

Hirudinea

Leech

Native to Maine

Freshwater & Coastal
Ponds, Lakes, and Marshes

Larval Form

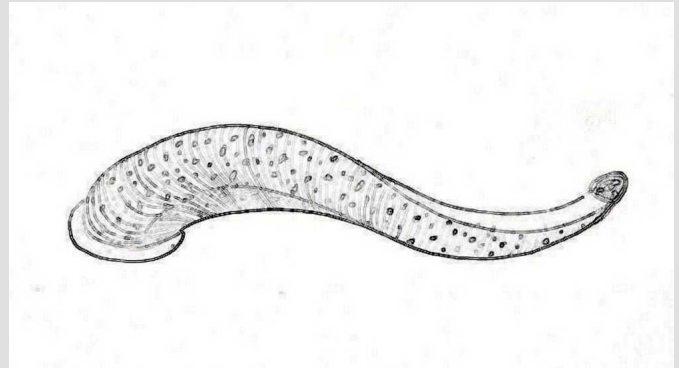


Mahoney Middle School Students



Look for an aquatic worm that is black, brown, green, or red with stripes or spots. Leeches have a sucker on each end of their body.

Larva Illustration



Sue Donaldson



When larvae hatch from an egg cocoon they look like small copies of adults. The bodies of leeches have 34 segments. Their suckers may have 3 jaws or piercing mouth parts.

Variations and Details

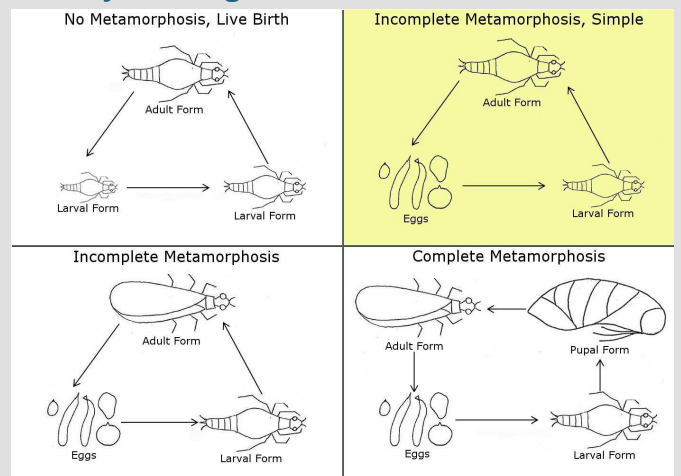


Viridflavus, Cschester and thesupermat @ Wikimedia



Leeches range in size from 1 to 30 cm. Some leeches are blood-sucking parasites but others are predators, ambushing prey and using their mouthparts as spears to catch their food.

Life Cycle Diagram



Adult Form



One Tree Hill Studios, Flickr



Leeches are hermaphrodites, with both male and female organs on any leech. Adult leeches can feed as little as two times in one year!

Similar Species

Leeches can be distinguished from other worms by the suckers present on both ends of their body. A larger sucker is on its posterior (rear) end and a smaller sucker is on its anterior (head) end.

Fun Fact

Leeches have been found in water, on land in moist places, and even in antarctic waters! Some leeches nurture their young by providing food, protection, and transportation.

Tolerant of Pollution



Gulf of Maine
Research Institute



www.vitalsignsme.org

Researched and created by: Sue Donaldson

Help us improve this species card! Contact us with your updates.