

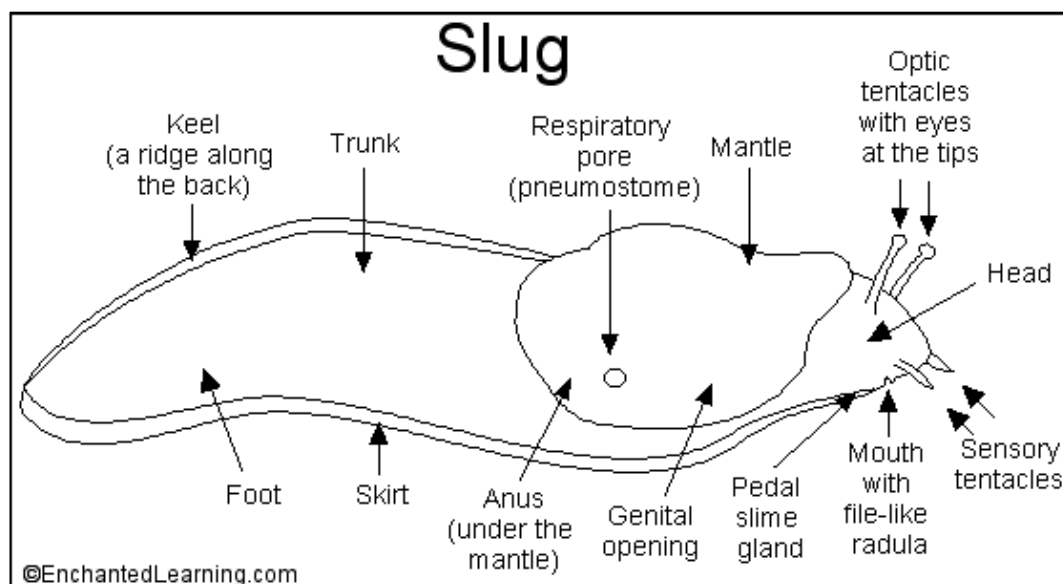
Cool Facts - Slugs



Have you ever gone out into your yard early in the morning and noticed a silver trail on the sidewalk? Have you wondered what sort of animal would make a trail like that? The culprit is a slug. Slugs secrete a slimy substance whenever they crawl. The slime makes it easier for them to move and protects them from sharp rocks, twigs and other objects in their path. A slug could crawl

over an upright razor blade and not be cut. Slugs mostly rely on their sense of smell to find their way around. They can use their slimy trails to guide them back to their tunnels. When the slime trails dry, they turn into silver tracks.

Slugs are related to oysters, clams and octopi. They are all mollusks. A slug is a special kind of mollusk, called a gastropod. The name means 'stomach foot'. Some other kinds of gastropods are snails and conches. Mollusks have been on the earth for millions of years and have not changed very much in all that time.



Light-sensitive eyes are positioned on the long tentacles at the top of the slug's head. The shorter tentacles extending downward are used for feeling and smelling. Slugs have a single lung (not two like most animals); the tiny hole on the right side of

his body (labeled respiratory pore) connects to the slug's lung.

Because they could easily dry out, slugs remain where it is cool and damp during the day. They come out at night to forage for food. They usually eat leaves and often visit gardens. Take a flashlight some evening and look for them after sunset.



Interesting Facts

- Slugs are invertebrates, which means that they don't have a backbone. In fact, they don't have bones at all.
- Slugs don't have teeth or tongues. They have a special organ called a *radula* that has thousands of tiny protrusions that help them grind up their food.
- Slugs lay eggs on the surface of the soil, under leaves. The eggs can survive for several years, until the conditions are right for them to hatch.
- Most of a slug's body is the huge muscle that is the foot. It creeps along by contracting a series of muscles on the underside of the body (making a wave that goes from the back end to the front).
- Slugs are hermaphrodites, which means that they have both male and female organs and can fertilize their own eggs.
- The biggest slug in the United States is the Banana Slug; it can grow to be nearly a foot long!
- Slugs can absorb oxygen directly from the atmosphere in addition to breathing through the respiratory pore.
- Slugs don't really like hot weather so they are more active in the spring and the fall.
- Slugs are very sensitive and will dehydrate and die if caught in gusty weather.
- Depending on the species, slugs live from one to six years. Older slugs are usually female.