



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.

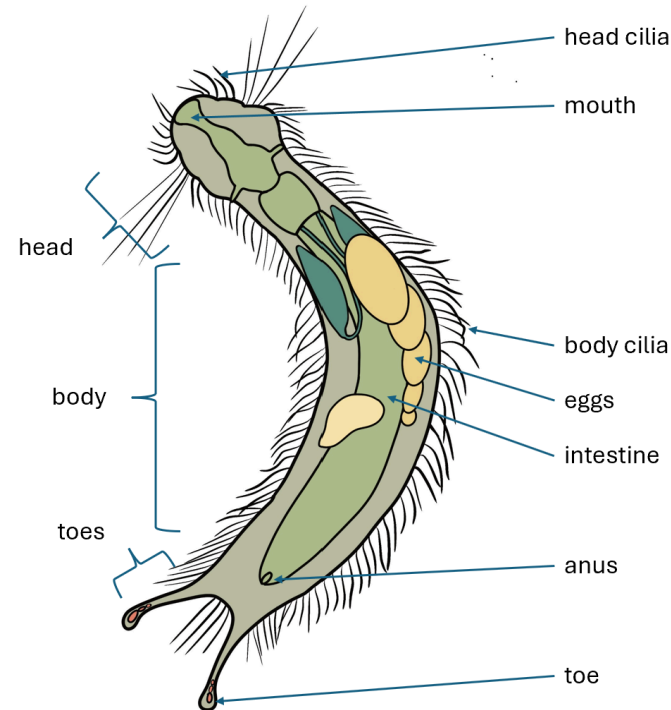
Gastrotrichs (hairy bellies or hairy backs) are tiny **invertebrate** animals that can be found in moss.

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

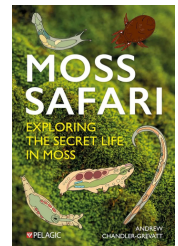
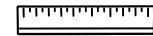


Diagram from

www.mosssafari.com

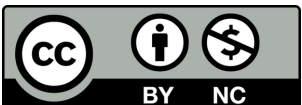
A.Chandler-Grevatt (2025) *Moss Safari. Exploring the secret life in moss.* Pelagic Publishing

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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