



WONDERFUL WORMS

The humble earth-worm is much more than bait for fish hooks

EARTHWORMS are highly specialized creatures. They seem obviously designed for their important task of burrowing through soil. They burrow into the ground in nearly all parts of the world, and make an important contribution to the fertilization, aeration and drainage of the soil.

Earthworms drag organic material from the surface into the ground. They also swallow huge amounts of earth, digest the nutritive matter it contains, then cast up the remains on to the surface of the ground or in their burrows. In this way they work at a constant and effective system of ploughing, which enriches and oxygenates the soil. An average acre (0.4 hectare) may house three million earthworms, which can move about 18 tonnes of soil per year.

Most are found in the top 12 centimetres (five inches) of soil. Their work is so thorough that in the areas in which they live almost all the soil to a depth of many centimetres has passed through the alimentary tract (gut) of an earthworm at some time.

Can evolution explain the earthworm's activities of loosening, stirring up and aerating the soil to make

it more fertile? Could its valuable work come about through mutations and natural selection (the supposed methods of evolution)? Did the earthworm choose to dig everlastingly, to pass countless tons of earth through its body over the centuries to help cultivate the soil for plant life?

A better explanation is that the Creator designed and planned the earthworm in the beginning, to be a willing, if humble, servant of the plant world. By which means, therefore, it helps to sustain the balance of all other life on this earth. ■

Fascinating earthworm FACTS

- Worms are deaf, and have no eyes. However, they can detect light, as well as vibrations.
- Charles Darwin wrote a whole book on worms.¹ He noted that objects on the surface of soil, such as stones and archaeological relics, sink into the ground as they are buried by worm casts. At the rate he measured, in 1,000 years, an object could end up being about 5.5 metres (18 feet) underground by this mechanism alone.
- A worm cut in half will usually *not* survive. However, if the tail is severed near the end, new tail segments can form and the worm will be as before.
- 90% of the leaves that fall from orchard trees are dragged into the soil by earthworms.
- The world's largest earthworm is found in the State of Victoria, Australia (see photos). These can grow up to three metres (10 feet) long.

REFERENCE

1. C. Darwin, *The formation of vegetable mould through the action of worms with observations on their habits*. D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1896.



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