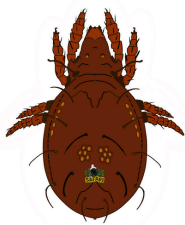


The microscopic Big Five at 40x

These five multicellular organisms are commonly found in moss. Images are not to scale.
This is a starting point. For genus and species, specialised keys are required.



Oribatid Mites (Phylum: Arthropoda)

Length range:
400 μ m - 1.0 mm

Look for:

- A dark pear-shaped body and head
- 8 legs with hooks on the end
- Long and short hairs arranged on the body and legs
- Exoskeleton is brown, orange or red in colour



Nematodes (Phylum: Nematoda)

Length range:
400 μ m - 1.0 mm

Look for:

- A long worm
- Pointed head end, tapered tail
- Mouth, pharynx, digestive system can be visible within the body
- Darker oval eggs may be seen in adults

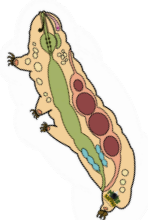


Rotifers (Phylum: Rotifera)

Length range:
400 μ m - 600 μ m

Look for:

- A crawling worm-shape, sometimes contracted into a ball
- Sometimes two ciliated 'wheel organs' open
- Body is in pseudo-segments, with two toes at the end
- Body often has a pink or red colouration

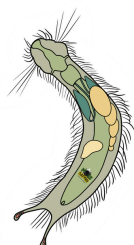


Tardigrades (Phylum: Tardigrada)

Length range:
400 μ m - 800 μ m

Look for:

- A soft, four segmented body
- 4 pairs of short legs with claws
- A pointed mouth, buccal pharyngeal apparatus visible inside
- Some types are red and ornamented



Gastrotrichs (Phylum: Gastrotricha)

Length range:
200 μ m - 400 μ m

Look for:

- A flat worm covered in cilia
- A distinctive forked tail
- Fast and darting when swimming
- Cilia are longer around mouth and head

Find out more at www.mosssafari.com

Images from:

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

