

Rare stonefly only found in Lake Tahoe



This stonefly has only been found living beneath the surface of Lake Tahoe. Photo/UNR

By Emily Benson, New Scientist

Species: *Capnia lacustra*

Habitat: Lake Tahoe, 100 to 280 feet below the lake's surface.

An autumn birthday means one of these rare aquatic insects was born live; but a spring birthday bash means it probably hatched from an egg.

The insect, a species of stonefly called *Capnia lacustra*, is one of 10 invertebrate species found only on the bed of Lake Tahoe.

And it is one of a kind among stoneflies. Most species in this group live in streams or rivers as juveniles, before emerging into the air as winged adults to mate and lay eggs. *C. lacustra* has a different strategy: it's the only known species of stonefly that spends its entire life under water, never developing wings.

The creatures' rarity and difficult-to-reach habitat make them hard to study. A lakewide survey in 2008 and 2009 revealed that *C. lacustra* – and the particular plant it lives on – appears to be much scarcer in Lake Tahoe now than in the 1960s.

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