# Salamanders, Frogs, and Vernal Pools

*Why are vernal pools important to the Downeast Lakes Community Forest?*

Downeast Lakes Land Trust, with the help of our dedicated supporters, is able to conduct wildlife conservation activities throughout the community forest. One of these activites is the spring vernal pool survey that we conduct with biologists from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This year Education and Events Coordinator Kendall O'Connell and Managing Forester Ernest Carle participated in the spring survey. Here is why the vernal pools they surveyed are so important to the community forest.

***From the May 12th, 2020 DLLT Blog:***

"A vernal pool, or ephemeral pool, is a body of water, usually about a foot deep, which serves a valuable ecological role. As the name suggest these pools are only available seasonally in the forest and spend parts of the year without standing water. These pools can vary in size and are distinguished by the lack of fish.

In the spring, there are certain species that utilize these pools to complete phases of their life cycle. For example, some species of salamander and frog require vernal pools to mate and lay their eggs.  Ideally, researchers surveying these ponds conduct their surveys between May 5$^{th}$ – May 20$^{th}$ for wood frogs and May 5$^{th}$-June 5$^{th}$ for spotted and blue spotted salamanders for breeding season records. Due to weather changes from year to year, there is flexibility in the dates that research is recorded. It is worthwhile to note the state of Maine recognizes certain levels of egg masses as significant depending on the species (>10 egg masses for

blue spotted salamanders, >20 egg masses for yellow spotted salamanders, >40 egg masses for wood frogs).  The state considers the pool as significant if there are any fairy shrimp present at the time of the survey.

Other animals like birds and turtles may rely on pools as an alternative water source throughout the year. These vernal pools can grow a variety of plants in and around them. They might be found surrounded by hemlock and red maple in the Downeast Lakes region. Within the vernal pool sphagnum moss, graminoids, and ferns may be present. All of which provide cover and feed for pool dwelling insects, amphibians, and reptiles."

To learn more about what a day in the field looks like please visit https://downeastlakes.org/the-importance-of-vernal-pools-in-the-downeast-lakes-community-forest/.

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