

## March 2017 Field Notes

### ***Vernal Pools and a Vital Window of Time***

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In the simplest terms, a vernal pool is just a very big puddle. However, the vital role of vernal pools in our local ecosystem cannot be overstated. Vernal pools are depressions on the land, which hold water from spring rains and snow melt before drying out in the summer months. In this short window of time, they provide essential breeding habitat for many species, especially amphibians. Because they are not directly connected to streams and rivers, vernal pools are free from fish that would otherwise prey on the eggs of salamanders and frogs. The flurry of life that occurs in these ephemeral wetlands is especially dramatic because it is concentrated in small, isolated spaces with a short window of time.

Because of their short-lived nature, vernal pools are often overlooked. The protection of these fragile microhabitats is critical to many species that are tied into a greater food web of flora and fauna. Since species migrate to and from vernal pools, it is also essential to protect surrounding open space where they can live out the other phases of their lifecycle. The concept of the ecosystem occupying many stations in space and time is one of the main motivations for Greenwich Land Trust to establish greenways of interconnected habitat, protected forever.

