

The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company
431-B. E. College Street
Granville, OH 43023

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Contact: Jerry N. McDonald
(740) 321-1140 (voice)
(740) 321-1141 (fax)
(800) 233-8787

mwpubco@mwpubco.com

Elizabeth A. Colburn's new book *Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation* will be released in mid-October 2004.

The book, published by The McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company of Blacksburg, VA, and Granville, OH, is the most comprehensive book-length synthesis ever written of the natural history, ecology and conservation of the myriad seasonally wet pools that occur throughout the formerly glaciated region of eastern North America—essentially the Great Lakes Basin, New England, and adjacent areas of Canada and the United States.

Introductory chapters define vernal pools, provide overviews of their formation and physical-chemical-hydrological characteristics, and present data critical for assessing, regulating, and managing pool ecosystems. The chapters that immediately follow the introduction explore the biology of microscopic life forms such as bacteria, algae, and fungi and the great variety of higher plants associated with vernal pools. The next chapters delve into the descriptions, distributions, habitat requirements and life-history strategies of pool animals, and the ecological processes and patterns associated with the composition and dynamics of pool communities over time. A final chapter discusses research needs and conservation considerations that are a part of the ongoing effort to recognize, understand, protect, and manage vernal pools as viable elements in the landscape of eastern North America. A 66-page appendix identifies all animals that have been reported from vernal pools of the region and describes their habitat requirements, geographic distribution, and life history requirements. Technical terms related to vernal pools are defined in a glossary. The lengthy bibliography will be an indispensable asset to any reader, beginner or advanced, interested in locating sources of information about vernal pools.

According to Dr. Colburn, *Vernal Pools* contains information by naturalists and biologists whose documented studies of vernal pools and their wildlife span some 250 years. The book presents an overview of natural history and conservation that should contribute to greater appreciation and improved protection of small wetlands everywhere. The book is dedicated to the people who participate in the natural wonder of learning and teaching about the importance of this fascinating biology, and to those who are involved in protecting and preserving vernal pools and their associated wetlands for future generations of wildlife and people.

Funding for the collection of some of the original data presented in *Vernal Pools*, and for the preparation of the manuscript, was provided by Sweet Water Trust, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Dr. Josie Murray, the Fund for Protection of Wildlife and Natural Areas, the National Park Service, The Fuller Foundation, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Center for Biological Conservation. A Charles Bullard Fellowship from the Harvard Forest, Harvard University, provided additional support for final writing and editing.

Publisher Jerry N. McDonald states, "This book will appeal to a broad audience. We believe it is especially appropriate for those interested in the natural history of freshwater ecosystems; the formal education system – junior high school through the university level; federal, state, and local agencies involved with monitoring, managing, studying, or teaching about freshwater resources; and citizen scientists and private businesses studying, monitoring, managing, designing, protecting, or teaching about freshwater ecosystems.

"We also believe interpreters, naturalists, water resource managers, freshwater biologists and ecologists, landscape architects working with water bodies and systems, and environmental consultants working with freshwater systems will find this book valuable," concludes McDonald.

Prior to finalizing the manuscript, *Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation* was reviewed by Dr. Rosemary J. Mackay, former editor of the *Journal of the North American Benthological Society*, and retired professor, University of Toronto. Her assessment was, "The book is an admirable collection of information on vernal pools...and a helpful guide to conservation. It is well organized...its scope is remarkably comprehensive...I can think of no topics that have been overlooked. The book is sufficiently scholarly to satisfy scientists...yet it will also appeal to the serious naturalist and conservationist. There is a lot of detail, but Dr. Colburn's writing style is not intimidating."

About the Author

Dr. Elizabeth A. Colburn presently is Aquatic Ecologist at Harvard Forest in Petersham, Massachusetts. Betsy's fascination with freshwater ecosystems developed during her childhood in eastern Massachusetts and was nurtured with her formal higher education at Brown University, Occidental College (B.A. in Biology), and The University of Wisconsin-Madison (M.S. and Ph.D. in Zoology). She has conducted research in Wisconsin, California, and especially New England. From 1983 to 2001, Betsy worked as Aquatic Ecologist for Massachusetts Audubon, during which time she studied and taught about the ecology and conservation of vernal pools and other freshwater ecosystems and advocated reforms in water quality and wetlands regulations. Betsy continues her wide ranging interest in water issues at Harvard Forest where, in addition to carrying out research, she participates in local, state, regional, and national forums involved with education, policy-making, management, and conservation as these efforts relate to freshwater life.

Her experiences led to requests by teachers, government regulators, environmental consultants, journalists, naturalists, and researchers to provide information on sources of data and citations of scientific publications. The book is her response to the need and demand for an in-depth summary of scientific literature and detailed information about, the ecology and biology of vernal pools.

Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation, is available in both soft- and hardcover, with 456 pages of text and 72 illustrations including 16 color plates; an appendix; a glossary; and a bibliography. The book is more fully described on McDonald and Woodward's web site at www.mwpubco.com/vernalpools.htm. Information about this and other titles is available at www.mwpubco.com or by calling toll free 1-800-233-8787.

Founded in 1986, The McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company publishes books on cultural and natural history, including biographies and scientific subjects.

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