



WILDLIFE FACTFLIE: Caddisfly

There are around 200 species of caddisfly (*Trichoptera*) in the UK, of which the largest is more than 3cm long. Mature adult caddisfly can be seen from February to November and have a preference for freshwater and wetland habitats, as well as gardens with ponds. They are widespread in the UK but different species of caddisfly range from being Common to Critically Endangered. The most common group of caddisflies in Britain are the Cinnamon Sedges. There are about 30 species of caddisfly in this group and they are especially common in garden ponds.

Caddisfly larvae live underwater, where they make cases by spinning together stones, sand, leaves and twigs with a silk secreted from glands around their mouth. Most caddisfly larvae live in these self-built shelters, while a few species only create cases when they are about to pupate (transform from immature larva to mature adult stage). Adult caddisflies look like moths but they fold their wings back along their body, rather than against the body, and have a fine set of hairs rather than scales on their wings. Some species of caddisfly have very long antennae as well. It can be very tricky to identify individual species of adult caddisfly but the larvae are more easily distinguished due to their differing cases. For example, some species form rounded cases from coarse sand, while others construct their cases from cut pieces of vegetation.

Adult caddisfly can be found on plants near to the edge of water or flying in swarms over rivers, lakes and ponds. They are an important food source for all kinds of predators, including the Brown Trout and Dipper. By keeping rivers healthy, we are not only providing a habitat for caddisflies to thrive, but also a food source for these predators that rely on the caddisfly. This all helps to keep the ecosystem in balance.



DID YOU KNOW?

One caddisfly species is different to all the others by having larvae that lives among leaf litter in the woods in the West Midlands rather than underwater. This gives it the common name, the 'land caddis'.

