

Waterstrider

Order: Hemiptera Family: Gerridae

Number of species in North America: 47



Size: 3-20mm (adult)

Also called pond skaters or Jesus bugs because they seem to “walk on water”

Middle and hind legs touch water— front legs are held up while middle legs row

Wing pads present on thorax

No gills present

Claws on upper leg – do not break surface tension

Steer with hind legs and unequal strokes of middle legs

3 pairs of segmented legs on thorax, skinny and long to help distribute body weight on water surface.

Ends of legs have non-wettable hairs

2 claws on segmented legs

Credits: McCafferty, W. Patrick. Aquatic Entomology, 1981.

Life Cycle Corner

Incomplete metamorphosis

Loose eggs usually deposited underwater. Attached to solid objects.

Adults lay eggs in spring— develop during summer.

Adults repeat cycle over winter.

Diet: Terrestrial and aquatic insects (living and dead).
Food for: Game fish, predaceous water insects.
Habitat: Surface of streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, and ditches.
Movement: Skate on surface of water.
Breathing: Openings in sides of bodies (spiracles). When diving, a thin layer of air is trapped on the unwettable hairs covering body.
Water Quality Indicator: Group II— can exist under a wide range of water quality conditions; a large number indicates MODERATE water quality.

