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Pillbugs (*Armadillidium vulgare*)

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Pillbugs (*Armadillidium vulgare*)

By Molly S. and Emma S.

On April 20, 2023 at 10:15 am, my friend and I went walking in the North Hampton, New Hampshire school woods. The weather was sunny, but cold and around 50 degrees



fahrenheit. We quickly came across a fallen down log that seemed to be wet and rotting. From previous experience, we knew that sometimes there are small bugs or worms that make places like these their homes. So, we suggested we lift the log. Underneath we found two roly pollies, what seemed to be a mother and a baby. Another thing we noticed while watching them was that one looked to be about half

an inch while the other looked to be about a centimeter long which led us to believe that one was the mom and the other was the child.

This all made us wonder, how long does the baby stay with mom? What is the shell protecting the bug from? Can the bugs live in light?

Doing some research from the University of New Hampshire website, we found that the overlapping plates on the pillbug are used as protective armor from spiders, centipedes, ground beetles, and small mammals. Pillbugs are commonly found under mulch, leaves, and rocks (or in our case, a rotting log). They are nocturnal animals, which is why we found them sleeping. They also require dark and damp conditions and enjoy burrowing under the soil.

This made me wonder if they burrow for warmth in the winter? Is it a form of hibernation? They are detritivores, which means that they eat debris, breaking down organic matter. We found out that the mother was still with the baby because on average, the baby

will stay by its mother's side for around a year, until it is fully grown. Pill Bugs are self-fertile animals, meaning they can lay eggs without mating. In the beginning, the eggs stay in a pouch



Zoom

Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

between the mother's legs, but after a few months they hatch and come out as miniature copies of their mom.

This makes **usme** wonder what is happening inside the mother's pouch to help these baby pill bugs grow? Is it similar to the process of how kangaroos keep their children safe? Do the babies get their nutrients from their mom's pouch? These are the questions that this research has left **usme** with.

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