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Weekend Fish Kill At Lake A 'Natural Event'

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*By Annabeth Miller,
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This summer's heat wave and drought are affecting more than just folks in Southeast Missouri –Mother Nature's creatures are feeling the heat as well.

A fish kill occurred over the weekend at the Dexter Fishing Lake. But Conservation Agent Mark Reed of the Missouri Department of Conservation said Monday morning that what occurred at the local lake is a “natural event” for this time of year and extreme heat conditions.

Reed said the fish fill was a natural phenomenon – a result of the oxygen levels in the pond decreasing due to the heat .

“The water holds and retains less oxygen when it is warmer,” Reed said. Fish kills “stink – there's no two ways was about it. “

Reed said the local city pond, for instance, has a “good algae bloom” – and the algae plants will make oxygen. However, a combination of warm water not retaining oxygen and lower water levels and other factors most likely led to this weekend's kills. Reed said most likely the fish died Saturday night, and began to float to the surface by Sunday morning.

“We’ll probably see more of these at area lakes and ponds,” he said. “I don’t think what happened at the Dexter pond killed everything. But we will have to wait and see; we’re going to have to ride this out.”

Reed said a fish kill like this does not necessarily wipe out a fish population in a pond. However, the condition of the fishing lake probably won’t be fully known until this fall. Reed said a fisheries biologist would come in and examine the lake to decide if it needs to be restocked for fishing.

“Fish kills always look bad. It’s unfortunate – a real shame. We may continue to see fish kills – we’ll just have to wait and see,” he said.

Reed said the fish are not the only wildlife affected by the heat wave. For instance, he said quail get most of their daily moisture from the early morning dew on plants. With the heat and humidity, there hasn’t been any dew in the area, and quail are having to find alternative sources for water.

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