

# Zooplankton Identification

Dichotomous keys like this one are tools that biologists/scientists use to help them correctly identify organisms. This method of ID uses an organized set of questions about mutually exclusive characteristics of different organisms. These keys begin with questions about general characteristics and progressively lead to more specific ones. By following the key and making correct choices, you will be able to identify the group of organisms you are observing.

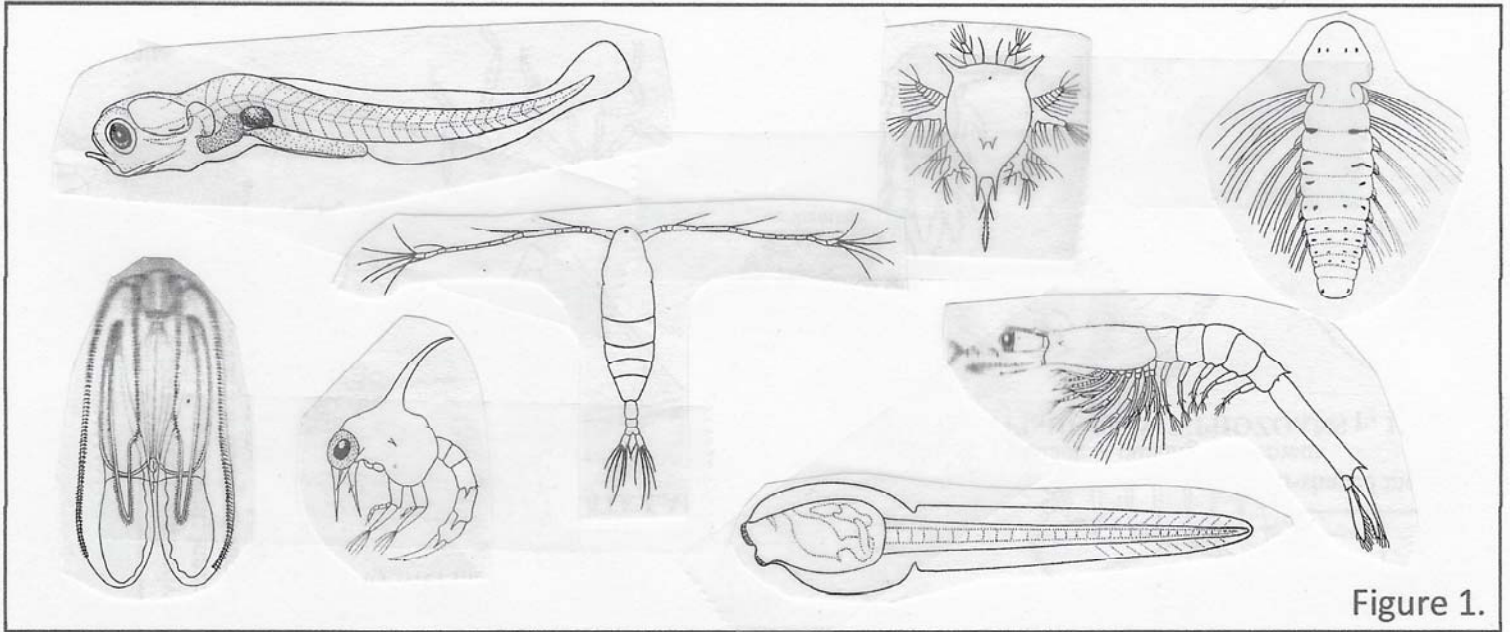


Figure 1.

Use the key below to distinguish among a variety of zooplankton (figure 1) common to our estuaries.

1. a. has large defined eye(s) ..... go to 2  
 b. has small eye(s) or lacking eye(s) completely ..... go to 4
2. a. has jointed legs ..... go to 3  
 b. lacks jointed legs ..... fish larva
3. a. tail curves under body ..... crab larva  
 b. tail extends out from body ..... shrimp larva
4. a. small eye(s) or eye spot is observable ..... go to 5  
 b. no observable eye(s) or eye spot(s) ..... go to 7
5. a. has antennae ..... go to 6  
 b. does not have distinguishable antennae ..... worm larva
6. a. has a segmented body and tail ..... copepod  
 b. body is not segmented and tail is not distinguishable ..... barnacle larva
7. a. cilia (hair like structures) are present on body ..... comb jelly  
 b. cilia are not present on body ..... tunicate