

The formation of a temporary pond is an annual event, which on Prince Edward Island may begin as early as January or February during a mild, wet winter. Initially, there is little pond life because of frequent freezing, and daylight is not long enough to entice prospective residents to begin their annual cycle. In late March or early April, residents begin to appear. Some migrate to the pond while others hatch from dormant eggs or cysts buried underground. Spring peepers and green frogs arrive in April to court, mate, deposit their gelatinous eggs and depart. By early May, the temporary ponds are teeming with life. Microscopic animals eat fresh and decaying vegetation on the bottom, and they in turn are fed on by crustaceans and aquatic insects. Black ducks use these temporary ponds for feeding and courtship.

Most ponds begin to disappear in May, and by early June the water is usually gone. By this time, some young amphibians have developed. Insect eggs have hatched, matured, and emerged adults have flown away. Some which remain go down into the moist soil, or form dormant eggs or cysts which can tolerate the ensuing dessication. For many animals the disappearance of the pond means death. Nymphs of insects not yet matured and some unhatched eggs are destroyed. Tadpoles that fail to reach adult form before the water disappears, perish. When the pond has dried up the only evidence of its recent aquatic condition is the occurrence of moisture-loving grasses and sedges. In cultivated fields, the evidence is even less obvious.

Nine months later, the pond will fill again and the cycle starts anew.

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NEW BOOK DUE Watershed Red - The Life of the Dunk River, Prince Edward Island is the title of a new book slated for release in March of this year. Written by Kathy Martin, Watershed Red is of particular interest to members of the Natural History Society. Not only is it written by an active society member and former editor of this newsletter, but it also contains a wealth of fascinating detail about the natural history of the province.

Bubbling up from a tiny spring in the corner of a Srington pasture, the headwaters of the Dunk wind their way westward through a rich variety of landscapes before emptying into Bedeque Bay. Along this route dozens of small tributaries each make a contribution to the river, tying the region together as a distinct watershed.

The Dunk watershed provides homes and livelihoods for a multitude of living creatures, from the aging beeches of the Rose Valley hills to the busy muskrats of the Bedeque marshes. Using the common denominator of the life-giving waterway, the author explores the lives of its inhabitants and the web of relationships that bind them into the community of the Dunk.

Watershed Red is being published by Ragweed Press, with the assistance of the University of Prince Edward Island. The book contains about 200 pages. Illustrations are by Connie Pound-Gaudet. Copies are available from Ragweed Press, Box 2023, Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 7N7.

For a sample of the type of writing in store for you in Watershed Red, read "The Three Month Pond" by Kathy Martin, in this issue.