8-23-2015

Source of the Borad River Dead Fish Remains Unidentified

Jennifer Ortiz

Source of the Broad River dead fish remains unidentified

Dead fish spotted at the Broad River Greenway. Photo by: Megan Hartman

By: Jennifer Ortiz

As of three weeks ago, dead fish have been spotted along the Broad River, a popular spot for Gardner-Webb students to hang out, swim and take in nature on hot summer days.

Sophomore Amanda Rymer has visited the river regularly in the past but has not returned since May due to the recent news.

“Last time I went there, I remember how refreshing it was to smell nature,” said Rymer.

The smell of dead fish has recently replaced the fresh scents of nature at the Broad River that students like Rymer once enjoyed.

Reports from the Shelby Star indicate that water quality tests completed by Duke Energy biologists have come back normal, and that the cause of the dead fish remains unknown.

Assistant Professor of Geology, Dr. David Campbell, discussed possibilities with GWU-Today saying that the most probable cause of dead fish are unidentified toxins in the water.

Dr. Campbell observes the river, finding several fish. Photo by: Jennifer Ortiz

"The water quality measurements that seem normal suggest that it's not anything particularly unusual," he said. "At this point, we don't know what the chemical is and whether it's bad for people."

Campbell said that the warm weather and lack of rain may also have aggravated the problem causing lower water levels, slower water flows and lower oxygen levels in the water.

"While it may be within normal range, that's probably something that puts a stress on the fish making it easier for something else to put them over the edge," said Campbell.

Initially, reports suggested parasites had caused the death of catfish along the Broad River, but on the site, minnows and other

species of fish have been identified. Campbell said that parasites would affect mostly one specific species over another, ruling out the possibility of this causing the fish kill.

Dead catfish and other species found along the Broad River.
Photo by: Jennifer Ortiz

At the river, Campbell was able to find one dead catfish, two dead fish of another species and several fish vertebrae.

Whatever the cause, Campbell advised that "it's probably not a good time to go fishing or the like in the Broad River."

Campbell said that some biology and geology classes visit the Broad River as part of the curriculum, but the professors may have to postpone the class trips.

"Hopefully all of this will be cleared up by then," said Campbell.