



southern worm

Aporrectodea trapezoides

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Annelida
Class: Opisthoptora
Order:
Family: Lumbricidae

FEATURES

The southern worm is small in size. Because it has no pigment, it has a gray appearance. This earthworm does not require mating for reproduction. Like all earthworms, it has light- and touch-sensitive structures. Bristles on the underside of the body help it to move. It breathes through the skin. The skin is coated with mucus, which aids in its ability to breathe. Segments are present all along the body. A raised bump or ring, called the clitellum, secretes mucus to form the cocoon that covers the eggs and sperm as they are deposited outside the body. Small earthworms hatch from the cocoon. This worm may live four to eight years but is often preyed upon or dies before that time.

BEHAVIORS

The southern worm may be found statewide in Illinois. It helps to keep soils aerated and fertilizes the soil with its wastes. It eats organic matter in soil like decaying leaves, roots and dead animals as well as living organisms like protozoans, bacteria and fungi. When soil becomes cold in the fall and winter, it moves downward to avoid freezing. This worm is a food source for many species including birds, snakes, moles, toads and insects.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.