

# FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

## The Platte River Caddisfly



Photo: Wyatt W. Hoback

### A CADDISFLY IN TROUBLE

The Platte River Caddisfly is swiftly vanishing from its home on the middle Platte River in Nebraska. It is one of the rarest insects in the world. Because of water diversion, habitat loss, drought, and exotic species, this unique insect is at risk of extinction. Without federal protection, we may forever lose the Platte River Caddisfly and the threads of the web of life that it weaves together.

### PROTECTING THE PLATTE RIVER

Scientists consider the Platte River Caddisfly to be an ecologically important animal because it provides food to grassland birds, frogs, shrews and other animals and facilitates decomposition in its ecosystem. The Platte River ecosystem is crumbling due to habitat loss and altered river flow and will be further compromised if this caddisfly vanishes. This humble caddisfly's range overlaps with the elegant whooping crane, a federally endangered species brought back from the brink of extinction by Endangered Species Act safeguards.

### KNOW YOUR CADDISFLY

- **A Watery Start:** Adult females lay their eggs on the surface of the river after mating in September or October. The eggs sink to the bottom and then hatch into larvae.
- **Small but Mighty:** Larval caddisfly feed on submerged plant material by “shredding.” Caddisfly shredding provides an important ecological service by expediting decomposition.
- **Surf & Turf:** By May or June, larval caddisfly take to the land, seeking shelter along the riverbank. They are the only caddisfly to emerge from water so early in their life cycle. They mature in August and later emerge as adults whose mission is to create the next generation.

### CLIMATE CHAOS

Extended droughts resulting from climate change further pressure the Platte River Caddisfly's precarious existence, amplifying the dangers of human overuse of water.

