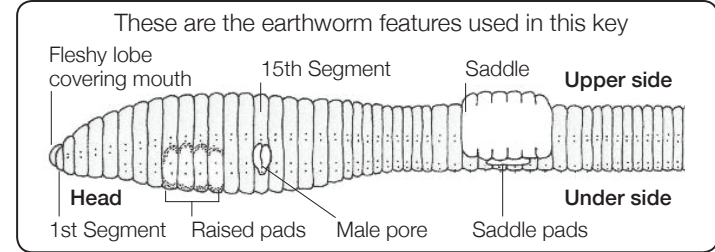


# Earthworm Identification Guide

This guide can be used for the OPAL Soil and Earthworm Survey



**Start here**  
Note that line drawings show the typical sizes of adult earthworms



Is it more than 2cm long, AND does it have a clearly developed saddle?



The saddle is usually a different colour to the rest of the body, and slightly wider

No

It is not a mature earthworm - you can't identify it with this Guide. At least 50% of the earthworms you find will be immature

Yes

Is the whole body clearly stripy on its upper surface when moving?



No

Yes

### Stripy earthworms

Which description best matches your worm? Is the body:

**A** Longer and wider or **B** Shorter and narrower?

**A**

**B**

**Hint**  
Saddle usually similar colour to the rest of the body  
Can exude an unpleasant smelling yellowish fluid when handled

**1. Compost worm**  
*Eisenia veneta*

**2. Brandling worm**  
*Eisenia fetida*

Is it greenish?

No

Yes



**3. Green worm (green form)**  
*Allolobophora chlorotica*

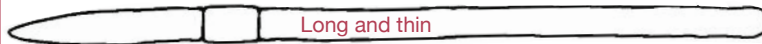
**Hints**  
Often curls up in the hand  
Yellow ring on body  
Has 3 pairs of sucker-like discs (see 13)  
Can exude a yellow fluid when handled

**5. Black-headed worm** *Aporrectodea longa*



**Hint**

Often a dark purplish head, the rear end of the body is much paler



Long and thin

Which description best matches your worm? Is the body:

**A** Long and relatively thin or **B** Long and relatively fat?



Long and fat

**Hint**

A stout worm, often as thick as a pencil

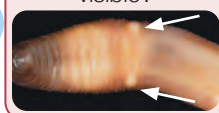


Sometimes it flattens its tail into a wide paddle shape

**6. Lob worm** *Lumbricus terrestris*

Yes

Are the male pores visible?



No

Yes

Is the earthworm longer than 8cm when NOT moving?

No

**Red earthworms**

Yes

Is the upper surface of the body, from the first segment to the saddle, entirely dark in colour (dark red, purplish red or chestnut brown)?

No



Is the body from the first segment to the saddle partly or entirely pale in colour (whitish, pink or grey)? It may have some reddish or dark segments

No



Yes

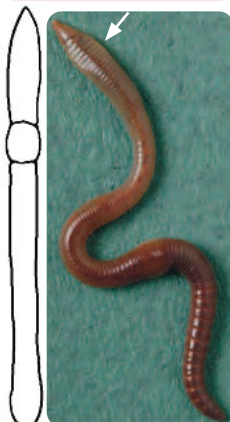
**Pale earthworms**

Key continues on the other side

Key continues on the other side

Return to start

**Hint**  
Sometimes slightly flattens its tail into a paddle shape



**4. Redhead worm**  
*Lumbricus rubellus*

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**10. Rosy-tipped worm** *Aporrectodea rosea*

**Hints**  
 The head is usually rosy pink or pale pink up to the male pores  
 Often has 2 or more whitish raised pads before the male pores. The saddle is usually orange, and can be wider towards the rear end

**7. Octagonal-tailed worm** *Dendrobaena octaedra*

**8. Chestnut worm** *Lumbricus castaneus*

Is there a raised whitish gland visible on the underside between the saddle and the head?

**Yes** → [to 8. Chestnut worm]  
**No** → [to 7. Octagonal-tailed worm]

Is the swelling around the male pore only covering one segment?

**Yes** → [to 7. Octagonal-tailed worm]  
**No** → [to 9. Little tree worm]

Are the male pores visible?

**Visible** → [to 9. Little tree worm]  
**Not visible** → [to 11. Grey worm]

You have probably found a rare worm which is not in this key. Record it as unidentified

Is the swelling around the male pores broad, covering the entire width of adjacent segments?

**Yes** → [to 9. Little tree worm]  
**No** → [to 11. Grey worm]

**9. Little tree worm** *Satchellius mammalis*

Does the worm have this colour combination?

Pink or pale grey	Whitish	Darker grey
		Saddle

**Yes** → [to 11. Grey worm]  
**No** → [to 13. Green worm]

Does it have a yellow ring towards the head?

**Yes** → [to 13. Green worm]  
**No** → [to 11. Grey worm]

**13. Green worm** (pale form) *Allolobophora chlorotica*

**Hints**  
 Has 3 pairs of sucker-like discs on the underside of alternate segments of the saddle, **not always easy to see**. The yellow ring can be faint  
 Often curls up in the hand  
 Can exude a yellow fluid when handled

**11. Grey worm** *Aporrectodea caliginosa*

**Hints**  
 The front end up to the saddle is usually in three distinct shades: pink or pale grey, then whitish, and then darker grey  
 The saddle pads usually form a two-humped ridge across three segments, but these can be difficult to see

Tail not yellow or only slightly yellow

Are the last four or five segments distinctly yellow?

**Yes** → [to 12. Blue-grey worm]  
**No** → [to 11. Grey worm]

**12. Blue-grey worm** *Octolasion cyaneum*

**Hints**  
 Distinct yellow tail  
 Can vary from faint blue-grey to a pale rosy pink colour  
 May have a lilac-blue line on the upper surface

Red earthworms

Pale earthworms

