



# Fairy Shrimp

*Eubranchipus vernalis*

Family: Chirocephalidae

Omnivore / Prey

Native to Virginia

The Eastern fairy shrimp is a unique crustacean that inhabits isolated wetlands, or vernal pools. These ephemeral waters dry up and refill seasonally, and do not support fish populations, a benefit for the fairly large and slow swimming fairy shrimp. They move their legs (ten pairs of swimming appendages) rhythmically from the head region to the tail, and swim with their ventral (belly) side up. Thus, they appear to be swimming 'upside down'. The rhythmic leg movements move water containing algae, plankton, and detritus into the mouth region and help with the uptake of dissolved oxygen.

## Fun Facts

- The eggs of fairy shrimp are small and cyst-like, and are easily spread across the landscape by wind or on the feet or fur of animals moving from place to place.
- Male fairy shrimp have a pair of large antennae in the mouth area that are adapted as claspers to hold the female while mating.
- The eggs of brine shrimp, a salt-water relative of the fairy shrimp, were sold as 'Sea Monkeys' in the 1950's and were taken into space by astronaut John Glenn in 1998. The trip did not affect their hatching!