

# Young times

## Riddle of the wriggle

With a tin of mustard and a keen eye, you could play a vital part in a Natural History Museum project, reports **Chloe Lambert**

Fancy a bit of worm watching? The Natural History Museum has launched a £500,000 census to find out more about earthworms.

The organisers are looking for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to look for earthworms in their local area. They hope to get a picture of where the wriggly wonders live and what kind of soil they like.

Some species could be on the brink of extinction, and it's vital that we find them quickly and work out how to keep them alive.

It's easy to take part — you can look for earthworms in your garden, school playing field or local park.

How do you find one? You can sprinkle water on to soil, or wriggle a metal pole in the ground to simulate the burrowing of a mole.

However, research has shown that the most effective technique is to cover the soil with diluted mustard. It irritates the worms, without hurting them, and brings them to the surface.

Every volunteer will be sent free worm-watching packs, which contain a chart to help to identify 13 of the most common worms by colour, size, shape and pattern of rings. They will be able to enter their results on a web portal, and so contribute to a giant community-led environment report.

To take part, email [opalsoil@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:opalsoil@imperial.ac.uk) or visit [www.opalexplornature.org](http://www.opalexplornature.org). The survey starts in March next year, so there's no worming your way out of it.



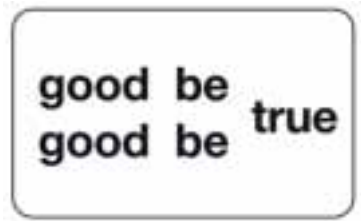
### Ground controllers

- Earthworms help to fertilise soil, by bringing nutrients closer to the surface.
- Widespread in Britain and Europe, they live up to 2m under the ground and feed on decaying organic matter in the soil.
- Ever heard the story that, if you cut a worm in half, you will end up with two live worms? It's a myth. The head may recover and heal, but you will probably kill it.



### daily dingbat

Which word or phrase is this? Say what you see.



Yesterday's answer Hamster

### jokes of the day

**How do pigs write?**

With a pigpen

**What did one arithmetic book say to the other arithmetic book?**

"Boy, do I have problems!"

### puzzle of the day

codes

If WAYWARD is 1231245 and ROWDY is 46153, how quickly can you work out these other words that mean naughty? You should identify more letters as you go along.

- 1 7 2 5
- 2 5 8 9 6 4 5 10 4 11 3
- 3 1 8 11 12 13 11
- 4 5 8 9 6 7 10 5 8 10 14 15
- 5 16 11 2 3 12 13 11

Yesterday's answer Mona Lisa

