



Blue Thumb—In Pictures November 2020



Mask Up for Bug Picking!

Bug picking and quality assurance sessions have continued this month as much as possible. These little critters are an important part of determining the health of a stream. While some bugs can live just about anywhere, others need a creek with little to no pollution. If too much pollution is present in the stream, sensitive bugs won't be able to survive. One indication of stream health is a diverse bug population. A

diversity of species suggests that the stream has everything necessary to support a variety of macroinvertebrates, including adequate water quality, food sources, living spaces and conditions that allow for reproduction.

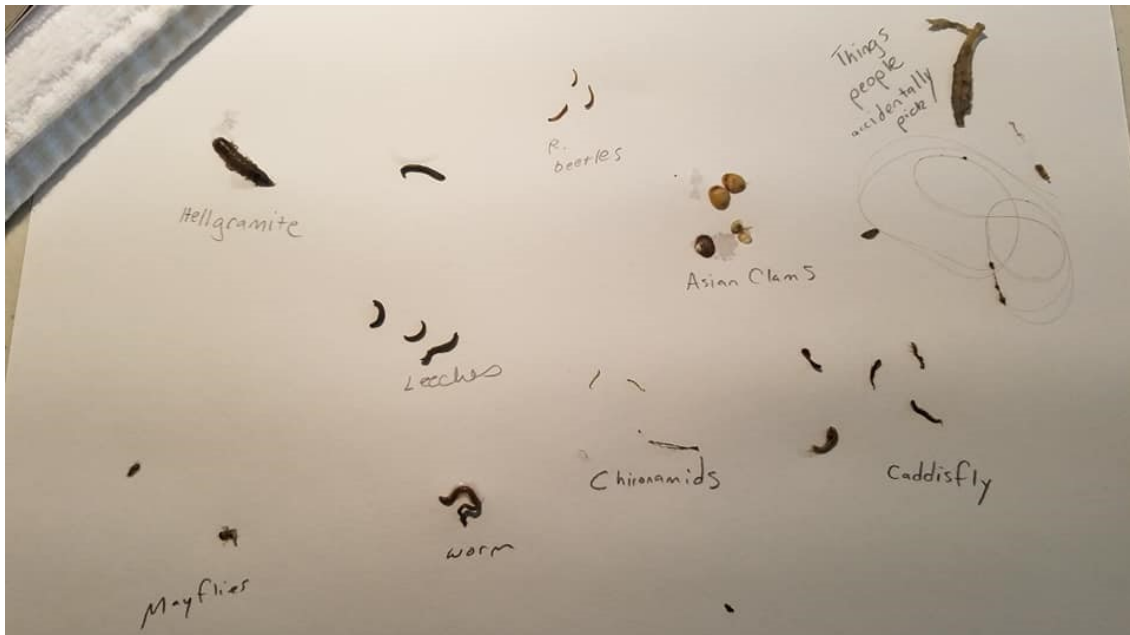


Above left: A volunteer picks through a bug sample that was collected over the summer and records her findings.



Above right: Candice double checks a volunteer's results during a QA session to make sure the volunteer got the correct answer.

Below: A sample of what a good, diverse bug sample looks like.



Groundwater Screening

We had several groundwater screenings over the past month! This program provides some basic water chemistry results to private well owners (pH, alkalinity, nitrates, sulfates, and chlorides). The events are facilitated by Blue Thumb and local conservation districts, but volunteers perform the tests.



Education, Education, Education

During 2020, we have been working with the Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP) to perform rapid bioassessments of tributaries to the scenic Illinois River in the Oklahoma portion of the watershed. This has been a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to work with water resource professionals from Arkansas. The IRWP sorts and counts bug species immediately after collection. This provides a great opportunity for Blue Thumb volunteers to learn to identify bugs to taxonomic order. In this time of COVID-19, it has been a delight to get out and meet new people on beautiful tributaries to the Illinois River. The collaborative sample effort will continue in 2021. Please reach out to Candice if you would like to participate.

