

Spotlight on Invasive

Crazy Snake Worm

Scientific name: *Amyntas agrestis*

Crazy Worm Basics

Also known as the Jumper Worm.

The name speaks for itself! They act crazy, jump and thrash when

handled, and behave more like a threatened snake than a worm. Further, they may shed their tails when caught. Crazy worms can be 1.5 to 8 inches long. The narrow band around their body (clitellum) is milky white and smooth, unlike other species which have a raised clitellum.

Crazy worms reproduce easily. They are asexual (parthenogenetic) and mature in just 60 days, so each year they can have two hatches. The best time to see them is late June and early July. From September until the first hard frost their population will double and may reach damaging levels.

Why You Should Worry

Crazy worms change the soil, by disrupting the natural decomposition of leaf litter on the forest floor. They turn good soil into grainy, dry worm castings (poop) that cannot support the understory plants of our forests. Other plants, animals and fungi disappear because the understory community can no longer support them.

Crazy worms in residential and urban areas can also cause harm to ornamental plantings and turf.

More than others, crazy worms have a voracious appetite, speedy life cycle and a competitive edge. In fact, in areas with crazy worms there are no other species of earthworm. They can cause long term effects on the forests which are already under pressure from other invasive insects, plants, pathogens and diseases.

There have been reports from nurseries that this worm is abundant in both field and container stock. Presumably it is transported to customers' gardens in this way. There are reports from home owners in Connecticut who blame the abundant castings of this worm for the demise of their lawns.

What You Can Do

There are also no proven biological control measures. Keep an eye out for them. One potential measure you can take to minimize the risk of getting them is to keep municipal mulches and composts out of your yard. You can also check plant materials that you get from nurseries for these worms.

Encourage professional organizations to support and lobby for research efforts on the biological control of these organisms.

