

California's Vernal Pools

Late summer and fall
Vernal pools are dry.

Known for their great array of colorful wildflowers, California's vernal pools occur in spring and provide a unique habitat for a variety of native plants and animals. Many of them depend on the pools for survival. The Central Valley's vernal pools support more than 60 species that are found nowhere else in the world.

Spring
The pools come alive with flowers and animals.

Winter
Pools fill with rainwater.

Vernal pools form above a hard clay soil or other impermeable layer that traps water from winter rains. Each spring, as the water evaporates and the pools begin to shrink, different types of flowers blossom and form concentric rings of color along the receding water line.

The endangered California tiger salamander depends on vernal pools for survival. Because of their annual dry spells, the pools do not support fish, so this moist, protected habitat offers an ideal place for the salamanders to breed and safely lay their eggs.

California State Parks preserves vernal pools in nearly two dozen park units so that these rare species can live and flourish.

