

Just for Kids

Vernal Pools: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

What is a vernal pool?

A low spot in a forest, meadow or other habitat that fills with water and dries out in a few months.

How big is a vernal pool?

Vernal pools can be very big or very small. Some could fit in your living room while others are as large as a football field.

Why are they important?

Several salamanders and frogs lay their eggs in vernal pools. Because these pools dry up, fish do not live in them and eat the eggs. Vernal pools are also home to many different types of insects.

I Didn't Know Frogs Quack

Not all frogs quack, but there is one called the wood frog that does. Wood frogs are brown, about two and one-half inches long, and have a raccoon-like mask. In the spring, they migrate to vernal pools. The males will sing to the females to get them to mate. The male's song sounds just like a quacking duck.

Salamanders by the Hundreds!

If you know the location of a vernal pool, you can watch for the annual salamander migration. On the first warm, rainy night in late March, visit the pool and you may see spotted salamanders making their way to the water to lay their eggs. Salamander eggs look like globs of jelly and are usually attached in one large ball to twigs under the water. Each ball is about the size of a tennis ball and can have up to 250 eggs in it. Later, you can visit the pond again to see the salamander larvae growing in each egg. After one or two months, the larvae will hatch and remain in the pool until they become young salamanders.



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Fairies Live in Vernal Pools!

These fairies are actually fairy shrimp. They are beautiful little animals with featherlike legs. They feed by straining microscopic plant- and animal-like material from the water. Fairy shrimp are eaten by many of the other animals found in the pool.

