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from C. Remmerde's Sonoran Journal
August 13, 2018

Pre-dragonflies

Just about everyone I know (and plenty I don't know) likes dragonflies. Lots of art work features dragonflies, and they are used as logos on products, etc. So when I discovered dragonfly nymphs, which are an aquatic larval stage of dragonflies (in other words, baby dragonflies) in my horse-water trough, I felt flattered to host them. There is no natural surface water where I live, but there are man made dirt cattle tanks about a mile from my house and some beyond that out in the desert, which often dry up. Since water is essential for dragonfly existence, the adult dragonflies are quick to take advantage of any water they find that might last long enough for the nymphs to mature.

Generally, I clean my water trough about once a week or so depending on how fast algae grows, which, in the summer, is pretty fast. I discovered the nymphs about 3 weeks ago so only partially drained the trough so as not to dump out the nymphs. This wasn't working that well, because the algae was building up on the bottom of the trough and blooming in the daytime when it warmed up, making a thick green tea rather than clean water for the horses. I drained it partially about 3 times but couldn't stand it any longer and decided to catch all the nymphs and set them safely aside until I cleaned the trough and then put them back in the clean water. Sure. Just catch 30 or so nimble dragonfly nymphs in deep algae.



The nymphs are almost as big as my little finger. I was pretty sure they don't bite but I have that innate fear of even the possibility of bug bites, so I scooped them out of the water with a yogurt tub and an old window screen after I drained out most of the water from the trough. Many of them were swept out into the horse-pen dirt (which became a puddle) by accident anyway. Normally, cleaning the trough takes me maybe 15 or 20 minutes. Today it took 2 hours to chase down (in sloppy mud) ALL the precious nymphs. I kept watching the muddy, drained out water for squiggles of struggling nymphs and scooped them carefully, dumping out the excess muddy water, so as not to put it in the trough. I rescued an

uncountable number, carefully dumping them in the clean water of the trough and watching them swim so happily (my guess) and safely away.

I watched the large group after the filthy task was done, counting while I watched. I counted about 35 nymphs scooting all over the place on the bottom and sides of the trough. They were quite active, though some rested, perhaps working on developing those little wing buds on their backs.

I am a "save the world" kinda gal and today I saved the world for those wonderful dragonflies that so many of us enjoy.