Looking for a way to take action for freshwater?

Explore this event guide and consider hosting your own **urban pond and stormwater habitat discovery walk.**

- Recommended event duration: 20-60 minutes
- Suitable for: Families, schools, community groups
- Group size: 2-30+ participants
- Main activity: Observing pond habitat, shoreline plants, and urban water systems
- Skill level: Beginner-friendly
- Cost: Free

Urban Pond and Stormwater Habitat Discovery Walk

Urban ponds and stormwater wetlands are important freshwater systems within cities. They help manage runoff from roads and buildings, improve water quality, and provide habitat for birds, insects, and aquatic species. This activity invites participants to explore a local pond or stormwater facility to observe wildlife, identify shoreline plants, and learn how urban water systems support freshwater health.

1. Select your site

- Choose a publicly accessible pond, wetland, or stormwater facility. Suitable locations include public parks, schools, residential areas, or pathways and can be safely viewed from shore, viewing platforms, or paved trails.

2. Conduct a hazard assessment

- Visit the site beforehand to identify potential hazards such as unstable banks, fast-moving water, wildlife activity, or restricted access
    - Hazard Assessment.pdf

3. Observe Shoreline plants

- Identify plants growing along the water's edge and discuss how they help support freshwater ecosystems. Consider:
    - What plants grow closest to the water?
    - How might these plants help improve water quality?
    - Do you notice differences between natural versus landscaped areas?

4. Explore stormwater function

- Discuss how stormwater ponds work in cities:
    - Review this resource to learn more about stormwater ponds!
    - Where does the water come from? (roads, rooftops, parking lots)?

    - What might the pond be filtering?
    - How do these systems help prevent flooding and pollution?

5. Observe wildlife and habitat features

- Observe signs of biodiversity such as birds, insects, or amphibians. Identify habitat features like shallow water, shoreline vegetation, and open water areas.

6. Reflection & Connection

- Discuss:
    - Why are urban ponds important?
    - How do they help protect rivers and lakes?
    - What actions can be taken to support these healthy ecosystems?

Basic Equipment Checklist

- Observation sheet or notebook
- Pencil
- Plant identification guide (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify 2-3 shoreline plants and describe their role in water quality
- Describe how stormwater ponds function in urban environments
- Recognize at least 1-2 examples of local biodiversity
- Build awareness of how cities manage and protect freshwater systems

Safety & operations

Before you begin:

- Tailor this template appropriately to facilitate your safety meeting
    - Tailgate Safety Meeting .pdf
- Assign an event coordinator
- Review site hazards and boundaries
- Explain observation-only rules (no collecting or disturbing organisms)
- Confirm group structure and check-in system

Key safety rules

- Do not enter deep or fast-moving water
- Avoid disturbing wildlife, nests, or sensitive habitat
- Be cautious near steep, slippery, or unstable shoreline areas
- Wash or sanitize hands after activity
- Children must be directly supervised at all times

Disclaimer

This guide is intended to support community-led educational and stewardship activities for informational purposes only. Organizers are responsible for assessing the site conditions, participant safety, and any permits or permissions that may be required. Participation is voluntary and at the participant's own risk.

For additional guidance, we recommend connecting with Living Lakes Canada or a local stewardship organization for additional guidance and support.