

# Ponds Are Alive

Developed by Jeanne Wall

*Rediscovering and Exploring Science through the Arts*

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## Objective/Goal:

This main experience allows children to discover the different animals that live in ponds, and to use their senses for scientific discovery.

Through the use of the senses as well as drama, movement, puppetry, and music experiences, it is possible to explore and discover unique environments and enhance a child's understanding of the natural world. This exploration of natural habitats, aligned with curriculum standards, will expand the children's knowledge of the physical world while developing skills that promote approaches to learning, observation, descriptive skills, problem-solving, and emergent literacy.

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## Educational Impact:

- ✓ Vocabulary
  - ✓ Descriptive language
  - ✓ Problem solving
  - ✓ Listening skills
  - ✓ Observational skills
  - ✓ Self-regulation
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## Suggestions for use with the *Songs for Singing and Learning* CDs:

- ✓ "Pond Soundscape"
  - ✓ "Pond Sounds"
  - ✓ "Insect, Frog, and Bird Sounds"
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## Materials Needed:

- ✓ Brown fabric (for the pond's muddy bottom)
  - ✓ Opaque blue fabric
  - ✓ Figures of a fish, turtle, crayfish, newt, and several ducks
  - ✓ Scarf (for pond grass)
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- ✓ Green felt lily pad

### Procedure and Process:

This is a lesson about ponds, with the overall objective of teaching pond science: the elements of a pond and the animals dependent on it. It allows the children to become aware of their senses and how important their senses are to discovering and observing new environments. The children will move very slowly and quietly, as if really looking for wildlife and listening for sounds. You can emphasize observation using only sight. How can they use descriptive language to describe what they see?

The first time I used this lesson, it was designed for a special needs classroom. With this in mind, I had to anticipate problems that would require more management strategies. I also needed to consider the rhythm of the lesson, namely, how to boost the energy level in some places while keeping the children actively involved. First, I looked for things to visually create a pond scene in the classroom. I thought about how I could provide the children with an auditory experience and how to choose the right book for the subject matter. I wanted to incorporate an enjoyable movement component into the lesson at the point that I believed the children's attention span might be challenged. The illustrations of pond grass gave me an idea for a grass dance.

### Preparation:

On the floor, create a pre-set pond scene. Use brown fabric (pond's muddy bottom) covered with an opaque blue fabric that is big enough for all the children to sit around it. On the bottom (the brown fabric), place a small figure of a fish, a turtle, a crayfish, and a newt, as well as a scarf for pond grass. All of this is covered with the blue fabric, representing the water in the pond. On the pond, place a green felt lily pad. Bring the children to the pond, and speak in a soft voice.

*Today we are going to visit a pond, which is a small body of water. A pond is a special kind of habitat, or place, where certain kinds of animals and plants live.*

*A person who goes out and studies the plants and animals in ponds is called a naturalist. Naturalists often share what they know about habitats (those special places animals live) and about the animals and plants that live there, by taking a group of children – like you – on a tour.*

*Would you like to go on a tour and visit a pond today? I'm going to put on my naturalist hat because I'm going to be the naturalist today.*

*The way a naturalist learns about a habitat is by observing, using their eyes and listening with their ears. If we are very quiet, we may see many birds and animals at the pond—but birds and animals are scared by noises and fast movements, so we must walk very slowly and quietly to the pond. Once*

*we are there, let's sit very quietly beside the pond with our hands in our laps. Remember to move slowly and quietly. I'll lead the way.*

If the children are not following your instructions, stop them and bring them back. Emphasize that, if they want to see the animals, they must move slowly and quietly. Try again. Sitting around the pond, children will want to touch the water fabric. Still in a whisper, say:

*Let's all take one hand and gently touch the water. How does it feel?*

Encourage whispering voices.

*We don't want to scare away the animals, so all hands back in our laps.*

*Shh! [whispering] Listen, what do you hear?*

Play a recording of environmental sounds that includes song birds and frog sounds.

*Let's look around and see if we can observe any of the animals that we are hearing.*

*Where is this bird flying? Some birds land and sit beside the pond to get a drink of water. Where is this bird sitting? Are the birds the same? How are they different?*

*Some birds go in the pond. What kind of birds are these? They are a mother duck and her baby ducks. What color are they? How many ducks are there? Let's count them. [Place the ducks on the water one at a time]*

*Mama Duck likes to have her babies in a straight line. Are these ducks in a straight line? She quacks at her babies, telling them to get in a line.*

Show the children the baby ducks going in a circle.

*What shape is this?*

Mama Duck quacks again. Put ducks in a square, then a triangle.

*Let's help Mama Duck and put her babies in a straight line. Now Mama Duck is happy. Off she goes with her babies.*

## **Main Experience**

Using finger puppets or small representational objects, start a narration/puppet play about animals coming to visit the pond. The first to show up is a dragonfly. Demonstrate a bird flying over the pond looking for bugs to eat.

## **Two frogs, one lily pad**



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Two frogs are now brought into the scene. After a quick swim, both frogs are hungry and want to sit on the lily pad to wait for flies. They begin to squabble over who gets to sit on the lily pad.

Ask the children what they think is happening. They will likely say that the frogs are fighting.

*Why do you think they are fighting? If they keep fighting, will either of them catch their dinner? What do you think they should do?*

Accept all answers that the children provide.

*They could share the lily pad. How could they share it? Take turns.*

Demonstrate how the frogs can take turns.

*Is the pad big enough for them to use together at the same time? Yes.*

Put both frogs on the pad.

*Now they can be friends and eat lunch together. The frogs decide to catch bugs and then share them for lunch.*

This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce a math problem. The frogs could catch a number of bugs, but the bugs get divided unevenly. This causes the frogs to squabble again. Ask the children to explain what is wrong. Count the bugs.

*Are the piles of bugs the same? Which has more? Can someone make them the same on both sides?*

You can tell the children that frogs really catch flies and eat them right away, but, since we are pretending, the frogs will catch their bugs first and wait to eat together.

### **Looking under the surface of the water**

*If we work together, we can explore what is under the water.*

*When I tell you to, and without lifting it up, everyone must take a hold of the edge of the pond just like I am doing. Do not lift it up until I tell you to do so.*

*When we lift it up, it's really important that everyone keep both hands on the pond. Don't let go.*

This is designed to counteract the impulse to reach for the objects under the water.

*We will lift the water when I count to three. Using only your eyes, look at what is under there. One, two, three, lift. Look with your eyes.*

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*On the count of three, put the water back down. One, two, three. What did you see? Part of being a naturalist is observing, which means looking very carefully.*

Remind the children to hold on and lift again – and then down.

*What colors did you see?*

*How many things do you see?*

Remove the blue fabric completely.

Close the space.

### **New Vocabulary Words:**

- Habitat
- Naturalist