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CLASS- VI (All Section) — DATE: 14-07-2020

Science

CHAPTER: 9 How animals move

Today's Topic: Animal movements

Animal movements:

Unlike humans, most animals with backbones do not stand or walk upright; most walk on four legs. Birds and hats have the ability to fly while fish and whales can live and swim in water. Snakes use movement which is similar to crawling. Invertebrates, such as earthworms, snails and insects, have their own unique movements and they have features designed to carry out their particular modes of movement.

The Earthworm:

An earthworm does not have a skeleton or limbs. The body of an earthworm is made up of many rings joined end to end. It has bristles on each segment called setae that help the earthworm to move. It has two sets of muscles—one that makes it long and thin and one that makes it fat. Earthworms move underground by means of waves of muscular contractions, which alternately shorten and lengthen the body. The earthworm first extends the front part of its body, keeping the rear portion fixed to the surrounding soil with its setae, which act as anchors. Then it fixes the front end while releasing the rear end. This makes it move

forward by a small distance. Repeating such muscle expansions and contractions, the earthworm can move through soil, the earthworm's body secretes a slimy substance to help the movement.

The earthworm actually eats its way through the soil! Its body then throws away the undigested part of the material that it eats. This activity of an earthworm makes the soil more fertile and useful for plants.

The Snail:

Snails can be found in gardens, in ponds and even in the sea. They belong to a group of animals with a soft body called molluscs, which are related to oysters, clams and other shellfish. They have soft, unsegmented bodies that are protected by a hard, round shell. This shell is known as the exoskeleton and is made of calcium carbonate. This shell is a single unit and does not help the snail in moving from place to place. It has to be dragged along.

A snail moves by creeping on a flat, thick structure at the base of its body that is made of a strong muscle. It is called its 'foot' underneath the body. The band of muscles in the foot contract and expand and this creates a kind of rippling movement that pushes the snail forward. The snail's foot has a special gland that produces slimy mucus to make a slippery track on which the snail can glide. Such silvery tracks can often be seen in the garden. The slime comes out from the front and hardens when it comes in contact with air. A snail is able to move on very sharp pointed needles, knives, razors and vines without being injured because the mucus-like secretion helps to protect its body.