

Scientists record five small earthquakes in Connecticut

January 12 2015

Five small earthquakes were recorded within a 5½-hour span in eastern Connecticut on Monday, including a 3.1-magnitude quake that was felt in parts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, according to the Weston Observatory at Boston College and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The quakes followed two in the same area last week, including a 2.0-magnitude quake Thursday and a 0.4 magnitude Friday. All the quakes were centered near Danielson and in northern Plainfield.

Four of the quakes on Monday were within a 20-minute span starting just after 6:30 a.m., including the 3.1-magnitude quake that was felt in parts of Rhode Island, including Providence, and more than 60 miles away in Massachusetts in New Bedford and Framingham, scientists said. A 1.3-magnitude aftershock was recorded just after noon.

John Ebel, senior research scientist at the Western Observatory, said such a series of small earthquakes in the Northeast is not unusual. The eastern U.S. is in the middle of a tectonic plate that stretches from the West Coast to the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and earthquakes are caused by pressure emanating from those two boundaries, he said.

In 2006 and 2007, a series of earthquakes hit around Bar Harbor, Maine, including a 4.2-magnitude quake, Ebel said.

Two small quakes also hit near Danielson on Nov. 9 and another small tremor near Danielson was recorded on Oct. 13, according to the New

England Seismic Network, a partnership of area universities that includes Boston College.

There were reports of shaking in the area Monday, but no reports of major damage or injuries.

"At first I thought it was a snow plow, but there was no snow," Darlene Gannon of Sterling, Connecticut, told The Bulletin of Norwich. "Then the breaking sound began, like a vehicle crashing through our stone wall. When I figured out that wasn't the case, I thought maybe the garage had collapsed—a gazillion explanations went through my head."

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