All About Vernal Pools

What is a Vernal Pool?

- Vernal pools are temporary freshwater wetlands in shallow depressions that are created through precipitation, runoff, and snow melt during the fall and winter.
- These pools support an interesting host of wildlife and plants, and are special as they dry up by summer, preventing fish from inhabiting.

How Can I Identify a Vernal Pool?

During the Wet Season:
- The presence of Fairy Shrimp in the pool
- Vernal Pool obligate amphibians are present, such as Spotted Salamanders, Wood Frogs, Marbled Salamander larva, Jefferson Salamanders, and more.
- The absence of fish in shallow, still water

During the Dry Season:
- Shallow depression in the ground
- Water loving plants in and around the depression
- Shed skins of damselfly and or dragonfly larvae

Benefits of Vernal Pools

- Many species of amphibians and invertebrates utilize vernal pools to breed, with their offspring developing safely in the pools.
- Rare plants grow around the edges of vernal pools.
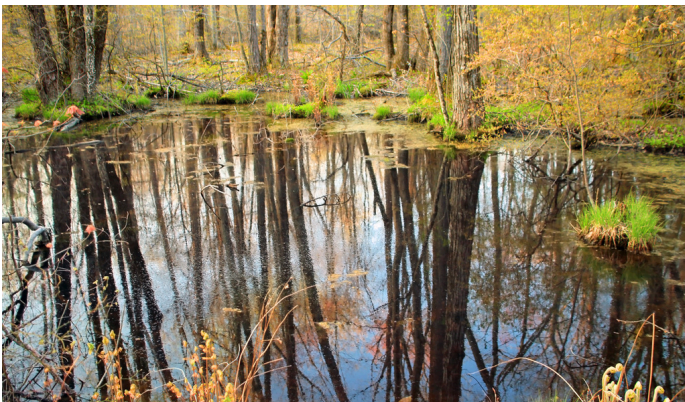- The inherent value of a natural habitat, the life it supports, and curiosity it can spark.

Illustration by Nick Garnhart - Photo by Nicholas A. Tonelli

The Plight of Vernal Pools

- Vernal pools have become more rare, as many have been filled in and paved over.
- Pollution in vernal pools can poison all wildlife, but particularly amphibians. Many species of amphibians can absorb oxygen and water through their skin, making them especially susceptible to toxins.

How To Help Vernal Pools

- Create a buffer around existing vernal pools using native plants. This will help filter out pollution before it reaches the vernal pool.
- Clear invasive plants from around the vernal pool.
- Avoid entering the water of vernal pools as this can injure and disturb wildlife.
- Participate in community science projects about amphibians, invertebrates, plants, and water quality.
- Enjoy them!

Contact Us

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