reader’s interests overlap Dubos’s broad reach. Insights also abound for readers engaged in one or more of the three main topics: microbiology, medicine, or environmentalism. But the book’s appeal is broader still. René Dubos should be known by everyone who cherishes, celebrates, and hopes to sustain human life on earth.

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SHORT-TERM FRESHWATER ENVIRONMENTS


The goal of writing Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation was, in the words of author Elizabeth Colburn, to provide “an authoritative synthesis of the current understanding of the habitat characteristics of vernal pools, the plants and animals that live in them, and the factors that govern the interactions among pool organisms and their environment.” Temporary pools are ubiquitous in their distribution; sadly, however, most ecologists have ignored their role in the diversity of aquatic and terrestrial systems. This book is a good start, albeit focused exclusively on vernal pools of the glaciated southeastern Canada and northeastern United States. It is organized into 14 chapters that define vernal pools; describe them as aquatic habitats, with an emphasis on seasonal hydrologic patterns; address their natural history, dominant organisms, and ecology; and describe the endangered status of northeastern North American woodland vernal pools, threats to their existence, and governmental mechanisms to stem their disappear-
Fall Focus on Books

A significant contribution is the 63-page appendix, “An Annotated List of the Fauna of Vernal Pools and Seasonal Ponds in and near the Glaciated Northeast.” With its taxonomic organization and its comments on the physical and hydrologic setting of listed taxa, it should serve as a starting point for other workers to add to this ecological database.

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NEW TITLES


The First Boat People. Steve Webb. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006. 336 pp., illus. $120.00 (ISBN 0521856566 cloth).


