

Leech

Class: *Hirudinia* Order: *Rhyncobdella*



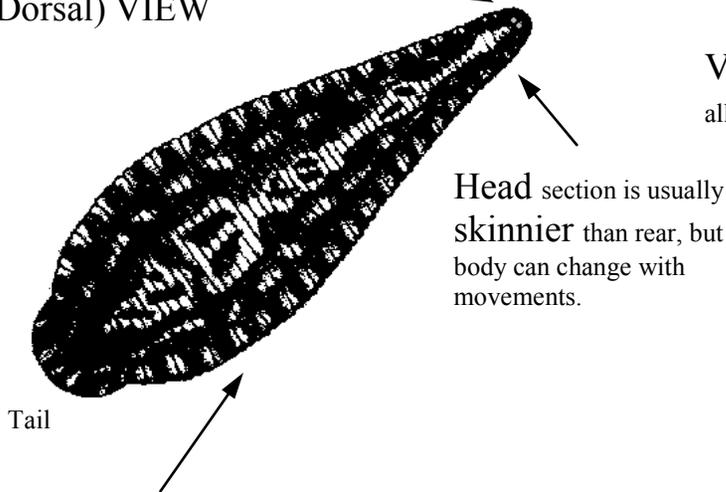
Size: 5-100 mm (adult)

Number of species in North America: 63

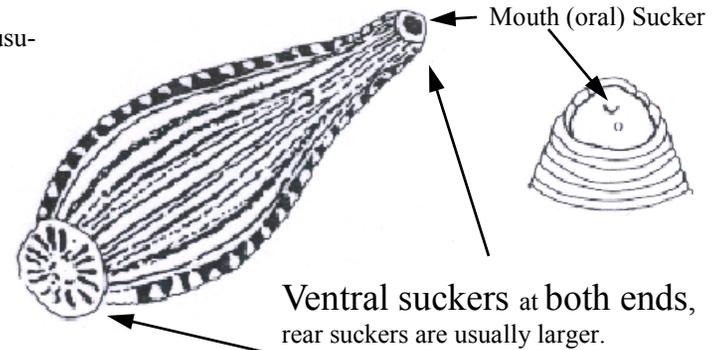
Eyes may be visible and are located in various places depending on the species.

TOP (Dorsal) VIEW

BOTTOM (Ventral) VIEW



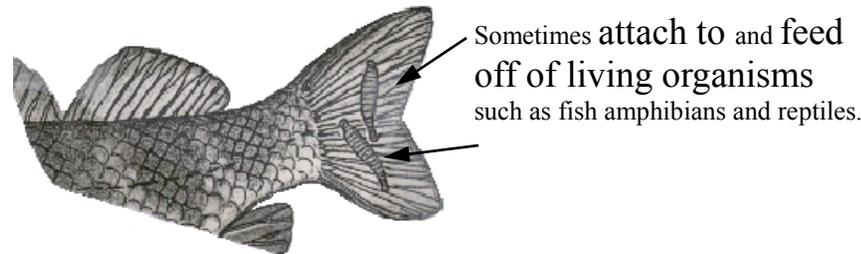
Ventral side is usually paler in color than dorsal side.



Head section is usually skinnier than rear, but body can change with movements.

Ventral suckers at both ends, rear suckers are usually larger.

Flat, segmented body sometimes with patterns and/or bright colors



Sometimes attach to and feed off of living organisms such as fish amphibians and reptiles.

SIMILAR TO: Planarian

- Planarian do not have suckers, leeches have suckers.
- Planarian do not have body segments, leeches have body segments.

Diet: Through suckers they scavenge or prey on insects, mollusks, and worms. Some are blood suckers to fish, amphibians, reptiles and water fowl.

Food for: Some fish and predaceous water insects.

Habitat: Bottom dweller along rocks and leaves or attach to other animals in ponds, streams, lakes, and rivers. Prefer slow stagnant waters.

Movement: Suckers used for movement, slide around, some may swim.

Breathing: Open breathing system, breath through skin and may move in wave-like motion to increase oxygen intake.

Water Quality Indicator: Group III- can exist under a wide range of water quality conditions including polluted waters.

Credits:
Headstrom, Richard. Adventures with Freshwater Animals, 1964.

Reid, K. George. A Golden Guide to Pond Life, 1995.

Voshell, J. Reese Jr. A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America, 2002.

Life Cycle Corner

Ring-like structures form a cocoon around eggs. These structures can be found laying on the stream bottom or slightly buried under sediment.

Incomplete Metamorphosis

Eggs are carried in a sac cocoon on the underside of the female. Young hatch and remain attached to the mother, feeding on her mucus.



OR

