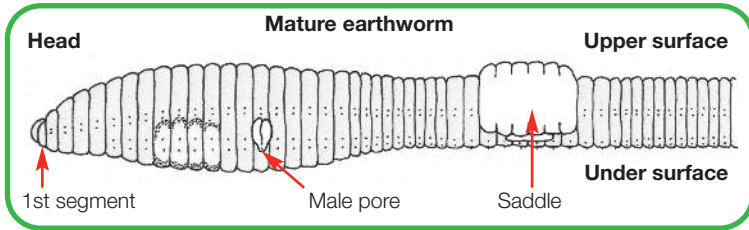


Key to common British earthworms of amenity grasslands

By David T. Jones and Chris N. Lowe

There are 26 British species of earthworm. This guide covers the seven most common species that occur in grass lawns and playing fields. It does not include the red stripy earthworms that occur in compost heaps, other species that occur in gardens, or woodland species.



It is not a mature earthworm - you can't identify it with this guide. At least 50% of the earthworms you find will be immatures.

Black-headed worm *Aporrectodea longa*

A

Hint
Often a dark purplish head

Long and thin

Is the body: **A** Long and relatively thin or **B** Long and relatively fat?

Long and fat

B

Hint
A stout worm, often as thick as a pencil

Hint
Sometimes flattens its tail into a wide paddle shape

Lob worm *Lumbricus terrestris*

Start here

Is it more than 2cm long, **AND** does it have a clearly developed saddle?

The saddle is usually a different colour to the rest of the body, and slightly wider

Turn over

It may be a species not on this guide

YES

Is the body from the first segment to the saddle partly or entirely pale in colour (whitish, pink, grey or greenish)? It may have some reddish or dark segments

Saddle

NO

NO

YES

Is the upper surface of the body, from the first segment to the saddle, entirely dark in colour (dark red, purplish red or chestnut brown)?

Are the male pores visible?

YES

Is the earthworm longer than 8cm when **NOT** moving?

NO

Hint
Line drawings show typical sizes of the adult worm


Hint
Sometimes slightly flattens its tail into a paddle shape

Redhead worm *Lumbricus rubellus*



From overleaf

Green worm
Allolobophora chlorotica




Yellow ring

Yellow ring

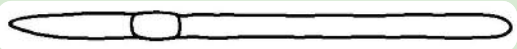
Hints
Two colour forms exist: pale and green
Can exude a yellow fluid when handled
Often curls up in the hand

Sometimes the yellow ring can be faint

Hint
The head up to the saddle is usually in three distinct shades: pink or pale grey, then whitish, and then darker grey



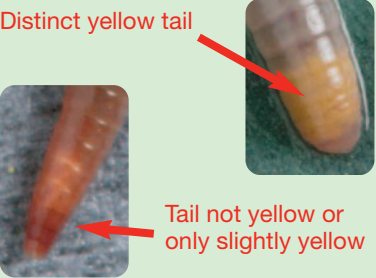
Grey worm *Aporrectodea caliginosa*



Are the last four or five segments distinctly yellow?

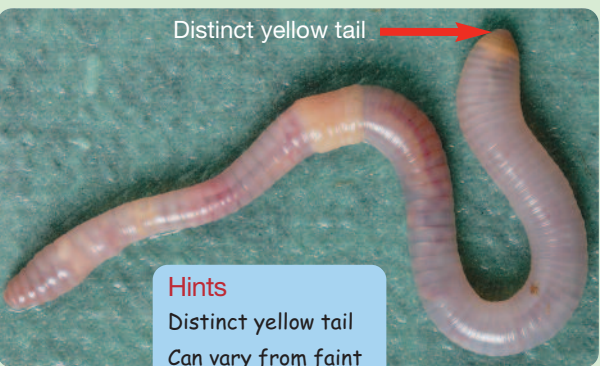
YES

Distinct yellow tail




Tail not yellow or only slightly yellow

Distinct yellow tail

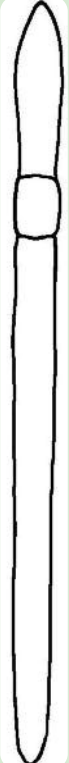


Hints
Distinct yellow tail
Can vary from faint blue-grey to a pale rosy pink colour
May have a lilac-blue line on the upper surface

Distinct yellow tail



Blue-grey worm *Octolasion cyaneum*



NO

Does it have a yellow ring towards the head?

YES

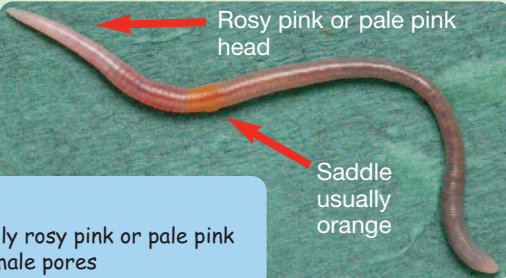
NO

Does the worm have this colour combination?



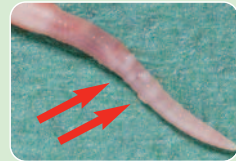
Pink or pale grey Whitish Darker grey Saddle

Rosy pink or pale pink head



Saddle usually orange

Hints
Head usually rosy pink or pale pink up to the male pores
The saddle is usually orange, and can be wider towards the rear end
Often has 2 or more whitish raised pads before the male pores



Rosy-tipped worm *Aporrectodea rosea*

