take photos of the area as a visual record of your 'starting point'. If possible, do a biodiversity survey to set yourself a benchmark.
- ✓ Be ambitious!
- ✓ We would be delighted to receive a **copy of your [plan](#)**, along with **some of your photos** so we know what you're working on. Upload plan and photos [here](#).
- ✓ Putting a [plan](#) together will help us know whether the scope of what you've got planned is 'enough' to win the challenge.

3. Put your plan into action ...

- ✓ Put someone with the necessary skills in charge of the job and give them the time and resources they need to get on with it.
- ✓ If you can, get everyone involved by letting them know what you're up to and by encouraging them to help you.
- ✓ Use your challenge to educate everyone – do pond-dipping days. Make the challenge part of what your park is 'all about'.

4. Report on your success ...

- ✓ When you've reached your project goal or a first major milestone let us know – send us details of what you've achieved and upload your report and photos of the results [here](#).
- ✓ If you are due an advisory visit, show your advisor what you've achieved.

5. Winning the challenge ...

- ✓ Once we've received details of what you've done, we'll review the information.
- ✓ If you have done enough, you'll win the challenge and get a badge to prove it!
- ✓ If not, we'll let you know what you still need to do.

NB: There are no strict deadlines for completing the challenge. An ambitious plan might take more than one year to put in place.

[Good ideas for your plan](#)

- ✓ If possible, do a **biodiversity survey** so that you have a baseline from which to work. Repeat the survey at regular intervals to monitor progress. Your local Wildlife Trust should be able to help.
- ✓ Keep any water bodies or wetland areas **free of litter** and other pollutants.
- ✓ If you are building a new pond, then try and find an area with a clean water source. This will help optimise the wildlife value of your new pond. The **best pond profile for wildlife is a shallow saucer** shape with gently shelving sides. If you have the space, put in a complex of different sized ponds, rather than one large one.
- ✓ Look for every other opportunity to create new wetland areas – for example, **create a wetland scrape in a boggy corner** of a field. Scrapes are shallow depressions with gently sloping edges, which seasonally hold water.
- ✓ Projects need not be large-scale. More manageable options can include a **mini-pond** and a **bog garden**. These projects are detailed in the WWT's 'Just add water' toolkit, which also shows how to make a wetland habitat at the end of a drainpipe (see [resources](#) for links)
- ✓ Take every opportunity to **let native species establish** alongside streams and rivers, along pond and lake banksides and out in water bodies e.g. rushes and reeds. Make sure invasive plant species such as New Zealand pygmy-weed do not get the upper hand.
- ✓ Aquatic vegetation colonises rapidly with little outside help. However, if you decide to plant up banks and shorelines put in native species that provide food and shelter. In ponds and other water bodies, put in a good mixture of appropriate **aquatic plants - oxygenators such as Hornwort** are particularly important.

- ✓ If you can, ensure that significant sections of stream, river, pond and lake ***banks are left wild*** with only occasional access points for humans. Overall, try and limit the amount of disturbance that any wetland habitat has to endure. If necessary, put up fencing to stop trampling.
- ✓ Think about ***creating artificial breeding areas***, nesting boxes and otter holts etc. to encourage wildlife to make a home.
- ✓ If people come to your park to fish, ***enlist your anglers*** to help keep your lakes and ponds in the best of health. See the [Angling Trust's](#) Code of Conduct for good ideas.
- ✓ If you have a pond, ***make sure that animals can get in and out easily*** by providing escape routes. Also, make sure that there are stones for newts and other animals to hibernate under, that leaves are removed, and that any ice is broken in the winter to let oxygen in.
- ✓ Many parks report health and safety concerns about water features, so please ***implement sensible signage*** and fencing to keep your insurers happy and everyone safe. That said, please use your ponds, streams, rivers and lakes for wildlife education and activities, such as pond dipping.

Online Resources

The [Freshwater Habitats Group](https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk) (freshwaterhabitats.org.uk) is a great place to look for inspiration. Its site gives detailed information on designing and managing ponds and other freshwater habitats.

The [River Restoration Centre](https://therrc.co.uk) (therrc.co.uk) can provide independent and impartial advice on a number of river conservation topics and issues.

The [Wild About Gardens](https://wildaboutgardens.org.uk) (wildaboutgardens.org.uk) website is full of good advice and ideas, including a FAQ on ponds.

The [WWT](https://wwt.org.uk) (wwt.org.uk) leads the way on the conservation of wetlands and the wildlife that lives on them. Its site has some excellent tips on creating wetland habitats and looking after them properly. It has produced the [Just add water](#) toolkit, which highlights three easy wetland creation projects. The group's website also has a really useful guide to native pond plants.