



# Wildlife NOTES

## Building a Wildlife-Friendly Pond

No matter how large or small your property, you can enhance its value for wildlife with the addition of a well-planned water source. A wildlife friendly pond allows animals to access water without the dangers of deeper, more traditional pond designs. Using a liner, you can create a shallow pond with a gradual sloping area at the edges.

**Size and shape** A wildlife-friendly pond should have a shape similar to a bird bath but on a larger scale. Limit the deepest part of the pond to six or eight inches to reduce risk of drowning for most animals.

**Location** Aquatic plants grow well with four or more hours of direct sunlight. Areas shaded by trees or shrubs make excavation difficult and increase maintenance work. Avoid low-lying areas that naturally collect runoff water. Find out where your utility lines are. Place it near a convenient source of water for refilling.



**Underlayment** A bed of protective material will protect the pond's liner from rocks, roots, or other debris. A pond supply store sells special fabrics for this purpose or you can use builders' sand.

**Liner** Plastic liners are cheaper but thinner, and rubber liners are more durable.

**Pond Edging** Many materials are suitable to edge the pond: slate, brick, rocks, concrete, turf grasses, and other plantings. Keep in mind that the edging of the pond should not present an obstacle to an animal trying to get into or out of the water.

**Construction** After you have dug the shallow hole, put down the underlayment, and then lay the liner. Next, fill the pond, trim the liner, and set the edging in place. You can provide handy perches by placing flat rocks in the water or by laying tree branches across a section of the pond, and include sizable rocks, tree limbs, or floating plants in the deeper portions.

**Maintenance** Normal maintenance includes topping off the pond with fresh water and removing any debris that lands in the pond. If algae becomes a problem, try partially changing the water on a regular basis. Submerged aquatic plants may also cut down on algae growth.



Keep in mind the needs of the animals who live around you. Birds, for instance, find moving water fascinating; if your pond includes a recirculating pump or a waterfall, place a flat rock under the inflow to the pond for an instant bathing area. Birds, amphibians, and insects will also land or sit on large lily pads and drink from the edge of the leaf. You might see goldfinches or red-winged blackbirds perch on the vertical stems of plants rising out of the water to drink, or barn swallows scooping moist earth from the pond edge or potted plants to make nests.

### *Exploring with a Pond Peeper*

*Getting children involved in nature projects is not only time well-spent together but also provides the opportunity to pass on your values of care and compassion for all living creatures.*

You'll need:

- Clear plastic wrap
- Large empty can – like a coffee can – with both ends removed
- 3 rubber bands

Place a large piece of plastic wrap on a firm flat surface. Put the bottom of the can in the center of the plastic wrap. Pull the plastic wrap over the outside of the can. Put a rubber band around the plastic wrap and can at the bottom.

Make sure the plastic wrap is stretched tight across the bottom of the can. Move up an inch and wrap another rubber band around the can and plastic wrap. Move up one more inch and put on the last rubber band.

Now go find a pond or creek. Put on boots or other gear and step out into the water. Lower your peeper until the water comes up to the second rubber band. What do you see?

Push the peeper deeper until it almost touches the bottom. Be careful not to let the water flood the peeper. What do you see now?

*Adapted from Camp Out! by Lynn Brunelle*