



What Lives in the Water?

Discover aquatic invertebrates near you!

Caution: Always supervise children near water.

Materials Needed:

Small fish net, cup, or shallow pan to scoop water. White plastic bin or other small container, white plastic spoon, ice cube tray for viewing and sorting, magnifying glass (optional).

Instructions:

Step 1: Find water near you (a pond or stream).

Step 2: With the help of an adult, scoop out some water from a shallow area with leaf litter or next to plants. Pour several scoops of water into the larger container. Take the container away from the water's edge and wait for the water to settle.



Step 3: Watch for movement. A white background makes it easier to see. If your container is transparent, slide a piece of white paper behind it to increase visibility. How many different kinds of creatures can you see? Pick them up with your spoon and sort them into an ice cube tray for a closer look. Use a magnifying glass to observe tiny creatures!



Step 4: When you are done exploring, release your aquatic life back into the water.

Activity adapted from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Insect Kit.

Watch a Museum Minute about exploring water:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9py9GIQIBs

To identify species in the wild and become a citizen scientist, download the **iNaturalist** app: www.inaturalist.org

Or try the **Seek by iNaturalist** app for kids:

www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app



Explore Aquatic Invertebrates



Water is needed for all life on Earth! Exploring tiny animals living in water near us is a fun way to explore the diversity of life at a different scale!

Some insect species begin life in the water before they become flying insects. Discover what young mayflies, dragonflies, caddisflies, and mosquitoes look like as larvae.



Mayfly larva



Dragonfly larva



Caddisfly larva



Mosquito larvae breathing air

Fun facts:

Dragonfly larvae could be as old as you! In interior Alaska, these insects spend up to 7 years growing in water before turning into adults!

Caddisfly larvae build a case around them, made of leaves, sticks, or pebbles for protection. They are tricky to find. Keep your eyes open for moving sticks!



Each aquatic animal has special adaptations to live in water. Observe the different ways in which aquatic invertebrates move, feed, or breathe.



The species of aquatic invertebrates we find can tell us how healthy the water is. Finding caddisflies and mayflies is a good sign, as they do not survive well in polluted waters.

What kinds of biodiversity do you find near you?

