

ECC for SUE April 25, 2021

Springtime has arrived! So much has changed since our last spring arrived. A pandemic changed the way we lived for a year and is only now becoming a new normal. We may soon be able to return to in person meetings, play dates with our children, mingling without masks!

Eleanor H. Parker of Littleton, NH wrote books about a young girl with an irrepressible sense of optimism, Pollyanna. With the year that we have endured recently I can understand people lacking optimism, yet I have felt that our natural world has benefited from our time in COVID prison. Due to the fact that all of us have had to live through isolation, socially and personally, we have tried to find new ways to get out and keep active. Have you noticed that there has been a severe shortage of bicycles, ski equipment, snowmobiles, outdoor equipment, camping equipment and anything else used to get us out of our confining homes? That is because we are trying get off our couches, shutting of the televisions, getting our children away from the computers and just expanding our horizons. I have noticed many requests on social media for hiking trail information from frazzled, cabin fever induced individuals!

Maybe it is time that we all adopt Pollyanna's optimistic attitude. During the next few issues I hope to report on the positive benefit we have for our natural world. The trees, flowers, home vegetable gardens, hiking and biking trails, rivers, parks and animals are all appreciating the new interest we are giving them.

Spring is being optimistic this year, as it has from the beginning of time. One of my favorite signs of spring are vernal pools. They conjure up memories of childhood. I can remember walking to kindergarten with a canning jar to scoop out the tadpoles from a vernal pool just off the edge of the path leading to my school. Of course it was a little deep and the water (including a tadpole or two) overflowed into my rubber boot!

What are vernal pools? They are pools that flood in the spring. Fish cannot live in the pools due to the fact that they dry up in late summer. This provides a safer place for some of their favorite foods to set up breeding habitats. Though its purpose is to provide the world with blue spotted salamanders, wood frogs and fairy shrimp, it is also an opportunity to involve our children a valuable learning experience. They can search for the pools, keep a record of sightings of the eggs, log and/or draw the stages of development of the different types of eggs and just be in awe of the natural world.

Should you see a vernal pool, please observe good neighbor and stewardship rules to protect the inhabitants.

(<https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/nongame/documents/vernal-pool-manual.pdf>)

1. Do not bring your dog to romp in the pool
2. Try to not disrupt the pool

3. Please leave the egg masses where they are.
4. If you must handle an amphibian, make sure to moisten your hand. Do not handle them if you have sunscreen or insect repellent on your hands.

The Epping Conservation Commission is always looking for volunteers! If you are interested in locating, mapping, recording data concerning the pools and submitting it to the ECC, please contact us!

For more information concerning vernal pools in New Hampshire you may visit the following websites:

<https://extension.unh.edu/resource/vernal-pools>

<https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/nongame/documents/vernal-pool-manual.pdf>