

A NEWSLETTER

from the

CAPE ANN VERNAL POND TEAM

Winter/Spring 2009

Website: www.capeannvernalpond.org

Email: cavpt@yahoo.com

THE CAVPT IS A HOPELESSLY NON-PROFIT VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO VERNAL POND CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION SINCE 1990.



Photo by Lysa Ireland

Candid photie of the CAVPT snake program volunteer crew at the Cape Ann Farmers' Market.

'Kid'tributions

by Ron Camille

If you have ever been to any of our vernal pond presentations, certification workshops, or snake shows, you've probably noticed that young CAVPT volunteers were helping out. While the kids add to the "cuteness" factor, they also play a vital role in the success of our programs. They help out with a variety of tasks, from loading and unloading supplies and animals, to "working" our exhibits, to answering questions that curious adults or children may have. They also have done some fieldwork that is required to certify local vernal pools, work that can be quite challenging at times.

We have many great young volunteers that show up for one or more events every year. We also have a core of regulars that show up for almost every event, notably Sam Bevins, Kate Bevins, Julia Camille, Mason Camille, and newcomer Tessah Stanton. Our "Junior A-Team" kids all share a love of and respect for animals and their habitats, which makes them a natural fit for our volunteer base. "Snakes are one of my favorite animals," enthuses Julia Camille. Sam Bevins adds, "I've been involved since I was five, and have a great time volunteering."



Photo by Ron Camille

Julia Camille, 10, and Kate Bevins, 7, take a break from the CAVPT snake exhibit at the 2008 Gloucester Sidewalk Bazaar, to hang out with their friends, a boa constrictor and an albino corn snake.

DID YOU KNOW...

by Nathan Mineo

Did you know that a strange new species of fairy shrimp was recently discovered in Idaho? Idaho National Guard biologists Jay Weaver and Dana Quinny found it in only two desert playas (temporary lakes). Called *Branchinecta raptor*, this three-and-a-half-inch leviathan, which is more than twice as large as the fairy shrimp we see around here, preys on other fairy shrimp and small invertebrates. Since it lives in very murky water, its eyes aren't very developed. So "raptor" has adapted with an arsenal of hooks, combs, spines, and other projections that help detect prey in the murky water. It will swim back and forth grasping at anything it encounters with its large, hooked front legs. Finding food can be difficult at times, so it will hold onto its dead or disabled prey while continuing to hunt. Raptor's life cycle is much like any other fairy shrimp: the eggs hatch when the lake fills, it feeds and grows for a few days or weeks, it dies when the water gets too warm, and when the lake dries, desiccant-resistant cysts (eggs) remain on the bottom to start the cycle over in a few years when the lake fills again.



Source: Quinny, Dana. "Army National Guard discovers a tough little shrimp. (Jay Weaver and Dana Quinny discover the *Branchinecta raptor*)." Endangered Species Bulletin. 31.2 (July 2006): 20.



Kestrel Educational Adventures Update

Kestrel Educational Adventures, founded in 2003 by CAVPT members Jessica Kagle and Nathan Mineo, brought vernal pool and other local ecology workshops to over 1300 area students last year. Kestrel's unique program model builds connections between young people and the natural world. Student thoughts, opinions, and creative ideas drive the learning. Some vernal-pond ecology workshops included the creation of giant interactive storyboards to show the migration journey of amphibians or the creation of an original definition of amphibians based on student observations. O'Maley Middle School students explored Dogtown around the Babson Reservoir and played ecology games. Fifth and sixth graders in Essex built ecosystems in their classrooms, then explored wetland and woodland ecosystems. Our preschool programs (rather new to KEA's repertoire) found small children simulating spring rains and migrating across a rug like salamanders. The Conservation Club certified a vulnerable vernal pool, did field-work design, and helped raise endangered turtle (red-bellied cooter) hatchlings.

This spring, we are planning to expand the Conservation Club to other area communities, to work more extensively with local middle schools, and to bring Local Ecosystems workshops to all the fifth grades in Beverly. Please call (978) 633-7100 or check out www.kestrel-education.org to find out more or to sign up for our programs.

CALENDAR of upcoming stuff...

check out our website at
www.capeannvernalpond.org

Thank you to all CAVPT members and friends
who participated or helped out last year.

Whale Center of New England

Environmentalists on Cape Ann may be interested in Gloucester's own Whale Center of New England. The Visitor Center and exhibit are located at 24 Harbor Loop (open year-round); please stop by! The Whale Center is hosting a day-long Earth Day fund-raising whale watch on May 2, 2009, to celebrate environmental action and to welcome back the area's whales from their annual migration. Call (978) 281-6351 for more information or reservations.



Photo by Ron Canille

Rick shows a spotted salamander egg mass to the scouts from Manchester Pack 30 as they complete the fieldwork portion of their Cape Ann Vernal Pond Scout Patch requirements. Congratulations to the 25 scouts who earned their patches last year.

Thank You

In mitigation for the loss of some upland habitat for three uncertified vernal ponds at the Gloucester Crossing site, developer Sam Park donated \$10,000 to CAVPT to be used towards pond certification in Gloucester.

