

COMMON STONEFLY

Plecoptera: Perlidae

Bug of the Month



This insect's brilliant golden and black coloration is characteristic for the nymph of a stonefly in the genus *Acroneuria*, which belongs to the family Perlidae, known as the "common stonefly" or "golden stonefly". Stoneflies in the family Perlidae have a low pollution tolerance, and mainly occur in higher quality aquatic environments, like pristine forest streams, where they can commonly be found under stones and woody debris. These environments are also frequently home to trout species, making *Acroneuria* a commonly imitated

nymph and adult fly by flyfishers.

In North America, there are 18 species of *Acroneuria* and 10 of these species live in Pennsylvania. The defining physical characteristics of *Acroneuria*'s are its lack of an occipital ridge; this ridge spans across the head generally resembling the appearance of an unibrow. *Acroneuria* is known to move across stream bottoms by clinging to the rocks and small pebbles, hunting for small invertebrates, mostly other insects like caddisflies, and midge larvae. Once *Acroneuria* locates its unfortunate next

victim, they feed by engulfing their prey.

After surviving 1-3 years as an aquatic nymph, in the spring or summer *Acroneuria* will make the dangerous ascent to the water surface. Should individuals avoid predation, they will molt to adults. *Acroneuria* then emerges as a sexually mature winged adult. It can now contribute to the next generation of stoneflies, playing a key role in aquatic and terrestrial food webs.

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