

Hello Worm Amigos!

It's always nice to meet a friend of worms and I am sure, as you do this study, you will notice worms and look at them in a friendly way. Let me start things off by telling a corny worm joke:

**What kind of worm do you use for math?
An Inch Worm!**



(Just a side note: An inchworm is not worm but the larvae from the Geometrid moth. I love word origins and here's a great one: This moth comes from the family Geometridae. The origin of this name means geometer, "So called because the larva seems to measure the ground with its looping motion." How cool is that? In All About Bad Worms, we met a parasite that "loops" the same way.

Enough silliness! This first section is all about what makes a worm a worm. I like my own junior scientist term, "Wormology," and will be using it a lot, but the real scientific name for worm biology is **Oligochaetology (ol-i-goh-keet-ol-ogy)**. It comes from the Latin scientific name of the Family Oligochaeta meaning "few setae" (bristles) and "logy" is Latin for "to study."

Here is a simple breakdown of the thousands of different species:

- Marine Freshwater
- Terrestrial (**The Good**)
- Free Living
- Sedentary
- Some construct elaborate tubes and burrows
- Parasitic to man and animals (**these are the Bad ones!**)

First we are going to study the Good Worms. The Phylum Annelida (annelid means segmented worms) has 9,000 different species. There are three groups of the **Terrestrial Earthworms**. Each one moves and grooves best in their specific soil environment.

1. **Litter Dwellers. Garden Worms**. They live under fallen leaves and pine needles on the forest floor. Those were the guys I was observing under a rotten log at Pine Knoll Forest.
2. **Shallow Soil Dwellers. Red Worms (*Eisenia fetida*)**. They live in the top 12 inches of soil and are great composters.
3. **Deep Burrowers. Nightcrawlers (*Lumbricus terrestris*)**. This worm is important for land improvement and because it likes to burrow deep in the soil and prefers to be undisturbed it is not a good composter.

At first glance, earthworms aren't much to look at, just a smooshy, pinkish tube with pointy ends. We are going to take a closer look at *Lumbricus terrestris*, and we'll discover they are amazing creatures. The word "terrestris" is related to the word "terra" which means earth. That's why they are excellent soil aerators. We'll study each contradiction in depth.

Contradiction #1

They have no eyes, ears or a nose but they have senses.

Contradiction #2

They have a mouth but don't have jaws or teeth.

Contradiction #3

Each earthworm is both male and female (hermaphroditic) but it still takes two earthworms to make baby earthworms.

Contradiction #4

They move but have no legs.

Plus Bonus Wormology

Cuckoo for Cocoons

The Amazing Circulatory System