



Konrad Lorenz wrote: "...go with a jam jar and a small net to the nearest pond - draw the net a few times through the depth of the pool and you will have a myriad interesting organisms", and "In the train of the fishing net came the magnifying glass; after this again a modest little microscope, and therewith my fate was scaled".



Pools, ponds and marshes are natural environments which contain everything we may wish to learn about ecology. But the interest and indeed fascination of these environments is not limited to science or teaching. Pools and ponds are part of the tradition of country people and, whether large or small, whether they are reserves of drinking-water or used for irrigation, whether they provide water for farmed livestock or for wildlife, they are always to be found near small country villages.



The traditional activities associated with these environments have recently been greatly reduced, as man has felt the need to expand his urban and industrial areas, or to practise extensive agriculture at the expense of wetlands. Pools, ponds and marshes have undergone an inexorable and extremely rapid decline, and are now viewed as the some of the most at risk in Europe.



It was from these considerations that the idea - even the necessity - of writing this volume arose. It has the ambitious aim of focusing the attention of the public at large on the intrinsic value of these sometimes tiny bodies of water - small in size perhaps, but of enormous value for the proper knowledge and conservation of our natural resources.

