

WHERE AND WHEN TO SEE FAIRY SHRIMP IN CARE

Visitors can observe desert shrimp (better known as fairy shrimp) in the Cottonwood and Willow tanks south of the Post or in the Fountain and Miaheyan tanks south of the Red Slide. These are shown on the attached maps. The Willow and Cottonwood tanks are much more accessible than the others being only about a mile south of the Post parking area. There isn't an established trail to any of the tanks, however, they can be located easily with a topo map. The Fountain and Miaheyan tanks are accessed by hiking down from Brimhall Arch or by going down the landing strip route which isn't highly recommended for most visitors because it is fairly steep and precarious in some places.

Two species of fairy shrimp (Order Anostraca) are present in the tanks. Branchinecta lindahl can be observed from about April through June, while Streptocephalus texanus can be observed from about August through October. There is also a species of clam shrimp, Eulimnida texana (Order Conchostraca), which has been seen in August but is also likely present in September. The only other order in this Division of invertebrates known as Eubranchiopoda, is Notostraca or tadpole shrimp. These look like miniature horseshoe crabs and unfortunately have not been reported from the tanks in CARE. The reason for their absence is not clear however, it may be due to the relatively low alkalinity and clear water in the tanks. Also, they are usually found in wetlands with grassy vegetation (e.g. sedges) which isn't found in the tanks.

Keep in mind that the times that I have stated for observing these shrimp is based upon one year of observation at the Cottonwood and Willow tanks. These observations were attained from a report submitted by Haefner and Lindahl, the researchers contracted to study the ecology of the tanks. Because all 3 of these orders of shrimp are known to have populations which are present or absent from year to year in a sporadic manner, it is possible that in some other year they could be present at other times or not at all. All 3 orders of shrimp produce resting eggs capable of withstanding desiccation and freezing allowing a population to survive from one season to another. As long as there is water in the tanks in the spring and fall, I would expect to find the fairy shrimp in the tanks.

In the spring, the tanks usually have plenty of water due to runoff from snowmelt. During the dry summer months (June-late July) the tanks may dry up and or become stagnant due to the lack of input of freshwater. However, late summer/early fall rainstorms tend to replenish the tanks and rejuvenate many invertebrates including the fairy shrimp. Therefore, I would suggest that visitors who want to see these critters plan to visit the tanks in April/May or in September. Feel free to invite them to contact the Resource Management division upon their arrival at the park if they desire additional information about the tanks and their inhabitants.