

Field Notes

Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre

February 2004



Aquatic bugs

Winter is not usually a time when you are thinking about bugs that live in the water but many of them are still active even under the ice.

Invertebrates (animals with no backbones) survive the winter in many different ways. Some insects such as Monarch butterflies migrate; in others the adults die in the fall after laying eggs and the eggs survive the winter. Some even hibernate in the mud at the bottom of wetlands.

Aquatic bugs can hibernate as adults, larva, or eggs. They will spend the coldest winter months dormant in a wetland and begin to stir when the ice starts to break up.

Some species do stay active all winter and can be seen swimming under the ice. These animals need wetlands that are deep enough so that they don't freeze to the bottom.

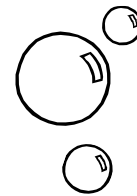
A great book to help you learn all about these amazing creatures is "A guide to common freshwater invertebrates of North America".

Come out to Oak Hammock Marsh this spring and grab a bucket and net and see what you can catch under the water.



Did you know?

That Water Boatmen breath underwater from an air bubble that is held under the wings.



That in some parts of the world Water Boatman eggs are so common that dried into a flour. they are and ground kind of



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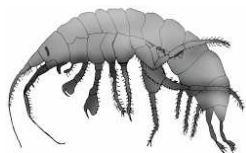
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Common Aquatic Invertebrates



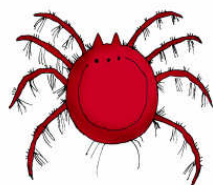
Sideswimmer

A freshwater shrimp, grey in colour that swims on its side by beating its many legs. Largely scavengers. Over-winters as adults in debris, stay active.



Water Flea

Pink or orange in colour, this tiny crustacean moves up and down in shore hops by using its large antennae. Feeds on algae and bacteria. Over-winters as adults or resting eggs.



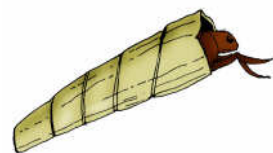
Water Mite

Usually red (sometimes black), this tiny spider relative feeds on worms, small crustaceans, larvae, and plankton. Swims by wildly beating its eight legs. Found in all seasons (active even under the ice).



Midge Larva

Dark red, worm-like larva (also known as a bloodworm), that moves along the bottom of the marsh in the mud. Eats algae, tiny plants, and other dead things. Over-winters as larva on bottom in mud and decaying vegetation.



Caddisfly Larva

Builds a tube-like home using bits of grass, leaves, sand grains, and even old snail shells. Walks slowly along the bottom eating algae and small aquatic animals. Over-winters as larvae under ice.



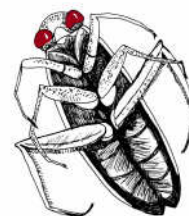
Whirligig Beetle

This small, shiny black beetle is usually seen zooming around on the surface of the water. Each eye is divided into two parts so they can see above and below the water at the same time. Feeds on small insects. Over-winters as adults, bury themselves in mud.



Water Boatman

Slender and black with fine yellow bars, this bug swims by paddling its long, skinny, oar-like legs. Eats algae and dead plants and animals. Over-winter as adults in debris at bottom, some stay active.



Backswimmers

Is black and white with large red eyes. It is boat-shaped and swims along on its back using its legs like oars. Preys on insects and small fish. Hibernates at the bottom in mud or vegetation as adults, some stay active.



Dragonfly Nymph

Greenish is colour, it usually walks slowly on the bottom or among vegetation. Eats worms, insects, small crustaceans, and plankton. Over-winters as larvae at bottom of wetlands.



Damselfly Nymph

Usually found on the bottom or attached to plants underwater. Has three leaf-like gills at the end of its body. Eats insects and plankton. Over-winters as larvae at bottom of wetlands in muddy debris.



Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is a joint project of
Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Province of Manitoba

