

HELLGRAMMITE

Megaloptera: Corydalidae

Bug
of the
Month



This impressive-looking aquatic insect is called a hellgrammite, and is the larval form of a type of dobsonfly. This insect is in the genus *Corydalus* and family Corydalidae. Hellgrammites are typically found clinging to (and climbing on) rocks in fast moving waters. Occasionally collected by fisherman, hellgrammites can make for great fishing bait due to their longevity on the line. Within the family Corydalidae, there

are 6 genera containing 20 species. Hellgrammites are fierce predators that eat smaller aquatic insects by engulfing them or swallowing them whole. Corydalidae larvae can reach 1.2 – 2.6+ inches in length with notably sized mandibles. Watch your fingers when handling, because they will pinch!

Hellgrammites live 2-5 years with 10-12 growth stages before creating a burrow in late spring

to midsummer to pupate and become adults. The adults are referred to as dobsonflies, or fishflies. Adult male dobsonflies have large, impressive mandibles which they use to battle other males and to attract female dobsonflies for mating! Corydalids are short-lived as adults, living for only a few days to a few weeks to reproduce, and are often non-feeding as this stage.

By Francesca Ferguson

August 2021



PennState



Center for
Pollinator
Research

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. U.Ed SCI 19-93