

Macroinvertebrate Fact File 4



Water Mites – sensitivity scale 6

- Water Mites are 1 to 5 mm long
- They are members of the spider family, but with one distinctive difference. Whereas spiders have two separate portions to their bodies, these mites only have one. The moveable head is attached to the body by a hinge
- Their smooth flat bodies appear as specks in the water. They are often red or red and black in colour
- They swim in slow flowing and shallow water among plants. Some mites are excellent swimmers, smoothly gliding through the water as their eight legs work furiously to propel them. Others are content to poke among plant debris at the bottom
- As adults, most of the water mites are carnivorous and predatory in nature; seeking out and feasting upon worms and insects
- The larvae of water mites are parasites. They attach themselves to the host using their piercing mouthparts and suck the life juices out of the host larva of another aquatic creature such as a fly, mosquito, dragonfly or stonefly
- Some types of mites are more similar to dust mites; non-threatening to any species, and feeding only on discarded casts or organic material



Water Mites

Image courtesy of Otago Regional Council

Freshwater Bug Fact File 4

Collect the fact files, laminate them and put them on to a key ring to produce a macroinvertebrate reference guide.