



Michigan
Vernal Pools
Partnership

THE POOL REPORT

Summer 2022 | Issue 5



eNews & Updates

Brought to you by [the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership](#)



New MVPP Coordinator, Pool Patrol stats, and more!

In this issue, meet the new MVPP coordinator, get updates on this spring's Vernal Pool Patrol successes, hear from one Pool Patroller as he shares what drives his interest in conservation and his experience with this spring's Pool Patrol season, and learn about the creature featured in the MVPP logo.

Vernal Pools Partnership

MNA's New Vernal Pool Partnership Coordinator

Welcome Abby Pointer!

In July, the Michigan Nature Association, a co-lead of the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership, welcomed Abby Pointer as our new Vernal Pool Partnership Coordinator. Abby will be the point person for all things MVPP, including production of The Pool Report and helping to organize the Annual Meeting. Abby earned her Bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University, and she has experience in both field work and nonprofit outreach and engagement, a perfect fit for working with the MVPP. Besides the MVPP, Abby's responsibilities include reaching beyond Michigan's borders to engage other states and even provinces doing vernal pool work.



“I am very excited to get to know the MVPP partners as we work together to advance understanding, awareness and conservation of vernal pools in Michigan and beyond.”

The Vernal Pool Patrol

Spring Trainings

The Vernal Pool Patrol Training (VPP) Workshops reached new heights this past spring with over 380 registrants. Participants attended a virtual training held by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, and many followed up with field training held with partners at the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings and the Flint River Watershed Coalition and For-Mar Nature Center in Flint. In addition, Vernal Pool Patrol Program Coordinators, including Oakland Township, Meridian Township, and the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy—also hosted vernal pool training field days this past spring.

We welcomed three new Vernal Pool Patrol Program Coordinators in 2022—Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Friends of Island Lake State Recreation Area, and Seven Ponds Nature Center—bringing the total to 16 across the state.

Program Coordinators provide support to the Vernal Pool Patrol by recruiting and training citizen/community scientists and ensuring data are being submitted to the database.

Contact Courtney Ross, MNFI, if your organization is interested in becoming a Program Coordinator.

2022 Pool Patrol Summary

-  In total, **208** pools were surveyed this spring
-  Of these, **61** were verified as active vernal pools
-  **142** of surveyed pools require additional verification
-  There were **5** sites found to not be vernal pools



Vernal Pool Surveys

The above graphic summarizes the 2022 efforts of our Vernal Pool Patrol (VPP) volunteers. Overall, 1,245 (22%) of the 5,686 pools or potential vernal pools currently mapped in the Michigan Vernal Pool Database have been surveyed to date. Of these, 761 vernal pools have been verified, and 202 potential pools

have been determined not to be vernal pools. An additional 282 potential pools have been visited but more information is needed to determine their status as vernal pools. A total of 4,441 pools have yet to be surveyed.

And, of course, current database numbers represent only a very small portion of Michigan's vernal pool universe. That's why it is so important to continue to grow the Vernal Pool Patrol and the number of citizen/community scientists helping to survey and monitor vernal pools on the landscape.

MVPP Partner Spotlight

Spotlighting partners who advance
vernal pool conservation across
Michigan

Cory Redman, Grand Rapids Public Museum

This edition's Partner Spotlight shouts out Cory Redman, a Vernal Pool Patrol program coordinator who dedicated time and effort this past spring to expand the database of vernal pool knowledge in the Grand Rapids area. He shares what drives his interest in conservation and his experience with this spring's Vernal Pool Patrol season!



Cory's interest in science and conservation extends beyond his participation in the Vernal Pool Patrol. As the Science Curator at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, he is responsible for cultivating and caring for the museum's science and natural history collection, as well as related science exhibits and education programming. Cory tells us that his interest in the natural sciences stems from his desire to help ensure that our ecosystems and natural resources can be experienced for generations to come. "We cannot hope to do that if we don't have a good understanding about where organisms currently occur and where they have occurred in the past," he says. Similar to the museum collections that Cory cares for, the Vernal Pool Patrol aims to collect and establish records of vernal pools across Michigan so that we can better understand and conserve them in the future !

While the Vernal Pool Patrol provides a great opportunity to participate in conservation, Cory also loves being out in the field, enjoying nature and spotting exciting reptiles and amphibians. "It is always fun to document a new vernal pool-related organism that you haven't seen before or are seeing for the first time that season", he says. Due to a wet spring, Cory found plenty of vernal pools in just a small geographic area. His strategy was to start where some pools had already been identified, and then explore the surrounding areas where possible pools might be located. He mentioned that lots of this area happened to be private land, but with a friendly knock on the door and a run down of the VPP's goals, many landowners were happy to help. Often, they contributed their own firsthand knowledge of where they knew possible pools would be located!

