



## **Pond Dipping Workshops, May 2023.**

In May 2023, the Lough Carra LIFE Project in collaboration with the Lough Carra Catchment Association (LCCA), facilitated pond dipping workshops with local National Schools in the Lough Carra catchment area. These workshops, held by Dr Ecologists Karina Dingerkus and Dr Richard Stone, began with brief presentations detailing the role of water on people's everyday lives, where our water comes from, what we as humans use it for, and the importance of not polluting our waterways.

Students were then encouraged to walk in the lake along the shore and carryout what is known as 'kick sampling', where the student places a pond net in the water where they are standing and agitates stones and gravel on the lake's bed with their foot for a minimum of two minutes. The material 'stirred up' in the water is collected when the student swishes their net through the water.



Students 'kick sampling'.

In most instances, the resulting product of this looks like a cloudy haze of water but when placed into the white trays and left to settle, life begins to emerge in the form of insects and in one instance for us, a newt.



A Newt and a Dragonfly Nymph collected from 'kick sampling'.

The students were then given an insect identification booklet to help identify the insects they caught. Insects found in this kick sampling process are a great indicator of the water's quality. For example, the students found Caddis fly larvae, May fly larvae, and Stonefly, all of which are highly sensitive to pollution, and so finding these insects is an indication that the water quality is quite good. However, they also found Gammarus (Freshwater Shrimp), Leech, and Water Beetles, which are indicators of lesser quality water. Species such as the Rat-tailed maggot, and the sludge worm, are indicators of very poor water quality, and were gladly not found in the lake during these workshops. Their absence is a positive indicator.

Damian Jordan June 2023