

Earthworm Identification

Not All Worms are “Crazy”!

Warm temperatures and spring rains can bring worms to the surface, often in large numbers. Most likely the worms that are found during the spring are **NOT** *Amyntas* spp. The adults of jumping or crazy worms (*Amyntas* spp.) cannot survive the winter in New England and require relatively warm soil temperatures to start developing from cocoons into adults.



Cocoons and new hatchlings are not easy to spot.





Adults become present in mid-summer and the peak of their abundance usually occurs in August – September. Accurate identification of an earthworm to species is only possible if an adult is collected.

The shape, color and position of the clitellum are important for proper identification.



Checklist of characteristics for jumping/"crazy" earthworm identification:

	JUMPING/"Crazy" worms	NOT JUMPING/"crazy" worms
Overall color of the body	Entire body has a pigmentation, usually dark in color (brownish, greyish).	At least some parts are pale; night crawlers might have a dark-colored head and upper/dorsal part of the body, but the underside and tails are light colored; entire body of some species is pale.
Clitellum color	Distinctly white or much lighter than color of the body. 	Somewhat similar to color of the body. 

Clitellum type	<p>Annular clitellum, encircling the worm's body.</p> 	<p>Saddle-like clitellum, very distinct on the upper side, flattens on the underside.</p> 
Position of the clitellum	<p>Clitellum close to the head.</p> 	<p>Clitellum farther away from the head.</p> 
Movement	<p>Snake-like movement, thrashing S-patterned movement.</p>	<p>Slower, move by stretching the body segments and pulling the rest of the body to the head; some species might coil when disturbed, nightcrawlers flatten the tail.</p>
Soil characteristics	<p>Coffee grounds or like "Nerd®" candy in appearance.</p>	
Seasonality/ Peak of adult activity	<p>Most adults are observed in August - September.</p>	<p>Adults are active in early spring and the fall.</p>

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Report Sightings of Jumping Worms in NH to NHbugs.org

