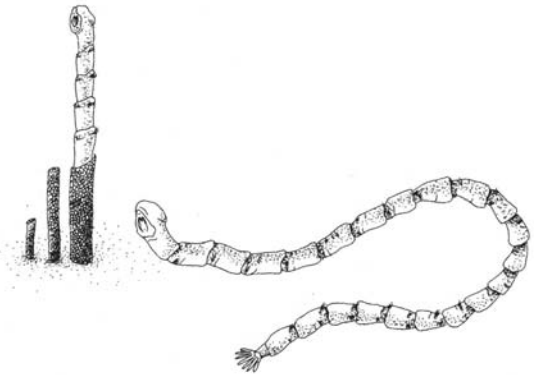


This Month

Common Bamboo Worm

Colloquial Nicknames: Bamboo worm
Scientific name: *Clymenella torquata*



Field Markings: Light brownish-red to brick red.
Size: Up to 6.5 inches long
Habitat: Sand or mud flats, eelgrass beds, intertidal zone to offshore
Seasonal Appearance: Year-round

Bamboo worms are detritus feeders. They feed by ingesting sand and mud, extracting detritus particles as they burrow. After digesting the food particles, excess mud and sand are excreted by the worm through the top of the tube.

Tube-building bamboo worms are visible in mud flats throughout Narragansett Bay. The tubes extend a few inches above the surface of the mud and generally occur in clusters of several individuals.

The clusters provide a sanctuary and habitat for other Bay life, including amphipods, isopods, mud snails and small crustaceans.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES AND BEHAVIORS

While several species of bamboo worm are found in the waters of the North Atlantic, the common bamboo worm is the largest and most abundant tube-building worm in Narragansett Bay.



These worms have thin, segmented bodies that resemble a stick of bamboo. Bamboo worms have no appendages or tentacles on the head; a hard plate at the tip of the head seals the tube when the worm retracts for protection.



The tail is a funnel-shaped, and the segments of the body are lined with hairlike bristles that anchor the worm into the tube. Bamboo worms live upside down in tubes constructed of grains of sand and cemented together with mucus produced by the worm.

RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE

Bamboo worms are also found in eelgrass beds. Human disturbance through nutrient enrichment and increased water temperatures from climate change reduces eelgrass habitat for these worms and other organisms that depend on it for survival.

Environmental disasters, such as the 1996 North Cape oil spill off Moonstone Beach, can have a severe impact on the benthic community. Toxic oil will often kill all of the invertebrates and plant species it comes in contact with, sterilizing the entire area.

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