

Why are Waterbugs so Important?

WATERBUGS ARE CRUCIAL LINKS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

Waterbugs are aquatic animals without a backbone that spend some or all of their life in fresh water. You can see them without a magnifier.

Waterbugs are important bioindicators as their diversity and abundance shows how healthy a waterway is. They are also easy to catch and identify.

WITHOUT WATERBUGS THERE WOULD BE NO PLATYPUS

Waterbugs are a key part of aquatic ecosystems. By breaking down organic matter, filtering the water and cycling nutrients, they are crucial for ecosystem function.

They also turn the energy from plants, algae, and plankton into food for fish, frogs, and platypus.

There are four types of waterbugs: **Shredders** that break down leaves and bark. **Collectors** that gather tiny food particles. **Scrapers** that graze algae from rocks and plants, and **Filter Feeders** that sift food from the water.

THE ROLE OF WATERBUGS IN OUR WATERWAYS

Waterbugs cycle energy in our waterways, keeping them healthy. There are a few different ways that waterbugs feed and get energy.

A healthy ecosystem has high biodiversity

Waterwatch uses waterbug surveys to check the health of waterways and ensure there's enough food for platypus, fish, and birds.

UNDERSTANDING TROPHIC LEVELS IN AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

Each level of a food chain is occupied by organisms that get their energy and nutrients in a specific way. Without the organisms at the lower levels, the organisms higher up won't be present.

Primary Producers

Plants and algae that create energy through photosynthesis.

All the energy in the ecosystem is first captured by Primary Producers.

Decomposers

Decomposers get their energy by consuming nutrients from dead plants and animals.

Primary Consumers

Waterbugs that feed on plants, algae and plankton to grow.

Secondary Consumers

Predatory waterbugs with powerful bites and clever hunting skills that prey on primary consumers.

Tertiary Consumers

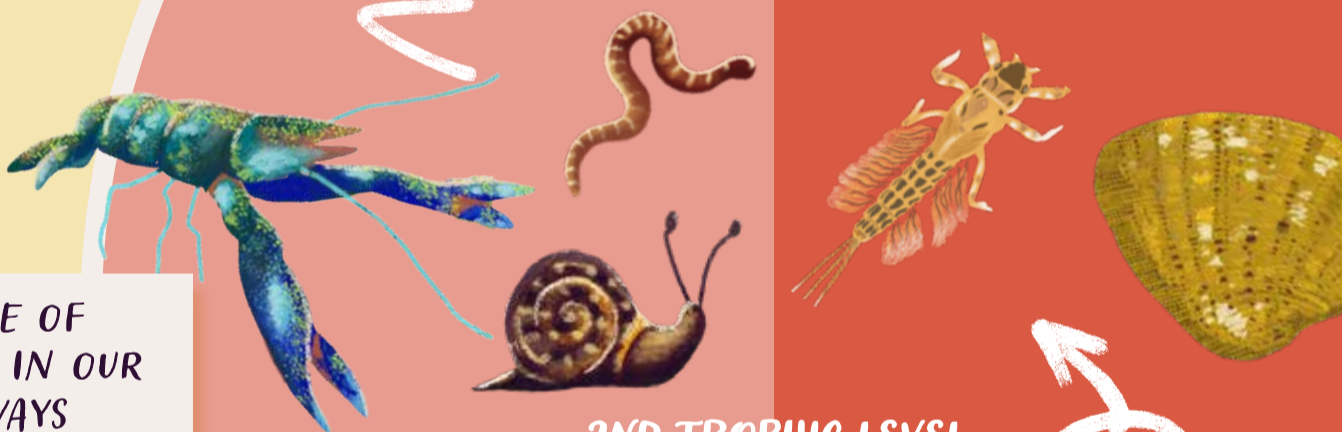
Top predators like platypus that hunt waterbugs and small animals.



4TH TROPHIC LEVEL



3RD TROPHIC LEVEL



2ND TROPHIC LEVEL



1ST TROPHIC LEVEL

Get involved in citizen science!
Join a Waterwatch waterbug survey and help protect your local waterways.

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch is supported by the ACT Government

To learn more about our wonderful waterways visit www.act.waterwatch.org.au

