



# The Microscopic Big Five (Beginner)

## Observing a gastrotrich



Connect with nature  
Promote microscopy  
Inspire STEM

### You have found a gastrotrich

Use this guide to help you observe it.

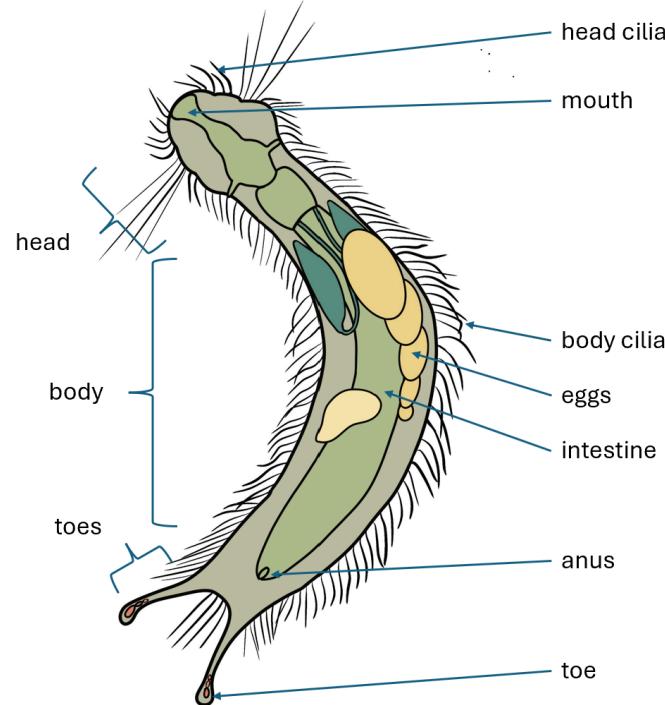
Gastrotrichs (hairy bellies or hairy backs) are tiny **invertebrate** animals that can be found in moss.

They appear pale or transparent

The key things to look for at x40:

- A long flat body
- Covered in hairs
- A forked tail

Draw your gastrotrich and label the features you can see.  
Describe what it is doing.



Tardigrades are less than half a millimetre long

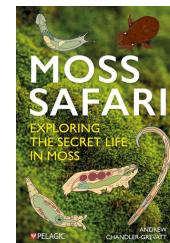


Diagram from

[www.mossesafari.com](http://www.mossesafari.com)

A. Chandler-Grevatt (2025) *Moss Safari. Exploring the secret life in moss*. Pelagic Publishing

### What is it doing?

Gastrotrichs swim gracefully.  
They can swim forward and backward.  
their bodies are flexible, they can twist and turn between particles.

### So what?

Gastrotrichs eat sediments and recycle nutrients in food chains and webs.  
Gastrotrichs are not well understood and scientists continue to research them.



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