

Vernal Pools



Spring rains, melting snow and rising groundwater levels create temporary pools of water. These vernal, or spring pools, are shallow bodies of water with average depths of less than 3 feet. For this

reason, they usually dry up by the end of summer.

Don't be deceived by their dark and murky waters, these pools are important to both people and the wildlife species that call them home. Vernal pools slow floodwaters, filter pollutants and sediments, store carbon, replenish groundwater, and provide habitat for animals both large and small.

For many animals, vernal pools are crucial to their development. These "fish free" waters act as nurseries for the larvae of caddisflies, mayflies, mosquitoes and other invertebrates. Small crustaceans such as fairy shrimp can only be found living in vernal pools. Adult fairy shrimp die when the water temperatures rise, but eggs laid in the leaf litter will survive dry and freezing conditions until the next spring floods.



Fairy Shrimp

Check out vernal pools as you explore the woods this spring!

Nature Notes

Frogs and salamanders migrate to vernal pools each spring to breed and lay eggs. The symphony of calling western chorus frogs, wood frogs and spring peepers can be deafening as males compete for territory and females.



Wood Frog

Once the eggs are laid, they hatch and mature into adults quickly before the pools dry up and disappear.

Stop by the Visitor Center Office for program information.

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