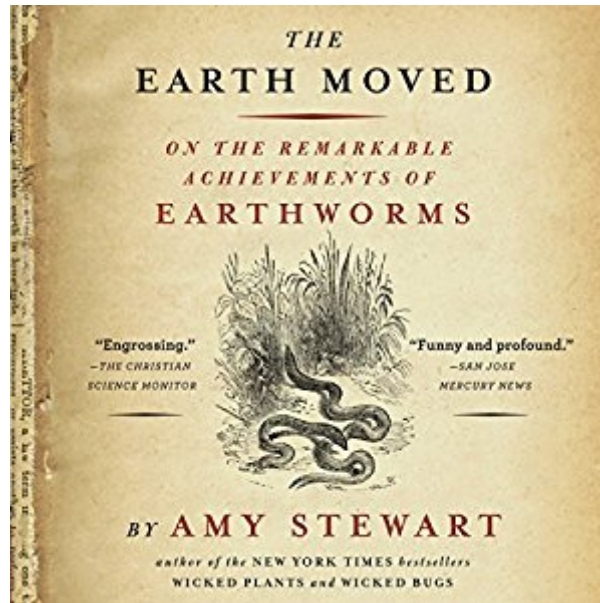


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# Earth Moved: On The Remarkable Achievements Of Earthworms



## Synopsis

They destroy plant diseases. They break down toxins. They plough the earth. They transform forests. They've survived two mass extinctions, including the one that wiped out the dinosaur. Not bad for a creature that's deaf, blind, and spineless. Who knew that earthworms were one of our planet's most important caretakers? Or that Charles Darwin devoted his last years to studying their remarkable achievements? Inspired by Darwin, Amy Stewart takes us on a subterranean adventure. Witty, offbeat, charming, and ever curious, she unearths the complex web of life beneath our feet and investigates the role earthworms play in cutting-edge science—from toxic cleanups to the study of regeneration.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Even if you aren't a gardener, you probably know that if soil has plenty of earthworms, it is healthy soil. People didn't always know this. It used to be thought that earthworms were parasites, eating at the roots of plants gardeners wanted to flourish. Chief among the instructors that made gardeners change their minds about the humble earthworm was none other than Charles Darwin, who was fascinated by the creatures, experimented on their abilities, and wrote his final book, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, Through the Action of Worms, With Observations on Their Habits*, in 1881. Darwin's work, and especially his curiosity and his enthusiasm for what worms do for us, run through all the chapters of *The Earth Moved: On the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill) by Amy Stewart. It is always good to be reminded of

just how much natural history Darwin taught us in yet another field, rather than merely his overarching Theory of Evolution, but as Stewart shows, there are now microscopic and ecological investigations that Darwin could not have dreamed of, all of which convince her (and she will convince any reader) that the humble earthworm is a soil engineer that has made our world the way it is today. Earthworms till the soil more intimately than any plough. By burrowing, they provide aeration. Earthworm manure (called castings) is highly valued by gardeners, and is even a cash crop for those who raise worms on a large scale. Earthworms promote bacteria in the soil, and most soil bacteria, rather than being bad germs, are useful in such things as converting ammonium to a form of nitrogen that plants can use, and breaking down other complex molecules so roots can absorb them.

I have no idea why I bought this book. I do like to garden, but am not especially organic about it. I do have a compost pile, and have sort of watched my local earthworm population over the years with about the same level of interest as the local ladybug population. They are there, I think they are doing good, but not really all that interested.---The Good Points---\* Amy Stewart seems to know her worms. She is certainly full of knowledge and opinions on what worms do, how they do it, where they do it, and why they do it.\* I never really thought I cared, but the book just sort of sucks you in. Now that I know that bananas are one of the worms favorite food, it sort of makes carrying the scraps out to the compost pile, including banana peels, somewhat more rewarding. Bon Appetite, little guys!\* There was quite a bit of info in the book that I hadn't been exposed to before, and it was written in such a way that I ended up reading it.---The Not So Good Points---\* My biggest criticism is that the material is not referenced. In some cases, Stewart identifies an authority in the narrative for her information. In others she indicates direct observation. But in the majority of her narrative, the earthworm facts are presented without attribution. I have no doubt that Stewart knows a great deal about them, and would be 90% confident in anything she said, but the book does not stand as a reference source. I admit being somewhat picky about this issue, but I am careful about what I read because I do not like to remember someone's opinion as a "fact". For example, the book makes a statement about cases where earthworms can actually be harmful to an environment.

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