



# Identifying Macroinvertebrates

Identifying aquatic macroinvertebrates can be a daunting task, but start out by asking yourself these 5 questions. They will help you notice certain characteristics about the organism that will make it easier to identify.

## Ask yourself these 5 questions every time.

1. Does it have a shell?
2. Does it have legs?
3. How many pairs of legs does it have?
4. Does it have obvious tails?
5. How big is it?

### Does it have a shell?

- These organisms are usually easy to identify, and include snails and clams.



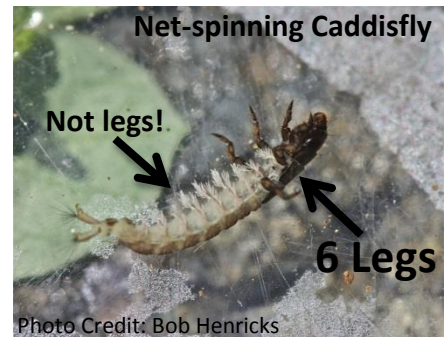
### Does it have legs?

- Most do, but if it doesn't you are able to narrow it down to organisms that are wormlike



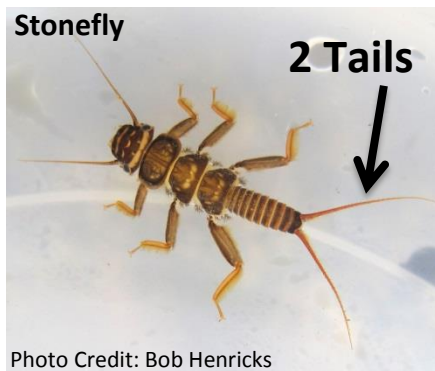
## How many pairs of legs does it have?

- This may seem hard, but they either have 3 pairs (6 legs) or 10+ legs
- Legs only exist on the thorax (right behind the head) not the abdomen. Leg-like pieces on the abdomen are fleshy appendages.



## Does it have obvious tails?

- Tails will be obvious, and long. Keep in mind that they may have been broken off during sampling.
- If it has tails, how many?



## How big is it?

- This can help distinguish between some of the bugs. They all look the same in drawings but some are generally very small (1/4 in) while others can be very large (3 in). **Check your Identification guides to learn what size is typical for the bug you are observing.**

