



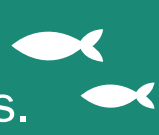
Meet the “Family”

Macroinvertebrates in the NCR

Macroinvertebrates are small organisms without a backbone that we can see with the naked eye. In stream ecosystems, benthic (bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates are



A food source: Fish, birds, mammals, and amphibians eat macroinvertebrates.



Ecosystem engineers: They clean streams by eating algae and debris.



Water quality indicators: Some macroinvertebrates can tolerate poor conditions while others are more sensitive.

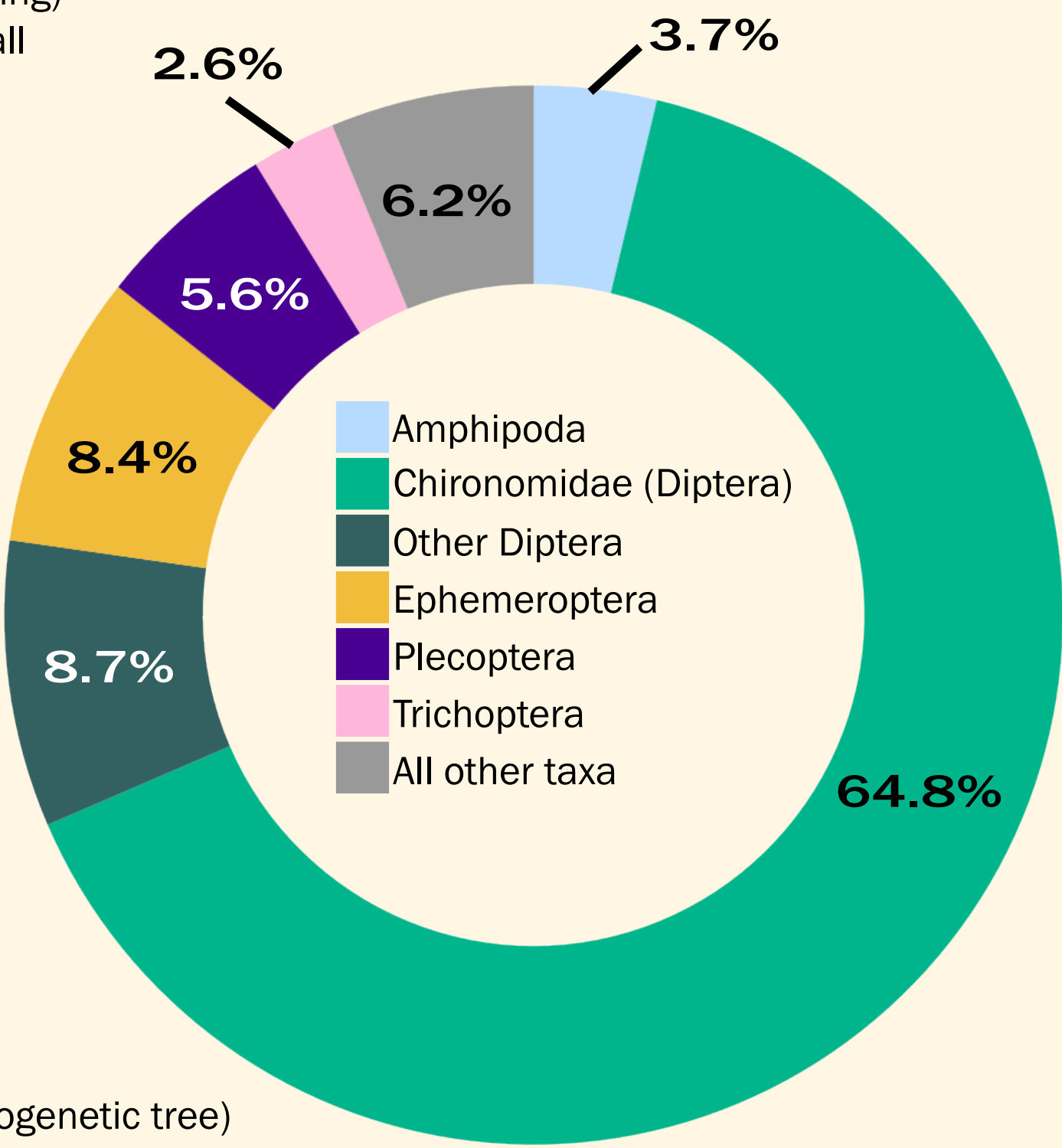


152 Taxa Live Here

The National Capital Region Inventory & Monitoring Network (NCRN) recorded benthic (bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates in 37 park streams. Nearly all types of benthic macroinvertebrates found were insects.

This graphic highlights the most common macroinvertebrate orders in the NCRN (plus Chironomidae, a family in the order Diptera). An order is a category used to classify different organisms. One order contains many species.

