



Flagship Ponds are the very best pond sites in England and Wales; identified because they support populations of some of the UK's rarest species and because they represent some of the least impacted and most diverse pond habitats remaining in the country.



Mud burrowers

Pond Mud Snail are just one of the many special creatures living in the ponds of the New Forest. These distinctively elongate snails are closely associated with ponds in unimproved habitats like heaths and commons. Sadly, the UK population has declined by up to 50% in the last 30 years, and the New Forest is now one of the few remaining national strongholds. Pond Mud Snails prefer ponds that dry out in summer, ponds that are free from pollution and naturally very low in nutrients. You can find them in a wide range of pond types - in large heathland ponds, through to the smallest pools in riverside woodlands.



Living fossils

Fairy Shrimp and **Tadpole Shrimp** are so well adapted to life in their shallow homes, they look the same as their ancient ancestors who lived alongside the dinosaurs. Here today and gone tomorrow - these creatures will hatch into their temporary pond habitats as soon as there is enough rain to fill the pond. They will then grow and reproduce in as little as 2 weeks, producing many thousand eggs each generation, until the pond dries out once more. Increasingly rare - the New Forest is one of only a handful of sites in the UK where these awe-inspiring pond dwellers survive.



Medical Miracles

Much maligned and misunderstood, **Medicinal Leech**, are both friend and foe. Although they are bred commercially in labs for their incredible medicinal properties, to restore blood flow, prevent blood clots, and reduce inflammation; at the same time the wild populations have declined to the brink of extinction, even in protected sites such as the New Forest. They mostly feed on amphibians, topped up by an occasional snack on a New Forest pony - they wait for the pond to reach a balmy 25°C before they will breed. Found in just five secluded ponds in the New Forest we are working hard to save these beautiful creatures.

More than half the UK's wetland plant species and a quarter of all the UK's larger freshwater invertebrates can be found in the New Forest's ponds.

More than 50% of the ponds mapped within the New Forest National Park qualify as a priority pond - a pond of national importance.

Over a third of all the UK's rarest pond plants and animals can be found in the New Forest.

In the UK, we have identified around 200 Flagship Ponds - sites supporting one or more ponds of exceptional quality; over 40 of these Flagship Pond sites are located within the New Forest.

PICTURE CREDITS: Mud Snail ©Jan Hughes. Fairy shrimp and Medicinal leech ©Neil Phillips. All other images ©Freshwater Habitats Trust