

Vernal Pool



One of the signs of spring is heard rather than seen. Spring peepers will soon begin calling in earnest, attracting mates. Other amphibians, the salamanders, will soon join spring peepers in wet temporary pools found in fields and woods. The peepers are likely to be calling from a vernal pool.

Vernal pools are a seasonal feature in the forest or field environment. They cycle in predictable ways throughout the year. They form wet areas that can vary in size from big puddles that seem to take forever to go away, to large freshwater pools. They often begin forming after trees and grasses go dormant for the year, and slowly increase in size to peak in March and April. The pools dry with warmer weather, active plant growth, decreased precipitation, and are gone by late summer.

Vernal pools are a unique and fragile habitat that are especially important to breeding amphibians like frogs and salamanders. Since the water in these pools comes from winter rains and snowmelt, the pools are independent of streams. These temporary pools don't support fish. Amphibian eggs laid in these pools can hatch and young develop safe from these predators. Animals that live in these pools are adapted to the pool drying out at the end of the summer and live on, usually buried underground, or as eggs, waiting for the pool to fill again.

Organisms that depend on vernal pools live close to the pool. Most of these organisms may be found within 1000 feet (about 304.8 m) of the center of the pool. This habitat is essential for the survival of several species of amphibians in our area. Among the organisms that depend on these pools are spring peepers, wood frogs, toads, spotted salamanders, and marbled salamanders. In the northeastern United States, over 700 species rely on the vernal pool habitat. *

For more information please visit:

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[National Aquarium "Teeming and Temporary"](#)

[Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program,](#)

[The Vernal Pool Association](#)

~ By Judy Plaskowitz