

✓ Anchovies fill harbor

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By PAUL BEATTY

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Nature forgot to "hold the anchovies" this year.

Tons of anchovies Friday and Saturday swam into the waters near Twin Lakes Beach and into the lower Small Craft Harbor where they died by the millions, filming the harbor waters with a patina of silver and blackening the beaches.

Boat owners looked on worriedly, remembering that in 1980 the lemming-like anchovies swam in, died from lack of oxygen, and caused \$1 million in damage to boats. Similar piscine mass suicides have happened in 1974 and 1964.

Assistant Harbormaster Steve Scheiblaue said Saturday afternoon, "This school (of anchovies) was awesome, the biggest school of little fish I've ever seen ... it was like one of those wonders of nature."

He estimated there were 150 tons of the silver fingerlings that came in about 11 a.m. Saturday. They were preceded Friday by a smaller school of about 50 tons.

He said Saturday no boats had left for other harbors, but that if the fish kill proves to be extensive by today when the anchovies all float up, "probably 100 or so will leave."

"Ultimately we don't know why they swim in and don't swim out when the water gets stale," Scheiblaue said.

The kills occur when great schools of

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Harbor turned into tapestry of dead anchovies

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anchovies mass into a shore area where they deplete the oxygen and then die from lack of it. Decay of the dead fish produces hydrogen sulfide which smells like rotten eggs, erodes the paint from hulls and pits metal fittings. Painting hulls is expensive. It cost \$50 to \$100 for a gallon of paint and the price of a dry-docking.

Scheiblaue says the full extent of the kill won't be known until this morning when many of the dead fish will rise to the surface.

He's calling for workers to be down at the harbor office this morning and Monday. About 30 people will be hired at \$4.50 an hour to help clean up the mess. They are advised to wear old clothes and old shoes. He's also hoping to get some help from the State Conservation Corps.

Scheiblaue and boat owners tried to get more oxygen into the water by running boat motors Saturday. He said that the oxygen level at 8 a.m. was high enough at 4.4 parts per million, but by 3 p.m. had

dropped to .4 parts.

That's not enough to keep a fish alive.

The harbor office was doing some netting to take the masses of dead anchovies out to deeper water and dump them. Some bigger boats will be put to work to net some for processed chicken food and fertilizer from a local plant.

The assistant harbormaster said that he has plug-in stations for 18 aerators to put oxygen in the water, but that the majority of them are in the upper harbor where the fish kills happened in prior years. Only two or three of them can be worked in the lower harbor where they have 220 volt stations.

Attorney Jack Butler, sitting by his boat "Malpratice," said, "This stuff stinks real bad, will eat up your boat and it sticks to the hull like big hunks of tar."

Two kids were fishing a few of the living anchovies out of the water. When Natasha Hodge and Bryan Myers were asked why they were putting the fish in buckets, Hodge said, "To take home to feed to our two cats."