

# WILD TIMES

FOR KIDS

## Exploring the OUTDOOR WORLD

### Learning to Look and Listen

**W**hoo, whoo, whoo cooks for you? Have you ever been out at night and heard the call of a barred owl? Perhaps you have noticed a nibbled plant at the edge of your yard? Learning to look and listen will help you be more aware of nature's sights and sounds.

Once you start to look you will find signs of wildlife everywhere. Signs are clues animals leave. Chewed acorns, tracks, nests, a hole in a tree and burrows are all signs that animals live nearby.

If you are lucky, you might not only see the sign of an animal but also a glimpse of what made it. Many animals don't stand still for us to take

a picture or get a good look at them. We might see the white flash of a tail or a colorful patch on a wing. These kinds of clues are called field markings. By looking in field guides, you can figure out what animal you saw.

Spring is a great time to become more aware of nature's sounds. Tune in and you will find the world is full of buzzing, drumming, whispering and yelping voices singing the songs of the earth. To learn to listen, take a walk and look for the sources of a sound. This will help imprint it on your mind. If you can't locate the source, make a note about where you were when you heard it and what it sounded like. Later you can listen to a tape or CD, or ask a naturalist. Going out with an experienced listener is another way to sharpen your skills.

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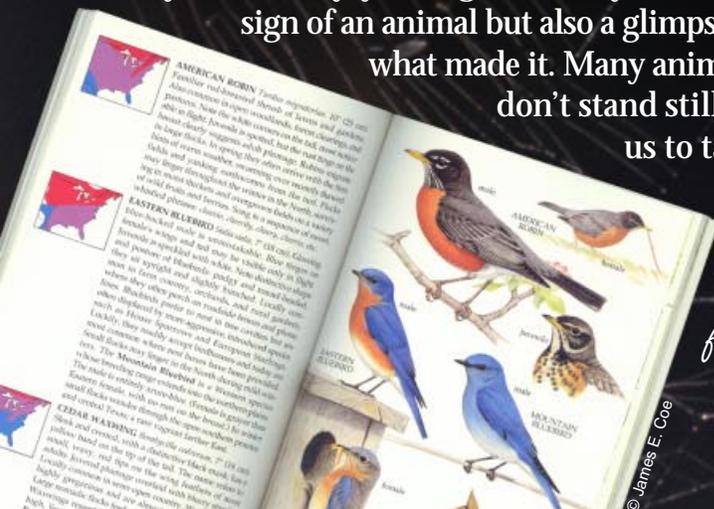


Moose track

© John Green Photo



Whitetail deer



Eastern birds field guide

© James E. Coe

LIFE IN A

# Vernal Pool

BY JUDY SILVERBERG

Every spring behind my house, the snow melts and the rain collects in a depression that lasts through the end of July. This is called a vernal pool. To some it seems like a bother and my parents get asked all the time, “why don’t you just fill it in?” To me it’s a wonderland.

One of my earliest memories is waking up to the quack-like call of a wood frog and saying “what’s that?” Of course I didn’t know it was a wood frog at the time. I just thought it was someone making a funny noise. My mom dressed me in my snowsuit and boots and we went to take a look. The noise was loud, but the minute we got close to the water it became so quiet

Vernal pools are used by a variety of animals. These egg masses were laid by wood frogs and will hatch in 10 to 30 days.

