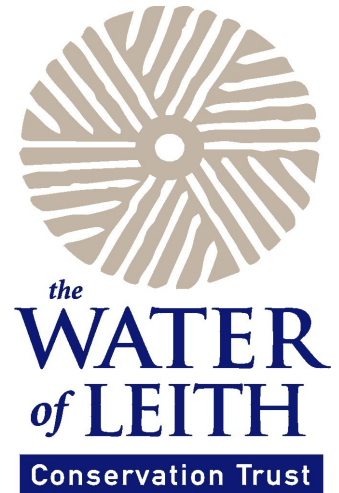


# Observational Drawing of Land or River Invertebrates

Drawing living creatures can be really tricky. *Invertebrates* (creatures without a backbone) are usually very small and they often move very quickly so they can be quite difficult to draw. So, why bother? Because it's a great way to look really, really closely at creatures and to see how amazing they truly are. Here's a guide to drawing these creatures with a few top tips to make it easier.

*Top tip 1:* Make sure you draw them as big as you can so people can see the wonder of creatures they walk by every day.



## What You'll Need

A grown up who doesn't scream when they see a bug  
River dipping equipment (see our River Dipping resource sheet) if you are getting river invertebrates  
A teaspoon  
An open shallow container  
Paper, pencils, coloured pencils, crayons, rubber  
A clipboard or hard-backed book if you are going to draw outside  
A magnifying glass if you have one

## Step One

Find a creature and use a spoon to carefully place it in a small open container. Bug boxes are great for collecting, but the sides are too high to see the creatures inside properly and so it is best to transfer them into a shallower and wider container.

*Top tip: place a white sheet of paper underneath to help you see the creature clearly.*

Spend a few minutes watching your creature. See if you can count the number of legs and the markings. Does it have an antenna? If you have a magnifying glass, use it by holding the glass close to the creature and then slowly move it towards you.



**If you are collecting river invertebrates you will need to keep yourself safe by water**

Always go river dipping with an adult and only when water levels are low.

Choose your location carefully to make sure the river is shallow and does not drop away quickly.

Even in hot weather, do not go into a river barefoot as sharp objects like glass or rusty old bits of metal are often found on the river bed.

Do not go further than the depth of your ankle bones and stay out of fast currents.

***Wash your hands after handling invertebrates and before eating anything, if you have been collecting creatures from the land or from the river.***

## Curricular Links to the Curriculum for Excellence

I can use exploration and imagination to solve design problems related to real-life situations. (EX 1-06a)

I can create and present work that shows developing skills in using the visual elements and concepts. (EX A 2-03a)

Within and beyond my place of learning I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in physical activities and sport, making use of available indoor and outdoor space. (HWB 1-25a)

The following step-by-step instructions show a mayfly nymph, caught in the river. But you can do the same exercise with any small invertebrate, whether it's a snail crossing the pavement on a rainy morning, a caterpillar on a leaf, or a slug. Just remember that you are very big to them and they are fragile beings. So handle them gently and put them back where you found them afterwards.

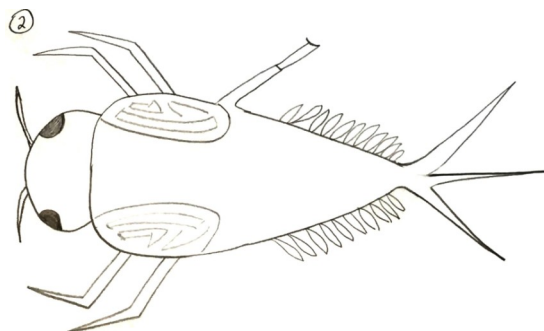
### Step Two—Beginning Your Drawing

This can be the tricky bit. No doubt your creature is wiggling away and even though you've counted the legs and gills, it's difficult to know where to start. Top Tip: start with the *biggest* part of the body and draw it as *big* as you can on a piece of paper. When something is small, it's tempting to draw it small, but we want other people to see how amazing these creatures are and so the bigger we draw them the clearer they can see them.



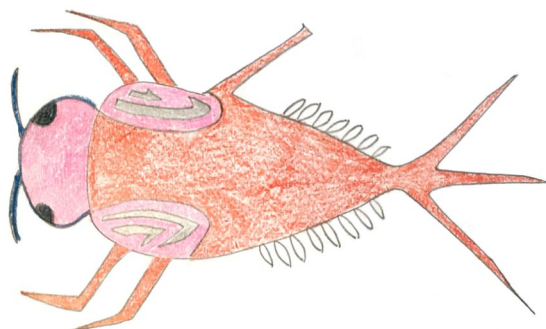
### Step Three—Looking at Every Detail

Wild creatures live dangerous lives and it is very common for them to be missing a leg or two, or half a tail. This is probably because their leg got stuck under a moving rock or eaten by a fish. A bit gory? The good news is that your creature is living and flourishing, but make sure you record exactly what you see. This is what *observational drawing* is about, drawing as true to life as you can.



### Step Four—Free Your Inner Artist

You've done a great job drawing the invertebrate as it is. This is what scientists do to record species. However, and only if you wish, now is the time to bring out the artist inside all of us and to add colour. Your creature may be brown and grey but if you want you can add all the crazy colours of the rainbow.



### Step Five—Describing and Identifying

Look at your finished masterpiece and at the creature in your tub and think of describing words. How does it move? Is it fast? Does it dart? Or does it saunter or meander along? Think of ways to describe it and add them to your drawing. Last but not least, don't forget to identify your creature and add its name to the drawing so everyone can learn about your special creature. Then release it back into the river or greenspace!