These data were collected between 2019 and 2022 and represent the most up-to-date available information on NCR benthic macroinvertebrates.

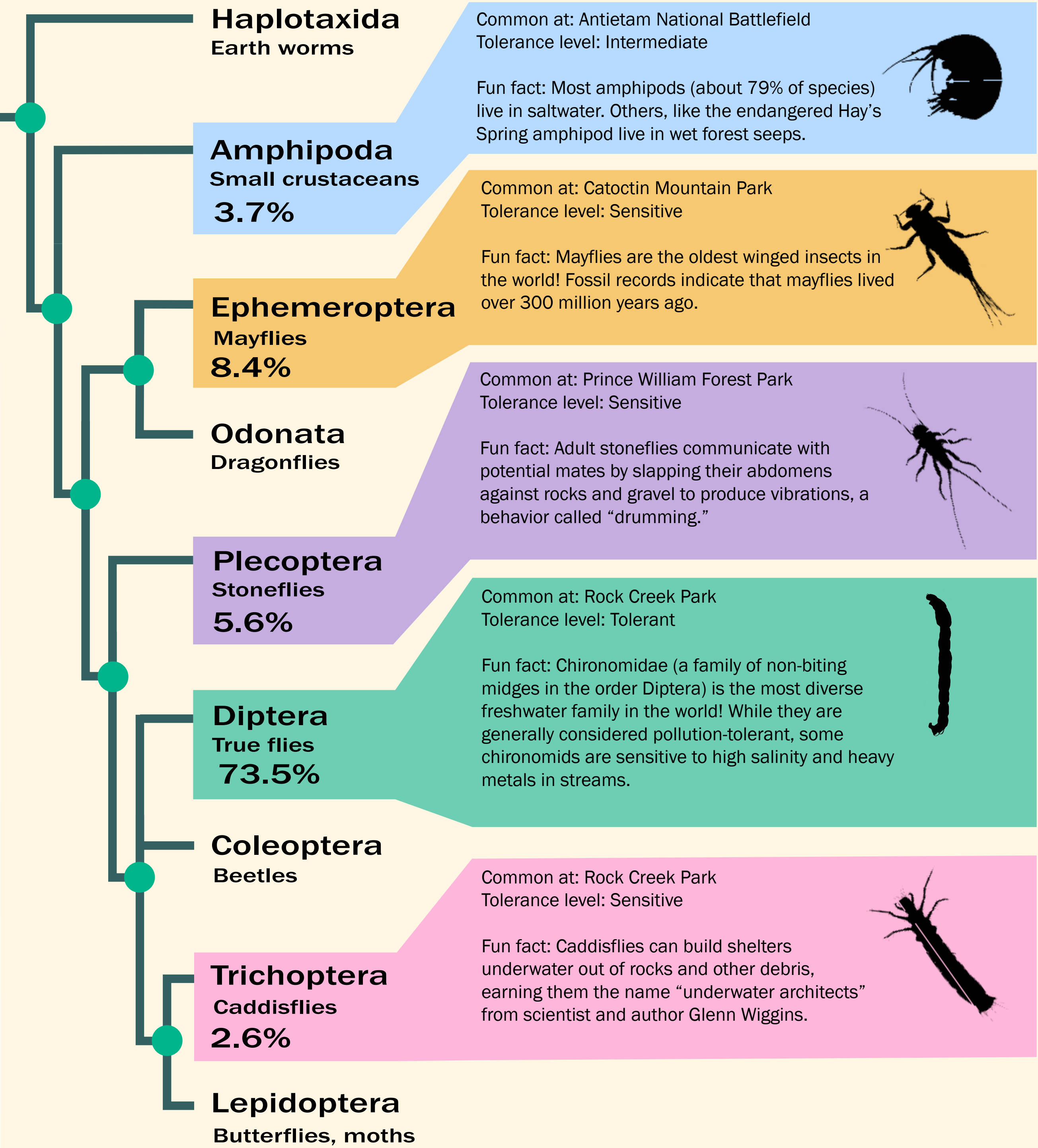


A Benthic Family Tree

On a family tree of all life on earth (called a phylogenetic tree) macroinvertebrates are classified with animals. They’re related to insects, spiders, and crustaceans, as well as their more distant relatives like mollusks, nematodes, and worms.

On the figure below, spots where the tree splits into two branches are called nodes. Nodes represent shared ancestors. The more nodes there are between two organisms, the more distant their relation.

Branches
Nodes



Learn More

The National Capital Region Inventory & Monitoring Network (NCRN I&M) serves national parks in the greater Washington, DC area (DC, MD, VA, and a bit of WV). Visit the NCRN Stream Biota webpage to learn more about macroinvertebrate monitoring:
www.nps.gov/im/ncrn/stream-biota.htm