

## Brief buzz: Danish Mayfly named 2021 insect of the year

November 27 2020

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This undated photo provided by the 'Senckenberg Institute' shows a 'Danish Mayfly'. The Danish Mayfly has been selected by a German entomological society as the Insect of the Year for 2021, but won't have long to celebrate its 15 minutes of fame. The insect, whose scientific name is *Ephemera danica*, only has a few days to fly, mate and lay new eggs. (Wolfgang Kleinstеuber via AP)

The Danish Mayfly was selected Friday by an international group of entomologists and others as the Insect of the Year for 2021, but it won't have long to celebrate its 15 minutes of fame.

The insect, whose scientific name is *Ephemera danica*, only has a few days to fly, mate and lay new [eggs](#).

"What makes the [mayfly](#) unique is its [life cycle](#): from the egg laid in the water to the insect capable of flight and mating, which dies after a few days," said Thomas Schmitt, chairman of the commission of scientists and representatives from [research institutions](#) and conservation organizations from Germany, Austria and Switzerland that made the choice.

Mayflies have existed for about 355 million years and today some 140 species live in Central Europe, the commission said.

Despite their fleeting time on earth in their final form, their developmental cycle is quite long.

Female mayflies zigzag over water between May and September, laying thousands of eggs that then sink.

Larvae hatch within a few days, and eventually develop gills. Buried in riverbeds, they take between one to three years to develop.

"Shortly before the transition from aquatic to terrestrial life, a layer of air forms between the old and new skin of the adult larvae," said Schmitt, who is also director of the Senckenberg German Entomological Institute in Muencheberg, east of Berlin. "By reducing its specific weight, the larva rises to the water surface. Once there, the larval skin bursts and within a few seconds a flyable mayfly hatches."

With no mouth parts nor a functioning intestine, the fully developed mayfly has only a few days then to mate and lay new eggs before it dies.

The commission has been [selecting one unique insect](#) each year since 1999 to "bring an exemplary species closer to people."

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