



Mayfly in the Classroom

Introduction

Aimed at years 4 – 6, Mayfly in the classroom (MiC) teaches students about the lifecycle of iconic invertebrates as well as experiencing real-life hatches on their very own local "outdoor classrooms" (aka rivers). This involves the catching, rearing (in class) and release of mayflies into local streams & rivers. Aquatic invertebrates, including mayflies, lend themselves to education about aquatic conservation very readily. Their biology perfectly illustrates requirements for good aquatic habitat. They also play a pivotal role in linking aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity; for example, energy that has arisen in the aquatic habitat (i.e. the mayflies themselves) is transferred into the diet of terrestrial predators like birds, bats and spiders. All activities can be linked (differentiated accordingly) to specific National Curriculum Key Stages.

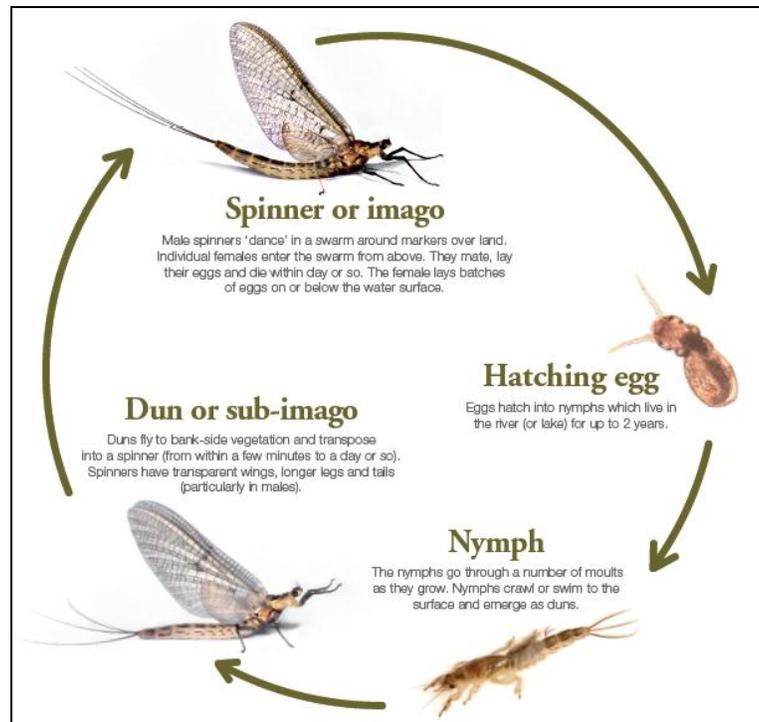


Figure 1 - The Mayfly lifecycle Images © Cyril Bennett

Key components:

Core

- Assembling mayfly aquariums in class
- Collecting mayfly nymphs from local streams or rivers & assembling their aquariums.
- Caring for the “nearly mature” nymphs of a particular species of mayfly and recording daily observations on holding conditions, husbandry duties (including feeding and temperature control), adult emergence and nymph survival. Associated activities & structured worksheets are available on the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) website.
- Storing the emerged mayflies in perforated boxes in a fridge until “release day”
- Releasing the emerged nymphs) and observing a real mayfly hatch in their local stream (including observations of bird and fish predation).

Structure & requirements

- Support; will be given by the WTT and local partners (for example arranging river visits) and teaching resources are available on the WTT Mayfly in the Classroom website.
- Training & equipment; provided free & in-house to teachers by the Wild Trout Trust and local partners. Training will cover basic mayfly ecology, links to the national curriculum as well as aquarium assembly and aftercare. Training is intended to give teachers the confidence and knowledge to look after MiC projects. Training will take approximately two hours and may involve a visit to a local stream depending on the schools situation.
- Timing & duration; from capture to release should take three weeks at most, depending on the species of mayfly and classroom care. Depending on species used & region, the programme can be used at any time from early Spring to late Autumn (this will be covered in training).
- Commitments; daily care is limited to maintaining water temperature and oxygen content. These tasks can be performed by students. Providing the right substrate is used, no feeding is required. Two visits to a local water body to catch and release the mayflies.
- Age groups; Mayfly in the Classroom is aimed at years 4 – 6

Benefits

- Cost effective; a system that is cost effective and easy to maintain; Free to start up & inexpensive to maintain.
- Low maintenance; mayfly nymphs are typically hardy and easy to look after.
- Time efficient; a programme that is not demanding of resources or time, typically taking a maximum of three weeks from start to finish and requiring a daily ten minute check
- Relevance; a programme that can be linked to stages of the national curriculum.
- Flexibility; the MiC model can be applied to a host of invertebrate species that hatch all year round. These will be covered during training.

Further information: <http://www.wildtrout.org/content/mayfly-classroom>, www.riverflies.org