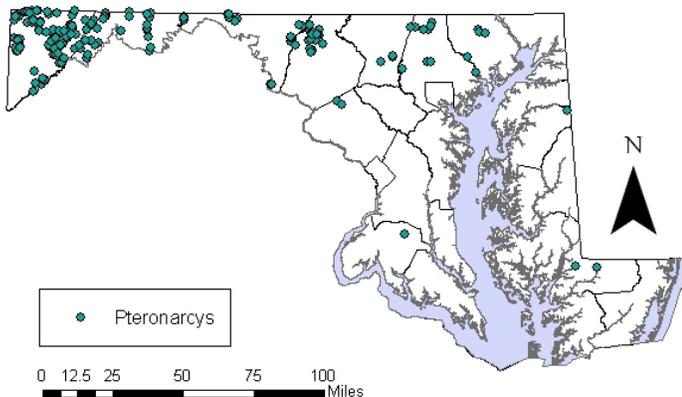


# Giant Stonefly

## *Pteronarcys*

About 500 different types\* of aquatic invertebrates live in Maryland's freshwater streams. One very interesting stream insect is the Giant Stonefly. This big, burly (relatively speaking) critter may be threatened by impending changes in many Maryland streams.

**Description** Mature *Pteronarcys* nymphs can be almost 2" long. They lurk under rocks and logs, eating leaves by night. After many molts, adults emerge, take to the air, eat, and lay eggs by the water's edge.



**Range/Habitat** In Maryland, most Giant Stoneflies live in streams west of the fall line; primarily in Garrett, Allegheny and Frederick counties\*\*. Some occur in coastal plain streams on both the Western and Eastern shores (Zekiah Swamp, Upper Chester River, and in the Wicomico and Nanticoke rivers).

**Why are Giant Stoneflies important?** Aside from being lunch for hungry fish, stoneflies are important members of aquatic communities because of their pollution sensitivity. These primitive animals require clear, cool, fast water with lots of dissolved oxygen. Thus they are excellent indicators of stream health. Due to their strict requirements, Giant Stoneflies live in some of Maryland's healthiest streams.

**Save the Stoneflies!** Since Giant Stoneflies need relatively intact habitats, the myriad disturbances we humans impose on streams may reduce or completely eliminate some populations. Urban and suburban development, acid mine drainage (and acid rain), road salt, irrigation pumping and a host of other disturbances can contribute to the ultimate demise of Giant Stoneflies in many Maryland Streams. As responsible stewards of the land, we must all do our part to protect the homes of these precious creatures.

\* genera

\*\* Maryland Biological Stream Survey (1995 – 2009) and Maryland Stream Waders (2000 – 2008). February 2010