"Anyone who is thinking about joining the VPP, should go for it, regardless of their background or experience," he says. Though he personally has a

background in natural science and ecological surveys, vernal pools were relatively new to Cory when he heard about the Vernal Pool Patrol at Michigan State's Science Festival. He found that the VPP training materials provided a comprehensive 'how-to' for the knowledge needed to be a confident and effective "Vernal Pool Patrol-er."

The MVPP appreciates Cory for all the hard work he's done to expand our vernal pool knowledge! Head down to the Grand Rapids Public Museum or check out their online collections to fulfill your science and natural history curiosity!

[Read More Here](#)

More News

Species Spotlight: Blue-Spotted Salamander



Photo by Yu Man Lee

Some vernal pool lingo you may have heard are the terms "indicator" and "obligate" species. For the blue-spotted salamander, identified by its blackish color that is flecked with blue spots covering its belly, sides, and limbs, these terms can help to understand its relationship to vernal pools.

If you are part of the Pool Patrol, you know that an indicator species is one of the organisms to look for when surveying to help you correctly identify a vernal pool. An indicator species is just that – its presence suggests that certain environmental conditions confirm a particular habitat, or in some cases, indicate a measure of environmental quality. What makes the blue-spotted salamander a

vernal pool indicator species is its obligate relationship to vernal pools. The term "obligate" describes a species dependence upon a certain habitat. In the case of vernal pools and blue-spotted salamanders, the species depends on vernal pools and their lack of fish predators to provide a safe-haven breeding habitat.

Outside of their breeding season, blue-spotted salamanders spend most of their lives hidden. Part of the "mole salamander" family, they usually reside underground in burrows or under rocks, logs, moss, and leaf litter. So, come early spring on the first rainy warm nights when the ground just starts to thaw, the salamanders begin an evening migration to freshly flooded vernal pools to begin a rapid breeding season that lasts between three days to three weeks. Habitat fragmentation, such as roads crossing through forested areas can put salamanders at high risk as they undergo migration. In some places, such as in Presque Isle Park in Marquette, conservationists have identified amphibian migratory routes in the spring and help to secure safe passage by closing roads.

Salamanders play an important role in ecosystem functioning, serving as both predators to invertebrates and prey to many species, including other amphibians. The nature of salamanders, especially ones that spend most of their lives underground, can make them hard to spot, but according to the Michigan DNR, they can have populations and biomass that match those of birds and mammals in forest ecosystems. Protecting and monitoring vernal pools, critical habitat for these obligate species, in turn helps to protect our Michigan salamanders!

[Read More Here](#)

News & Notes

Other news you might be interested in:

- Haven't experienced "Ephemeral" yet? [Click here to watch!](#)
- MLive features of vernal pools:
 - ["Michigan's Short Lived Vernal Pools are the Coral Reefs of Our Forests"](#)
 - ["Where to Find Fairy Shrimp in Michigan's Woods This Spring"](#)
- 9 & 10 News on vernal pools, ["The Wild Where You Are"](#)

- [MVPP was highlighted by Michigan.gov for Wetlands Month!](#)

Enjoy podcasts?

- Click to listen to our own MVPP & Vernal Pool Patrol lead, Yu Man Lee, [chat with NPR about Michigan's Vernal Pools](#)
- Check out "[More than a Mud Puddle: The Exciting World of Vernal Pools](#)" on the *Backyard Ecology* podcast

Events and activities:

- Share your vernal pool photos and findings with our community on [The MVPP Facebook Page!](#)
- The Midwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) is having their Annual Meeting. [Register here.](#)
- Want to get kids involved in vernal pools? [Check out the great resources from Maine's "Of Pools and People" vernal pool program.](#)

Connect with us:

Vernal Pools Partnership

- Abby Pointer - apointer@michigannature.org
- mvpp@michigannature.org

Vernal Pool Patrol

- Yu Man Lee - leeyum@msu.edu
- Courtney Ross - rosscour@msu.edu

MVPP

Pool Patrol

MNFI

MNA

The mission of the **Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership**, a public/private partnership, to increase awareness, understanding and protection of vernal pools through conservation, research & mapping, education & outreach and collaboration.

The **Vernal Pool Patrol** is a statewide program for community scientists and educators who want to learn more about these fascinating wetlands, participate in science and conservation, and enjoy spending time outside in nature! Members learn how to follow a standard protocol to help identify and map locations of vernal pools within their local communities.

The Pool Report is a publication of the [Michigan Nature Association](#) on behalf of the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership.



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