An intermittent woodland pool is a small, shallow wetland mostly or entirely surrounded by forest and isolated from streams and other wetlands. It typically has standing water during winter and spring but dries up by mid- to late summer. The absence of fish (due to seasonal drying of the pool) is key for a special group of amphibians that require fish-free breeding and nursery habitats. Leaf litter from the surrounding forest is the base of the pool’s food web, and forest provides essential habitat for the amphibians during the non-breeding seasons.

**Typical plants**
- Red maple, slippery elm, green ash, swamp white oak, pin oak, black tupelo (usually at the edge or scattered within the pool)
- Highbush blueberry, swamp azalea, buttonbush
- Sensitive fern, sedges, duckweeds, mosses

**Species of conservation concern**
- Featherfoil, Virginia chain fern
- Black dash (butterfly), springtime physa (snail)
- Jefferson salamander, marbled salamander, wood frog, spotted turtle
- Wood duck, American black duck

These are just a few of the species of regional or statewide conservation concern that are known to occur in intermittent woodland pools. See Kiviat & Stevens (2001) for a more extensive list.
Threats to intermittent woodland pools

Intermittent woodland pools are frequently drained or filled by landowners and developers, used as dumping grounds, treated for mosquito control, and sometimes converted into ornamental ponds. They are typically small (often less than 0.1 ac), and are often overlooked in environmental reviews of proposed developments. Even when the pools themselves are untouched, the surrounding forest so essential to their ecological function is frequently destroyed or degraded.

Conservation Recommendations

- Avoid filling, draining, or excavating intermittent woodland pools.
- Minimize development and road construction in forests within 750 ft of an intermittent woodland pool to protect the adult habitat and travelways of pool-breeding amphibians.
- Avoid fragmentation of upland forests and preserve migration corridors between pools.
- Avoid activities near intermittent woodland pools that would increase soil erosion, alter runoff volume, or contribute pollutants. These activities include logging, construction of roads or buildings, ATV use, or use of pesticides and fertilizers. Organisms of these pools are sensitive to changes in water quality.

References

