Common name	**Giant African Millipede**
Scientific name	*Archispirostreptus gigas*
IUCN status	Least Concern (IUCN, 2021)
Conservation threats	• Habitat loss from converting land to agriculture use and housing development • Collection for the pet trade
Primary conservation message/action	For "creepy crawly" animals, our primary approach is about building empathy not only for the animal in front of them, but for other species like them: *Even the little things of this world have a place.*
Physical description	**Size:** from 4–12 inches long **Coloration:** Dark brown and black **Sexual Dimorphism:** On the 7th segment, males have a specialized set of legs that are tucked into pouches so there appears to be a "gap;" i.e., it appears that legs are missing. Females and juveniles do not have this gap.
Species notable features or adaptations	• A large arthropod with an exoskeleton and many body segments • Although the name "millipede" means "1000 legs," an individual may have between 300 and 400 legs, depending on its age/size. • Can have 40 or more body segments, with four legs (two pairs) per individual segment • They do not have true eyes, but on the top of the head they have "simple eyes" called *ocelli [oh-SELL-ee]* which can detect light. • In spite of no true eyesight, they have an excellent sense of touch with their antennae and legs.

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	• Breathe through tiny pore-like holes called *spiracles [SPEAR-uh-kuhls]* that are located along the length of their bodies. Because spiracles cannot open and close, if a millipede is an environment that is too wet, it will drown. • Like other arthropods, millipedes grow by **molting** (shedding its exoskeleton as a new one develops under it). • Each time a millipede molts, it adds one body segment with two pars of legs. Thus, the largest/longest individuals are the oldest. • The plates of its exoskeleton help protect the millipede from some predators. The millipede may also coil up when threatened, which makes it more difficult for a predator to carry it away. As a final defense, the millipede can produce a foul-tasting fluid from each body segment to repel a would-be predator.
Native habitat & range	**Habitat** Forest (primarily), shrubland **Range** Widely distributed across eastern Africa
Natural diet & feeding behavior	Detritovore *[Dee-TRITE-oh-vore]* • Feed on dead and decaying organic matter, such as logs and plants, on the forest floor
Activity	Nocturnal
Social structure	Don't live in groups, but use chemical signals called *pheromones* (*FAYR-uh-mohns*) to attract mates.
Ecological relationships	**Their predators:** Birds, small mammals, frogs, and a variety of reptiles **Recyclers and soil makers:** As detritovores, millipedes replenish the soil with their nutrient-rich excrement!

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Mating & reproduction	• A female lays hundreds of eggs at one time and bury them in soil of the rainforest floor. The eggs hatch after about three months. • There is no parental involvement in raising the young; after the millipede hatches, it is on its own. • At hatching, the young are white and have only a few segments and a few pairs of legs. They go through their first molt within their first day.
Median life expectancy	About 5 years

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you distinguish millipedes from centipedes?

Millipedes have two pairs of legs per body segment; centipedes have only one pair per segment.

Millipedes have weak jaws and cannot give a good bite. But they can secrete a foul-tasting fluid from their body segments to deter a predator. Centipedes are venomous and bite with fangs.

Millipedes are typically not very colorful. Many kinds of centipedes are brightly colored, which serves as a warning of their venom.

Millipedes have rounded bodies; centipedes have flattened bodies.

Are millipedes insects?

No. Millipedes are arthropods, but they are not insects. (Insects have 6 legs.)

Does it bite?

Anything with a mouth can bite, but the bite of a millipede would be very weak.

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