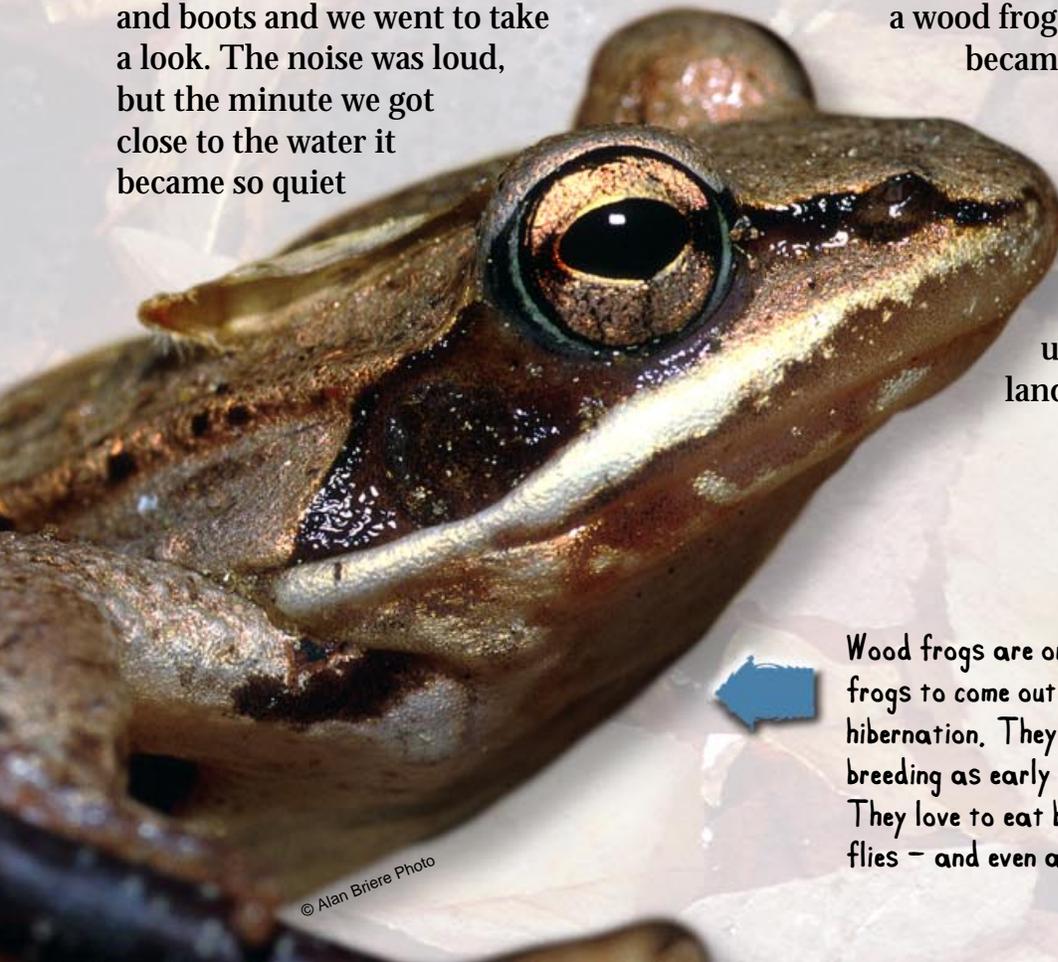
you could hear a pin drop. After standing in one spot, totally still, for what seemed like an hour, but was more like three or four minutes, the sounds began again. I wasn’t able to actually see a wood frog that day, but I know it was the day I became hooked on trying to catch one.

A wood frog is brownish-tan, with a black mask. Its belly is paler. Its color blends in with last fall’s leaves, making it hard to see. It’s about 2 inches long.

In general, wood frogs only use temporary or permanent woodland pools with no fish for mating and

Wood frogs are one of the first frogs to come out of hibernation. They will start breeding as early as March. They love to eat beetles and flies – and even a snail or two!

© Alan Briere Photo



© Alan Briere Photo

Craig Cloutier Photo © NHP&G





Spotted salamanders can grow to over 8 inches long. They eat all sorts of things, including earthworms, snails, beetles and spiders.



Victor Young Photo © NHF&G

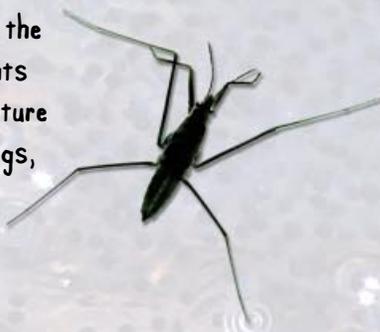


laying their eggs. Soon after the females lay their fist-sized ball of eggs, the adults leave. During the next three months, I've watched the tadpoles emerge from eggs, the tadpoles grow legs, and the tails begin to disappear. Finally, I've seen young frogs leave the pool before it completely dries up. During the summer wood frogs are found in the forest. In the winter, wood frogs hibernate under the leaf litter.

When I was a little older, I remember going out on the first warm, rainy, spring night. I had a flashlight covered in red, and was able to see



Spotted salamanders use vernal pools, too. On the first warm, rainy nights of spring they will venture out to start laying eggs, like the ones in this picture.



Spring peepers are very small frogs. Most adults are tiny enough to sit inside a thimble!

Steve Wheeler Photo © NHF&G



also inhabit these pools.



Steve Wheeler Photo © NHF&G

Steve Wheeler Photo © NHF&G



Water striders and other insects also make vernal pools their home.

the migration of yellow-spotted salamanders to the pool. They came silently from the woods, walking over patches of snow to the pool. It was quite the sight to see these large black creatures with yellow spots. Some of them were over 8 inches long. After laying their eggs, the adults leave like the frogs and go back to their woodland hideouts.

Besides wood frogs and salamanders, spring peepers also use the pool. The peepers are very loud and noisy, making their jingle bell-like call. When they are calling, you can easily hear them in the house with the windows closed.

