

Mayfly madness at Jeffrey Lake Sunday

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 25 July 2013 13:36 -



'Ephemeral' swarm emerges from water.

What Bonnie Aubushon thought was a dragonfly hatch on Jeffrey Lake Sunday morning turned out to be thousands of mayflies emerging from the water.

"It was fascinating," said the 85-year-old who lives in the northwest corner of the lake. "My screen doors, white patio poles and latticework were covered and, when I looked toward the lake, fish were popping up and eating them."

Aubushon said the activity lasted through the afternoon and on Tuesday, she said she witnessed another "fly-in" but wasn't as big as the first one.

On Sunday, Aubushon called local biologist Mark Peyton, who works for Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District, who traveled to her home.

By the time he arrived, the big emergence had ended.

Peyton snapped some photos of what insects were left.

He also explained that mayflies are from the order Ephemeroptera which translates into ephemeral wings.

"Typically they live as larvae in the mud under water for a year, climb up on vegetation, molt

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and then live a day or maybe two (hence the ephemeral part),” Peyton said. “They fly around in swarms, mate, lay eggs and die.”

The biologist said mayflies are harmless, except for in some cases, they emerge so thickly they get all over everything.

Peyton said the swarms are typically made up of males.

Females then fly into the swarm and return with a mate.

“She will then lay the freshly fertilized eggs in the water...and die, he said.

According to a 2001 study , Peyton said are 81 different species of mayflies in Nebraska.

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