| Misconception | Explanation |
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| All earthworms are the same | There are over 3,000 earthworm species worldwide. Most of the worms currently found in the United States were brought here by European settlers in vegetable products and soil they transported by ship. Most native earthworms are thought to have died out during the latest glaciation. There are three broad ecological groups of earthworms: Epigeic: (above – earth) such as red wigglers, that live and feed on leaf litter near the surface; Endogeic: (within – earth) small worms that feed on soil and construct horizontal burrows; and large Anecic worms, like night crawlers, that dig deep vertical burrows and drag surface leaves down into them. http://www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/identification/ecology_groups.html |
| Earthworms are helpful to our soil | In gardens and agricultural settings, earthworms help aerate the soil and cycle nutrients. In forests, current research leads us to believe that they are actually harmful to the ecosystems of the northern hardwood forests. http://www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/educator/activities_observatory.html |
| Earthworms just eat dirt | Different worm species have different feeding habits and different diets. Some eat minerals in the soil, leaf litter, decaying plant or animal matter, nematodes, fungi, and other living organisms. Worms cannot exist on soil alone, but process it as they tunnel through the soil. |
| It's ok to dump left over fishing worms on the ground. | It's not ok. Exotic earthworms harm forest floor ecosystems by eating beneficial fungi and reducing the mulch layer where many forest organisms reside. Non-native earthworm populations are especially high along streams and lakeshores with active fishing communities. Keep worms contained in gardens, as food in your fish or turtle tank, but do not release them into the wild. http://www.nrri.umn.edu/worms/forest/soil.html |
| Worms come to the surface when it rains because they will suffocate (drown) in the saturated soil. | Worms are thought to come to the surface so that they can move more easily over land. Worms' skin must stay moist for respiration, so after rains and during days with high humidity, worms can move more easily from place to place. Worms can survive for several weeks under water if there is enough dissolved oxygen in the water to support their respiration. http://www.learner.org/jnorth/search/WormNotes3.html |
| Worms are found in apples. | The 'worm' frequently featured in cartoons is actually the larva of the codling moth, *Cydia pomonella*. Female moths lay eggs on small developing apples or leaves. The larva tunnels through the skin and feeds on the seeds. Worms do not have legs, insects do. It would be very difficult for an earthworm to climb a tree or fly. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4boYyC-KAU |
| Earthworm have bones | Some children confuse earthworms, which are invertebrates and have no bones, with snakes which are vertebrates and do have a bony skeleton and many ribs. |
| | Only a few earthworms have the limited ability to regenerate the rear portion |

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| Earthworms can become two worms when cut in half | of their body and only if enough of the front half is left intact. Only flatworms, like planaria, have the ability to regenerate into two new worms after being cut in half. |