

Nat Theo Club

FIELD NOTES

ISSUE 42



Fairy Shrimp

CRUSTACEAN

HABITAT & DIET

Live in seasonal ponds called vernal pools. They eat tiny organisms including algae, bacteria, protozoa, rotifers, and waste from other animals in the water.

FUN FACT

Fairy shrimp are closely related to brine shrimp which are sold by stores as "Sea Monkeys." Have you ever bought a Sea Monkey kit and raised Sea Monkeys? If so, you have raised creatures very similar to fairy shrimp!



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A FAIRY IN THE WOODS?

While fairies from fairy tales are made up for stories, there is a fascinating real creature called a fairy shrimp. My kids and I found them while climbing boulders in the Rocky Mountains. On top of the massive rocks were water puddles called vernal pools. A vernal pool is a seasonal pond, which means it is only sometimes full of water, while other times it is dry. The pools were just depressions, like pits, in the rocks filled with rainwater. Looking closely, we could see that the water was moving with life! We counted at least five different kinds of tiny creatures squirming and swimming in the vernal pools, including fairy shrimp.

Fairy shrimp are crustaceans, which means they have a lot of similarities to crabs, lobsters, and crayfish. Do you know what is very neat about them? They can live inside their eggs for an extremely long time before hatching. The female fairy shrimp lay their eggs in the vernal pools, and then die. When the pools dry up, the eggs can remain dormant (not growing but still alive) until more water comes and they hatch. If it takes a long time for the pools to refill with water, the eggs can survive for decades (1 decade is ten years). Some scientists think they eggs could survive for centuries (1 century is 100 years)! Then, when the pools fill with water and conditions are right, the eggs can hatch a new generation of fairy shrimp. I wonder how long the fairy shrimp we found waited to hatch!

Like a fairy shrimp waiting to hatch from its egg, God often calls us to wait on things. Maybe we are waiting for an answer to prayer, or for an opportunity, or for healing, or for something to happen in life. God can use our times of waiting. There is a beautiful word in the Bible for waiting. In the original Hebrew, it is the word *qāvâ* (pronounced kah-vah). It means to wait with hope or to be expectant. Isaiah 40:31 says "But those who hope (*qāvâ*) in the Lord will renew their strength" Some translations say "Those who wait" instead of hope, because the word means both. We can wait in great hope and assurance of what God is doing.

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