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The Worm That Just Looks Like a Wiggly Hair

By Eleanor F.

I recently went out on a nature walk with my seventh grade science class on the date of April 25th at 9:42 AM. We went to a special pool of water called a “vernal pool” that is home to all kinds of strange creatures. One that really stuck out to me was the horsehair worm. I was curious as to how such a lively creature could be as thin as a hair and still have all the organs to keep wiggling around. The look of the worm was quite deceiving for it could easily be mistaken for a hair and probably as long as my pointer finger but somehow had all the organs to keep moving. The worm eats different kinds of invertebrates such as insects. Apparently, they are considered beneficial because they *control other insects*. I’d like to know what their purpose in life is, or what they do in their life and their life span.

Although the worm can control other insects, they aren’t harmful to humans. But to insects such as grasshoppers, crickets, cockroaches, and sometimes even beetles they are. The hair-like worm practically hijacks the insect's mind and controls the bugs movements and its body. This creature is known as a parasite and the horsehair worm grows and develops inside of some of the invertebrates listed above.

When the insect enters the water the worm takes this opportunity to strike, and exits out of the insect's body, usually destroying its insides. Pretty brutal, right? After its hatching period it usually lives for many months before dying. So the horsehair worm is a parasite that can be considered beneficial, but don’t do too much because they are only able to paralyze bugs in small amounts.

This paragraph concludes my nature note on the gross creature, a horsehair worm which we found out was a parasite and has the ability to control other bugs. Another thing I would like to know about horsehair worms is what kind of organs or organelles they have. As I stated in the first paragraph the worm is incredibly thin so it's wild that it has all the organs (or organelles) to keep moving. But how? Horsehair worms are incredibly interesting parasites and I’d like to learn more about them.



Citation

UC IPM, revised March 13, 2019, Horsehair Worms,
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7471.html>