Vernal pools are very special. Besides the frogs and salamanders, a whole variety of specialized creatures are found there. Tiny animals like fairy shrimp, fingernail clams, caddisflies, water striders and other aquatic insects

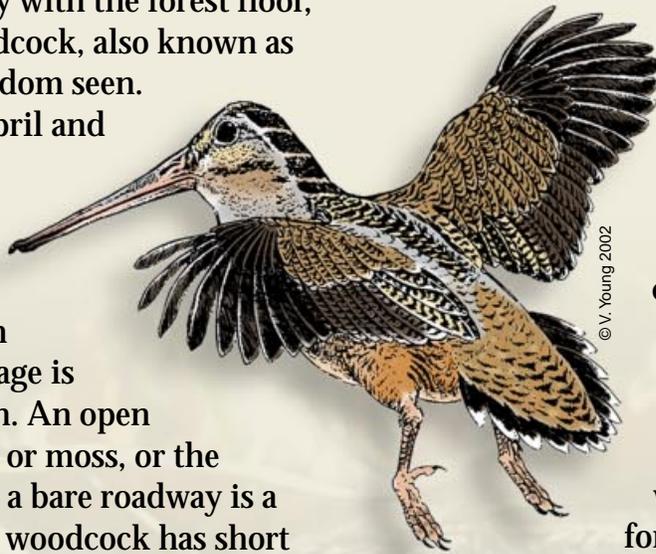
## American Woodcock

# Timberdoodle

### *The Evening Sky Dancer*

**B**lending in perfectly with the forest floor, the American woodcock, also known as the timberdoodle, is seldom seen. But on nights in late April and early May, this chunky bird with its long bill and rounded wings, performs an amazing sky dance with unusual sounds. The stage is set as the sun goes down. An open area of very short grass, or moss, or the bare outcrop of rock, or a bare roadway is a must. Because the male woodcock has short legs, his strutting can't be seen if the grass is too thick or dense.

The show begins with a "peent" (a loud buzzy bzeep), often repeated every two seconds when the bird is on the ground. Suddenly the peenting stops and the bird begins to fly skyward. In an upward spiraling pattern the timberdoodle flies higher and higher with a musical twitter caused by the outermost feathers on the wing. Up and up, the twittering gets louder and louder. Finally, when the bird is just a tiny speck in



© V. Young 2002

the sky, he tumbles without warning. Plunging toward the earth, making a beautiful warbling sound and landing on the ground in the same place that he had begun.

The long bill of the woodcock is designed to extract earthworms out of the mud. The top of the upper jaw is flexible, so they can grasp a worm while probing in mud without opening the bill. Look for holes with bird tracks in muddy areas along streams, vernal pools and forest roads.



# WILDLIFE



# CHALLENGE

**H**ow much do you know about New Hampshire's wildlife? Take the wildlife challenge and find out. You will find some of the answers in this issue of WILD Times, but you will have to rely on your knowledge and observations for other answers.

**1.** All animals have these four basic needs. Their habitat is where they find them.

List their needs:

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**2.** Which animal won't you find in a vernal pool?

- a. wood frog
- b. bass
- c. spotted salamander
- d. caddisfly

**3.** What do woodcock eat?

- a. wood
- b. fish
- c. earthworms
- d. eggs

**4.** Guess who is looking for a home?

*Wanted:* A new home. Must include a nice backyard or park, an oak tree full of acorns, a place to get an occasional drink. A bird feeder to raid would be nice.

- a. fox
- b. gray squirrel
- c. beaver
- d. woodpecker

**5.** Which animal does not use a cavity (a hole) in a tree?

- a. squirrel
- b. woodpecker
- c. raccoon
- d. robin

**6.** Some birds are found in New Hampshire year-round, while others migrate here in the spring and leave in the fall. Which one of the following birds migrates?

- a. chickadee
- b. blue jay
- c. Baltimore oriole
- d. cardinal



Would you find a spotted salamander in a vernal pool? Check out the story on page two to find out!



# Animal

Take a walk outside. Here are some wildlife clues you might find. See if you can check four in a row. Can you think of some other animal clue squares for your own bingo card?



1. Beaver-cut tree
2. Hole in the ground
3. Bird nest
4. Insect-chewed leaf
5. Animal scat (poop)
6. Feather
7. Insect buzzing
8. Animal bone
9. Amphibian call
10. Animal tracks
11. Woodpecker hole
12. Salamander Eggs
13. Spider web
14. Seed or nut shells
15. Shed antler
16. Bird calling

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**ANSWERS TO THE WILDLIFE CHALLENGE**

1. All animals need food, water, shelter and space. It's not enough for an area to contain these four properties. These things have to be arranged where animals can find and use them.
2. Fish will not be found in a vernal pool. They would not be able to survive when the water dries up.
3. Woodcock eat earthworms by using their long bills to probe the mud for them.
4. A gray squirrel would love to live in a place with lots of acorns and bird feeders.
5. Cavities are important to more than 40 of wildlife species found in New Hampshire. They are used as nest sites, places to spend the night and for shelter from the weather. Cavities are not used by robins.
6. The Baltimore oriole is one of over 75 neotropical migrants that nest in New Hampshire during the summer. Neotropical migrants travel from as far as Central or South America.

Wild Times for Kids is published twice a year by the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department. Multiple copies are available for school and youth groups upon request. Send your request to:

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2 Hazen Drive  
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