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## Horse Hairs Are Worms

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# Horse Hairs Are Worms

By Peyton B.

April 25, 2022

8:47 am

Messalonskee middle school trails

In the back of my school on one of the trails on April 25, 2022 I found a horsehair worm swimming around in a vernal pool. I observed the horsehair worm for a little bit and I noticed that it was trying to get under the leaves and try to hide from me. I also found it interesting that The horsehair worm would take over their host body and make them jump in water near to then exit out of their host's body. Questions about what they eat when they are growing up. And how do they get to the vernal pools and the other places? What is their life cycle like?



After I did some research I found the answer to my first question: what do they eat? After searching I found out that they eat the inside of their host and when done they leave through their abdomen. Soon after I found the answer to my second question: how do they get to the vernal pools and other places they stay? After researching again I found out that they mind control their host to kamikaze into nearby water areas and exit through holes bored in the insects exoskeleton. I soon learned about their life cycle which I thought was quite interesting. There are four stages in the life of a horsehair worm: the egg, the pre parasitic larva that hatches from the egg, the parasitic larva that develops within an invertebrate (its host), and the free-living aquatic adult. The worms spend the winter in water. After mating in spring, the female worm deposits a string of eggs 12 to 24 inches long in the water. About three weeks to one month later, minute immature larvae hatch. These larvae must parasitize an invertebrate host to develop. Suitable hosts for different species of horsehair worms include larger predaceous arthropods (often mantids, water beetles, carabid beetles, or dragonflies) or omnivores (such as crickets and other closely related insects, or millipedes).

Based on my observation of the horsehair worm and my research, this horsehair worm got to our vernal pool by taking over their host body and making them kamikaze into nearby water and drowning their host in the process. I was wondering how they repopulate.

Citation

The Wildlife Trusts. Accessed April 26, 2022. Horsehair worm

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/marine/worms/horsehair-worm>

[Horsehair Worm Stock Photos and Images - Alamy](#)