

GIANT AFRICAN MILLIPEDE

Archispirostreptus gigas

Giant African millipedes are the largest of the world's
10,000 species of millipedes



ABOUT

Size - Can grow to 12 inches and about as thick as a thumb

Life expectancy - 7-10 years

Habitat - Mostly live in forests, sometimes coastal habitats

Home - They are native to the rainforests of western Africa



They have poor eyesight, so communicate primarily with touch, using their antennae and legs to feel other millipedes. They can also taste and smell with most of their body.

DEFENCE

Birds, small mammals, frogs and reptiles all prey upon millipedes. Because of this, giant African millipedes have two main modes of defence:

- they can curl into a tight spiral, exposing only their hard exoskeleton, making them difficult to pick up.
- they can secrete an irritating liquid from pores all down their body, which tastes and smells foul to their predators.

Millipedes are detritivores, meaning they feed on dead and decaying, nutrient-rich plant matter which, once digested and excreted, becomes nutrient-rich soil in their environment.



Despite the name 'millipede' (meaning 'thousand feet'), they actually have around 300 to 400 legs. Their body has around 30 to 40 segments with about four legs per segment. The number of legs varies throughout their lifetime as they grow new segments with each moult.