FYI - Check this out Rattlers, Peepers & Snappers

A really cool video field guide to all the amphibians and reptiles of New England, produced by Vince Franke and Jim Andrews. For more information or to order, please visit www.rpsdvd.com



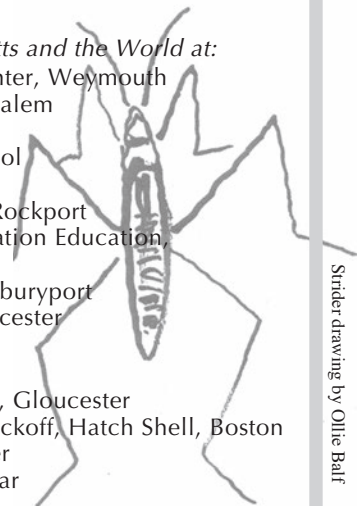
Drawing by Andrew



Salamander drawing by Ollie Balf

Last Year We...

- *Presented Vernal Ponds at:*
New England Wildlife Center, Weymouth
Sawyer Free Library, Gloucester
Biodiversity Celebration at Joppa Flats Audubon, Newburyport
Salem Family Science Picnic at Salem Willows
- *Held Vernal Pond Certification Workshops at:*
Joppa Flats Audubon
Agassiz Rock for The Trustees of Reservations
Agassiz Rock for Manchester Scout Pack #30
- *Led our usual nighttime field trips*
- *Made several daytime field trips to photograph amphibian egg masses for certification*
- *Had a wicked-scary pumpkin-carving session at the Red Barrel Pub in Essex*
- *Presented Snakes of Massachusetts and the World at:*
New England Wildlife Center, Weymouth
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem
Earthfest at Lynn Woods
Rockport Elementary School
Riverfest, Sudbury
Halibut Point State Park, Rockport
Harris Center for Conservation Education, Hancock, NH
Maudslay State Park, Newburyport
Sawyer Free Library, Gloucester
- *Presented Snake Exhibits at:*
Fuller School Science Fair, Gloucester
DCR Great Park Pursuit Kickoff, Hatch Shell, Boston
Camp Spindrift, Gloucester
Gloucester Sidewalk Bazaar
Kid's Closet, Gloucester
Cape Ann Farmers' Market, Gloucester
Belle Isle Marsh Harvest Festival, East Boston
Brookwood School Sustainability Fair, Manchester
- *Last May CAVPT joined the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust to create an exhibit for the Garden Club at Singing Beach in Manchester. We received the Marion Thompson Fuller Brown Conservation Award, presented by the Garden Club of America*



Snake drawing by Ollie Balf

Field Trips

Rainy nights and flashlights

Every spring CAVPT members lead nighttime field trips to the ponds to see the amphibian-breeding activity. Check your flashlights, get new batteries and put your rain gear on the hook by the door. To avoid habitat destruction and critter disturbance, we limit the number of participants on each trip. We also ask that you leave your dog at home. Interested? Email us at cavpt@yahoo.com.

If we value wildlife, we must protect vernal ponds.....

What a CAVPT Membership offers:

- A CAVPT car decal
- Discount on CAVPT products (t-shirts, hats, etc.)
- Subscription to our annual newsletter
- Email updates of vernal pond activities and events
- Guided field trips to local vernal ponds
- The satisfaction of knowing you are helping preserve these unique and vital habitats

Our programs & activities include:

- Vernal pond certification
- Exhibits & presentations
- Daytime & nighttime field trips
- Certification workshops
- Posters
- "Vernal Ponds" video
- Website: capeannvernalpond.org
- Scout patch program
- Snakes of Massachusetts & the World

Salamander linoleum cut by Isabel Natti

For school programs, including Ponds in the Classroom, contact our sister organization, Kestrel Educational Adventures: www.kestreleducation.org



Photo by Nathan Mince

The funding for our programs is provided by:

- Corporate gifts
- Grants
- Sale of our merchandise
- Donations from community members like you

CAVPT thanks the following organizations and foundations for their generous support:

The EnTrust Fund • The Norcross Foundation • New England Herpetological Society • Sweetwater Trust • Toad Hall Bookstore
Gloucester Cultural Council • The Bellevue Fund

Support the Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team. Become a member or renew today!

The Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to vernal pond conservation and education since 1990. Our focus is vernal ponds. The issue is the preservation of wildlife habitat, which is ultimately about the health of the planet.



Blue flag is common in vernal ponds and it's wicked pretty.

CAVPT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
Your contribution is tax deductible.

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

☐ Send me email updates about field trips and events

☐ Lifetime \$200

Annual Membership

☐ Individual \$20

☐ Family \$35

☐ Other Amount \$ _____

☐ Junior (under 16) \$10

Please find my enclosed check in the amount of:

\$ _____

Please detach this form and mail with your donation to:

Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team
P.O. Box 12, Rockport, MA 01966





Return Service Requested

Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team
P.O. Box 12
Rockport, MA 01966

The Need for Protection...

The temporary nature of vernal ponds often belies their importance. Countless plants and animals live in vernal ponds. Insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals visit to drink, feed, breed and nest. Some species, such as spotted salamanders, wood frogs and fairy shrimp are totally dependent on this habitat.



Fairy shrimp drawing
by Ollie Balf



Photo by Dan Pierson

Looking for love in all the wrong places......this male wood frog, unable to attract a mate at the end of last spring's breeding season, grabbed a passing young garter snake. Alas, it wasn't meant to be. The snake escaped after a few moments. (We've seen over-zealous male wood frogs latch on to other male wood frogs and even spotted salamanders, but we'd never seen this one before.)

How to Protect...

The best way to protect a vernal pond is to own the property. The next best way to protect them is to certify ponds with the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. Certification application reports include photographs, maps and field observation forms. To learn more go to www.capeannvernalpond.org or check out the Vernal Pool Association's website at www.vernalpool.org

