

Key for identifying freshwater invertebrates



START

Has legs

No legs

Living in a case of tiny twigs or stones
Cased caddis larva



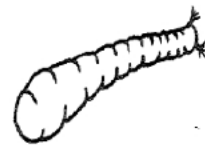
Not living in a case

3 pairs of legs

4 pairs of legs
Water mite



Moves as if it has a sucker on both ends. Often stands on one end.
Blackfly larva



No suckers

Hard wing case on its back
Water beetle



Or
Water boatman



No hard wing case on its back

Less than 15 body segments, red or green, up to 3cm long. May wriggle in a figure of 8 movement.
Midge larva



At least 15 body segments, long and thin, brown or red
Worm



Short tails or hooks

Long tails (nearly as long as body)

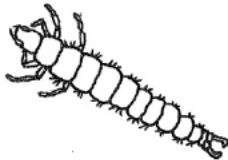
Longer than 2cm, fat like a maggot.
Cranefly larva (Daddy long legs)



3 or 5 tails
Dragonfly or damselfly larva



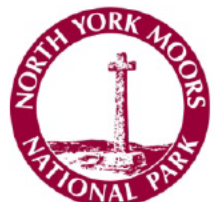
2 very short hooks
Caseless caddis larva



2 tails
Stonefly nymph



3 tails
Mayfly nymph



Minibeast Water Quality Scale

Water Quality

Minibeasts



Very good

Stonefly nymphs
Mayfly nymphs



Moderate

Dragonfly nymphs
Freshwater limpet
Cased caddis larvae
Freshwater shrimps
Swan mussels
Caseless caddis larvae
Water beetles
Cranefly larvae
Blackfly larvae
Water boatmen
Pond skaters
Water mite
Alderfly larvae



Poor

Leeches
Snails
Water louse
Rat tailed maggot
Midge larvae
Worms

Some freshwater minibeasts, such as stonefly nymphs, can only live in very clean water which contains plenty of oxygen. Others, such as worms, can survive in polluted water with less oxygen. The types of minibeasts we find in a river therefore tell us about the quality of the water.