

Pondwatch JE Level 1 handbook

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to be part of this project. Pondwatch JE is an island-wide effort to record Jersey's pondlife, with the aim of detecting changes in their conservation status. By taking part, you will also be helping us to improve our knowledge on the distribution and habitat requirements of Jersey's pond-dwelling wildlife. It's also a good opportunity for you to spend some time in nature too!

In this handbook you will find out everything you need to know to become a Pondwatch JE Level 1 surveyor.

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Level 1 pond surveys

Where to survey

Ponds and wet areas of many types and sizes can be surveyed as long as you have permission from the landowner and it is safe to do so. Please read the safety information below before carrying out a survey. We want you to survey ponds and other wet areas because they are an important habitat for lots of plants and animals, including amphibians which use ponds to breed and lay their eggs. The easiest location to survey is your own or a friend's garden pond. Other options include ponds on nature reserves and SSIs, school ponds, indentations holding water (e.g. tyre ruts), streams, reservoirs and irrigation ponds.

When to survey

Time of year: The best time of year to survey ponds and other wetland areas is between January and May. This is when ponds are most likely to contain water and Jersey's amphibians are most likely to be seen in and around the water (although they can sometimes be found in ponds both earlier and later than this).

Time of day: The best time of day to spot amphibians depends on the condition of the pond, but they can be spotted during the day, and after dusk using a torch.

Number of surveys: We are asking you to survey your pond **once** between January and May. If you wish to, you can carry out more than one survey but you will need to fill out an additional survey form each time.

How to survey

Equipment

You will need:

- a Pondwatch JE Level 1 survey form 1 (available from <https://groups.arguk.org/jarg>)
- a pen or pencil
- a mobile phone (for use in the event of an emergency)

Optional (recommended):

- a camera (a smart phone camera is fine)
- a torch if you are looking at night

The camera will allow you to take pictures of anything you are not sure about, which can also help others check the identification of what you record.

How to survey

Step 1: Visit your chosen pond and record its location, [type and pond construction](#) as shown on the survey form.

Step 2: Spend 30 minutes visually searching for pondlife from the bank. When possible, take photos of what you see but remember not to touch or handle any wildlife. **Remember**, much of Jersey's wildlife is protected by law, and should not be harmed, taken or possessed, nor should their breeding or resting sites be disturbed.

If you need help identifying the species you saw, see the species ID guides on the [JARG website](#).

Step 3: Record the date you carried out the survey and the number of any plants or animals seen. Amphibian spawn and tadpoles can be difficult to count, so instead you can record a range (e.g. 10–20) or simply tick the box to indicate they were seen.

Step 4: Record any supplementary information, including the date you first saw spawn in your pond (if applicable), if toads have been run over nearby roads and if a grass snake has been seen in the pond.

Step 5: [Submit your results](#), **even if you don't see anything**. Absence data is very useful.

Pond type and construction

The survey form asks you to tick the most appropriate type and construction of pond from a list of multiple choices. These are described in more detail in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 Description of pond types.

Pond type	Description
Formal garden pond	Standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary. Includes both man-made and natural waterbodies occurring within a garden or within the boundary of your curtilage. The pond is heavily manicured.
Wild garden pond	As above but the pond is not heavily manicured.
Fish pond	Any standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary and are stocked with fish (e.g. goldfish or koi).
Farm pond	Any standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary occurring on a farm.
School pond	Any standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary occurring on school grounds.
Golf course pond	Any standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary occurring on a golf course.
Natural pond	Any standing or still waters between 1m ² and 2 ha in area which may be permanent or temporary that occurs naturally (i.e. without human interference).
Lake	A body of still water >2 ha in area, includes reservoirs and gravel pits.

Table 2 Description of pond construction types.

Pond construction	Description
Liner	Water is retained by a liner (e.g. butyl).
Preformed plastic	Water is retained by a preformed plastic shell.
Concrete	Water is retained by a layer of concrete.
Clay	The pond has no liner but water is retained by clay.

Safety

It is very important to make sure you are safe at all times during your survey. Working at night can present greater risk, so if you do want to look for pondlife at night you should make sure you first visit the pond during the day to assess any risks before visiting at night. If you have concerns, then you should not proceed with the survey. A [risk assessment template](#) is available on the [Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group website](#) if required. You are under no obligation to participate or complete the survey.

Note that you do not need to enter the pond to conduct a survey and should only survey from accessible banks. Avoid surveying areas with steep banks or wet muddy ground. Carrying a fully charged mobile phone is also advisable in case of emergency.

It is best to do your survey with someone else, but if you are on your own then make sure you tell a responsible person where you will be and when you expect to be back. Lone working procedures are described in the [Volunteer Working Agreement](#) (available on the [Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group website](#)).

Biosecurity

Amphibians are globally at risk from amphibian diseases. Furthermore, ponds can contain Invasive Non-Native aquatic plants. Both diseases and invasive plants can easily be transferred on equipment, footwear, clothing or other surfaces. It is therefore important that equipment and other items are properly cleaned and disinfected between surveys and between ponds. For further advice, see [ARG UK Advice Note 4](#), [Amphibian disease precautions: A guide for UK fieldworkers](#) and the [Check Clean Dry](#) campaign.

Submitting your results

Once you have finished your survey, make sure you submit your data. The preferred way is using the online forms at <http://jerseybiodiversitycentre.org.je>. Alternatively, you can email a copy of your form to jbc@societe-jersiaise.org or post it to:

Pondwatch JE
Natural Environment, Growth Housing and Environment
Howard Davis Farm, Trinity
JE3 5JP

Please only submit your data using one method, as submitting through multiple avenues can lead to information being duplicated.

Resources

The survey forms, species ID guides and all other information needed for completing pond surveys are available on the Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group (JARG) website: <https://groups.arguk.org/jarg>.

Survey results can be submitted online to the Jersey Biodiversity Centre (JBC): <http://jerseybiodiversitycentre.org.je>.