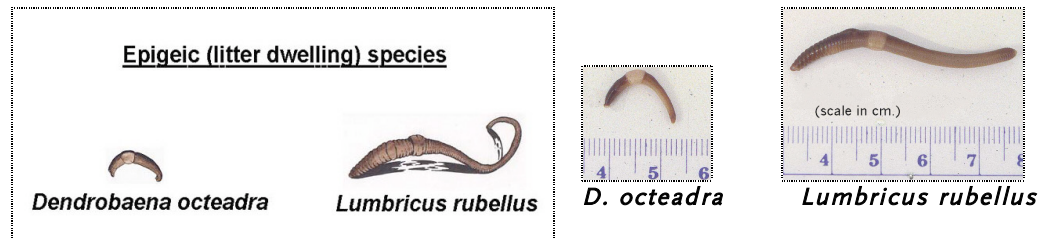


# Great Lakes Worm Watch

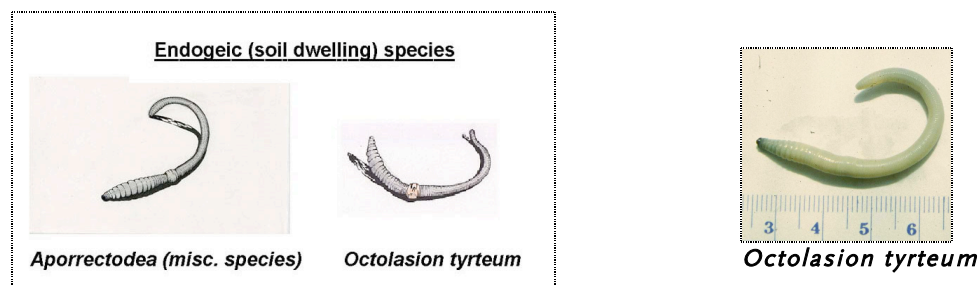
## Earthworms by Ecological Group

### A Guide to Earthworms You'll Find in The Great Lakes Region

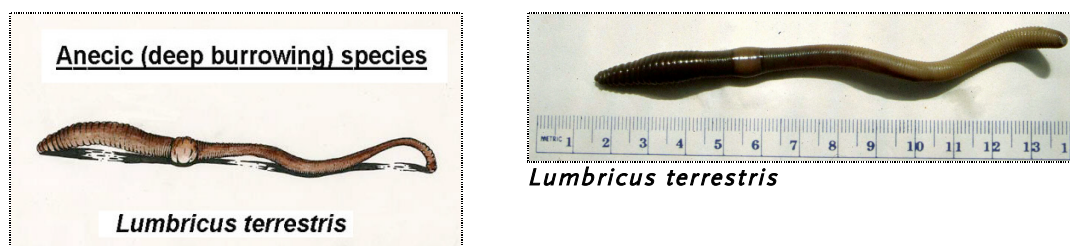
There are many species of exotic earthworms in the Great Lakes region. They can be divided into three broad groups to make identification easier:



Epigeic species live in the surface litter above the mineral soil or the top inch (2.5 cm) or so of soil and make no permanent burrows. They feed on surface litter, digesting it and the fungi and microorganisms found there. They are reddish brown in color and small in size, usually less than 7.5 cm long (3 inches) when mature. (scale above in cm). Remember, base size estimates on adults only!



Endogeic species make extensive branching burrow systems in the top 50 cm (20 inches) of the soil. They feed by ingesting large amounts of soil and digest the soil organic matter and fungi and microorganisms found there. They are easily separated from epigeic and anecic species by their color: endogeics have no red-brown skin pigmentation, but rather are light grey, sometimes with an albino pink head. Be careful! If their gut is full of dark soil they may look dark at first glance, but a closer examination will reveal that the skin has no color. Adults can range in size from just over 3 cm to 12.5 cm long (1-5 inches). (scale in cm)



Anecic species make vertical burrows up to 2 meters (6 feet) deep in the soil, but they feed on fresh surface litter. The common night crawler is an example of an anecic species. They are reddish brown in color and larger than either of the other two groups. Adults are usually 12.5 – 20 cm long (5 to 8 inches). (scale in cm)