

# Waterstrider Fact Sheet

**Order:** *Hemiptera*

**Family:** *Gerridae*

**Number of species in North America:** 47

**Size:** 3–20 mm (adult)

**Facts:**

- 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.
- Steers with hind legs and unequal strokes of middle legs.
- No gills present.

**Diet:** Terrestrial and aquatic insects (living and dead).

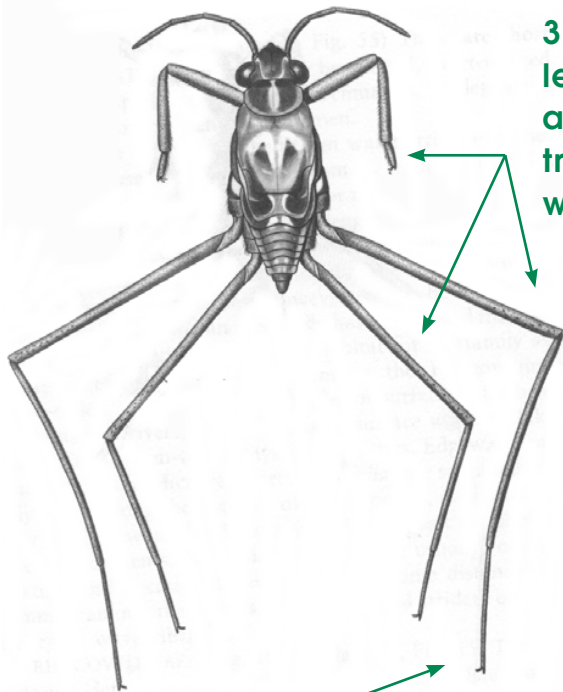
**Food for:** Game fish, predaceous water insects.

**Habitat:** Surface of streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, and ditches.

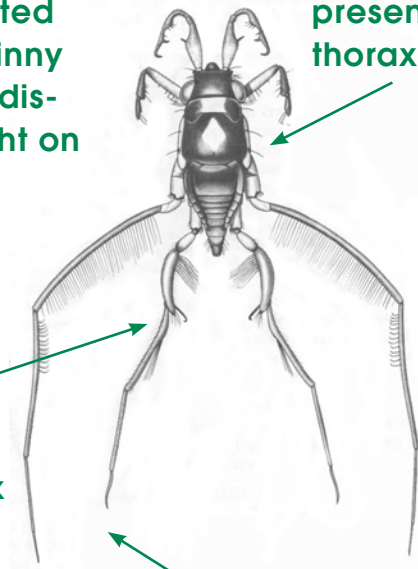
**Movement:** Skate on surface of water.

**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.



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



Wing pads present on thorax.

Claws on upper leg do not break surface tension.

Ends of legs have non-wettable hairs.

2 claws on segmented legs.

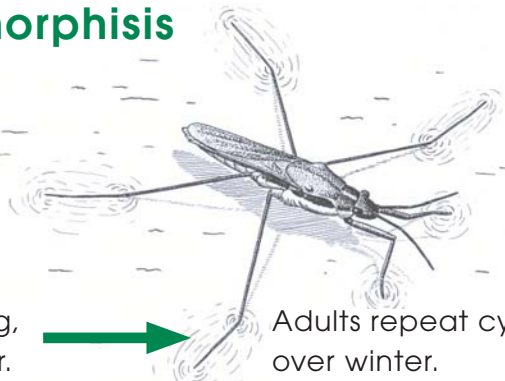
## Life Cycle Corner

### Incomplete Metamorphosis

Loose eggs usually deposited underwater. Attached to solid objects.



Adults lay eggs in spring, develop during summer.



Adults repeat cycle over winter.

Images: McCafferty, W. Patrick. *Aquatic Entomology*, 1981.



**CREEK CONNECTION**  
Allegheny College