

Macroinvertebrate Fact File 9



Amphipods - sensitivity scale 5

- Amphipods prefer to live in still or slow flowing water and live under vegetation and rocks. Some species live in estuaries, the sea or on land.
- Freshwater amphipods are commonly known as scuds.
- Amphipods are typically less than 10 millimetres long.
- The largest recorded amphipod was 28 centimetres long and was found in the Pacific Ocean.
- The body of an amphipod is divided into 13 segments, which can be grouped into a head, a thorax and an abdomen.
- The amphipod has three pairs of tail limbs and seven pairs of walking legs. Four pairs of walking legs reach forwards, the other three pairs reach backwards.
- The speciality of amphipods is the tail-flip, a rapid escape response where the abdomen flicks the animal away after the tail limbs are dug into the ground.
- Amphipods grasp their food with the front two pairs of legs which are armed with large claws.
- Freshwater amphipods are omnivores; they mostly eat dead plant and animal matter but they will also eat other animals.
- Freshwater amphipods cannot tolerate chemical pollution as it damages their delicate gills which they use to breathe.
- Most species live only one year, reproducing once during their lifetime.



Image courtesy of Otago Regional Council

Amphipods

Freshwater Bug Fact File 9

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