

# Earthworm



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GARDEN EARTH  
NATURALIST  
ECO-SERVICE CARDS

# EARTHWORM

FAMILY: Several

PHYLUM: Annelida

## IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ long and tubular; variable in length
- ◆ body is segmented, legless and covered with slimy mucus
- ◆ Each segment has 4 pairs of tiny bristles to help the earthworm move.
- ◆ swollen section called the clitellum at the head end



### Where to Look:

Earthworms stay in the moist soil during the day and emerge at night. They live in burrows. In winter, they hibernate deep in the soil often forming a ball with other worms.

### Who Eats It?

Birds, reptiles, small animals, insects, centipedes and parasitic organisms eat earthworms.



### LIFE CYCLE

Each earthworm has both male and female parts. To mate they intertwine and exchange bags of sperm. Then they lay their eggs and fertilize them. Baby worms hatch from tiny lemon-shaped cocoons.

### What It Eats.

Earthworms eat mostly organic matter in the soil. They get some of their food as they tunnel and eat the soil. They digest the organic matter and excrete the rest (called castings). They will also eat leaves.

### Role in the Ecosystem

Earthworms are soil aerators and recyclers. Also, as they dig tunnels they loosen and mix the soil.



### Did You Know

Some earthworms can live up to 10 years. If cut or injured, they can regenerate segments as long as the middle section remains intact.