

Habitat

Vernal Pool

What is a vernal pool?

A vernal (which means occurring in spring) pool is a sunken basin that collects water when the water table rises or when rainfall is persistent. The only way water can escape a vernal pool is through plant roots or by evaporation.



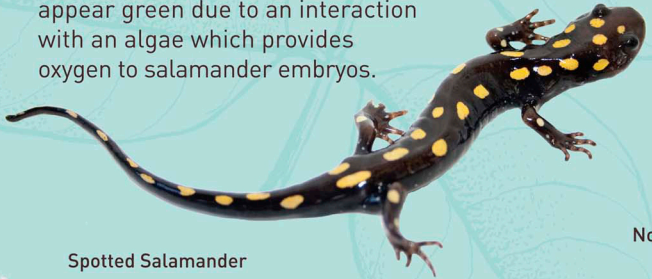
Blue Dasher Dragonfly



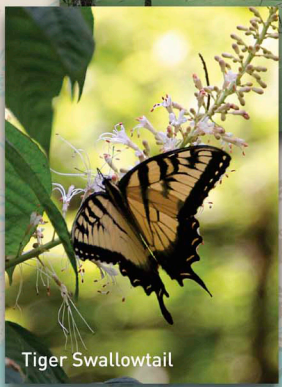
Crawfish

What animals live in vernal pools?

Because vernal pools tend to dry up in the summer months fish are not present. This makes it a safe environment for frogs, salamanders, insect larvae and crawfish. One of the ponds' most intriguing inhabitants, the spotted salamander, migrates to the same pool every year to breed. The salamanders' huge egg masses contain up to 200 eggs and appear green due to an interaction with an algae which provides oxygen to salamander embryos.



Spotted Salamander



Tiger Swallowtail



Northern Cricket Frog



What happens in a vernal pool in each season?

Fall and Winter: When temperatures drop, evaporation decreases and rainfall starts to collect in the vernal pools.

Spring: When temperatures rise, the growing season resumes and creatures like salamanders return to these pools which have been recharged by fall/winter rainfall.

Summer: Higher temperatures and greater rates of evaporation reduce the water content in these pools until they are mostly dry and the cycle begins anew.



Cottonmouth